Within Eastern Walls:

A Vision of Syrian Society From Within

by

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Abstract

My research is based on twenty months' fieldwork carried out in Qamishly in Syrian Jazirah. The purpose of my study is to examine the lives of women in this community. Why women? The relations among women in this community are close and confidences easily shared; not so, for me, among men. The network path for external communication in this society is contained almost exclusively within the male world. I wished therefore to examine the society from the inside, using the eyes of women, to determine attitudes to ethnic, sectarian and class issues. For me, as a Japanese, a particular area of interest was the extent to which women's concepts of social duty and obligation led to their individuality being subordinated. In this society, the burden of duty and obligation falls most heavily on women.

The inhabitants of Jazirah fall into three main groups: local Arabs (Shawaya), Kurds and Christians which are further subdivided into tribes (Arabs and Kurds) or sects (Christians). In my study, I focus on the local Arab tribal confederation known as the Ṭai. The mechanism by which individuals identify themselves with their grouping, whether religious, tribal or class lies at the root of the whole network of obligations and restrictions on the behaviour of female members of society.

Not only do women take care not to fall victim to rumour, speculation or gossip, which in Jazirah is elevated almost to an art form. From the point of view of individual reputation, a woman will also be under pressure from her male kin. The standing and reputation of men in society are also vulnerable to any apparent failure to keep the family women under control. Jazirah women struggle with the dual obligations of ensuring their own and their family's honour and position in society in the context of a

rigid social code at the same time as expressing themselves as individual, as personalities and as women. Some succeed.

Corrigenda

| Page	Line	
45	25	Ṭai and Shammar, who <u>were</u> sheep rearers, **are**
89	25	as <u>the fault</u> of his own personal defect **a result**
95-8		page numbers 94, 98, 97, 96 and 95 have been accidentally reversed
117	9	imply that she is better (*ahsan*) than these ***ahsan***
124	23	giving priority to fulfilling their own wishes (*raghba*) <u>prevents</u> women **prevent**
126	4	through which they can <u>identity</u> themselves as respectable women **identify**

138 Figure 3

Salah
Ṣalaḥ

Fatima
Fatima

140 Figure 4

Husain
Ḥusain
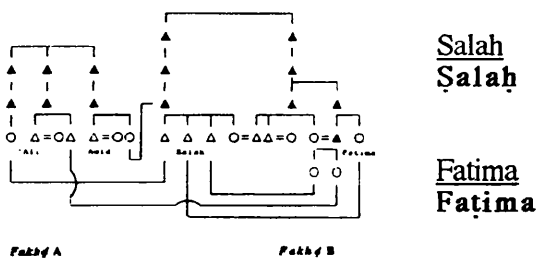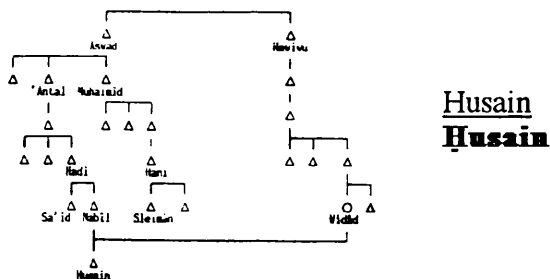
140	1-2	on this chart are related as *ibn `amm* -s₂ patrilateral parallel cousins ',' added
147	28	In such cases, *ibn `amm* <u>-s</u> stand '-s' added
167	16	describe the path by which <u>accept</u> the fate of human being is accepted 'accept' omitted
184	13	activities which have <u>less</u> economic value 'less' added

188 Figure 7

Flock Size

*→ error 'T' missing

Female Labour Force (over 13 y.o.)
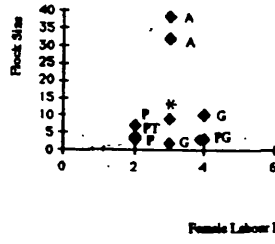
208   12   the `Asāf is one of the tribes among the fiai with reference to
                                    Ṭaï spelling correction

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Tables and Figures

Preface

I went to Syria in January 1989 for preliminary research, planning to carry out extended field research in the Jazirah region from April 1989. There was little information available on Syrian Jazirah (Khalaf, 1981; Rabo, 1986). Scholars whom I contacted had noted the suspicion felt toward social research carried out by a foreigner, because of the political sensitivity attached to studying Jazirah. Fortunately, I was able to secure a position as a research scholar at the Institute for the History of Arab Science in the University of Aleppo, which enabled me to carry out research on the women of Jazirah. I conducted field research during twenty months beginning April 1989, including supplementary research in April 1991, intended for a review of ethnic relations in the area in the aftermath of the Gulf War. I spent the first two months in Aleppo, the second largest city in Syria, obtaining government permission for my stay in Syria, and studying Arabic.

I moved to Qamishly, which was the biggest town in the Jazirah region, in June 1989. I began research by asking friends to introduce me to their friends both in the town and the villages nearby. I planned to conduct research both in Qamishly and a nearby village. Qamishly was the regional economic and social centre, where the town inhabitants and villagers living nearby mix with each other through economic, educational and private activities. Through the exchange of everyday stories, gossip and rumour, the Qamishly women's views on rural-urban relations and the characteristics attributed to different ethnic or religious groups became apparent. Upon hearing these conversations at the beginning of research, I set out to investigate the

women's views on ethnic or sectarian relations in Qamishly society, and of their own identity within it.

Through my immersion in village life, I tried to investigate how regional economic developments based on agriculture and natural resources, coupled with the unstable social situation derived from ethnic or sectarian conflicts, affected their everyday lives and gender relations. After visiting several villages, I chose a village, which I shall in this thesis call Ḍubāna, located about ten kilometres from Qamishly. The local inhabitants of Jazirah categorised themselves into three main groups: local Arabs (Shawaya), Kurds and Christians. Ḍubāna was composed of local Arabs; local Arabs, along with Kurds were in the majority in this region; most of the villagers were members of the Ṭai tribal confederation whose paramount sheikh also lived in Ḍubāna. I made my choice for the following reasons: the village was located near Qamishly, and the villagers had contact with different ethnic or religious groups in the town through their everyday economic and social activities; it contained only twenty-one households, excluding seasonal agricultural labourers. This village size made it possible for me to have close contacts with the villagers.

I lived with a family in Qamishly and commuted between Qamishly and Ḍubāna every day. I stayed overnight in the village once or twice a week, and on other days I worked in the village, and in the evenings visited women in Qamishly with whom I had become acquainted through my friends and their families. Through conversations with the women both in the town and the village, I gradually recognised that gender norms became boundary markers that segregated society into differentiated ethnic or religious groups. Among Ḍubāna villagers, their egalitarian and independent attitude toward the Ṭai paramount sheikh was evident in the duplication of ritual symbols in sheikh sponsored Islamic feasts, in private mourning ceremonies and also in the sheikh's acceptance of an obligation to protect the honour of the village women.

In the course of my field research, I needed to explore conceptual and social processes which held gender relations and collective identities together. My concern was to identify the words and actions used by women to indicate their acceptance and

conformity to the behavioural standards, that shaped their normal lives. By focusing upon topics that were repeated often and circulated widely in society, in this thesis, I highlight dominant forms of social code and obligations, which the women repeatedly mentioned as forces constraining their activities, and which created the dilemma for them between adherence to socially acceptable collective standards and fulfilling their personal wishes.

I took notes on or taped my interviews and conversations, when the topic was not directly related to personal matters or political attitudes. If personal secrets, or political opinions on ethnic relations or relations with their tribal sheikhs were expressed, I listened, only occasionally asking questions; later I would write down these conversations as accurately and as promptly as possible.

Certain difficulties I encountered during my field research have constrained the scope of my thesis. Firstly, I was hampered by the political sensitivity attached to the study of ethnic groups in Syria. Studying plural ethnic or religious communities made my relations with interview subjects more complicated, because of a tendency to suspect that I might have affiliations with other ethnic or religious groups. Secondly, the nature of the subject made it difficult for me to use formal procedures like structured interviews. Thirdly, my position as a single woman prevented me from investigating many aspects of both men's and women's activities outside the home.

Arabic words used in the text will be transliterated according to the system in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Adjustments to Qamishly dialect and Shawaya dialect will be made in accordance with local pronunciation. I chose fictitious names for Muslims referred to in this thesis from <u>Muslim Names</u> (al-Ja`fari, 1977). As for Christians, I chose pseudonyms from names which were popular among the Qamishly Christians.

Acknowledgements

The kindness and assistance of many individuals have facilitated the completion of this project. I am primarily indebted to Dr. Richard Tapper for his reading of successive drafts of the thesis. I also thank Dr. Nancy Lindisfarne, who provided me with invaluable suggestions as well as practical guidance during field research. I appreciate the contribution of Ms. Leila Jazayery and Ms. Cathy Savage, both of whom have helped me to edit the text. Mrs. Nahās deserves special mention for her highly constructive comments regarding the translation of Arabic terms into English. A special thanks also to Dr. Giro Orita and Prof. Khalid Maghūt whose support enabled to me to start field research in Syria.

I express my gratitude to the Institute for the History of Arab Science in the University of Aleppo for all the assistance and opportunities provided for me during field research. I am also grateful for the financial assistance received from the SOAS Additional Research Award for field work.

My greatest debt is to the Qamishly people for their support and friendship and particularly to the informants for their commitment and willingness to tell me about their lives. Finally, I am forever grateful to my parents for their continuous concern and support throughout this project.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: THE SETTING OF MY RESEARCH

In January 1989, I visited Qamishly, the biggest local town in the Jazirah region of the Syrian Arab Republic in order to look into the possibilities of carrying out field research on methods used by women to construct culturally acceptable norms of social behaviour. Fortunately, during this preliminary stage of my research, I made the acquaintance of several local families through Japanese businessmen working in Qamishly. Their mediation helped me to establish confidential relationships with local families and their friends later on in the course of my main field research. In June 1989 I began my stay in Qamishly.

During my time in Qamishly, I was often included in private conversations amongst local women through my network of friends. This participation gave me first-hand knowledge of the prevailing cultural concept that social contact between men and women, other than with one's kin or affines, was taboo, since it implied relations of a sexual nature. I was to find out that this concept and its implications, constitute the Jazirah women's most important concerns in everyday life. This concept of gender segregation is transposed into interpretations of women's everyday behaviour. These interpretations in turn lead to gossip, which may well damage a woman's social reputation. Although this perception is an inescapable motif in their everyday life, women's activities do not strictly abide by this abstract ideal of gender segregation. For example, many educated Qamishly women work as school teachers, alongside male head-teachers who are usually unrelated men (*gharāib*). The idea of gender segregation is therefore clearly not strictly adhered to in all work places. Similarly,

young single village women work as seasonal agricultural labourers also alongside unrelated men from different regions, while middle-aged village women regularly sell their dairy products in the Qamishly market in the company of non-kin men. When visiting kin and friends, women have many possibilities of meeting unrelated men. In such contexts, however, speaking to men is not regarded as shameful (`aib) conduct, or a violation of gender segregation.

During the first stage of my field research, I was perplexed by the variable interpretations of behaviour applied by women in different situations. For example, upon seeing friends of their husbands and brothers in the street, women would try and avoid them because it would be shameful for them to be seen speaking to these men on their own. However, when these women met these same men in the company of their husbands or brothers, they did not hesitate to openly socialise with them. Women interpret meanings of these meetings with unrelated men by referring to their conformity to socially acceptable behavioural standards. Through experience they come to understand how the norms of gender segregation are to be applied to particular situations, and which particular conditions are required to justify the socialising of men and women. I shall therefore first describe social norms that prohibit women from speaking to and meeting unrelated men. Then, I shall examine the social reality that accepts women working together or enjoying conversations with these men, on condition that they do not breach the norms of gender segregation.

In writing this thesis, I have used observations and insights I gained through my own encounters with these women, who shared their lives with me, in order to arrive at an understanding of their behaviour and their way of evaluating their own and other women's behaviour. My aim in this thesis is to describe the processes by which women create a collective identity. This collective identity means that women a) recognise their own behaviour as one which is conducted according to social norms, and b) affirm it as socially appropriate behaviour through the evaluation of their behaviour by others. This collective identity does not however seem to me to demand

rigid compliance, but rather is subject to pragmatic interpretation, aimed at covering up tensions and conflict within the community.

Given these premises, I want to answer three questions about women: a) how do Jazirah women acquire some freedom of behaviour while conforming to norms of gender segregation and social behavioural standards?; b) how do women code their words and actions to indicate their acceptance of and conformity to the socially acceptable behavioural standards and values that have been shaped both in local history and the contemporary political and economic situation?; c) how do women make personal and private decisions, given the restriction that they are obliged to adhere to socially acceptable behavioural standards and must seek the positive approbation of others? In replying to these questions, I shall describe the everyday conversations and actions in which they present themselves as socially acceptable women. This applies to both the Qamishly city women, and women from the nearby village of Dubāna.

1.1 Research Problems

During my field research, one of the most serious problems I regularly faced was that my interview subjects expected me to behave in accordance with their notions of what was acceptable behaviour for a young single woman, although they respected my position as a researcher seeking information. Most of them came to respect my intentions and even to take pride in telling me about their customs. One of my acquaintances, a Dubāna villager, whose village I had chosen for carrying out my main research, agreed to accommodate me and to assist me in my contacts with the administrative authorities. In return, I had to conform to what he considered to be acceptable behaviour for a single woman. Dubāna villagers were quite strict in enforcing cultural norms and in applying them to me.

As a student of anthropology, concerned to comprehend another culture and its order, it was imperative for me to adapt to the local culture, to learn the local modes of behaviour, to master culturally appropriate ways of speaking and behaving and particularly the social restrictions on their behaviour. In turn, the villagers related to me

by placing me into their socially prescribed categories. Ḏubāna villagers regarded me as their guest, friend, a researcher and a young woman. To outsiders, they introduced me as *kanna*. *Kanna*, derived from the verb of *kanna*, generally means daughter-in-law. *Kinna*, which is the word derived from the same root as *kanna*, means shelter or cover. When a person asks more influential people, kin or otherwise, to protect him/her from social conflict with others, and those people accept, they should then shelter him/her. In their understanding, I was a young woman coming into the village families from the outside, like a woman married into her husband's family, who needed their protection from outsiders. In time, their initial hospitality and graciousness as hosts, or hostesses and guardians gave way to a much closer relationship.

Ḏubāna villagers, especially male villagers, regard unrelated men (*gharāib*) as potential enemies and a sexual threat to their female kin, particularly to the virginity of single women, and thus to their honour (*sharaf*). Women, as a consequence, must be protected by their male kin, and their movements outside the village restricted. Because of my relationship with them as *kanna*, a woman protected by the villagers, they held themselves responsible for protecting me. They would insist therefore that I was not to drop in on friends, or go anywhere on my own while commuting between Ḏubāna and Qamishly, where I had rented a room. Whenever I went back from the village to Qamishly, either one of the village men would accompany me to my house, or they would choose a taxi-driver, be it a relative or friend, to take me. That I would submit myself to their protection was taken for granted by these villagers.

My conformity to their cultural norms of behaviour, concerns, and ways, did however pose restrictions on my freedom to move outside the village. In addition, while my anthropological and safety concerns obliged me to sustain this socially guided relationship of dependency and protection, clearly the more I agreed to abide by their notions of a single woman in Jazirah society, the fewer opportunities I got to move freely outside the village and speak to men who are seen as outsiders by the villagers. Consequently, these restrictions make it difficult for me to look into their lives as an outsider and observer.

Just like other village women inside the village, I was able to speak to village men without any restrictions. The men were happy to allow me to join in their conversations, or to answer my questions. Soon after starting my research, I noticed that I needed to know more about their relationships with the people outside the village, in order to fully understand their conversations. It was necessary for me to gain information about their kin, affines and friends, if I were to understand the ways of maintaining relationships between them and the talk about their activities and behaviour.

On one occasion the son of a religious sheikh was getting married. I was asked by several of both the male and female villagers to join them in attending the wedding reception. I accepted gladly, as this was one of the rare occasions on which the villagers allowed me entry into their social network outside the village. On the day of the wedding, many village girls helped in cooking the meal for the guests, while the young men arranged the site for the reception. On ceremonial occasions the work is usually shared by close kin and neighbours. I asked many Dubāna villagers about their relationship with the sheikh. Their answers were almost all the same: the sheikh belonged to the Ṭai tribal confederation, to which most of the Dubāna villagers belonged, but was not their kin; they respected the sheikh because of his religious knowledge and ability. Given the non-kin nature of the relationship, I could not understand why the villagers offered their help to the sheikh's family.

One month after the wedding, an old couple in Dubāna asked me to join them on a visit to the sheikh's household. Observing the behaviour of the couple towards the members of the sheikh's household, I realised that their relationship was similar to that between other commoner villagers in Dubāna and the Ṭai paramount tribal sheikh. Even though the couple were visitors, the husband gave one of the sheikh's sons a lift, while the wife helped with the cooking and looked after the sheikh's grandchildren. These services indicated relations between inferiors and superiors; guests are never treated in this manner in relationships between equals. Although Dubāna villagers, including this couple, insisted that the relationship between them and the sheikh was

not that of unequals, and that it was customary to help close neighbours and friends, their behaviour clearly indicated difference in social status between them. Even this indication of status difference, the villagers using the cultural notion of mutual help to express their equality, interested me. Later on, as my field work progressed, I realised that this notion of mutual help was used as an important device by the commoner tribal members to deny status difference between themselves and the sheikh. They replaced the meaning of their behaviour by indicating the status difference as social exchange between equal individuals.

On this occasion, one of the sheikh's daughters gave me a bottle of perfume as a present. In Jazirah society, the exchange of gifts is a means of initiating a new personal relationship. In terms of my research, it seemed to me that constituting close relations with the sheikh's household members might provide me with opportunities to understand their relationship with the Dubāna villagers. Ten days after this first visit, I made a return visit to the daughter on my own, with a wedding present for her as she was going to marry a man in Saudi Arabia. However, my sudden visit obviously embarrassed the daughter and the other female members of the sheikh's household, and I was not welcomed as a guest on this occasion. The Dubāna villagers had warned me not to visit people on my own, even acquaintances. Even though I explained to them the purpose of my visit, they were unable to understand my behaviour. I, for my part, was disappointed by the cold response of the sheikh's household to my visit, and even more by the villagers' response. In re-examining the situation, I understood that I had been allowed to attend the wedding reception as one of the village single women, i.e. in the company of responsible male kin, and was thus only allowed to visit the sheikh's household in accordance with the same norms as other single women in Dubāna.

The villagers had judged my behaviour by applying to it cultural norms which they applied to their own female relatives. Although I recognised this as their way of preserving their identity, it left me with no choice but to adhere to the behavioural norms for single women. It was vital that I show my respect for them and their customs, in order to gain the trust and friendship of the villagers. This well-defined

position of single women guided me in carrying out my obligations and responsibilities to, and dependence on, my host villagers, especially in the context of my activities outside the village. This experience also clearly demonstrated to me that a woman's behaviour was interpreted in the context of whether or not it fulfilled their social obligations.

The focus of my study became clearer through my participation in the complex relationships which developed between the villagers and me. Their aim was to control my behaviour outside the village and to fulfil their obligations to their *kanna*. Even though their hospitality and kindness were genuine, I often found it difficult to accept the social constraints upon my behaviour and the disregard for my own feelings. My own first-hand experience of the social obligations imposed for the sake of maintaining good relationships, brought me face to face with the question of how the village women - whose activities were more restricted than mine - handled everyday interactions without deviating from these social obligations, while at the same time limiting the effect of these social constraints and being able to express themselves as individuals.

In order to solve this problem I spent a large portion of my time building close relationships with the village women. I helped with their domestic chores and agricultural labour in the fields and joined them on their visits to Qamishly where they went to sell their dairy products. When they were free, I also spent time with individual women alone. I tried to get close to them, in order to encourage the women to confide in me and to discuss their perception of the dominant social values and obligations. They sometimes told me about their dilemma of acquiring social esteem as modest and obedient women and yet achieving their own wishes which may be inconsistent to these standards. In this process of getting to know these women and the way in which they identified their activities as socially acceptable, I came to the gradual realisation that women were constantly striving to maintain their social position by indicating their acceptance of and conformity to the social values and obligations. They also tried to accomplish their own wishes in socially acceptable ways, without damaging their social reputation.

Conversations among close friends contained expressions of how their self-esteem is affected by the social evaluation of their behaviour by others. There are two conventional expressions used for the anxiety that self-esteem may be lost by others (*nās*) labelling their behaviour as inconsistent to socially acceptable behavioural standards: 'how do others (*nās*) understand my behaviour?'; or 'if I do not do such and such, others may think that I do not know the way of this world (*dunya*)'. Women are therefore anxious about the possibility of their behaviour being judged as contravening the moral code by other people (*nās*) with whom they share a common cultural background. *Dunya*, in this context, refers to the social ideas of obligations and responsibilities to others necessary for maintaining one's social position and good reputation, and the social reality in which one's behaviour is subject to pragmatic interpretations by others who apply these ideas in different ways. A woman should learn the order, or *dunya* through her life experience. A woman interprets her behaviour from the point of whether or not it conforms to these ideas. However, a woman is often afraid that others who interpret behaviour in different ways in different contexts, can label her as *dāt*, a person who has base characteristics, or does not know *dunya*.

In this sphere, individual women strive to portray themselves as conforming to the general ideals of how women must be: modest, self-controlled, always denying their sexual desire and obedient to the social order. Although women seek conformity to prevailing social values, it is not always derived from their own inner wishes to be moral or good. Eickelman speaks of propriety: "the locus of propriety is not so much the inner moral consciousness of a person as his [her] public comportment with respect to those with whom he [she] has regular face-to-face relations" (1976: 138). Among Jazirah women, modesty and the obedience to the social order in the public sphere are essential in order to receive social approval. Social approval, however, is required not only for the fulfilment of their obligations to others, but also for self-respect and pride in conforming to the acceptable moral standard.

Fear of losing one's self-esteem, derived from anxiety that women may be judged by others as ignorant of *dunya*, increases when they are caught in a dilemma between acting morally and accomplishing their wishes. Women often seek the sympathy and help of their close friends who will understand their dilemma and help them restore their self-confidence by criticising others' judgement of her behaviour. The acknowledgement of their behaviour by their friends sets them at ease, because women's inner anxiety is never separated from others' evaluation imposed on their behaviour. Their confidence to themselves is constituted in, and through, social relations in which their behaviour can be acknowledged.

I shall investigate personal conversations and narratives which contain judgements as to whether or not behaviour conducted by women fulfils social obligations and their roles. The tales related by these women are not simply descriptions of personal experiences. The theoretical concern underlying the analysis of women's personal activities, is that they are always interpreted with reference to social obligations which women must fulfil in order to establish their social position in relation to others. When women talk about their personal experiences, using evocative words such as obligation (*ijbār*), responsibility (*maswūliya*), and this world (*dunya*), they are in effect linking their experiences to prevailing norms of social duty. When women talk about their own behaviour and that of other women, they interpret it with reference to their relations to others, categorised such as father-daughter or brother-sister relations, and relations between patrilateral parallel cousins, neighbours and friends, all of which accompany specific obligations between them.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Through my participation in the life of Ḍubāna villagers, the subject matter of my research gradually becomes clear. My investigation of women's personal experiences will focus on the social obligations which must be fulfilled between individuals

involved in certain relations, which thereby determine women's actions and so lead to their individuality being subordinated.

As a Japanese, my experience makes it easy for me to understand the concept that identity might be shaped by constructing social relations based on fulfilling obligations to others. Japanese identity is constructed by social relations between self and others in this world (*seken*) which includes norms of responsibilities and obligations to others, and the social reality which emerges from their interactions based on these norms. Iijima (1989: 55-6) discusses meanings of Japanese '*hito* ' : it means generally people in the world (*seken*), and also the social order which organises human relations; it indicates others and also means self. This understanding of relations between this world, self and others is that Japanese '*hito*' exists in the world of relations between the self and others. Japanese self is defined in the world of relationship to others. Mori (1976: 26-7) mentions the lack of individuality amongst the Japanese people, where individual experience cannot be distinguished from others' experience. According to him, moral values, for example honesty and innocence, which are the most important ideals for Japanese, are understood by the Japanese in relation to others, and without the existence of these others, honesty and innocence do not have meaning for them (Mori, 1976: 66-7). Mori (ibid.: 81) further discusses Japanese cognition of the self: they are not autonomous individuals in the Western sense, and their self consciousness has been developed by fulfilling roles and responsibilities to 'you', the 'other', for example, husband/wife, children, company staff and so on; one cannot decide his/her own behaviour without considering how 'you' interpret it. He/she is expected to react to 'you' in the same way as 'you' expect him/her to react to 'you'. The boundary between 'I', the first person and 'you', the second person, becomes ambiguous in Japanese social relations.

I, as a Japanese, empirically understand the social relations which emerge in negotiation with others and *dunya* in Jazirah society, in terms of what I have experienced in finding myself in my responsibility to 'you' and *seken*. To observe these proprieties is to respect relations between 'you' and 'me'. Common aspects

between my Japanese self and that of people in Jazirah are that in both cases the 'self' is restricted by social relations, especially obligations to others and the world, including the order and people who constitute it.

The difference between the 'Japanese self' and the 'self' in Jazirah is that in Jazirah individual experience is differentiated from that of others, and individual autonomy is an ideal which is sought. Lack of individuality in Jazirah society is largely a result of social restrictions, to which individuals think they must adhere. Their 'self' is achieved through the identification of oneself by fulfilling social obligations to others. During my field research, one question often arose: although women overtly express themselves and claim their right to do so, why do they lack individuality and always fear the loss of self-esteem?

People in Jazirah had little knowledge about Japan; other than the manufacturers of Japanese audio systems and cars sold to the Syrian market, and what they had heard of the A-bombed city of Hiroshima. They knew little however, about Japanese custom, religion and personality. My religious affiliation was one of their most important concerns. Thanks to my Japanese origin, I could tell them that I was Buddhist, even though I was not religious. My religious affiliation helped me to keep myself out of the regional framework of opposition between Muslims and Christians. Some of Dubāna villagers, who were Muslims, said to me, "if you were Christian, we would not have accepted you". Neither Muslim villagers or Qamishly Christians were able to attribute to me any base dispositions which they attributed to their religious rivals when asserting their own superiority.

People in Jazirah tried to understand me as a Japanese and gave me stereotyped questions. They always asked me about Japanese attitudes to the fulfilling of obligations to kin, and the constraints on women's activities. Typical questions were: a) "we visit our relatives regularly. It is our obligation (*ijbār*). In the West they ignore the value of these relations. How about in Japan?"; b) "women in Europe have little concern for family ties. They live apart from their parents when they grow up. Unmarried women go out alone. How do Japanese women behave?"

They only refer to norms which are the most important for them in constituting social relations and achieving honour (*sharaf*). They judged the behaviour of Japanese and Westerners from the point of their own social standards. On the basis of my answers, they concluded that the Japanese were better than Westerners. They found that the Japanese were more confined by social relations through responsibilities and obligations to others, than Westerners. Their understanding of the Japanese, including me, relayed to me the most important factors for them in shaping their identity.

My Japanese experience of constituting relations between the self and others, and their understanding of me as a Japanese, brought an important perspective to bear on my study. White (1992: 39) argues that the weight of individual-centred analysis has created a significant theoretical problem, aggravated by the persistent dualism in Western thinking on the self and society: private/public, inner/outer, emotion/reason, and individual/society. These contrasts are inevitably reflected in anthropological discussion on the person and self. Since Mauss (1985) elaborated cultural conceptions of social actors as the evolving unity of human beings' self awareness, and the idea of person as a social concept compounded by judicial rights and moral responsibilities, according to Kirkpatrick and White (1985:10), many anthropological analyses leave the person and self as opposed, and postulate Western notions of person in the evolutionary sense, without paying attention to Mauss's different definitions of the self and person in different cultures and at different historical periods.

The self in Jazirah society is acquired in two contradictory ways: enhancement of the concept of obligations which ensure their own and their family's honour and positions in society, and enhancement of an individualism which leads to competition between individuals. The latter is encouraged by gossip about the shameful character and behaviour of others in order to enhance the image of oneself. An individual feels that his/her behaviour is always evaluated by others, who thereby judge the conformity of their behaviour to the accepted standards, and his/her behaviour must therefore be recognised by them. Through this mutuality, one confirms an inherent social link between his/her self and others, and so acquires self-respect. An individual can

therefore only measure him/herself by an evaluation of his/her vice and virtue by others. Awareness of his/her own behaviour as evaluated by others results in the tendency to state more scrupulously his/her attachment to the behavioural standards. At the same time, an individual must make his/her own decisions on the basis of enhancing his/her own virtue and good characteristics in comparison to others. In this sense, an individual constitutes a figure of autonomous self only in opposition to others. Moral values, for example, honour, generosity and hospitality which are the most important ideals for Jazirah people, underline the autonomy and independence of individuals vis-`a-vis others. These personal virtues are not achieved by a moral consciousness but are rather reflected in the obligations undertaken in their relationship with others.

Whilst the Western notion of the self is characterised by psychological consciousness, focusing primarily on the reflective self-awareness of the subject (White, 1992: 30-1), the self as the basic category of inner consciousness is developed as a being possessing ideology and moral value, that is, a person. For example, Dumont (1985: 94) develops his discussion based on such Western notions of the person-self opposition and suggests an ideological dichotomy between individualistic Western ideology and holistic Indian ideology in which society as a whole is the focus of value. Dumont postulates the Western notion of individualism to understand the Indian individual. Anthropological discussions of how the individual and society are interconnected have been deployed by maintaining the distinction between the individual and person (e.g.: Fortes, 1973).

Yet, theoretical assumptions, framed in dichotomous terms such as individual/collective, self/the world, hinder us in our examination of culturally constructed individuals which are created in everyday interactions between self and others. In Jazirah society, an individual makes his/her own decisions in his/her own interests which reveal a sense of personal autonomy as well as in an intense concern for conformity of his/her behaviour to social standards. Through these contradictory ways of self-presentation, self and personal values are created.

This way of assessing behaviour by natives should be explored. In this thesis, understanding behaviour in its relation to the notions of gender segregation poses one of the most important concerns. Gender segregation is found more or less everywhere in the Middle East; it affects decisions over one's behaviour and its interpretation as regards one's social position. As Kirkpatrick and White noted, "even if contextual bases of affect are universally recognised, we doubt if these are the sole means for constructing persons' status in any culture" (1985: 6). We should direct ethnography toward indigenous understandings and practices. This attitude makes it possible for us to investigate actions and emotional experiences which provide their own way of understanding the social norms. Even though gender segregation and the protection of female sexual virtue and the underlying the concepts of honour and shame, may appear in similar ways in different societies, we cannot depend on uniform interpretations. Ethnography should explicate the behavioural significance in terms of "a set of problems of social relationship or existential meaning that cultural systems often appear to present in emotional terms" (Lutz and White, 1986: 427).

Abu-Lughod and Lutz do not agree with the analytical approach taken by most studies about emotions dependent on psychological processes that predicate people's experiences and behaviour upon universal psychological processes (1990: 2). From early culture and personality studies about the individual, emotion and behaviour are often subsumed under the concept of personality (e.g.: Benedict, 1967; Mead, 1963). The concept of personality is traditionally an explanatory concept that responds to cross-cultural analysis and theories about social behaviour (cf. Spiro: 1984). [1] Caughey (1980: 175) suggests, that the problem of personality analyses within Western tradition is compounded in cross-cultural analyses: it is apparent that much of the analysis of cultural differences in relation to personality simply relies upon the perspective of equating the local label with an English gloss. "This tendency is linked to the assumption · · · that a single universal mode of personality appraisal underlies different ethnopsychologies" (Caughey, ibid.: 175). The concept of personality found

in the Western tradition of research refers to individual behaviour and experience within the assumption that individuals are the focus of organisation in behaviour. Arguments for the behavioural validity of different cultures, which depend on this assumption, apply this Western notion of autonomous individual to the interpretation of behaviour in other cultures. In Jazirah, behavioural validity is based on one's relationship to others and *dunya*, from which the individuals acquires self-esteem. The Western notion of the autonomous individual seems not to be appropriate to analysing the experience and behaviour of people in Jazirah.

Recent interpretive approaches to emotions attempt to seek connections between social ideas and personal consciousness which lead people to particular behaviour constituting social relations (e.g.: Abu-Lughod, 1986; Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990; Rosald, 1984; White, 1991). This new trend rests on the view that the meaning of emotional words in non- Western societies should not be simply analysed on the basis of Western theories of emotion, and that English terms must not be employed as universal labels for describing motivational feelings without regard for indigenous perceptions of moral and social reality. This attention to the interpretation of emotions, with which indigenous concepts and practices are associated, presents an ethnography in contradiction to ethnographic models of emotion as defined in Western thought. For example, Errington and Gewertz's study of the Chambri in Papua New Guinea (1987) suggests:

> "One of the main reasons, in our view, that Mead failed properly to understand the Chambri as persons - and thus misunderstood the relationship between Chambri men and women and the interests and strategies of each - is that she viewed them in terms of a culturally alien and Western model. Following this model, she saw them as subjectivities which had developed as a result of emotionally formative experiences; she did not see them as repositories of social relationships" (ibid.: 40).

Errington and Gewertz re-examine Mead's field-notes about a perplexing dispute over a disgruntled wife (ibid.: 71-75). They argue that Mead understood the anger of the male participants in the dispute from the viewpoint of adultery. Errington and Gewertz argue that Mead's focus is too narrow, and that they need to look at the Chambri view of the

relationship between husband and wife, in order to understand the dispute as part of the continuing political struggle between big men.

Even though emotion is universal, it should be seen as exerting its own force in social relations and in directing practical actions. The social use of emotion enables the investigation of social reality which itself is constituted by referring to socially available ideas for defining relationships.

When I first began to work in Qamishly and Ḏubāna, I anticipated the significance of the use of the communal 'we'. This usage does not only indicate the existence of a boundary between co-members and excludes others, but also forms words and actions which indicate the actors' social position in relation to others. One of the most effective means for analysing the communal selfhood in those relations, is to investigate narratives of self-presentation in which individual words and actions are interpreted from the point of whether or not they fulfil the social obligations which the woman is expected to carry out in her relation to the community. Emotion about gender segregation and female sexual virtue expressed in narratives helps us find the key to understanding the social reality that women are in a dilemma over accepting the obligation of adhering to these ideas and the dissatisfaction of accepting social constraints which force them to conform to these ideas.

In Jazirah society, extra-marital relationships are strictly forbidden. This prohibition is strongly supported by notions of family honour (sharaf). If an extra-marital relationship is discovered by the woman's kin or any one else, her male kin are obliged to kill or punish both her and her lover in order to regain lost honour, caused by their loss of control over their female kin's sexual acts. Affairs are understood as disgracing the women's family honour. Two primary dimensions of indigenous conceptualisation emerge from the symbolic meanings of prohibited love: a) men's responsibility (maswūliya) to their female kin to prevent them from sexual offence by unrelated men, along with their right (ḥaq) of control over their women's activities; b) shame ('aib), brought on to women's family by their contacts with unrelated men, and the dishonour ('ār) caused by women's involvement in illicit sexual affairs, which

damage the honour (*sharaf*) of their male kin and family. These stereotyped understandings constitute conceptualised modes used to stop individuals from engaging in extra-marital affairs.

Both men and women say that 'we' should fulfil 'our' duties (*wājibāt*) by accepting arranged marriages negotiated and decided between the bride and bride-groom's families. In terms of their spouses, men have more opportunities to choose their women candidates, and to ask for marriage to specific members of their family or friends. Women are more restricted in expressing their preferences. Although they can voice their opinion against a particular marriage arrangement to their family, they are not allowed to ask for marriage to any particular man; this is considered shameful (*'aib*).

For both men and women it is not possible to realise marriage with persons who are from different ethnic, or sectarian groups and classes. Jazirah society is composed of mainly three ethnic or sectarian groups: Christian, Shawaya[2] and Kurd. As a principle, each group is endogamous, but commonality of religion sometimes makes it possible to arrange inter-group marriage, in cases where the economic and social status between the two families is similar. Marriages are thus sometimes arranged between the Shawaya and Kurds, or between local and foreign Christians who emigrated abroad and seek spouses from their home land through relatives and friends.

Young men and women sometimes tell their close friends about their dream of communicating with a person about whom they fantasise, but with whom they have no existing relationship. They describe their romance as the ardour of love but with respect for an individual (*hubb* or *'ishq*). This fantasy of love is understood by both men and women as the most beautiful expression of feeling and is not restricted by social obligations. This tie between a man and woman is different from the ties between family members who love (*hubb*) each other. Love within a family is realised on the basis of mutual care and responsibility for protecting the family honour. In order to maintain a positive social reputation they are obliged to fulfil certain duties. A woman must keep her sexual virtue and the men in her family must protect it for the

sake of their family honour. Fulfilment of these mutual duties is undertaken as part of the love and mutual care between family members. Hence, a woman is not allowed to pursue romance.

Another obstacle to seeking romance is the norm of preferential marriage between close kin. Both men and women understand that marriage between patrilateral parallel cousins in a classificatory sense should be arranged, and that a male cousin has primary right over his female cousin for marriage. This is not only in theory, it is often carried out. In this respect, both men and women from all the ethnic or sectarian groups feel that: "'our freedom of choice in selecting spouses is restricted, because of marriage regulations".

The public-private space configuration also prevents a woman from communicating her feeling of love towards a man about whom she fantasies. Women's behaviour in the context of activities outside the home, that is, in the public arena, becomes the object of commentary which evaluates their actions and reformulates their meaning in terms of whether or not they violate norms of gender segregation. Illicit relationships signal the rejection of the mutual dependence between female and male kin in the context of family honour. Even if a woman does not engage in an actual affair and only has feelings of love for a man, any suggestive behaviour on her part leaves others free to interpret her actions as a violation of the norms. The public-private space configuration between men and women thereby becomes the procedural device used to confine women's actions.

This schema, confining romance between men and women, "is [a] cognitive structure through which interpretations about the world are made" (D'Andrade, 1992: 52). This schema determines the interpretation of one's behaviour both by oneself and others' peers, even though only certain elements of this schema may be used at any one time in a particular context. In reality, these interpretations can be constructed by taking into consideration various political, economic and historical elements. Social reality therefore does not always reflect the total representation of this social schema [3].

Examples of the women's cognition of love and gender segregation, as expressed in narratives and conversations, reveal their cultural understandings, and the social situations in which emotional experience and thought are created. As a concept, love is an ideal in which the individual's autonomy, which is the most important value, is respected. Women use romance to find ideal relationships between themselves and others, in which their autonomy and independence are not restricted for the sake of protecting their family honour. However, in reality, various social responsibilities and obligations for protecting family honour and keeping a good reputation, actually prevent women from seeking romance. Moreover, since a woman's behaviour associated with seeking romance is interpreted by others as a evidence of a personal desire (*raghba*) for sexual attraction, a woman is afraid to be labelled as such a woman and risk losing her social position; she may be divorced by her husband for the sake of protecting his honour; if she is still single, she may not have opportunity of a marriage proposal.

Despite the social constraints imposed on women, romance becomes a topic of conversations between close friends and the means of expressing their resistance to the collective view which prevents freedom of choice in selecting partners. The stories of romance contain two contradictory notions, that is, restrictions on the male-female relationship, and individual autonomy. The following is an example of women's emotional reaction to love and of their understanding of prohibited relationships.

Muhja, a single Shawaya woman and a friend of mine, was preparing for lunch with her grandfather's widow, with whom she was intimate. The widow said with a smile, as if she was talking to herself; "Muhja will marry a man in Saudi Arabia". I was surprised because I had not heard anything about her marriage from Muhja, her family or neighbours. I asked Muhja later in private whether or not she would be marrying in the near future. She told me that a man who was going to return from Saudi Arabia was to visit her family and ask her father for her hand in marriage. A few months later in another conversation I was to find out the truth about her love.

Muhja: "when I was in elementary school, my classes were in the morning. When I was leaving school, the man who is now in Saudi Arabia would

come to teach in the afternoon classes. I therefore saw him everyday. When I first met him, he was still a university student. He is handsome and I find him very attractive. When I met him a month ago, he told me that he was going to go to Saudi Arabia for a while. He has not come back yet."
Noriko: "will he visit your family for greetings after coming back?"
Muhja: "no, it is impossible, because he is not our relative, nor a friend of my father. The only way for me to talk to him is in Qamishly, in the street, where I must pretend to have met him spontaneously. Noriko, we will go shopping together after he comes back."

The expression by Muhja of her love cannot be separated from social obligations and constraints. Muhja and her grandfather's widow respected their family honour and were aware of preferential marriage between close kin. These notions prevented Muhja from realising her love to the unrelated man in the form of marriage. Muhja recognised that her patrilateral parallel cousin wanted to marry her, and refusing this marriage would be difficult, if her family agreed with the marriage. However, in their conversation, the two women temporarily removed themselves from these constraints and enjoyed relative freedom by talking about Muhja's love. Muhja dreamed of marrying the man whom she loved, and of meeting with him, even though she knew it might be difficult because of gender segregation. Her expression of love was affected by the social restrictions imposed by marriage regulations and gender segregation to which she adheres, in order to preserve status and carry out respective roles. Her personal talk therefore must not be examined by separating it from the social representations of prohibited relationships and family honour. Women's emotional expression of love is not congruent to the behaviour which respects family honour and marriage regulations. It would therefore be shameful for her to demonstrate her love for the man about whom she fantasised, such as by meeting with him, for fear of being gossiped about as a woman who has a strong sexual appetite and who is destroying her family honour. Women are caught in a dilemma between these social constraints, and the tension caused by these constraints. Their recognition of political forces that constrain and direct their actions, expressed as obligations and responsibilities in their social roles, is contrasted to their private views about love, in which they idealise being

liberated from these social constraints. Talking about love would release them from these social constraints and signal resistance to institutions and political forces which prevent them from exercising their autonomy in selecting a spouse.

In this thesis, I shall look particularly for ways in which power relations determine what women can, cannot, or must do, by taking into consideration their roles and status. In order to analyse social forces imposed on women and their response to it, I shall examine events which depict this dilemma between the fulfilment of social obligations and the desire to resist.

One of the most influential works on power relations was written by Foucault (1972), who shows that power relations are held within discourses. Foucault defines 'discourse' as a) a practice that systematically forms the objects of which the subject speak (ibid.: 49): b) a discourse is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions for existence can be defined (ibid.: 117); and further, a group of relations between statements which make up a discourse belong to a single system of formation, that is, 'discursive formation'. Discursive formation governs the division of statements, the degree to which they depend upon one another, the way in which they interlock or exclude one another, the transformation that they undergo, and the play of their location (ibid.: 33-4, 107). Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990: 9-10) mention that Foucault's contribution to discourse analysis is to suggest a concern with texts, talk and all sorts of other social practices, as productive of experience and constitutive of the social realities, which are not only informed by social ideas and values, but also serve as idioms for communicating performance in a field of social activity. Foucault (1972: 98, 102-3, 105-6, 115, 119) uses the concept of discourse to express his rejection of the distinction between social ideas and social practices, and to postulate that social actors not only operate representative meanings of social ideas for an object, but also elaborate them through discursive formation.

Foucault's analysis of power relations provides ways of thinking about power which are framed in the context of experiences that involve the whole person and are shaped by social interaction. "Systems of power bring forth different types of

knowledge which, in turn, produce effects in bodies of social agents that serve to reinforce the original power formation" (McNay, 1992: 148). Foucault's formulation of the power/knowledge nexus is that "power and knowledge directly imply one another; ··· there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (1979: 27).

Foucault emphasises heavily a primacy of fundamental rules that define the discursive space in which the speaking subject exists (see Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 52). As a result, he defines that the processes through which hegemonic social relations are maintained, exemplify images of the physical inscription of power upon the subject. This tendency is apparent in Foucault's historical studies (1978:138), where the disciplinary method is seen as producing "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile bodies'" (McNay, 1992: 40), in which "the body presents no material resistance to the operation of power" (McNay, ibid.: 40). Foucault enables us to grasp how social ideas, as cultural products, are reproduced in individuals in the form of embodied experiences.

In his theoretical discourse, since individuals assess their own behaviour in relation to social discourse, the discourse is incorporated into behaviour of the self. 'Discourse' in recent anthropological writings, has become one of the most popular terms, often used in a much wider sense than that used by Foucault. The ambiguities of the concept of discourse, as Foucault himself noted (1972: 80), allow a wider usage, which cuts across current research on social schemata, emotions and relations between social knowledge and power as exerted in social life. The discourse approach, as social theory, directs ethnographies toward "social practices as productive of experience and constitutive of the realities in which we live and the truths with which we work" (Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990: 9-10). This approach also concerns "relations among cognitive, communicative, and socio-institutional forces rather than discrete "concepts" or "symbols"" (White, 1992: 38-9). The discourse-oriented approach offers a more complex view of contested, multiple and shifting relations between practices and

cultural knowledge. This approach also considers social activities and emotional narratives in which cultural values and concepts exert their force in social relations, and which, as constituting social reality, use these values and concepts for understanding, reformulating and transforming meanings of one's social activities. I shall use the term 'discourse' to refer to complex statements and their justified pattern of common usage repeated by numerous people in Jazirah in everyday life. Women in Jazirah apply these patterns of complex statements for communicating and justifying the meanings of their behaviour, and as devices which indicate their behaviour adherent to institutionalised social obligations.

1.3   Writing Method

Experiences during my field research, interactions with Dubāna villagers and Qamishly inhabitants, as well as the politics involved, recast my whole involvement with this subject, as mentioned earlier in this Introduction. My participation was shaped by particular dialogues between myself and my Qamishly friends and Dubāna villagers, and influenced by the dynamics of our relationships. In time, participation as an observer became socially limited, while as an audience and a fellow actor, my involvement in their activities increased.

From the theoretical stand-point, the problematic relationship between participation and observation in ethnography has produced concern over the methodologies appropriate to the study of everyday experiences. Recent studies of interactions turn the study of social identity into discursive processes, in which actors give meanings to their actions with reference to conceptual and institutional forces, where social reality constructed through their activities is not merely represented by the social institutions and rules. One direction of this individual-centred study is to study processes in which socially constructed and validated cultural meanings are internalised in individuals (e.g.: Kondo, 1990). My approach to the study of social identity focuses on the analysis of interpersonal relationships. The relationship between cognitive

processes, through which social behaviour and narratives are understood and social activities through which these processes are constituted, contains both the internalisation and externalisation of cultural meanings which create social interactions.

I have therefore chosen to examine a number of communicative ways, such as casual talk, private conversation, and narratives of historical stories. In their talks they give meanings to their words and actions with reference to conceptual and institutional forces and sometimes resist these collective forces which constrain their behaviour. Jazirah women try to establish their social position through their behaviour, to which they give a meaning by conforming to socially acceptable collective behavioural standards. While they constitute their identity in this way, they oppose the social constraints which force them to behave according to these behavioural standards. Being in a dilemma between these social constraints and the desire to resist, how do Jazirah women free themselves from the dilemma?

One example can be found amongst village women working in the agricultural fields of their tribal sheikh. Considering the historical hierarchical relationship between the tribal sheikh and the commoner tribal members as slavery working for the sheikh, these women occupy a subordinate position to the sheikh. However, the historical narrative of how their economic and political relationship with the sheikh has changed since they acquired independent income from various sources, expresses their self-awareness in defining themselves as equal to the sheikh. Alliance between tribal members and acceptance of the sheikh's political influence, in the form of respecting his honour, make it possible for these commoner tribal members to oblige the sheikh to accept the role of a guarantor for protecting these women from outsiders. Thus these women insist that they work in his fields, not because of being obliged to work as slave labourers, but because of his guarantee to protect them from sexual assault by outsiders during the work. Fidelity of the sheikh to his tribal members in conducting his role as a guarantor and his political influence that no one trespasses his authority over his labourers, lead them to an alliance with the sheikh based on the norms of tribal solidarity. Women's reputation and their family honour are not damaged by working

outside the home, because of the sheikh's guarantee. This egalitarian discourse makes the women free from a slavery position to the sheikh and also brings them an opportunity to have income. This discourse however, obliges them to be dependent on male guarantees to protect their social reputation about sexual virtue.

Throughout this thesis, I attempt to examine dialogues and events as they occurred amongst people I knew, and to describe the collective understanding of social obligations, the desire to resist it and the ways of resolving the dilemma between the two. These social and cognitive processes are important because they give meaning to the words and actions that shaped their everyday lives.

*   *   *

Throughout this thesis, I use Christian, Shawaya and Kurd as categories defining my units of study [4]. Various markers differentiating these ethnic or sectarian groups will be discussed in Chapter 2 and 3. Here, I shall explain the reason why I use these ethnic, or sectarian differences as markers to define my unit of study according to local expressions.

It is common understanding between these three groups that men from different ethnic or sectarian groups, who are defined as unrelated men, or outsiders, *gharāib*, are potential threats to the sexual honour of women other than from their own group. Indigenous experiences articulate these groups which are affected by values of family honour derived from the need to protect female sexual virtue. Women take pride in not placing themselves as threats to their family honour. Men pride themselves on imposing confinement on the movement and activities of women in their family and having the authority to restrict their women's activities outside the home. These self-estimations require acknowledgement of these claims by the society (cf. Wikan, 1982: 141). What women are most afraid of is gossip which can ruin their reputation and that of the men in their family, and which can also undermine self-esteem. If others (*nās*) in society gossip about a woman who is regarded as having, or intending to have sexual liaison, her male kin lose honour, because they failed to control women's behaviour in their family.

By considering how both men and women fear being gossiped about, I realise that social constraints imposed on women's activities are related to creating boundaries between ethnic or sectarian groups and protecting family honour. Norms of solidarity between insiders of the group against offences to female sexual virtue and to their family honour by other groups create group distinction. These social values demarcating ethnic or sectarian groups, shared in common between these three groups, are put to use in order to constitute their identities vis-à-vis outsiders. Since protection of female sexual virtue and revenge against violation enhance group solidarity and the consciousness of group affiliation against offenders, women's actions, such as speaking to and meeting unrelated outsiders, are identified with sexual acts against the group interest. Social restrictions imposed on women's activities are created in order to identify themselves as members of the group and also to create boundaries between Shawaya, Kurds and Christians.

In chapter 2, I begin by broadly outlining the political, economic, and historical situation in Jazirah, then go on to outline the population composition of Qamishly, and finally analyse the various dimensions of constituting social boundaries between the Shawaya, Kurds and Christians, between town and country and between big landlords and poor peasants.

Chapter 3 focuses on the most prominent dimension of the conflict between Kurds and Christians in Qamishly history; and on the assault on women from other social categories as representative of group hostility. This dimension provides me with the possibility of introducing the recurring theme of sexual assault on female outsiders which creates conflict between the Shawaya, Kurds and Christians. Although assault on female sexual virtue and stories of prohibited relationship between a man and woman from different groups are depicted as group conflicts, actual matters related to female sexual virtue are regarded as family matters, on which no one must intervene out of respect for the family's autonomy. No one has direct awareness of how others evaluate one's behaviour. Women therefore need to censor their behaviour themselves in order to make sure they are not jeopardising their good reputation.

In chapter 4, I shall examine the women's inner conflict in achieving individual wishes. Activities outside the home offer great possibilities for women of being suspected of involvement in illicit relationships which threaten male authority over them. Since women need to present themselves as chaste and obedient, women confine themselves to being involved in activities permitted by their male guardians, out of fear of the social evaluations imposed on their behaviour. This confinement creates the dilemma for women between adherence to socially acceptable behaviour and determining their own activities. Women seek liberation from the social restrictions in the idea of love between a man and a woman, which is based on mutual respect for personal values, rather than social status and obligations. However, in seeking romance, they risk being evaluated by others as someone who possesses a strong sexual appetite, if their liaison is discovered. Women strive to resolve the gap between acquiring social acknowledgement for their behaviour, and liberating themselves from the social constraints.

Chapter 5 juxtaposes different accounts of the relations between the Ṭai tribal sheikh and his commoner tribal members. Commoner tribal members seek equal status to the sheikhs on the basis of tribal structure on the one hand, while on the other hand, they are still tied to practices enforcing their subordinate position to the sheikh. In this ambivalent situation, commoner tribal members seek discourses to resolve status differences between themselves and the sheikh by consenting to his political authority on the basis of honour. I shall discuss discourses of ceremonial exchanges between the commoners and the sheikh, and women's agricultural labour for the sheikh. In both discourses the gender roles bear importance in asserting the commoners' equality with the sheikh. These discursive formations allow them to transform their subordinate position to the sheikh. However, their assertion of equality entwines them and their activities more closely in the constraints which force them to adhere to their roles.

Chapter 6 examines the interpretation of women's activities outside the home. The contribution of village women's income from animal rearing and dairy production to the household economy does not only provide a cash income to the households, but

also constitutes an ideological basis for the assertion of their independence from the tribal sheikh. Local response to village women's economic activities, admits the need for these activities to be acknowledged by men, because contact with unrelated men is inevitable in these activities. The women's own definition of their participation in these activities is linked with their role as processing subsistence for the household, and with the cognition that their activities are authorised by male elders in their households. This male authority provides women within their self-esteem, on the basis that their contact with unrelated men in the course of their activities does not involve sexual acts.

CHAPTER 2. CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL DISTINCTIVENESS AND MAINTENANCE OF GROUP BOUNDARIES

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall describe group identities constituted in contemporary economic and political situations, and in local history. People in Jazirah define their respective identities in terms of religion and ethnicity: Christian, Shawaya and Kurd. The way in which they attribute distinctive group features to each other, signifies the classification of groups. The relationships between groups whose members consider themselves culturally distinctive from members of other groups, have developed through mutual contacts. Yet, before starting the discussion on group identification, I shall first describe the native definition of Shawaya, as given by themselves and as attributed to them by members of other groups. Describing the delimited category of Shawaya is not only useful for explaining the meaning of the name, but also provides an insight into the native's recognition of distinctions between their own group and others, in other words between 'us' and 'them'.

The Shawaya describe themselves as people originally from the steppes, tending sheep and camels. They say that the word 'Shawaya' derives from *shawā*, to roast or grill meat, which connotes their previous life-style as nomads. They also guess that the word 'Shawaya' is a name of an Arab tribe or *ashīra*, even though they know no such tribe exists in this region. They identify themselves as rural people and distinguish between themselves and city dwellers. Although migration of the rural population into cities, such as Qamishly and Hassaka, has accelerated recently, rural immigrants do not abandon their own rural and nomad origin and even think that they may go back to their natal villages if the opportunity arises.

The Shawaya no longer identify themselves as nomads, although they still depend on rural economic resources: they are engaged in animal rearing and agriculture. With the region's economic development, many Shawaya men have gained employment in cities or towns. As government employees, workers in the private sector or self-employed, their income constitutes their households' main income. Despite this economic shift, they still identify themselves as rural peasants, *fallaḥūn* (single; *fallāḥ*). The Shawaya define the boundary between their own group and others in terms of their nomadic tribal Arab origin and occupation. They grow particularly self-conscious of these group identities as their contact with city dwellers increases.

As Muslims, they also differentiate themselves from the Christians. As for language, the Arabic dialect spoken by the Shawaya is different from that spoken by Qamishly city dwellers, in terms both of pronunciation and vocabulary. For example, the word for village, *qarya* in Qamishly dialect, which is the same as standard Arabic, becomes *jyarya* in Shawaya dialect; and dog, *kalb* becomes *chalb*. The interrogative 'what' is *eishu* in Qamishly, but *sinu* in Shawaya dialect. The Shawaya, whose mother tongue is Arabic, also distinguish themselves from the Kurds whose mother tongue is Kurdish.

Although the Shawaya insist emphatically on their group identity, they rarely use the term Shawaya to refer to themselves. Instead, they refer to themselves as Arabs, even though they are not the only Arab inhabitants in this region (the Christians also identify themselves as Arabs). Identifying themselves as Shawaya implies their acceptance of the negative stereotypes of Shawaya as portrayed by others. The Shawaya are often regarded by others as backward, ignorant and dirty. These others use the name 'Shawaya' in order to indicate inferiority. However, these stereotypes do not always reflect the real Shawaya identity. Among the Shawaya, there are educated engineers and even female teachers. Furthermore, the Shawaya women always pay attention to hygiene and sanitation. The stereotypical dispositions attributed to them therefore do not by any means reflect the way the Shawaya live. Instead, they provide

other groups with simple criteria for group classification in their relations with the Shawaya.

The locals' own classification of the Shawaya highlight several important points in the discussion of group identity. The difference of the Shawaya from others is taken for granted by both the Shawaya themselves and others, even though each of them use different criteria. Since these criteria emerge through mutual contacts between them, they must maintain the notion of each other as being socially and culturally different from one another. This differentiation is essential in these relationships. However, the criteria used in defining the Shawaya clearly bear a little relation to the reality. Moreover, the shared social and cultural traits frequently cross group boundaries and people do not always share all these traits with others in their own group.

For example, although the Shawaya define themselves as peasants, many of them are no longer intensively engaged in cultivation. Many Shawaya men let out their leasehold agricultural land, assigned to them by the Syrian government, to people who look after their crops and they themselves only work in the fields during the periods of sowing and harvesting. Some of them do not work in the field at all and just contract out to share-croppers. Neither do many Shawaya women in Dubāna work in the fields held by their fathers and husbands and only young women work as seasonal agricultural labourers in the fields owned by big landlords. This type of engagement in agricultural cultivation is little different from that of city dwellers, who also possess the right to hold land on lease. Shawaya households who immigrated to the town scarcely work in cultivation and their household heads earn income from other jobs in the town. Thus, although they do not fulfil the criteria of peasants, they still identify themselves as such. Their access to economic resources reveals the contradiction between their own definition of Shawaya, as Arab peasants, and their life-style. But distinctions between rural and urban, as well as between peasant and non-peasant, are of great importance for the Shawaya themselves in order to define the self in relation to others. Why is this so?

The stereotyped images created in inter-group contacts are caused by a variety of factors: a) historical evolution of their peasant identity, b) inclusion of the Shawaya into a capitalist system of production and exchange, and c) increased economic and personal contact with other populations in the town. Through these processes the Shawaya have grown self-conscious of their group identity due to their extensive contacts with other groups. As a result of these interactions, the Shawaya constitute their own stereotypes, while other groups attribute to the Shawaya different stereotypes from those that the Shawaya use in order to identify themselves. These stereotypes are widespread in society, with a rough power equilibrium existing between the Shawaya and other groups. Below, I shall analyse the processes by which the Shawaya's identity was created in relation to urban populations, mainly the Christians, who distinguish themselves from the Shawaya in constructing their group identity.

The peasant identity is also created within intra-Shawaya relationships between the tribal sheikhs and common tribal members. Commoner Shawaya tribal members, along with the Kurds, have been incorporated into a capitalist agricultural production system since the 1930s, as tenants of big landlords, i.e. their tribal sheikhs. Regional industrial development and the Syrian land reform of 1963 have given these common tribal members opportunities to become economically independent of their tribal sheikhs who had previously monopolised agricultural land. They refer to this change not only as a change in economic relations between the sheikhs and themselves, but also as reflecting change in political relations, away from superior-inferior to between equals. They explain the old relationship between themselves and the sheikhs as resembling much more one of slaves owned by the sheikhs. They insist that their economic independence from the sheikhs has now transformed this relationship into an egalitarian complementary relationship, in which they support each other as equals (Eriksen, 1993; 27-8). It is therefore important to analyse narratives expressing the process of this shift, through which these commoner villagers insist on their identity as peasants independent of their tribal sheikhs.

Processes of dichotomisation and boundary maintenance between ethnic or sectarian groups are not analysed only from a subjective position, in which agents themselves ascribe ethnic memberships. Barth suggests that ethnic membership must be acknowledged by agents themselves in order to be socially effective (1969: 15). Although Barth focuses on the need for investigating the social enactment of ethnicity through flexible and negotiable boundary-making processes, he does not discuss the social processes of creating collective conceptions which operate in order to make distinctions between groups. Instead, he defines ethnic ascription as categorical ascription which classifies "a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background" (1969:13).

In Jazirah, group distinctions are acknowledged by agents themselves and expressed in processes in which they create criteria for distinguishing groups. These distinctions are shaped in local political and economic situations as well as local history and are not determined by ascriptive group characters. For example, the Shawaya belief that they were originally nomads, but now define themselves as peasants, even though agriculture has diminished in economic importance. It has become gradually more difficult for them to differentiate themselves from others in terms of occupation and source of income, since many of these peasants have become wage earners in towns and on industrial sites, and worked as shopkeepers and taxi drivers, in all areas of economic activity in which city dwellers are also engaged. Their identity cannot therefore be discussed only from the point of subjective ascription and their origin, but must also be examined from the point of objective social and political functions, which serve to underline their social position in their relationships with other groups. Group distinctions should be analysed from both aspects: that of the agents' subjective awareness and strategy, and of the structural constraints which are imposed upon agents within interactions (Okamura, 1981: 453, 456).

In the following sections I shall discuss group relations in which group members demonstrate group distinctiveness vis-à-vis others, and through which they try to distinguish cultural or natural traits between groups in order to define their own

position within the group. I shall also discuss these demonstrations of identity and group boundary in relation to regional economic and political developments and historical changes. The economic and political situation in Jazirah imposes various social constraints on individuals; these are expressed in the form of group relations and distinctions.

2.2 Regional Development and Peasant Identity

Jazirah means 'Island' in Arabic. It is the area lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. It covers a fertile area in north-eastern Syria and large parts of today's Iraq, previously known as Mesopotamia. The Jazirah in Syria is composed of three administrative provinces: Raqqa, Deyr-ez-Zur, and Hassaka. My field research was conducted in Qamishly, and the rural Shawaya village nearby, which for the purpose of this thesis I call Dubāna, in the Hassaka province. I shall therefore limit my descriptions to this area.

Qamishly is a relatively new city, in the sense that it has a very short history. It was planned and established when the French mandatory power came to the region in 1922, in order to accommodate Kurdish and Christian refugees from Turkish Anatolia, who had fled following Turkish independence and Western interference in Turkey during the 1910s and 1930s. Before the French invasion, Qamishly was a so-called no man's land, home to scattered settlements of Kurds. The French planned the city along a grid pattern. The town used to be roughly divided into two parts by the Jag-Jag river, which formed the boundary between the Christian and Kurdish districts (Velud, 1986: 91-3). By 1925, the oldest Kurdish district, *Qdur-bek*, was already established.

Most Christians, although by no means all, are city-dwellers. Hence, Qamishly is an area of relatively high Christian population density, even though in Syria as a whole, according to Lewis (1987: 13-4), Christians constitute less than eight percent of the population. The majority of the Christian inhabitants of Qamishly are Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic and Syrian Protestant, all of whom identify themselves as

Suriyan (Syrian Christians). Arabic is their first language, but many families tend to speak their own language Syriac at home and attempt to find places in schools and churches for their children's Syriac language education. There are Assyrians, i.e. Nestorians (*Ashuri*), and Assyrian Catholics, that is, Chaldeans (*kuldani*), who fled into this region after clashes with the Iraqi army in 1933. According to Nisan (1991: 164-5), "the Iraqi accused the Assyrians of rebellion; the Assyrians accused the Iraqis (Arabs and Kurds) of cold-blooded murder" (1991:164). *Suriyan, Ashuri* and *Kuldani* have a conviction that the shared language means that they all originally had very close relations. These Christians sometimes do inter-marry. Acceptance of this marriage is explained by their shared Syriac origin. There are also Armenian Orthodox and Armenian Catholic Christians, but the proportions have decreased, especially due to emigration to Armenia in the former Soviet Union in 1948 and 1965. They speak Armenian at home. The Syriac and Armenian Christians differentiate each other and do not inter-marry. The sectarian differences are not created in on the grounds of distinctive religious doctrines amongst these sects, but are created by behavioural patterns, such as marriage, language and attending churches of their own sects.

Most present inhabitants of Qamishly and the surrounding countryside used to live in what is now south-eastern Turkey. The border between south-eastern Turkey and the adjoining area, which is now part of northern Syrian, was only established in the peace settlement ending the first World War in 1922 (Yapp, 1987: 318-21). Both regions used to be the territory of the Ottoman Empire and the inhabitants moved back and forth between these two regions. Local family histories relate how many Kurdish peasants had already moved from south-eastern Anatolia into Jazirah during the Ottoman period and settled there. Shawaya tribes or tribal confederations, such as the Tai and Shammar, who were sheep rearers, occupied both south-eastern Anatolia and northern Jazirah, and seasonally migrated within this region.

The Danish writer Carsten Niebuhr who visited Nuseibin in 1766 wrote of his meeting with the Tai tribal sheikh (1992: 709). Blunt also mentions the Tai as living in a camp composed of one thousand tents, in the late nineteenth century:

"Tai [is] a pure Bedouin tribe, formerly very powerful in upper Mesopotamia, and allied to the Tai of Central Arabia. They own camels and mares, and carry the lance: but are peaceful and rich. They have numerous flocks of sheep. The present Sheykh, Abd er Rahaman, is considered of very noble family" (1879: 189).

The Ṭai were based in Nuseibin, which is now on the Turkish side, and occupied south-eastern Anatolia, Nuseibin, Mardin and Diyarbakr to the north, and Mount Sinjar to the south, as their tribal territory. The Ṭai believe that they are originally from the Arabian Peninsula, but they cannot trace their links to the Arab tribes of that area.

Qamishly and the surrounding countryside were sparsely cultivated by Kurds. According to Lewis (1987: 160), Jazirah became an area important for agricultural production during the second World War when wheat prices rapidly increased. My interview subjects mentioned that the price increased eightfold between 1935 and 1939. Then, the second agricultural revolution introduced cotton cultivation into this area and its production increased during the Korean War of 1948 to 1952. During that time, "the USA imposed export controls ⋯. Between 1948 and 1952 production of cotton in Syria increased eightfold and acreage under cotton almost tenfold" (Lewis, 1987: 161).

The subsequent rush to get as much land as possible and to bolster claims to it by occupation and cultivation was caused by the chaotic situation in this region: "this was an area where clear title to land was a rarity" (Lewis, ibid.: 161). The enormous possibilities of cotton production as an agricultural money-maker were recognised by tribal sheikhs, who aspired to take maximum advantage of the prevailing agricultural boom by treating much of the tribal land as if it were their own. The sheikh of the Ṭai tribal confederation, who was the present sheikh's grandfather, kept his eye on the economic advantages of agricultural production. At the beginning of the 1950s, he abandoned his village in the tribal heartland, where water supply was less than that required to sustain dry-land farming, and moved to land where the Jag-Jag river provided plenty of water for his fields. There he constructed a new village, Dubāna. The sheikh controlled huge amounts of tribal territory under cultivation. His tribesmen

say that they could not obtain rights to land in their tribal territory and so became landless tenants and domestic labourers, that is, slave followers, 'abīd (single:'abd) of the sheikh.

In 1963, the Syrian land reform redistributed a large area of land from a handful of rich tribal sheikhs in Jazirah to state farms. Considerable numbers of tenants and city dwellers were helped by the new laws, enabling them to rent land owned by the state at cheap rates. According to my interview subjects, the average size of a peasant land-holding was between 140 and 200 dwānum (single:dunom), which is almost equivalent to thirty-five acres and fifty acres[1]. Peasants calculate the size of land by sacks of wheat required for sowing. For example, they say that one sack of wheat is needed for sowing ten duwānum (one sack of wheat is between one hundred and one hundred-twenty kilograms).

Land reform therefore reduced the size of large land-holdings and gave landless peasants the means to free themselves from economic control by the tribal sheikhs. Nevertheless, the fragmentation of land led to reduced efficiency and, as a result, the economic gap between big landlords and small lease-holding peasants was not closed. First of all, small lease-holding peasants can only depend on rain-fed wheat and barley cultivation. They usually cannot afford to rent government agricultural plant and invest in irrigation, or to use manure in order to increase productivity. The harvest is also easily influenced by precipitation levels. For example, low rain-fall during the first two months in 1990 affected rain-fed barley cultivation. Peasants complained of a harvest which was only two or threefold the amount sown. Some of them harvested only the same amount of crop as they had sown. Secondly, farms owned by big landlords, or the state, occupy well-watered land, giving high returns, whereas land redistributed to small peasants often lacks the water supply required to gain enough productivity through rain-based cultivation.

Thirdly, plots which are owned by big landlords and are state-managed, use crop rotation which improves their productivity. For example, the plots belonging to the sheikh of the Ṭai tribal confederation surrounding Ḍubāna, were run on a rotation of

grain, cotton and summer vegetables (such as tomatoes, aubergines, okra, cucumbers, marrow, watermelons and sesame). Plots where wheat was cultivated in June the previous year are left until sesame is planted in the spring. After the harvest of sesame in September, wheat is planted at the end of autumn. Another plot, which had lain fallow last season, is planted with wheat from October to June, and then next April will be a cotton field. This crop rotation is believed by peasants to increase productivity and to restore the organic composition of the soils. The use of vegetables and cotton in rotation with grain cultivation also enables farmers to leave plots uncultivated from one season to the next.

Yet crop rotation needs irrigation and therefore small lease-holders, without water pumping facilities, cannot have access to this effective system of cultivation. Only wealthier landowners are able to afford the cost of capital intensive vegetable and cotton production. Vegetable prices are free from state regulation. Their cultivation could therefore yield higher profits than wheat and barley, whose prices are low and fixed by the state and do not keep pace with the rate of inflation. Hence, despite the benefits of the land reform, many small plot holders cannot make a living by agriculture alone.

These poor peasants must have several sources of income in order to make a living. Development of the oil and gas industries, which are the most important natural resources in north-eastern Jazirah, provide some employment opportunities. The road network carries these workers to the sites of oil and gas industries (Rumeilan, Swediyah and Malkīya). These job opportunities have brought rural migration to Qamishly, which has acquired locational advantages. Roads and railways connect oil and gas installations in north-eastern Jazirah and the agricultural villages to Qamishly and Syria's other major urban centres and ports (Ḥassaka, Aleppo, Ḥama, Ḥoms, Damascus, Laḍqiya and Ṭarṭus). Qamishly is the regional commercial, trade and transportation centre and thus provides the local population with job opportunities in these industries. These regional factors have caused a population increase in urban centres which is also paralleled with higher birth rates. During the twenty years

Figure 1. Mineral resources, industry, and transportation in the Syrian Arab Republic (From G. Meyer, 1987: 47. The blue line is a main road under construction in 1991, traced by the author from Syria Road Map for Tourists, 1985.)

Mineral Resources, Industry, and Transportation in the Syrian Arab Republic
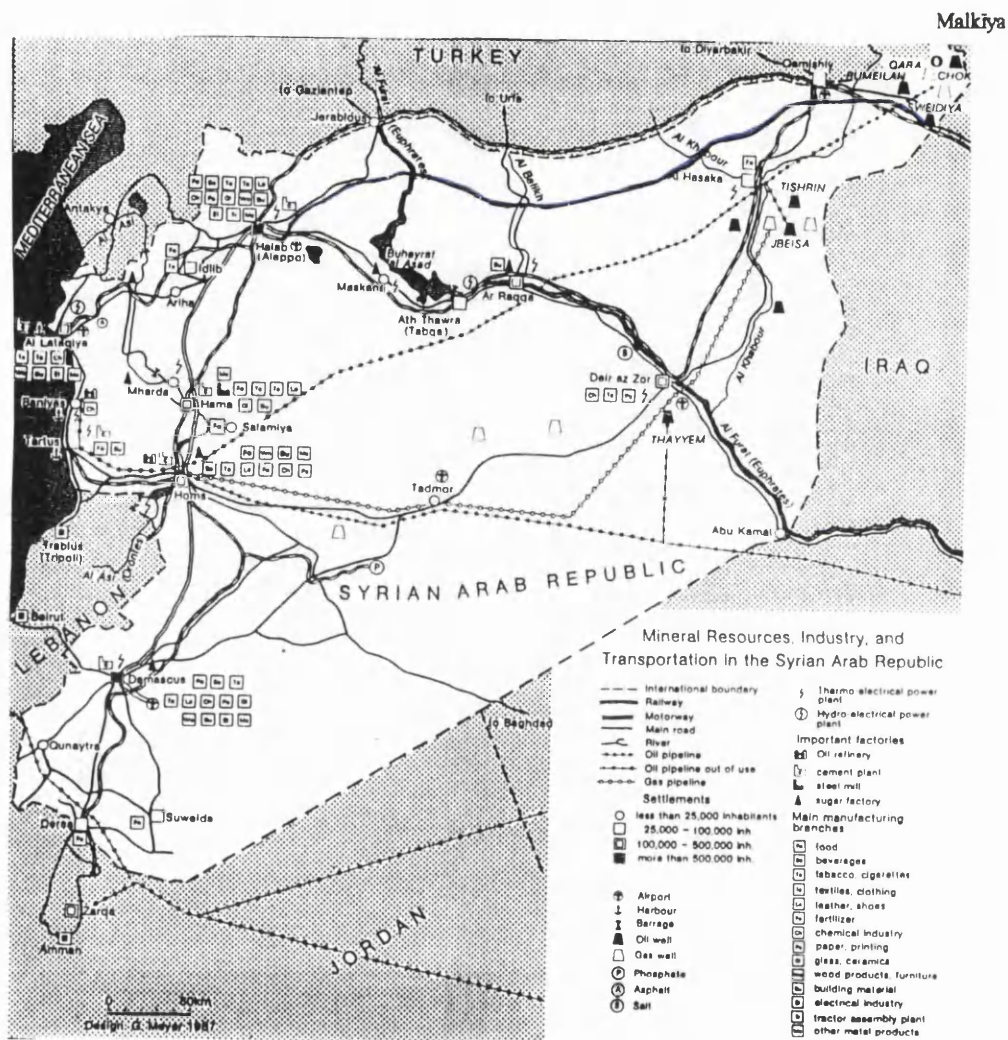
between 1960 and 1980, the population in Qamishly doubled from 43,198 to 92,990 (Mardini, 1986: 97). Syrian population growth is one of the fastest in the world. Perthes (1992: 42) estimates it at more than 3.9 present per annum for the late 1980s. Furthermore, about 60 percent of the country's 12.5 million people are under 20 (Hedges, International Herald Tribune 18 December 1991). But even given the high birth rate of the area, rural migration to Qamishly is an important factor for its population growth.

Increases in the urban population provide another source of income for rural peasants and households of immigrant rural workers in the cities. The increasing demand for meat and dairy products provides them with the opportunity to sell their products in the Qamishly market. They keep a few milking cows, or a small flock of sheep and make some cash from the sale of these products.

Investment in animals for milk production is costly for these peasants. The cost of a sheep is between £S1,000 and £S1,200 and that of a milk cow is more than ten times that.(2) Even with this highly costly investment, there are three main determinants of the profitability of milk production for these small livestock-owners. Firstly, these livestock provide milk for the owners' household consumption as well as for sale. The sale of milk products is free from state interference and therefore profitable. Secondly, animal rearing for milk production is one of the few economic activities in which peasant women can be involved, i.e. feeding, watering, milking, making dairy products and selling them in the market. Although these economic activities surrounding milk production require male intervention in their commercial aspects, mainly in dealing with unrelated men, or *ghrāib*, women's labour in this area is vital in generating cash income for peasant households (see Chapter 6). Thirdly, possession of livestock is a means of claiming economic independence from tribal sheikhs, as well as indicative of their right to cultivate lease-hold agricultural land.

As slave followers, `abīd, of the sheikhs, the peasants used to work on the sheikhs' land and take care of their flock. The change in their economic status has encouraged them to construct a new discourse in which their economic independence from the sheikh has also liberated them from bondage as `abid. The villagers therefore deny vigorously that they are `abīd any longer. The following narrative describes how the villagers in Ḍubāna perceive the change in the relationship between themselves and the sheikh, after their acquisition of the right to cultivate land endowed by the State. A married woman, Malika, forty-three years old, in conversation with a young male villager, Khalid.

> Khalid: We could borrow seeds and funding from the State for a motor to pump up underground water for irrigation.

Malika: What is [the status of] your father?

Khalid: *Mālik* (*mālik* is an owner who has the right to the freehold of his land and cultivation. The right of possessing the land is categorised as *mulk*, which is out of State control). A *mālik*, not a person having a right of *intifa`a* (*intifa`a* means making use of the land and monopolising profit from the land and its cultivation. A person having the right of *intifa`a* owns the right to cultivate the land and get profit from it, but ownership of the land is vested in the State).

Malika: You are stupid. What was [the status of] your father originally?

Khalid: My father was *mālik*

Malika: *Mālik*? Was his right to own his land granted by the State?

Khalid: Do you have the freehold to your land? Or, do you possess the right of *intifa`a* ?

Malika: With honour (`ala `ayn). But my son, I spent more than ten hard years as `abd. We did not possess the right of *intifa`a*. Now the land which we cultivate belongs to the State. Produce from it is ours. We sell the produce to the State. Our right is granted by the State. What about yours?

Khalid: My father's right is registered with the State.

Malika: A former tenant of the sheikh (*fallah*) cannot have freehold land. As categories of land use, there is tenant, and there is *intifa`a*. O, my father! We lived in a village belonging to a sheikh who was the father of Hajjiya Maysūn (a wife of the father of the present Ṭai paramount sheikh). When my father moved into the village, he was lent a piece of land. The land did not belong to the State, but to the sheikh, the father of Hajjiya. He lent his land to the `abid who cultivated it. At the time of the Syrian land reform, the government paid sheikhs compensation for their land. Was your father a tenant of a sheikh? What did he say about his status?

Khalid: My father was not a *fallah*

Malika: For example, Khalid, your house; your father is the owner, *mālik* of the house (it is absolute freehold). Supposing that the land were distributed for cultivation by the State, the right of cultivating the land belongs to each cultivator. If he had money, he could cover the cost of cultivation and harvest. If he did not have enough money, he would ask a rich man for financial support. After the harvest, he shares the crops with his supporter at a ratio of one to one. This is the right of *intifa`a*. If a man does not have any right to land which he cultivates and which belongs to a sheikh, he is a tenant (*fallah*) of the sheikh. Khalid, I have not heard such an interpretation of *mālik* like yours. No one any longer says, "I am an

`abd of a sheikh". `Abd served a sheikh. `Abīd prepared dishes, cleaned
the sheikh's house and washed the dishes. For example, a woman like me
went to the women of the sheikh's household and washed their clothes.
This is `abd. Now, who is doing such work?

Khalid: No one.

Malika: A few, but willingly. If I want to visit the sheikh and serve his
household members, I can. Older villagers, like your father, used to be
`abd of our sheikh. When the sheikh ordered an `abd to kill someone, the
`abd had to carry it out. No one could refuse him. There was no one who
was not `abd of sheikhs. Fifty or sixty women, like me, who were poor,
worked in the sheikh's field during the harvest season. He gave us a little
wage with which we could only eat and sleep. A mālik, like our sheikh,
exploited his tenants.

Malika's view represents the common villagers' recognition of the shifting
relationship between themselves and their tribal sheikhs from the perspective of
historical change. Commoner villagers, like Malika, recognise that distinctions
between themselves and the sheikhs emerged in the course of the commercialisation of
agricultural cultivation and the monopolisation of tribal land by the sheikhs. They think
through this process, occupational specialisation between the landowners and peasants
was developed[3]. Tenants of the sheikhs were compelled to be dependent on the
sheikhs economically and consequently became politically slave-followers, `abīd, of
the sheikhs. For these peasants, `abīd indicate both landless tenants of the sheikh, and
people ranked as his slave-followers. Dubāna villagers told me that before the land
reform, all the male villagers were slave followers (`abīd), who fulfilled different roles
in serving the sheikh: serving coffee for the sheikh's guests, looking after the sheikh's
children, acting as attendants of the sheikh, domestic servants, or shepherds, and so
on. Female villagers served sheikhly women as domestic labourers, washing and
cooking. By dividing the villagers into these categories, they describe the salient
distinctions between themselves and the sheikh, at the time when they had no other
livelihood except for dependency on the sheikh.

The commoner villagers insist that this hierarchical distinction between sheikh
and `abīd has now therefore diminished, since the acquisition of the right of intifa`a .

Even after the acquisition of this right, they are still peasants (*fallahūn*) who do not own the land which they are cultivating, but are no longer just tenant peasants (*fallahūn*) of the sheikhs.

Together, the villagers describe their past politically as slaves and economically as underpaid peasants. By virtue of the land reform and regional industrial development, they are now able to describe the past hierarchical relationship between themselves and the sheikhs as the result of a historical configuration, in which they lacked access to economic means except for reliance on the sheikh. Nowadays most of these villagers generate their income independently from the sheikh: as peasants, they own the right of *intifa`a*. Moreover, male villagers have jobs as wage labourers, commercial traders, or are self-employed. They also earn income from livestock rearing and dairy production. Even though some male villagers work as the sheikh's private drivers or tractor drivers in the sheikh's field and young village women work as seasonal agricultural labourers in the sheikhs' fields, they regard this work as based on economic contracts. No one identifies themselves as slaves any more, even though they often still work for the sheikh; they say that they offer their labour willingly. Their egalitarian attitude is a consequence of the change in economic circumstances and their reaction to these circumstances. Under these circumstances, the villagers define economic changes in their life as liberation from the hierarchical order, and share collectivity as ex-*`abīd*.

This common ground of their past and present circumstances identifies themselves as peasants (*fallahūn*) having the right of *intifa`a*. Their peasant identity however, is not only created in historical processes within intra-Shawaya relationships, i.e. relationship between the Shawaya tribal sheikh and commoner tribal members, but is also created in interactions with Qamishly city dwellers. In the following section, I shall discuss the identity of Qamishly Christians, who apply stereotyped criteria to themselves vis-`a-vis the Shawaya. These stereotyped criteria of the Shawaya clearly do not reflect who the Shawaya actually are. The Shawaya in return object, and construct their own criteria in order to identify themselves.

2.3   Constituting Cultural Differences

Inter-group contact and conflict between Christians, Kurds and Shawaya in Jazirah have existed since Christian and Kurdish refugees from Anatolia came to Jazirah. Before their immigration, the north-eastern Jazirah used to be occupied by Shawaya tribes, local Kurds and minority Christian villagers. The appearance of refugees, especially large numbers of Kurdish refugees following Sheikh Said's rebellion in Anatolia in 1926 (Olson, 1989: 120, 125-6; Joseph, 1983: 105-6), increased conflict with the Shawaya, mainly because of the rapid population growth in the region. Kurdish refugees followed local Kurds and took up farming. The Shawaya were also encouraged to take up farming by developments in commercial agricultural production. According to Khoury (1987: 526), conflicts consequently arose over access to grazing and farming lands, especially in competition for water, and were not easily resolved .

Group distinctions between Christians, Kurds and Shawaya were accelerated by political instability in Jazirah. The majority of Qamishly inhabitants were Christians who had fled from Anatolia. They were engaged in commerce, or worked as urban professionals – as medical doctors, pharmacists, artisans and soldiers in the French army. They were a regional minority and wished to protect their rights and retain autonomy under the French Mandate power. Even now, Qamishly Christians hold the French administration in high regard. This is not only because the French promoted urban development in Qamishly and helped their resettlement there, but also because the French advocated political rights for the Christian minority.

The Kurds also supported autonomous movements in opposition to nationalists, mainly led by the Shawaya, who were in turn supported by the government in Damascus. These movements were not simply political, but were also used by the urban Christians and local Kurdish and Shawaya tribal sheikhs in order to secure their own respective interests. The most remarkable incident reflecting this, which most Qamishly inhabitants remember, happened in 1937.

Serious tension had existed between the allied separatists of Kurds and Christians and nationalists, led by the Shammar tribal sheikh (Shammar is one of the Shawaya tribes) (Hourani, 1946: 215). According to Khoury (1987: 531), when the Shammar tribal sheikh attacked the Christian opposition in Qamishly and Hassaka, the Christian quarter in `Amuda, which was located to the north of Qamishly and populated by a significant number of Christians, was pillaged by a Kurdish tribe allied with the Shammar; the Kurds massacred the `Amuda Christians, until the French military intervened in the conflict on the side of the Christians.

People in Qamishly recall this historical event as 'the massacre', and interpret contemporary relations between the Kurds, Shawaya and Christians with direct reference to it. The Christians refer to the incident at `Amuda as an evidence of Kurdish betrayal: "the Kurds pretend to take your side, but then stab you from behind" (see Chapter 3). In turn, the political movements of the 1930s seem to have left the Shawaya with the perception that the Christians support Western powers, because the French took sides with the autonomists against the nationalists. For example, during the Gulf War, the Shawaya resented the local Christians, because the Shawaya regarded the Christians as supporters of the Allied operation in Iraq and so increased their antagonism towards them, since the Shawaya regarded the whole operation as Western interference in the Arab world.

Another historical factor that has fuelled group classification is the nature of agricultural commercial relations between Qamishly city dwellers, mainly the Christians, and rural inhabitants, which existed before the Syrian land reform in 1963. Christian farming entrepreneurs rented land from the tribal sheikhs, large landowners, and invested in machinery, seed and irrigation. Warriner (1957: 90) mentioned that these farming entrepreneurs, who had no inherited wealth, and did not belong to the established land-owning class, accumulated capital in this way. This was a risky business because irrigation farming was only done on a small scale, while dry farming depended on unstable rainfall. According to my interview subjects, the failure of the harvest which occurred for several years in the 1950s, drove many of these farming

entrepreneurs to bankruptcy. This Christian enterprise created occupational differences between the city dwellers, as an entrepreneurial urban class, and rural inhabitants, as either big landowners or landless peasants.

In the course of Jazirah history, the Christians, Kurds and Shawaya seem to have developed a strong consciousness of their group distinctions as a result of these contacts and conflicts. As Qamishly Christians and Kurds often say, "until twenty years ago, the Shawaya only came to Qamishly when they wanted medical treatment. Now they come here for work and to attend school. For these purposes, large numbers of Shawaya come here everyday. Many of them have immigrated to Qamishly". These statements testify to the increased contact between city dwellers and people of rural origin, who have acquired opportunities to earn income through work in Qamishly.

In Qamishly, no quarter (*ḥāra*) is ethnically, or religiously unmixed. One of the oldest districts, called *Wasta*, used to be inhabited mainly by Christians and Jews. With the development of Qamishly into an urban and commercial centre, this residential quarter became a market area. The inhabitants have pulled down their old houses and rebuilt flats both for residential and commercial use. These flats are occupied by different kinds of people. For example, a building owned by a Christian family houses shops run by Kurds; or a Shawaya family may move into a flat in the Jewish area. In the outskirts of the city, multi-storey residential buildings have been constructed for school teachers, employees of the electric power station and the agricultural sector and more are under construction. These flats are often let by the owners to people of different occupations, usually new couples and rural immigrants. These areas house a mixture of Christian, Kurd and Shawaya inhabitants.

There are also relatively new quarters which have sprung up on the outskirts, occupied mainly by rural immigrants. These are characterised by horizontally structured mud-brick, or concrete houses, with the people retaining as far as possible their rural lifestyles: raising livestock in the courtyards, furnishing their rooms with long, narrow rugs and cushions on the floor. These districts have more of a rural than

an urban character. One of them, *ḥāra Ṭai* (the Ṭai quarter), was established in 1962, just before the Syrian land reform in 1963. Since I carried out my research in Ḍubāna, a Ṭai village, I had many opportunities to visit the villagers' kin and friends in this district. The residents used to be *`abīd* of the Ṭai tribal sheikhs and immigrated here in order to seek economic opportunities. Some men work as employees in either the public or private sector, while others are engaged in self-employed commercial work, running small shops which sell vegetables, or miscellaneous goods, or in garages, or some work as taxi or tractor drivers. These jobs all used to be regarded as jobs held by urban dwellers, but rural immigrants gradually come to outnumber urban dwellers in these occupations. Consequently, occupation, income and residential differences have been blurred between the city dwellers and people from rural origin. This has led to social unrest amongst the minority Christians.

The Christians of Qamishly were the town's first urban professionals, commercial traders, entrepreneurs and artisans. The Christians, as well as urban Kurds, still occupy the most prestigious jobs, such as medical doctors, pharmacists and engineers. Most of the shops in Qamishly market and in shopping centres located in the city centre are still run by the Christians and Kurds. Occupation and access to economic resources constitute important criteria for the Christians to distinguish between urban and rural, or professional and peasant.

Urban professions, however, are no longer monopolised by urban dwellers. Increased access to higher education has made it possible for rural peasants to become qualified engineers and school teachers. Rural immigrant women work as school teachers, one of the most respectable occupations for intelligent city women, even though the number of female school teachers from rural origin is still small. School is the most desirable place for women to work because gender separation is observed to some degree. Women teachers work only among their female colleagues; of the teaching staff, only the head-teachers are men.

Christian city dwellers have gradually seen their valued distinction as urban professionals undermined. They therefore fear the intrusion of rural people, especially

the Shawaya, whose presence amongst them during these twenty years has disrupted the traditional balance of urban-rural relations. They speak of distinguishing themselves from the Shawaya by nature and culture, emphasising their own prestigious position in society. They have developed standardised ways of understanding and attitudes vis-à-vis the Shawaya, and have oriented themselves socially to the standardised attitudes of their own group. The Christians hold particular notions about the vices and virtues of the Shawaya and these notions are articulated in everyday conversations. They predictably determine the behaviour of the Shawaya, which are interpreted in the light of ethnic dispositions, or group stereotypes with which they identify and differentiate the Shawaya.

One stereotype held by the Christians relates to education. Child education is one of the most important issues for the Christians, especially for mothers, and is regarded as a factor defining their own and their children's place in society. The traditional occupational dichotomy between urban and rural has created the preconception that urban Christians constitute the urban intelligent middle class, whereas the Shawaya are less educated peasants.

Moreover, the government policy of investing in the public sector in order to increase production, has encouraged and increased the employment of engineers as local experts, by offering better salaries at the beginning of 1980s (Perthes, 1992: 45). This policy has encouraged child education among the city dwellers in Qamishly, as a means of enhancing their economic and social positions. Many Christian parents (even rich Muslim parents) try to send their children to private Christian schools and to hire private tutors in order to provide them good education. These city dwellers believe that having a few children and spending large amounts of money on their education are distinctive features of an advanced (*mutaqaddim*) way of life. Many young couple in their twenties and thirties insist that to have three or four children, is sufficient[4]. They contrast their attitude to child education and family planning to that of rural peasants, who have as many children as they possibly can. The urban Christians regard this

attitude as backward (*mutaakhir*) and derived from the parents' inability to understand the importance of educating children.

These stereotypical attitudes relating to education and the number of children, serve to justify the urban dwellers' superiority to the rural peasants. They function by justifying the inferiority of the rural peasants, especially the Shawaya, by emphasising their lack of knowledge regarding birth control, the deterioration of women's health due to continuous child bearing, as well as the rearing of many children without concern for their education.

Although the Shawaya do indeed have many children (many village women bear a dozen babies), these stereotypical images held by the Christians have little to do with the reality of the Shawaya's life. Children, especially daughters, are active members of the labour force in village households. Village women need the help of their daughters to carry out domestic chores and animal care. If a village woman does not bear daughters, her domestic chores increase with every new addition to the household, without additional help. Sons are able to help with animal rearing, but they are not allowed to engage in dairy production and domestic chores, because of the gender division of labour. Consequently, women with few daughters find themselves in the position of the woman in the following example. There was a woman in Dubāna, whose fourth child was her first daughter. She was forty-two by the time her daughter was only thirteen. There was no other female labour force in the household. The daughter did the washing and cleaning and did not attend elementary school. However, she was not old enough to bring fodder, or cotton stalks used for fire wood, from distant fields, nor to cook meals by herself. The mother subsequently bore a heavier work load than other village women who were almost at the same stage of life as her, but had more grown-up daughters.

Having sons acts as future insurance for parents, for their old age. Indeed, one of the married sons in a family is obliged to live with his parents and to take care of them. For daughters, having brothers is also important as insurance. When a woman is divorced or widowed, she can come back to her natal family and ask for the support of

her father and brothers. When sons marry and constitute independent households, brotherhood is regarded as the closest relationship outside one's own household. Brothers are also obliged to help each other, especially on big occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and in sickness, when great financial expenditure and the cooperation of agnatic kin are required. This mutual support between brothers is a prerequisite for carrying out one's social obligation (*ijbār*) towards one's distant kin, neighbours and friends.

As for education, the Shawaya recognise the importance of educating their sons and regard it as one of the motivations behind their immigration to Qamishly. It is however true that they have little concern for women's education. For example, in Dubāna all the men between the ages of elementary school and into their fifties are literate, whereas for women over thirteen, only two teenage girls were literate. Men need to seek multiple opportunities to acquire income in the towns. Women are regarded as responsible for domestic, agricultural work and livestock rearing, so that learning these chores during their maidenhood takes first priority. Moreover, notions of gender segregation also hinder women's attendance at school. For example, in schools, as well as during journeys to and from school in the city, girls are regarded as being exposed to the eyes of unrelated men. However, since the Syrian government has increased the number of elementary schools in villages, it has become easier for village girls to receive elementary education in their own villages, without having to worry about contact with unrelated men. Since the establishment of an elementary school in Dubāna in 1986, most of the girls were able to attend school.

Given this wide gap between the misconceptions of the urban Christians and the reality of the Shawaya villagers' attitudes toward children and education, what can be the cause of this stereotyping by the Christians? When I started my field research in 1989, belief in higher education as providing a good job and a better life no longer reflected the actual situation in the job market. At the macro-level of the Syrian economy, according to Perthes (1992: 43-4), actual government investment in the public sector has declined because of rapid inflation at the end of 1980s. Inflation and

the reduction in actual expenditure on investment are important reasons why the public sector has held back from employing workers and engineers. Consequently, a number of local professionals are facing difficulties in finding employment. I met many university graduate engineers in these circumstances. They certainly have skills, but no work.

The Christians are apprehensive about the advent of an economic crisis, because of their fear of losing status as urban professionals. Difficult job prospects, inflation and salaries lagging far behind inflation[5], have therefore created serious social unrest among the Christians. In the summer of 1989, although all Syrian citizens were issued coupons by the Syrian government as a means of controlling inflation and subsidising basic foods - sugar, rice, tea, and olive oil - it was still difficult to obtain these goods in government establishments. Consequently, the shortage of goods led to inflation in the prices of daily foods and to a flourishing black market. Since this was the time of year when every household purchased large amounts of foodstuffs to preserve food for the winter, concern grew amongst the Christians[6].

Inflation and the lack of employment opportunities resulted in the Christians' fear that their standard of life as the urban professional class in Qamishly would be lost. They felt unable to keep up with the social exchanges necessary between kin, neighbours and friends. They generally spend large amounts of money on gifts to relatives and friends on important ceremonial occasions. Although these exchanges are a financial burden for them, they nevertheless cannot escape them, as they are regarded as their obligation (*ijbār*). If they fail to participate in this exchange, it means that they wish to end relations with their network of people close to them. They will consequently be isolated and lose their position in society. Therefore, it is necessary for them to participate in these reciprocal exchanges, even though they are financially burdensome.

I shall give one example of how many Christians participate in social exchanges beyond their financial ability. My neighbour at Qamishly, Salwa, a nursery school teacher, who was a Syrian Orthodox living with her mother and sister, earned £S2,500

per month. Her neighbour, who was a medical doctor, announced his wedding and sent an invitation to Salwa's family. Salwa was obliged to buy a wedding gift, which was customarily presented to the bride. Salwa did not buy the present until her other neighbours, who were also invited to the wedding reception, had bought theirs. She consulted these neighbours on their presents and their cost. Her neighbours had bought gold rings, which are usual wedding gifts to one's close neighbours: one neighbour had spent £S1,200; the other £S970. Salwa thus decided to buy a gold ring for £S950.

Just three days after the wedding, Salwa was also invited to a party celebrating a baptism held by another neighbour, whose family were big landowners. She bought a gold cross for £S450 as her present to the baptised boy. Ten days after the baptism, Salwa was invited to a friend's new house. The friend was a wife of a Ba`ath party officer and was therefore rich. After her visit, Salwa felt that she was obliged to buy a gift as a housewarming gesture for her friend. Salwa said to me, "most of the furniture in my friend's new house was probably presents from friends. Usually officers receive large amounts of gifts on such occasions. I cannot buy her anything cheap". Since her expenditure on gifts in that month had already amounted to sixty percent of her salary, she could not afford to buy another gift. She was thus forced to ask her close friend to lend her £S1,000, with which to buy a present for the officer's wife.

This example shows how ordinary city inhabitants are financially burdened by having to keep up with their social network and relationships. Salwa tried to keep up with her rich neighbours and friends, whose financial situation was better than hers. Even on occasions when she is engaged in exchanges with people of similar economic means, the cost of goods for social exchange is the same as on the occasions when she participates in exchanges with richer friends. Many city dwellers admit these social exchanges are financially burdensome, but cannot abandon them if they wish to keep their status as equals in their networks.

When the gap between their actual financial means and claimed class status is revealed, they are forced to escape from society. They then believe that their prospects

would be better elsewhere. Many Qamishly Christians have therefore emigrated abroad to seek their fortune. A middle-aged Syrian Protestant man, who was a watch-maker and was trying to emigrate to Sweden, told me, "I like Qamishly, but feel that it is difficult to live here. I have a shop, but cannot earn enough. Social expenditure for parties and gifts exceeds my financial ability. All my brothers and sisters have emigrated abroad. I received an invitation from my friend in Germany. Therefore, I am planning to go to Germany first, then to Sweden to work, where I have many friends".

The financial situation of rural peasants resembles that of ordinary urban Christians, but without the burden of social expenditure. While they are also obliged to participate in social exchanges: mutual visits and exchange of gifts, these are on a different financial scale. I observed social exchanges among Ḍubāna villagers, their kin, affines and friends, including people who had immigrated to the city, on various occasions. At the birth of a child, a boy's circumcision or a wedding, close neighbouring women present *ñugūl*, which is a dish composed of rice and clarified butter, to the mother, or the bride during the seven days after the event. When a child is born, the uncles, sisters, patrilateral parallel cousins and *krīf* (a guardian of circumcision of the father, or the mother's brother) give a present of money, sweets, or baby clothes. The cost of this usually does not exceed £S100. At a circumcision, the boy's *krīf*, who is usually the boy's father's friend, presents the boy with a white outfit which he wears after his circumcision. During the seven days after a wedding, the bride and her bridegroom receive their kin, neighbours and friends who bring presents to the bride. The gift items are usually sweets, money, perfume, night-dress for the bride, shoes and so on. The cost of these does not exceed £S200.

At a funeral, which usually continues for seven days, groups of the kin of the deceased and his/her neighbours' kin take turns in preparing the meals for the gatherings and so share the cost. Among many households the preparation and expense of the meals - mainly on meat - are shared. Because of their co-operation, the sharing of expenses and work, only a little burden falls on each household. In the

social networks amongst the Shawaya, the importance of these social exchanges is to support one another (*musāuda m`a ba`ad*). Their contribution to kin and neighbours is aimed at the successful observation of ceremonies, or resolving serious crises according to culturally defined ways. This support is reciprocal. One family who are helped by their kin and neighbours will return the same financial and labour support to their kin and neighbours on occasions when the latter need it. The monetary value of exchange items does not take priority, nor is this related to their class consciousness. The Shawaya consider mutual support as an important cultural trait of their own.

The Christians have therefore seen that their status as urban middle class is gradually undermined. They fear that they might not be able to maintain their standard of life in Qamishly. Moreover, rural immigrants have come to outnumber urban Christians in urban occupations. This crisis requires other criteria to distinguish the Christians from rural immigrants, especially the Shawaya, who are the relative newcomers in Qamishly. The Christians determine the criteria for differentiating between their own life-style and discipline, and those of the Shawaya's. These criteria give individual Christians a means of confirming their superiority as modernised, advanced (*mutaqaddim*) and intelligent people, in comparison with the Shawaya.

One of these criteria is housing. In the centre of Qamishly, many Christian families have pulled down old-style mud-brick houses and built modern blocks of flats in their place. Their main purpose is to let or sell parts of the buildings for both residential and commercial use. Although the Christians used to emulate Western styles of decor and furniture in the old houses, they have since become even more westernised in their choice of architecture and furniture in their new flats. They have well-furnished guest rooms and bedrooms in a Western style, as well as two types of toilet: one Arab, which is installed in an independent room, the other in the Western style, which is installed in the bathroom. For the Christians, the decor of their homes to some degree represents their advanced way of life in comparison to the style of rural houses, which the Christians regard as backward (*mutakhallif*).

Village houses, inhabited by both the Shawaya and the Kurds, are one-story houses made of mud-brick or concrete. The sitting room or guest room is usually furnished with long narrow rugs, and cushions on the floor and along the walls. The earthen floor of the bedrooms is covered with plastic mats. The wall of one of the bedrooms is generally hidden behind bedding, mattresses and cushions for all the members of the household, piled up as high as possible on a wooden bed, a particular style of village furniture. Most of the village houses do not have toilets. Even in newly built houses, they do not install a toilet. Although village households use oil heaters as their main heating facility, they also use heaters fuelled by dried sheep droppings and clods made of cow dung mixed with clay and straw.

The structure of Kurdish and Shawaya urban houses, as well as the Christian urban houses, are divided into two types: horizontally structured old houses and modern flats. Although the structure of their houses is similar to that of the Christians, the urban Kurds and Shawaya are not particularly interested in the decor of their houses. Some houses have the sitting rooms or guest rooms which are furnished in the rural style and others have furnished guest rooms in a Western style. The urban Kurds and Shawaya, even though they are rich, do not generally spend a large amount of money on the decor and furniture in their houses and have no interest in modernising old equipment in the bathroom and toilet. For the urban Kurds and Shawaya, the decor of their houses does not reflect their financial status or level of modernisation.

The difference between urban and rural houses is acknowledged by both urban Christians and rural Shawaya. The Shawaya insist that they want to keep the traditional style of rural Arab housing as a means of identifying themselves as people of Arab nomad origin. The urban Christians regard the Shawaya's life-style as a sign of their inability to adopt a civilised way of life. The Christians declare their allegiance to the modernised way of life as representation of their cultural ability to adapt to advanced ways of thinking.

Another criterion used by the Christians to contrast themselves with the Shawaya is sanitation. Christian women believe that improvements in sanitary conditions

correspond to one's degree of culture and civilisation. This idea is reflected in the way they carry out domestic chores. They clean the floor of their houses several times a day; they are over scrupulous about the matter, even though it is very difficult to prevent dust coming into the rooms from the desert. They keep their kitchens meticulously clean and scour all the pots and pans until all the surfaces shine. The creases on all washed clothes and bed linen are carefully ironed out. These Christian women contrast their own standard of cleanliness with that of the Shawaya, to the latter's disadvantage:

> "The Shawaya blow their noses without using tissue paper and then wipe their hands on their clothes or rugs. They cook food and process milk with their hands, without washing them first. They cannot understand the meaning of keeping things clean. "

These statements are often used by the Christians in order to stress their own relative advantage. However, during my time with the Shawaya villagers, I did not find the Shawaya ignorant of sanitation. The Shawaya women also sweep the floor of their houses several times a day, clean their kitchens and utensils, and wash their clothes regularly. Yet, the villagers live in houses with earth floors and often carry out their work, even domestic chores, outside the house. Their clothes and feet often become muddy. They may therefore be seen as dirty by outsiders.

Christian women often say: "look at Shawaya children! They wear dirty clothes and walk around with bare feet. Shawaya mothers do not understand what happens if germs enter through wounds on their feet." They often warn their children: "don't walk with bare feet like the Shawaya!". These mothers force their children to follow their own standards - putting shoes on and wearing neat clothes - whereby they demonstrate their advanced understanding of sanitation.

The Shawaya in turn have different notions of child development. Small Shawaya children, whom their mothers do not treat as babies, look dirtier than urban Christian children. Shawaya mothers train their children to think for themselves. Their attitude to child discipline is that mothers must help their children develop their own moral ability. If children are not able to comb their hair and dress neatly and forget to

put on shoes, their mothers advise them what to do. If children do not listen, their mothers do not force them to do so and leave them until they can judge for themselves what they should do. Adult Shawaya say: "children do not know how to present themselves. They often fly into a rage, cry and resist their seniors. This happens because they lack knowledge. Gradually they learn what they should do". The Shawaya think that children learn to dress appropriately during the course of their life among adults, by watching the ways of the adults, and their behaviour.

The Shawaya regard their housing and life-style as their own. They do not think that these are less advanced than those of the urban Christians. Rather, they regard the Christians' Western oriented attitude as further proof of the Christians' political support for the West rather than for the Arabs. This is a Shawaya criterion, imposed on the Christians in order to distinguish them from Arabs. The Christians however, identify themselves as Arabs [7], and interpret this discrimination with reference to the historical circumstances surrounding the Sykes-Picot Agreement, in which the Western powers divided the Arabs in order to defend their own interests in the Middle East (this view is common among historians. see Mutaguchi, 1987:189-91, 203-207; Yapp, 1987:279-280). The Christians know that the Shawaya discriminate against them as non-Arabs, and so feel threatened politically. During the Gulf War the Christians feared attacks by the Shawaya. The Christians maintain that "the Westerners divided us Arabs, through political manipulation and created antagonism between us". Although the Christians share the political fate of the Arabs in the broader political context, the Shawaya's perception of the Christians' political stand does not correspond with the Christians' actual attitude. The Shawaya's perception is reinforced by the Christians' Western oriented life-style and demonstration of their superiority to the Shawaya.

In Jazirah, occupational choices, access to economic resources, financial status and educational opportunities are becoming equally available to the urban and rural populations. The Shawaya have acquired opportunities for better jobs and various means of generating income. Yet even though agriculture is of secondary importance economically, they still identify themselves as peasants, *fallaḥūn*. They view

themselves as liberated peasants, according to their historical interpretation of their release from the status of `abīd. They deliberately highlight this identity in their contacts with city dwellers. They regard their access to urban occupations as one of the means for acquiring income, but deny that their intention is to assimilate urban middle class life, by maintaining their rural life-style, norms of mutual assistance between kin or neighbours, their own discipline for child education and Arab versus Western distinctions.

From the other perspective, the Christian urban dwellers object to the Shawaya and boast of their distinctiveness and superiority to the Shawaya. The Christians experience the economic difficulties, the financial burden of keeping social networks, alongside inflation, unemployment, and the general crisis of status brought about by the entry of rural populations into urban occupational niches. These circumstances threaten their way of life. Their means of reducing their stress and anxiety is to delineate distinctions between themselves and the Shawaya, the relative newcomers in Qamishly. The Christians have thus developed their identity as the urban professional class and demonstrate their superiority through a cultural dichotomy between themselves and the Shawaya: their cultural advancement (*mutaqaddim*) versus the Shawaya's backwardness (*mutaakhir*), or intelligent versus ignorant, clean versus dirty. The Shawaya are aware of what the Christians think of them, and so feel increased antagonism towards the Christians. Since the Christians use the name Shawaya pejoratively, the Shawaya identify themselves as Arab peasants. This is a means by which they not only insist on a distinction between their life-styles, as adherent to the cultural traits of Arab peasants and those of Western-oriented urban Christians, but also regard the Christians politically as Western supporters against Arabs.

Ethnic and sectarian identities can then emerge from this categorisation processes in which each individual interprets the behaviour of another in terms of stereotyped ethnic perceptions and relationships, so that the interpretation is accepted by all as sufficient explanation (Mitchell, 1974: 25). However, these narrow stereotyped views of ethnicity and sectarianism, which actors place on their actions, must be analysed in

relation to social constraints enjoined upon actors within a social situation, as the consequence of historical, economic and political structures of group relations. In the next chapter, I shall analyse another stereotyped view held by the natives with regard to sexual actions and its relation to social constraints which affect social relations between ethnic or sectarian groups. As an analytical explanation of the relationship between sexual actions and ethnicity, this approach will help understand the locals' way of linking gender segregation to group differentiation.

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CHAPTER 3. SOCIAL BOUNDARIES AND WOMEN'S SEXUAL VIRTUE

3.1 Introduction

In Qamishly, the Gulf War ignited local conflict between Kurds and Christians.[1] My Christian neighbours, both men and women, sat around exchanging information about the movements of the Iraqi Kurds. A rumour was spread amongst the Christians, that many Iraqi Kurds had crossed the border along the Tigris river into Syria. My neighbours talked of alleged incidents involving cruelty by Kurds towards Syriac Christians: Iraqi Kurdish men were said to have raped two unmarried sisters from a village near the Tigris river; another Christian girl had lost an arm, broken her jaw and lost her eyesight in an explosion, supposedly carried out by Iraqi Kurds who placed the bomb in a hand cream container which the girl had picked up in the Tigris river. Rumours of Kurds attacking Christians were rife amongst Qamishly Christians, but were never confirmed. Several fights between Qamishly Kurds and Christians were also reported by Christian men. My *Suriyan* neighbour told his neighbours about an incident involving his brother's son, a deaf and dumb boy, who was told by a Kurdish man, "it is because of the Christians that the Kurds are sacrificed." He had then poked the boy, who could not reply to him; soon the people watching surrounded them, the quarrel developed into a fight between fifty Kurds and twenty-five Christians. In other instances, teenage Christian boys, who had heard of conflicts between Kurds and Christians discussed by their families and neighbours and who had internalised this resentment, began claiming that they had been attacked by Kurdish boys armed with knifes or broken pieces of bottle for no other reason than being Christians.

Many Qamishly Kurds tried not to get involved in such conflicts. I asked several of my close Kurdish friends, their husbands and brothers, whether or not any of their kin had gone to Iraq during the Gulf crisis in order to defend the Kurdish population and land, or whether their kin living in Iraq had fled into Syria. I asked them separately, on different occasions, but all of them replied in the same way: they did not know any Syrian Kurds who had moved to Iraq; at least among their kin in Syria there was no one who had crossed the border between Syria and Iraq. I told my Kurdish friends that Christian mothers were afraid of their boys getting involved in fights with Kurdish boys. My Kurdish friends told me that they had never heard of such a danger in Qamishly. Denial of such Kurdish-Christian problems by the Kurds thus prevented them from getting involved in open conflict.

Qamishly Christians, however, had their own interpretation of the position of the Kurds in the Gulf War. They highlighted the clear connection between the Kurds' fate and the allies' campaign in Kuwait. The Christians believed the Kurds saw themselves as having been betrayed by the United States to become victims of the Iraqi government's genocide. The Christians thus feared recrimination from Qamishly Kurds, believing that the Kurds regarded them as Western supporters. Hence even though many Qamishly Kurds maintained neutral political positions, the Christians were highly suspicious of them.

These interpretations of contemporary events create hostility and conflict between the Kurds and Christians. The Christians' understanding of the Kurdish acts relates back to local historical Christian-Kurdish conflicts. For the Christians, collective memories of the genocide of their ancestors and the sexual assault on their female kin in Turkish Anatolia in the 1910s and the 1920s by the Kurds, are recalled and retold over time in order to constitute a meaningful history of relations between Qamishly Christians and Kurds. How have the events of this genocide obtained social significance and been applied to the interpretation of contemporary events, such that they have been told repeatedly through time? To respond to this question it is necessary to comprehend the following point. The history, which remains very much alive,

speaks to the hearts and minds of those who participate in its reconstruction. It is different from the history which historians describe, because here meanings of historical events are recreated and applied to current events, in accordance with the participants' concerns and interests. Davis (1989) suggests how contemporary Libyan tribesmen produce decisions and actions that are intended to be a replication of their history of fighting the Italians. He cites this relationship between current actions and a rural history as produced by the tribesmen, in terms of a touchstone for determining current actions:

> "people give meaning to events, and then decide on current actions partly in the light of their knowledge of the past, thus creating events that in turn are given meanings [· ·] 'The history of the common men' is the history produced and consumed in daily life by common men ··· it has a determining role in shaping experience and events" (Davis, 1989; 104).

The history, as retold by these participants is constructed in such a way as to facilitate an understanding of relations between different social groups and their cultural dispositions, and in order to interpret contemporary events. These historical narratives therefore create not only an emotional reaction to historical events, but have also have a contemporary socio-political significance. These are relayed in ordinary conversation and draw similar understandings between historical and contemporary experiences. In Jazirah, the social meaning behind the genocide of the Christian population and the dispositions attributed to the Kurds through the interpretation of these events, are both widely shared not only among Christians, but also among the Shawaya in Qamishly society. The Kurds also predict Christian and Shawaya reactions by considering the contemporary situation in the light of historical events. In this chapter I aim to portray Christian-Kurd relations in the light of local history. I shall then consider prohibited sexual relationships between Christians and Kurds, or between Christians and Shawaya, which are significant in the creation of group boundaries in both historical and contemporary narratives. My purpose in this chapter is to demonstrate how local history and the differentiation between Christians, Kurds and Shawaya, prepare Qamishly people for constructing discourse on the constraints imposed over the

activities of women. I shall examine these processes of creating group boundaries in terms of the spatial and relational confinement imposed on women, as well as the social codes which are adopted to interpret women's activities.

3.2 Historical Experiences and Contemporary Christian-Kurd Relationships

Qamishly and the surrounding countryside were sparsely cultivated and largely unpopulated before the arrival of European powers early this century. Among the present inhabitants, the Syriac Christians (*Suriyan*), Armenians and Kurds living in Qamishly and the surrounding countryside, previously lived in south-eastern Turkish Anatolia. Stories told by older generations of Christians remind the younger generations of their migration. Abu-Ghasān, an eighty-four year old *Suriyan* Christian living in Qamishly, told of the tragedy of his family in Anatolia, and of his emigration to Qamishly.

> "When I was six, my father and father's brothers were killed by the Kurds. We lived in a village called Warabāsh, near Diyarbakr. My grandfather, who was a religious man and had visited Jerusalem, used to read from the Bible for his neighbours. Men who were intelligent and religious were rare in those days. The Kurds were cruel, but my grandfather was not put off by their atrocities. He said, "if the Kurds slaughter us, we will go to the place of God." My grandmother used to tell him that although my grandfather read the holy Bible regularly, he did not know whether God would help her find out the whereabouts of my father and his brothers after they disappeared. After my grandfather died, my grandmother found out that my father and his brothers had been murdered by the Kurds. Soon after, she died of sorrow.
>
> The Kurds are cruel to Christian women. One of my neighbours, a woman with two children, was threatened by a Kurdish man who told her, "if you do not do as I say, I will kill your children one by one." The Kurds also raped Christian women, even pregnant ones. They cut their swollen bellies and killed the foetuses. My wife later told me that she put excrement on her face in order to protect herself from sexual offence. After the massacre, we lost all our animals and property. My mother, my

younger brother and I moved into Diyarbakr. My brother caught cholera and died there.

When I was fourteen years old, in 1920, we knew that the French mandatory power was coming to Syria. I came into Qamishly with my mother and my older brother. When we moved into Qamishly, the French force had not arrived there yet. Even the present city centre was no more than agricultural fields. After arriving, the French constructed Qamishly; the population increased later on with refugees from Turkey."

Abu-Ghasān's narrative is of significance to the history of Qamishly Christians. Such stories of the massacre of fellow villagers and kin present a scenario that structures and motivates Christian hostility towards the Kurds. Before the start of European intervention in Turkey in the 1910s, many *Suriyan* Christians now living in Qamishly used to co-exist alongside the Kurds in south-eastern Anatolia, in towns such as Nuseibin, Mardin, Madyat, Diyarbakr, and the surrounding villages. These treacherous acts were conducted by their Kurdish neighbours. The Chaldeans (*Kuldāni*), and Assyrians (*Ashūrī*), who lived nearer the present Iraqi border, were in a similar situation to the *Suriyan*. According to Joseph (1983: 96-8), the Christian evacuation and massacre of 1915-1918 was carried out by the Ottoman government, which issued the evacuation order of the Armenian population. There were a great number of Armenians (*Armani*) living in this region at the time. This evacuation policy applied to all Christians, regardless of sect. The Kurds took the side of the Turks and fought the Christians under the guise of religious conflict. Abu-Ghasān became a victim of these deportations.

About the time of Abu-Ghasān's emigration to Qamishly, Anatolian Christians were still subjected to acts of Turkish retaliation. The Armenian movement claimed that their independence was put down by Turkish nationalist forces in 1922. The Kurds acted in collusion with Turkish armed forces. All the Christians, not only the Armenians, became the helpless victims of these forces and sacrifices to the course of events. In 1922, the Turks permitted all Christians to leave Turkey (Joseph, 1983: 101). Many of these Christians fled to Qamishly.

Those who emigrated from Turkey were not just the Christians, but also some Kurds. As a result of the Kurdish revolts of the mid-1920s and the 1930s, "about twenty thousand Kurds came and settled in northern Jazirah in Syria[,] along the Turkish-Syrian frontier" (Joseph, 1983: 105-6).[2] The population composition of Qamishly became similar to that of their previous residence in Anatolia, even though, according to my interview subjects, some Kurdish peasants had already moved from south-eastern Anatolia into Qamishly during the Ottoman period.

Like Abu-Ghasān, many Christians who experienced deportation referred to Kurdish cruelty. Although the Christians and Kurds co-existed in the same community and shared certain cultural characteristics, such as Kurdish and Syriac languages, the Kurds sacrificed the Christians to their political ambition. Not only Abu-Ghasān, but most of the Christians I met in Qamishly, believe that they were betrayed by the Kurds and view them as having a untrustworthy disposition (*ṭabī'a*). These views recreate the mystical history of the massacre and also tell us as much about the present as the past. Past historical events clearly cannot be separated from present cultural attitudes.

The interpretations of past historical events are thus recreated in historical narratives and provide a framework for analysing present events. These are widely shared in the society, not only among the Christians, but even among the Shawaya. The Christians and the Shawaya attribute base characteristics to the Kurds and refer to them thus: "Kurds are possessors (*dawū*) of a 'nasty heart' (*qalb wasikh*)"; "Kurds always appear hospitable, but then stab you in the back. This is their natural disposition (*ṭabī'a*)". The Christians and Shawaya regard this Kurdish disposition as founded on historically proven and innate characteristics. The Christians also contrast the Kurds to the Shawaya and say, "eat with the Kurds, and sleep with the Shawaya (*Ukra m'a Kurad wa nām m'a Shawaya*)." This phrase demonstrates how local history attributes base characteristics to the Kurd which are then applied to their comprehension of the present situation in Qamishly. The Christians actually believe the Kurds are more civilised (*mutaqqadim*) than the Shawaya in some ways, such as in their attention

to sanitation; but still consider them to be two-faced: "If a guest stays at night in their house, they might betray him/her and kill him/her." In contrast, the Shawaya are regarded as ignorant of sanitation and sanitary ways of cooking, but nevertheless honest. The Christians identify themselves as intelligent urban people, having more in common with the Kurds than the Shawaya, who are less educated peasants (see Chapter 2). Yet, as discussed, the Christians apply their historical experiences of the Kurdish disposition, to interpret contemporary situations, thereby drawing considerable distinction between themselves and the Kurds.

Why are narratives of Kurdish brutality effective in recreating and sustaining an understanding of contemporary relations between the Kurds and the other residents of Qamishly? The key elements in the narratives provide a means for understanding contemporary sequences of actions and reactions in so far as they are a means for interpreting Kurdish behaviour toward the Christians. Narratives of contemporary social situations, for example those of the Christians soon after the Gulf war, create a sense of analogy between local history and contemporary events.

A fundamental reason for the suspicion felt by Qamishly Christians towards the Kurds is the formers' fear of being regarded as political enemies by the Kurds. The Christians are afraid of once again being sacrificed to Kurdish politics, just as they were when Kurdish ambitions of acquiring political rights in Turkish Kurdistan led to the Christian genocide of the 1910s to the 1930s. Moreover, the Christians consolidate their identity through emphasising urban/rural contrasts, such as urban professionals versus rural peasants, cultivated versus ignorant and refined Western-oriented life style versus traditional rural life-style (see Chapter 2). The fact that the Kurds constitute a large proportion of the rural population in Jazirah means that the Christians' attitude provides the basis for antagonism among the rural Kurds. Although the Christians, themselves Arabs, do not adhere to Westerners' attitudes towards the Arabs, they still try to construct their identity as urban, by conforming with perceived urban middle class norms. They are simultaneously afraid of being regarded as supporters of the West by the other populations in their society. Yet, in terms of religion, Qamishly

Christians are regarded by local Muslims, that is, the Kurds and Shawaya, as being of the same faith as Westerners. Since the Gulf War, the Christians' suspicion towards the Kurds has increased, based on fear that Kurdish anger at the response of the Western coalition to the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq, might be turned on them. Some Christian women told me that they had even stored food and daily necessities in their basements in anticipation of raids on them by the Kurds.

The afore-mentioned stories of a Kurd attacking a handicapped Christian boy, and a Christian girl injured by a bomb planted by the Kurds, reinforce the negative disposition historically attributed to the Kurds. The Christians interpret these stories and conclude that, a) they will be sacrificed to Kurdish political ambition and b) the Kurds are capable of deceiving them. Narratives of historical events therefore underpin the process of creating local history and defining contemporary Christian-Kurd relations.

3.3   Stories of Prohibited Relationships

Conceptions of Christian-Kurd relations, reproduced with reference to local history, create boundaries between these groups. As Rassam states on relations between the Shabak and other groups in northern Iraqi Jazirah, "an historical analysis becomes crucial for the proper assessment of the factors involved in the formation of these groups · · · and their patterns of relatedness to each other" (Rassam, 1977: 158). Historical analyses provide elements for defining relations and distinctions between groups. In Middle Eastern anthropology, Barth is the first scholar to pay attention to strategic self-identification by local groups and boundary-making through interactions which allow for marking cultural differences (Barth, 1969: 13-15). Yet, Barth's analysis is criticised for lacking "an adequate notion of how social processes are related to the production of cultural conceptions with which people distinguish themselves from "other" ethnic categories and with which they account for, evaluate and weight the importance of those distinctions" (Eickelman, 1981: 159).

The distinctions between local groups are created not only in historical narratives, but also in narratives of contemporary events. As seen at the beginning of this chapter, stories and rumours developed in the context of the Gulf War are part of a process of boundary-making between Kurds and Christians. These stories are not only understood with reference to local history, but are also linked to other cultural norms which form boundaries between local groups and which are generated through contemporary interactions between people from different social categories.

In both historical and contemporary narratives about Kurdish attacks on Christians, assaults on female sexual virtue assume a special significance. This type of assault highlights group separation between Christians, Kurds and Shawaya and is linked with norms of prohibiting relationships between men and women from different groups. Narratives concerning prohibited relationships between Christians and Shawaya, or between Christians and Kurds, are widespread in the daily life of Qamishly inhabitants and those of its surrounding villages. The most prominent and frequently repeated topic in these narratives is that men from different social categories damage the honour of an individual man through a sexual assault on a woman in his family. This same issue runs through the many variants of stories about prohibited relationships, told as social facts. Such stories reinforce an understanding of Qamishly society composed, as it is, of different social groups. Narratives of prohibited sexual relationships between people from different ethnic or sectarian groups revitalise contemporary conflicts and constitute moral parables intended to teach individuals their duties as members of a particular group.

A typical story of a prohibited relationship focuses upon problems of group conflict in terms of male honour being damaged by an illicit sexual relationship between a female relative, or wife and a man from a different social group. The contents of these stories are diverse, but all evolve around the notion that losing control of a woman's sexual acts renders her male relatives, or husband vulnerable. For example, a story told by the Christians:

> "A Kurdish girl and an Armenian man fell in love with one another. Her family noticed the affair, and consequently her brother killed her. Her

lover, afraid of vengeance by her kinsmen, fled the area. Then, her brother attacked the lover's paternal first cousin in the absence of the lover. The brother had run into the cousin's pharmacy, closed the shutter and stabbed the cousin to death. The brother reported the murder to the police, but was not charged. And he was still looking for the lover for revenge."

During my field work I heard several such stories of prohibited relationships between people from different groups, Christians, Kurds and Shawaya. All of these stories exhibit common elements that highlight group differences and the need for revenge to restore male honour. The common character of these stories is that: a) any sexual encounter outside marriage is forbidden; b) any marriage between different religious communities is forbidden; c) any marriage except for those arranged by the bride and bridegroom's families is forbidden. Moreover, norms of preferential marriages between kin, awlād `amm, primarily patrilateral parallel cousins, make it difficult for individuals in Qamishly to choose spouses other than relatives. Religion, marriage regulation and the protection of female sexual virtue become important criteria in displaying classificatory boundaries between Christian, Shawaya and Kurd. The common theme of these stories is of an extra-marital relationship between a man and a woman from different religious communities. The stories then develop this theme further: punishment follows the violation of the sexual code and it is the woman's male kin, or husband who inflict punishment on the woman and the lover for this breach of social norms in order to restore their honour.

Because both of them are Muslims, it is possible for Shawaya and Kurds to inter-marry. Shawaya and Kurdish families whose social and economic status are similar, sometimes arrange marriages. Their attitude towards marriage is almost identical; they forbid themselves from marrying Christians; they have common marriage regulations, such as khyār, precedent marriage right of male patrilateral parallel cousins and badāil, direct exchange marriage, both of which the Christians criticise as the customs which represent backwardness (mutaakhir). The Shawaya and Kurds, however, think that each of them has their own marriage rules and regulations and do not identify with each other's norms.

I shall examine the significance of prohibited relationships within the context of group differentiation in society. Stories of prohibited relationships offer a framework for interpreting sexual segregation between men and women from different groups. On the one hand, accounts of the woman's kin murdering couples who have engaged in illicit sexual liaisons, are suggestive of the force of socio-cultural models in punishing acts which violate norms of group boundaries. On the other hand, such acts of vengeance give rise to the conflicts between the groups amongst which the illicit sexual liaison has taken place. Narratives of prohibited relationships provide a framework for seeing into confinement of women's daily activities, where they come into contact with people from different groups.

The stories of prohibited relationships depict the sexual offence by a *gharīb*, (plural: *gharāib*) an outsider, a man from a different group, and vengeance by the woman's male guardians on the *gharīb*, or his male kin. In the narratives, the outsiders prove their manliness by depriving a woman of sexual virtue. The following story demonstrates the interpretations of the outsiders' behaviour, and the anxiety of living in such circumstances where the breach of sexual norms creates conflicts.

A Shawaya shepherd cut off the arm of a *Suriyan* Christian dentist, who had given the Shawaya's wife an anaesthetic in order to extract her tooth. The significance attributed to the story differs totally between the Shawaya and Christian narrators. The Shawaya Dubāna villager's interpretation is the following:

> "An Arab shepherd took his wife to a Christian dentist. After examining the wife the dentist wrote out a prescription for her. The dentist asked her husband to go to a pharmacy to buy the prescribed drug. The dentist's intention was to separate her from her husband, because she was a beautiful woman. The dentist told her that he had given her an anaesthetic and a sleeping pill in order to extract her tooth. Her husband, upon returning at the dentist's surgery, looked through the key hole into the office, and found the dentist being indecent with his wife. He took his wife without showing any reaction at the time. After a few days, he broke into the dentist's office and cut off his arm and put it in his pocket. The dental nurse, who saw what had happened, tried to phone the police. The Shawaya then stabbed both the dentist and the nurse. He has not yet been

arrested, because he moves from place to place like a nomad. If he had not attacked the dentist, it would have been his 'ār(dishonour)."

The story as told by a *Suriyan* Christian woman:

"A Shawaya woman went to a Christian dentist to have her tooth extracted. She did not tell him that she was pregnant. She was given an anaesthetic and fainted. The dentist then carried out mouth to mouth resuscitation on her. After the treatment, she had a miscarriage. Her husband believed that the anaesthetic had caused her miscarriage. After a few days he stole into the dentist's office and cut off his arm. It is not because of the dentist that she had a miscarriage. Without his hand, the dentist cannot work any more. It is *harām*(sin), isn't it? This is the way of the *Shawaya*. They think of us, Christians, as their enemies and assault us. "

The two different narratives are of the same incident which took place in Hassaka, a neighbouring town to Qamishly. The incident had already received much attention and was the subject of much gossip, before I was told about it by my neighbour, whose mother's sister's husband was the dentist. The two narratives presented above were also told to me directly without naming the people directly involved. The two narratives represent the standpoints of both the Christians and Shawaya in exaggerated and distorted forms. It provided both sides with an opportunity to endow a different significance to the incident and to reflect the different concerns of each group.

The Shawaya version interprets the incident as a Shawaya woman's encounter with a *gharīb*. Their concern over the story is that a *gharīb* man has threatened to assault the Shawaya woman's sexual virtue. The Christian dentist's actions are seen to exemplify the treatment by a *gharīb* man of a Shawaya woman. Restoring honour, through revenging the offender who threatened the woman's sexual virtue, emerges as the key focus in the Shawaya version. The ferocity of the Shawaya husband's reaction towards the dentist, reflects his male obligation (*ijbār*) to restore his male honour (*sharaf*) in response to the assault on his wife's sexual virtue by a *gharīb*. His manliness is demonstrated by overcoming this threat by a Christian outsider. The

Shawaya narrative reconstructs an acceptable image of Shawaya man, thereby justifying the husband's violence.

The Shawaya therefore interpret illicit relationships on the basis of their own most important concern, that of protecting their honour. *'Ar* (great shame) is caused by assault on a woman's sexual virtue. When one of the female family members is sexually assaulted, all the men in her family are regarded by others in society as having lost their male honour (*sharaf*) through the loss of control over the conduct of their female members. Whether a woman is willingly involved in an illicit sexual liaison, or is raped, the violation of the sexual taboo is never forgotten by members of the community and serves to damage the social reputation of her family for generations. Stories of prohibited relationships warn Shawaya men to restrict opportunities for their women to encounter outsiders who might seduce them. Regarding outsiders as offenders, or potential enemies threatening their honour, the stories recreate group boundaries.

Meanwhile, Shawaya women voice a different concern when telling stories of forbidden relationships. In order to protect the honour of their male kin and husbands, they feel that they are obliged to refrain from behaviour regarded as shameful (*'aib*). Women's activities outside the home offer the possibility of committing sexual offence and are therefore regarded as shameful. Women collaborate to enforce this view because they are afraid of being mislabelled by others in society and in so doing they restrict their own behaviour. A woman wants to be seen herself as virtuous and protective of her chastity, thereby acquiring the social reputation of an honourable woman (*sharifa*), through her good deeds.

In contrast, the Christian version of the story shows the dentist, representing the Christian identity as an urban professional, as a victim of the brutality and ignorance of the Shawaya. The Christian narrator blames the miscarriage on the Shawaya couple's ignorance of medical matters, thereby projecting an image of the Shawaya as uncivilised, in contrast to the educated Christians. Underlying is the Christians' fear of the threat to their position in Qamishly, coupled with their inability to respond violently

to the Shawaya or Kurds. In most stories, as have seen in this story, the Christians describe themselves as helpless victims of retaliation by the Shawaya and Kurds who use violent means. Their ferocious acts are not punished by the authorities, or in other cases, the offenders are on the run. The Christians' view that revenge is uncivilised behaviour reflects their weakness as a minority. The Christians' anxiety is also derived from the threat posed to their identities as urban professionals and the intelligent middle class, by the encroachment of rural immigrants, especially the Shawaya, into urban life and standards (see Chapter 2). The Christians understand this incident by applying the Shawaya's collective dispositions which contrast to their own. Thus, the exaggerated portrayal of the Shawaya is derived from their perception of the Shawaya as backward and violent and thus a threat to their lives. Hence the group rivalry is created.

Why are narratives of prohibited relationships an effective vehicle for identifying individuals as members of one group and creating group rivalry? Firstly, narratives provide the conceptual backbone for constructing meanings of *gharīb* behaviour from a temporally organised sequence of actions. Narratives formulate the dichotomy such as Christians/Shawaya, Christians/Kurds, and violation/protection into scenarios of action through which women's daily activities outside the home are interpreted. For example, even though these days men tend to encourage women's education, village girls have little opportunity to attend school in Qamishly after finishing elementary level education in their village schools. One of the main reasons for this is their fathers' anxiety about incidents which may lead to them the loss of their virginity. Their concern is that there is no one to protect their daughters on trips between the school and their village. I heard of many fathers, who upon hearing the story about a bus driver raping a school girl on her way back from school, were afraid to allow their daughters to go to school. Interestingly, the ethnicity attributed to the bus driver depended on the narrator's own identity: Christian fathers said the driver was a Shawaya, or Kurd; Kurdish or Shawaya fathers said the driver was Christian. But the characteristics of this story are similar throughout; male actors think and decide their actions in relation to the 'plot' of

prohibited relationships. They regard a *gharīb* man as threatening to their honour. Consequently, they confine the activity of their daughters.

Women do not think that a *gharīb* man threatens their sexual virtue in their activities outside the home. Young women criticise and ridicule their fathers behind their backs for believing the story of a bus driver raping a school girl. These women, however, do not rebel against their fathers' authority preventing them from attending school. They fear that others (*nās*) will interpret their behaviour with reference to the social schema of a *gharīb* man offending female sexual virtue and so label their activities outside the home as immoral. Women strive to acquire a good reputation as obedient and chaste, which brings honour to the men in their family.

The second prominent impact from narratives of prohibited relationships on daily personal activities, is the conceptualisation of the behavioural meanings they embody. This is particularly important for women in terms of acquiring social acknowledgement of their adherence to the socially acceptable behavioural standards. A woman strolling in the street, talking with men outside the home, or visiting another's home, is seen as having contact with *gharāib* men. Such activities are relayed in stories of prohibited relationships which create an image of the woman as evoking her sexual desire and threatening group identity. The stories tell of women who engage in immoral sexual contact behind the backs of their kin and husbands. Women being seen in public places, or in enclosed private spaces belonging to *gharīb* are believed to be undermining their sexual virtue. These behavioural standards created by stories of prohibited relationships, are applied when interpreting women's daily activities.

Women are unhappy with the social view that their activities outside the home often make them the targets of gossip about their involvement in sexual liaisons. Activities such as work, commuting, meeting with friends and shopping, all result in meetings with unrelated men and could be interpreted as having sexual implications. Women therefore need the permission of the men in their family in order to engage in these activities outside the home, if they are to secure their own position and to maintain

their social reputation. Women fear social criticism, which could attribute to them a base disposition (*ṭabīʿa*), that is, their ignorance of socially acceptable behavioural standards. They therefore act in collusion with the men in restricting their own behaviour. As a result, their attitude reinforces the social constraints on their behaviour.

The third effect of stories of prohibited relationship on the group identity is that women understand prohibition in relation to their restricted freedom in choosing their spouses. Women from all groups have the same view: a couple who are involved in a prohibited relationship and end up facing separation and punishment by death are tragic. They relate this tragedy to their obligation (*ijbar*) to accept arranged marriages within their own group and yet feel sad about their situation which suppresses their autonomous wish (*raghba*) to select their own spouses. The stories remind them of the group boundaries which oblige them to accept the norms of marriage.

The stories of prohibited relationships are also interpreted with reference to dispositions attributed to each group. Christians' hostility towards Kurds as created through local history, attribute to the Kurds a base disposition (*ṭabīʿa*) which incites them to sexually assault Christian women for the sake of showing Kurdish power. To deprive a Christian woman of sexual virtue proves not only the manliness of the offender, but also the Kurdish men's superiority to the Christian men who failed to protect their woman's sexual virtue. The Christians ridicule the Shawaya, who cling to old customs of vengeance, by using the criterion of advanced/backward (*mutaqqadim/mutaakhir*), in order to affirm their own superiority as urban educated middle class on the one hand. Yet, on the other hand, they fear the Shawaya's violence. Kurds and Shawaya in return object to the Christians' attitude and attribute the label of 'Western supporters' to the Christians, who support the Western way of court justice and look down on traditional way of honour respect. Group hostility produced by these discourses highlights the attitude of each group to the others and creates the view that outsiders are potential enemies.

In stories of forbidden relationships across group boundaries, even though the couple may be devoted in their affection for each other and think much of mutual respect, that is love between men and women (*ḥubb*), the relationship is regarded as a sexual offence by the male lover against the woman's group. However, love between insiders is often given as a reason for marriage, even though marriage is arranged between the bride and bridegroom's families. This contrast between inter-ethnic love and intra-ethnic love demonstrates the natives' cognition and differentiation of relations with outsiders from those between insiders. Generally speaking, people from all ethnic or sectarian groups say that closely related men and women have more opportunities to get to know each other, because they can visit each other's families in their obligation of keeping kinship relations. If a woman's family accepts frequent visits from their young kinsman, the prospects for an arranged marriage between the two families are heightened. In these cases the reason for the marriage given by the couple and their audience is love, even though the marriage was arranged by mutual family agreement. For example, in one case when a man living in Ḍubāna married his first patrilateral parallel cousin, his sister explained to me the process of their marriage:

> "my brother Māhir loved his *bint `amm* (FBD)[3], Firyāl, and visited her family by playing truant. He loved her and asked our father to arrange his marriage with her. Our father at first was reluctant to arrange the marriage, because Firyāl spent time with Māhir before marriage and our father worried that she might have loose sexual morals. Since Māhir insisted on his love for her and wish to marry her, our father accepted, and they got married."

Between close kin or insiders of a group, love is accepted as the reason for marriage. Although a couple who love each other are ideal for marriage, any extra-marital relationship is prohibited between them. The meaning of this prohibition is different in cases of inter-group relationships. As Māhir's father suggests, the sexual issue is a serious concern in personal relationships. If Firyāl were sexually loose, she may commit adultery and undermine her husband's honour. It is not Māhir's family, but his own honour which would be ruined by his wife's immoral acts. Only if Māhir trusted her and was confident of maintaining his individual honour by

controlling Firyāl's behaviour, he could ask his family to arrange the marriage. Chastity is regarded as a woman's personal disposition (ṭabīʿa), which is partly innate and partly acquired through upbringing by her natal family. Her personal disposition is therefore not only regarded as her individual character, but also indicative of her family members who are responsible for her. The woman and her family should therefore remove her from any sexual contact before marriage, in order to preserve the good reputation of both her and her family.

The fantasy of love can be realised in marriages between insiders. Individuals often tell me that their marriage is an ideal based on affection, even though the truth is quite different. I heard many women from different groups idealising their marriage in this way by claiming: "I loved my husband". The actual process of marriage often contradicts this statement. In most cases marriages are arranged on the basis of preferential marriage between close kin or insiders and the wealth, and personal characteristics of the principals. Marriages are agreed upon between the bride and bridegroom's families with these factors in mind, but with little consideration for the couple's feelings. A man may ask for marriage to be arranged with his chosen woman with the support of his family or friends. A woman however, cannot express her feelings or make such a request, as this would be interpreted as an expression of her sexual desire and so is considered shameful (ʿaib). She may be labelled as a woman who has a disposition (ṭabīʿa) with a strong sexual appetite and may endanger her husband's honour. This social restriction forces women to refrain from expressing their own wishes (raghba), so that their feelings ultimately play little part in their marriage.

However, on occasions when married women feel free to idealise their marriage, it is portrayed as the realisation of their secret love. For example, a woman told me how she and her ibn ʿamm secretly loved one another. While she was unable to express her feelings, or do anything about it, her cousin had asked for her hand in marriage, so that her feelings were finally realised. Another woman told me that she met her husband, who was her distant relative, at a wedding reception and that they had fallen in love with each other at first sight, even though they only saw each other at a

distance. Although she could not request to marry him, he succeeded in persuading his family to let him marry her, resulting again in the realisation of their feelings.

In all the cases where women claimed to be devoted in their affection towards their spouses, they had played little part in the marriage arrangement. They, however, insisted that they had communicated their feelings of love to their chosen man and so had succeeded in marrying on the basis of love. Līnā, a Shawaya woman, whose arranged marriage with a man from a different tribe was cancelled by her *ibn `amm* through the exercise of his precedent marriage right as her patrilateral parallel cousin (*khyār*) over her, is one such example. Although Līnā had no choice but to marry this cousin, she told me that she had married him because she loved him. She had lived with her mother and mother's father before her marriage. Her mother had not had a good relationship with her husband and had come back to her natal family where she was supported by her father. He was nearly eighty years old and found it difficult to sustain his household independently. Līnā's mother's two brothers who lived in Dubāna, negotiated an arrangement with their cousin. The latter agreed to exercise his right of *khyār* on condition that Līnā's mother and grandfather move into Dubāna and live with the new couple in their new house, whose construction cost would be shared between the bridegroom and the grandfather. This marriage was preferable for Līnā's uncles in terms of both fulfilling the norm of preferential patrilateral parallel cousin marriage and as the practical means of securing their father and sister's livelihood.

Līnā's marriage arrangement was largely effected by her kin's intention, supported by the right of *khyār*. Yet, she described her marriage as if it had been conducted in accordance with her will (*raghba*) and her love for her cousin. Her husband also claimed it was his love which motivated him to marry her. Whether she had willingly married him, or was forced to marry him I could not ascertain, since the marriage had taken place two years before we met. The important point however, is that love is accepted as a motivation for marriage within the same group and women are allowed to express love as a basis for their choice in selecting their spouses, even though love is not considered a key element in arranging marriages. Here, the

expression of love has two important meanings for women. Their marriage is no longer dominated by marriage regulations, because it has happened on the basis of affection and mutual understanding between individuals. Also through the attainment of love women can express the freedom to decide about their own lives. This is never the case in inter-group relationships.

Practically however, marriage choice is restricted by various rules of endogamy, which support the creation of group boundaries. Preference for patrilateral parallel cousins is common between Christians, Shawaya and Kurds. The Shawaya and Kurds sustain the rule of *khyār,* which serves to retain their women within their groups. *Khyār* affirms the order of priority for marriage according to genealogical distance between a man and a woman. In other words, a man who is a woman's first patrilateral parallel cousin has priority in marrying her, or preventing her marriage with any other man.

For example, a Shawaya woman, who was asked for marriage by her first patrilateral parallel cousin accepted it, even though she did not wish to marry him. Since he often visited her family, she knew that her family would favour her marrying him. She also recognised his priority over her marriage and was afraid that no one would propose to her as long as the cousin wished to marry her. If his right over his kinswoman were rejected, the cousin would be dishonoured. The rule of *khyār* supports his priority to marry his first patrilateral parallel cousin and places him in a superior position to others. Choice of spouse is made on the basis of three factors: the personal characteristics of the principals, social distance between their families and their wealth. In this case, the two families were socially close and economically equal. If the marriage were refused by the woman's family, it would be regarded by the community as the fault of his own personal defect. This would in turn cause the loss of his honour. Patrilateral parallel cousin marriage affirms the notion of distinguishing people in terms of genealogical distance. When a man's family proposes to his patrilateral parallel cousin, his request would be supported by the notions which keep her away from further distant kin or strangers, and retain her under the control of her patrilateral

kin. This male control over kinswomen is a source of male honour. Furthermore, this ideology of control over marriage is so structured that women find it difficult to resist, or to try and achieve their own wish. Although women can express their disagreement to their family, it is very difficult for them to dissuade their family when the cousin fulfils all the marriage conditions, in terms of both personal characteristics and economic ability.

If a woman succeeds in fulfilling her wish by rejecting such a proposal against her family's wishes, the result is obvious. Any breach of this order causes great problems between kin, as in the case of a Kurdish woman whom I came across. She was proposed to by both her first and second patrilateral parallel cousins. She wanted to marry her second cousin, but her father accepted the request of her first cousin out of respect for his priority to marry her. At the wedding reception, the second cousin kidnapped the bride who subsequently chose to run away with him to Austria, in order to realise their love. There was no other way for them to marry except by elopement. The first cousin who had then lost face, chose to leave his country.

Rules of patrilateral parallel cousin marriage enjoy intensive and collective support for promoting marriage between closer kin. These make it difficult for women to choose their own spouses. Direct exchange marriage (*badāil*) is another rule which encourages marriage between close kin among the Shawaya and Kurds. Two households exchange their daughters as brides simultaneously, without paying a brideprice (*mahr*) (cf. N. Tapper, 1981:397). Although there are no definite regulations as to who can participate in this type of direct exchange marriage, they are usually conducted between first patrilateral parallel cousins. Both the Shawaya and Kurds explain that direct exchange marriage is conducted between intimate kin. The fate of the married couples is largely determined by relations between their families. If the relationship between the two families deteriorates, it may lead to divorce. Once one couple divorces, as a principle, the other couple should also divorce and exchanged women are then returned to their natal families. Since direct exchange marriage contains such risks, this type of marriage is not desired by young people. Out of thirty-

five marriages among households in Ḏubāna, three were direct exchange marriages. Among these three, one resulted in divorce, because the wife refused to accept her husband's second marriage and her family supported her. Relations between the two families deteriorated in the course of the dispute. The other couple in the exchange consequently also had to divorce, regardless of the couple's own wishes. Another couple also faced difficulties, because the husband of their partner couple in the exchange had taken a second wife and divorced his first wife in order to terminate his financial support for her. However, after negotiations between the husband and his wife's natal family, agreement was reached not to divorce, even though the other couple in the exchange had divorced. As shown in these cases, the fate of such marriages is largely dependent on the regulations surrounding exchange marriages and family relations. Both young men and women subsequently feel that their wishes are neglected in direct exchange marriages.

In practice brideprice is a central concern in marriages. Both the Kurds and the Shawaya set the amount of brideprice to be paid to the bride's family, as a reflection of the genealogical distance between the bride and bridegroom's families. Accordingly, an *ibn `amm* who shares an ancestor five generations back with his bride, pays half the amount of an unrelated man. More distant kin, *qarāib*, pay half the amount between these two amounts. In 1990, an unrelated man had to pay £S100,000 (approximately $2,500)[4]. The brideprice paid varies according to these categorical divisions, rather than to household wealth and income between rich and poor. Especially at the present time, when financial difficulties make it difficult for ordinary young men to marry, this categorical division is important in finding a spouse and minimising the brideprice incurred. These categorical divisions all act to promote norms of preferential marriage between kin and consequently the choice in selecting spouses is more confined by preferential marriage. The principals of autonomy and freedom in selecting spouses are thus undermined.

Christians reject the ideas of *khyār*, direct exchange marriage and brideprice, which in their view represent the backwardness of the Shawaya and Kurds and their

disrespect for women's humanity. Parents and elder family members of single men and women also prefer marriage between close kin and marriages are agreed upon between the bride and bridegroom's families with consideration of the social distance between the families, wealth and personal characteristics of the principals. The personal wishes (*raghba*) of the Christian women are more respected than those of the Shawaya and Kurdish women, when their families arrange marriages for them. The right of the final decision however, remains in their family's hand and thereby restricts their decision. In practical terms, preferential marriages between close kin are difficult to conduct. Although emigration abroad has decreased the Christian population, with those remaining also intending to emigrate, they still try to maintain endogamy within the same Christian sect. Thus, parents willingly arrange the marriage of their daughters with emigrants, who are their relatives or friends. This arrangement also helps to facilitate their own emigration. These arrangements sometimes ignore their daughters' wish. For example, a young *Suriyan* woman was forced by her parents to marry a man who was an emigrant and nearly eighty years old. Before her marriage, she cried and asked her mother; "how can I share a bed with such an old man?" Her mother replied to her; "just close your eyes, and everything will be fine." The desire to emigrate, generated by the political and economic difficulties of the Christians, thus becomes another factor in narrowing the choice for young women's marriages.

These facts tell us that individual choice is rarely reflected in actual marriage arrangements, even in endogamy. Marriage choice is restricted by endogamous rules, genealogical and social distance between bride and bridegroom's families and agreement of their kin on marriage. Women recognise that the prohibition of relationships across group boundaries symbolises these restrictions. Since marriage arrangement regards the personal characteristics of the principals - for men, economic ability and non-alcohol drinking and for women, modesty, obedience, hard-working and beauty, are the most important - as one of the important conditions for marriage, personal preference based on these criteria is not denied. Women are allowed to express love and describe the preferable characteristics of their husbands, as if these

motivated them to marry them. This is allowed largely because the marriage has been acknowledged by the relatives of both the husband and wife, as having fulfilled the marriage conditions. Personal preference does not take priority over the maintenance of social order and kinship relations. Love between a man and a woman is prohibited because it gives priority to personal preference and ignores the order of kinship relations which control sexual acts. In this sense, even sexual irregularity within a group is strictly prohibited. The offenders should be strictly punished for breaching this order. Since control over women's sexual acts is linked to male and family honour, male members of the woman's family punish her and her lover for bringing about the loss of honour. The lover's family, who share responsibility for the breach, are made a target for revenge by the woman's family, if they are Shawaya or Kurds. Prohibited relationships therefore represent social constraints on sexual acts and love and marriage choices thus produce group boundaries.

I have discussed several elements which prevent inter-group relationships and promote intra-group marriage. Illicit sexual acts are not always identified as problems which breach the social order of group relations. This identification depends on the differing contexts in which responsibility for controlling women's activities and their misconduct is interpreted by the locals. The following section begins by examining complementary gender roles among agnatic kin, or between husband and wife. Then, I shall consider to what extent responsibility for controlling a woman's sexual conduct is transferred to her husband at marriage (Holy, 1989: 121). This discussion provides the interpretative possibilities for assessing whose honour is affected by a woman's sexual actions. I shall discuss the locals' cognition of adultery and its treatment, as expected by society, by the husbands and the adulteress's natal family.

3.4 Responsibility for Protecting Women

In this section I shall examine a woman's position within groups whose members share responsibility for her sexual virtue. A household, *usra*, is one such

group. For all groups, Christians, Shawaya and Kurds, *usra* refers to a social unit constituted by a married man and all his dependants, including women and their physical dwelling space, the house (*bait*). The concept of *usra* implies a unit composed of parents and children. Many households are composed of a couple and their unmarried children. The *usra*, whose members share residential space (*bait*), is represented by the male head. The physical boundary of *bait* separates members of one *bait* from another. The *bait* is owned by the male head, who builds it at the time of his marriage. His wife provides the furniture and daily utensils for the house. The *usra* is built upon throughout the marriage, establishing the manhood and womanhood of a new couple through the achievement of their economic and residential independence from their natal *usra*-s. Marriage imposes complementary roles in the two spheres of activity between genders: the husband earns a living outside and is a mediator between members of his *usra* and the world outside; the wife processes what is brought from the outside by her husband and provides sustenance for its members. Children sharing the *usra* are reared in the same womb and are also children of the same father.[5] This division of roles also creates a division of spheres between the inside and the outside, as well as between men and women.

Women, as members of the *usra*, as wife, unmarried daughter and unmarried sister, are subject to the control of the male household head. The household head, husband, father or brother is responsible (*maswūl*) for protecting his female household members from assault by outsiders, and also has the right to punish them for improper behaviour. This control of the household head over female members is related to gender roles. These women depend on his permission and arrangement for their activities outside the home, such as meeting unrelated men, in order to socially affirm their actions subject to his control. The man is a mediator between his household and the world outside, and between women in his household and people outside the home. The women's contact with these people, especially unrelated men, without the agreement of the household head, leads to loss of his control over them and damages his male honour. A wife's sexual misconduct however, does not damage the honour of

her husband to the same degree as that of his daughter and sister. His honour can be restored once he divorces his wife and sends her back to her natal family. He is not obliged to kill her or the adulterer in avenging his honour, or that of his family. Once a wife commits adultery, the mutual dependency between her and her husband in terms of gender roles is destroyed. This break-down constitutes her denial of his protection over her from unrelated men and his monopolised right to have a sexual relationship with her, her rejection of his role as household spokesman and her direct relationship to the world outside. There is no longer any guarantee that her husband will control and protect her. Although a married woman is a member of her husband's household, it is only through their marriage tie that her husband takes responsibility for her. When their interdependent relationship is over, the husband's protection and control over his wife can terminate, while his daughters and sisters, whether they are married or not, divorced or widowed, are related to his *usra* through genealogy all their life. The responsibility for these women stays forever with their natal *usra*.

Members of a household may change for certain periods of time. In the domestic cycle, married sons and daughters move out of their natal household. After the father's death, one of his married sons retains his father's *usra*, managing both his father's *usra* and his own conjugal *usra*. Ḍubāna villagers hold two different interpretations of this joint household: it is regarded as the father's *usra* encompassing his son's *usra*; or it is composed of two *usra*-s, because the joint household is composed of two conjugal households. The villagers say that those who eat and work together and sleep in the same dwelling space compose one *usra*. Members of the joint household share their livelihood, which is ideally earned by the male head. Women cooperate to carry out chores inside the household, such as domestic tasks and the rearing of animals, the commercial side of which is carried out by the household head and brings income to the household.

Usra membership however, does not pass down more than two generations. Sons and daughters who move out of their natal *usra* are still regarded as its members, but their offspring are not recognised as members of the parents' natal *usra*. This is

one reason why the villagers can insist that a joint household is composed of two *usra*-s, even though economically and politically, these members constitute one unit. *Usra* is the place where concepts of descent and sustenance are integrated and defined. Even though a broader definition of *usra* may be desirable in order to accommodate its enormous flexibility, *usra* provides descendants with a means of incorporating the paternal natal `*āila* (family). Whether or not the term *usra* is used to refer to a household composed of two married generations, or whether the old mother lives with her married son and whether or not single sons and daughters and widowed daughters are living in the same compound with their parents, the household is nevertheless represented by the patriarch. His household ceases to exist after his death. When one of his married sons succeeds him, it becomes his son's household.

`*Āila* relationships, however, through which descendants are related across time, are generative. Although `*āila* is generally translated as family, the meaning for men is different from that for women (e.g. Delaney, 1991: 112-3). For example, when I asked a middle-aged married man in Ḍubāna whose sons had not yet married, about his `*āila*, he mentioned the names of his brothers' *usra*-s. He said, "this is our `*āila*, `*āila* Ḥamza". Ḥamza is his deceased father, through whom his `*āila* relationship is defined. During one's life time, a series of concentric kinship circles proceeding outward from the individual constitute `*āila* relationships. A man is first involved in `*āila* relationships through his father. This relationship includes members of his father's brothers' and father's brothers' sons' *usra*-s. These relationships derive from blood relations through his father's father. When he and his brothers marry and constitute their own *usra*-s, his `*āila* relationships connect him and his siblings as closer relations. After his sons' marriage and their independence from him, he is involved in `*āila* relationships constructed by his sons. `*Āila* relationships involve members of *usra*-s of the father, father's brothers, father's brothers' sons, brothers and sons. `*Āila* relations are generative across time, because `*āila* produce new *usra*-s which reproduce offspring. Maternal kin are not included in the `*āila*

A woman retains her 'āila relationships through her patrilineal line throughout her life, in the same way as a man. Her father, father's brother, brother and father's brother's son have to support her when she is divorced or widowed. She returns to her father's or brother's usra and obtains their support financially and politically. Her remarriage is arranged by them and in the cases of Shawaya and Kurds, the brideprice goes in full to her household head. At a married woman's death, either her natal 'āila or her husband's usra take responsibility for her burial, depending on their respective circumstances. Sometimes, if her natal 'āila are in a better position economically and politically than her husband's, her body is returned to her natal 'āila, and her burial and funeral are conducted by them. A woman's 'āila continues to retain responsibility (maswūliya) for her throughout her life.

'Āila has different meanings for women and men. When a woman marries, she constructs a new usra with her husband, and consequently becomes involved in her husband's 'āila relationships. Women are brought into their husbands' usra as wives, for the purpose of perpetuating their husbands' patriline. They are imperative for the continuity of the patriline, and are directly involved in the process of this proliferation. A married woman becomes a member of her husband's usra, and as its member, participates in activities of mutual assistance between her husband's 'āila members. As an individual, however, she is not encompassed by her husband's 'āila relationships. Even though she becomes old and lives with one of her married sons and his household members, she still retains membership of her natal 'āila.

Marriage with patrilateral parallel cousins is the ideal in this society. The word for a patrilateral parallel cousin (male: *ibn `amm*, female: *bint `amm*) is used in classificatory sense, and usage of this word is contextual: it only refers to kinship relations with first patrilateral parallel cousins in one context, and in the other context, includes relationships with patrilineal kin who share an ancestor up to five generations back. Even though marriages with patrilateral parallel cousins are ideal and common among the Shawaya and Kurds, a married women's natal 'āila is different from her husband's 'āila, except for marriages with first patrilateral parallel cousins. Even in

cases of marriage with one's patrilateral parallel cousin, the husband is not obliged to take responsibility for his wife based on his genealogical relation to her.

The responsibility (*maswūliya*) for protecting a woman is transferred upon her marriage from her natal `*āila* to her husband, depending on their marriage tie, through which she and her husband constitute *usra* relations. The marriage tie, however, is based on personal relations between husband and wife. There are cases of Shawaya and Kurdish husbands terminating support for their wives, both financially and socially, after marrying another woman. Through marriage, a woman does not change her patrilateral affiliation and therefore she goes back to her natal `*āila* and asks for their support for both herself and her children. Her husband's `*āila* bears no responsibility for her and her conduct, because the marriage tie does not incorporate her into her husband's `*āila*. Women sympathise with the separated wife, but no one condemns her husband's behaviour as a betrayal of his responsibility to his wife. While this constitutes separation, legally the marriage contract remains valid. This validity makes it possible for her to retain her children.

Hence, women affirm their identify with their natal `*āila*, which retains responsibility for them all their life, even after their marriage. To understand the apparent ambiguity in a married woman's position and in responsibility for her, I shall examine the right (*ḥaq*) to control her activities, and the responsibility (*maswūliya*) of a woman's natal `*āila* over her, look at which rights are transferred from the `*āila* to her husband at marriage, and how responsibility becomes ambiguous in the context of adultery by a woman.

In most Arab countries it is a woman's agnates who are responsible for controlling her sexual conduct, whether she is married or not (e.g. Bourdieu, 1965: 223; Marx, 1967: 104; Aswad, 1971: 54; Abu-Lughod, 1986: 158-9). In Qamishly, as in other Arab societies, the onus of responsibility for the protection of a woman's sexual virtue is placed firstly on her agnates. When a woman is single and living in her natal *usra*, it is her household head, that is, her father - if he is already deceased, her brother bears authority instead of her father - who exercises the ultimate duty to control

her conduct. An unmarried woman must therefore reside in her *usra* where descent relationships are integrated. She needs the permission of her household head to go anywhere outside the *usra*. This permission concerns allowing women to cross the boundary between the inside and outside. When a woman crosses this boundary, the inside-outside dichotomy is applied not only to the distinction between residential space and the outside, but also to the distinction between *ʿāila* relations and outsiders. A girl can go out with men related to her through *ʿāila* relations, such as her father, brothers, father's brothers, and father's brother's sons, who all share the responsibility for her sexual conduct. If a woman, especially a village girl goes out alone, or only with another woman without a male guardian to protect her, she faces outsiders, who are represented by *gharāib* men from different groups. She may be sexually assaulted by outsiders (*gharāib*), or there may be speculation that she is intending to visit a man to 'sleep with him' (*'tnām m`a-hu'*). In this case, male members of an unmarried woman's *ʿāila* must punish her for the loss of her family honour caused by her sexual misconduct. If a Christian single woman is suspected of involvement in sexual liaisons, her *ʿāila* must ask the police to investigate whether it happened or not for the sake of their honour. If she is a Shawaya or Kurdish woman and the loss of her virginity is revealed, male members in her *ʿāila* must then bear the responsibility for taking revenge on the lover in order to restore their honour.

Even when a woman marries, she remains a member of her natal *ʿāila* all her life. A married woman retains the name of her father, signifying her incorporation into her agnatic line. To what extent the control of her conduct is transferred from her natal *ʿāila* to her husband, however, is ambiguous (cf. Pitt-Rivers, 1977: 43, 49; Meeker, 1976: 416; Tapper 1979: 128). The marriage ceremony symbolises an agreement to transfer a woman from her natal *usra* to her husband's; but complete transfer is not admitted by both sides. Although her *ʿāila* are obliged to openly permit her transition to her husband's *usra* and her engagement in sexual activity once married, they do so reluctantly, for this signifies her transition from closely-guarded maidenhood to

womanhood. Her family's resistance to accepting her transition, is ritualised in the marriage ceremonies of Shawaya and Kurds.

Among the Shawaya and the Kurds, ceremonial abduction of a bride takes place at her natal house[6]. In the afternoon of the wedding day, the bridegroom's female kin and neighbours come into the bride's house. They approach the bride singing and dancing. They surround the bride, cover her face with a green shroud and her body with a cloak. They take her to the bridegroom's house for the wedding. The bride's `āila members, gathered there, do not go with the bride or attend the wedding.

This ceremony, in which the bride is captured by the bridegroom's kin and neighbours, highlights resistance by the bride's `āila to transfer the bride to her bridegroom. This ceremony takes place after the marriage agreement has been completed and the brideprice has been paid by the bridegroom. Therefore the agreement to transfer the bride from her natal `āila to her husband has already been reached at the time of this ritual kidnap. Although the bride's `āila collaborate in the ritual, the kidnap is nevertheless regarded as an action of the bridegroom's group transgressing the boundaries of their rights. This performance means that the bridegroom's group abducts the bride without asking her family for final agreement to her transition. The refusal to attend the wedding by the bride's `āila is also a show of their resistance to her transfer. The kidnap, transgression and resistance performed in the ceremony, remind both the bride's and bridegroom's `āila-s that family of the bride has not completely agreed to her transition and therefore she retains membership of her natal `āila (cf. Marx, 1967: 104).

During the first seven days after the wedding, called ḥawfa among the Shawaya, which literally means edge or border, the new couple must remain at the husband's house and must not go out. The bride's close kin do not visit the couple during this period. Female guests present sweets or nightdresses to the bride. According to the Shawaya's explanation, sweets convey religious blessing (baraka) for the marriage. A nightdress as a gift connotes presentation of the bride's sexual charm to her husband. Women say, "once married, a woman wears an attractive nightdress in order to show

herself to her husband". Presenting a nightdress means society's acknowledgement of the bride's transition from maidenhood, *bint*, to womanhood, *hurma*, through her involvement in sexual activity. In return, the bride serves coffee and cigarettes, a conventional way of entertaining guests. She gives the guests presents, such as dresses, perfume or shoes, and demonstrates the transition of her status to that of a married woman allowed to engage in social exchanges between married women and represent of women in her household. Through these exchanges, female guests celebrate the auspicious transition of the bride brought about by the marriage, and the potential creation of new life.

During *hawfa*, however, the bride's *ʿāila* and her patrilineal kin still retain the right to annul the marriage. They could enforce this right through the bride's *ibn ʿamm*, patrilateral parallel cousin in a classificatory sense, by kidnapping the bride back from the bridegroom's house. This right is called *khyār*. It is only possible if the genealogical relation of the *ibn ʿamm* to the bride is closer than that of the bridegroom to her. His right to exercise this abduction is defined by degree of genealogical closeness between the bride and him. This recapture of the bride also needs the agreement of her *ʿāila*. Genealogical distance implies a distinction between the bridegroom and his bride's kin, in terms of outsider-insider differentiation. At times, this right of recapturing the bride is actually exercised. For example, a Shawaya woman married a man from a different tribe. During *hawfa*, her *ibn ʿamm* exercised his right to capture her and then, married her. My informants told me that this *ibn ʿamm* was not obliged to marry her. The recapturing of the bride signifies the resistance of her natal *ʿāila* and her patrilineal kin to transferring her to another family who are not close to her in a genealogical or a social sense. By retaining the right of recapture during the period of *hawfa*, the bride's *ʿāila* and her close kin warn her husband of their retained right over her. After this period, her departure from her natal *usra* is symbolised by the bridegroom's authority over his bride to decide whether or not the new couple pay a ritual visit to her natal *usra*. It is at this stage that her natal *ʿāila* accept the bridegroom's authority over his bride.

Marital relations continue only on condition that each partner carries out his/her roles in the *usra*. Once this cooperation breaks down, the dualistic position of women becomes apparent. The termination of a marriage may occur if the wife becomes involved in an extra-marital liaison. Ideally, the husband in such cases may divorce her and send her back to her natal *'aila*, but he is not obliged to kill his unfaithful wife for the sake of restoring his honour; nor do her agnates in her natal *'aila* bear the responsibility of killing either her, her lover, or other members of her lover's *'aila* in revenge.

There are no stories of punishment for this type of transgression as there are of prohibited relationships, where the loss of woman's sexual virtue is deemed to bring unbearable shame to her *'aila*. If an unmarried girl loses her virginity, either by being raped or willingly committing affairs before marriage, it is clear where the responsibility for revenge lies. Once married, however, it becomes ambiguous: either her natal *'aila* or her husband may fulfil the responsibility over her misconduct. This ambiguous position of married women was relayed to me in cases of adulterous relationships. If adultery happens within a group, that is between two Kurds, Shawaya or Christians, it is regarded as a personal problem between husband and wife. When a wife commits adultery, no one interferes with this problem, nor takes revenge for restoring honour.

A man must rely solely upon himself. Respect for the other requires concern for his independence; to intrude one's opinion upon a man whose wife commits adultery is regarded as disgracing the husband. Friends and neighbours of the husband have no obligation or right to report on his wife's extra-marital relationship. If his friends and neighbours report on his wife's adultery, the husband would become angry, and regard it as interference in his personal affairs, and would regard them as trying to tarnish his social reputation. It would break up friendships and neighbourhood relations. Therefore they pretend not to notice the affair for their own sakes.

Even though no one tells the husband about his wife's adultery, men gossip about it behind his back. The male view of adultery takes account of why adultery is

not punished by the husband, even though male honour is paramount value to men. I questioned several men from all groups, Christians, Shawaya and Kurds, on their view of adultery, both in general and in relation to actual cases of adultery. In both cases, they gave the same response: "if the husband knows about his wife's adultery, he can divorce her and send her back to her natal 'āila. If he does not divorce her, it is because he does not know what is happening. No one can tell him either, even though every one may know about it, because this is a matter between a husband and wife." The men's view thereby supports the husband's honour in the sense that avoiding intrusion into his personal affairs prevents him from knowing about his wife's adultery.

Women have a different view as to why adultery is not punished. I talked about this matter with Christian, Kurdish and Shawaya women in Qamishly, but it was difficult to find the opportunity to discuss this matter with village women. They were afraid of their private views being heard by other villagers who may drop in on any house without prior notice. If a wife commits adultery, her husband and natal 'āila may well have suspected her behaviour, but they might choose to turn a blind eye. The husband undermines his exclusive authority over his wife by disregarding his monopoly over her sexual activity. This is detrimental to the value of male honour. From the female point of view, male honour is a paramount value, but they accept that there are other values and priorities in real life. When women surmise that the husband might suspect something about his wife's behaviour, they also admit the practical priority of keeping his eyes closed to her misconduct. The following view is common among women in all groups, who talked to me about cases in which the husband does not divorce his adulterous wife: "if he divorces his wife, he has to prepare brideprice (*mahr*) or gift for his new bride. This is very costly. Also, his children will eventually have to have a stepmother, an often troublesome relationship. Or, he may love his wife and want to keep her." Women regard a husband as a man who forfeits his honour for the sake of other priorities in his real life, rather than behaving in strict accordance with the ideal of male honour. Even though women may feel that the husband does not care about his honour, they do not regard his wife's adultery as his fault. If he is seen to be

satisfactorily performing his role as husband and breadwinner in his *usra*, it is his wife who is regarded as the guilty one and thus held responsible for disgracing her husband and her natal `*äila*

While adultery takes place in Qamishly, I never came across a case of a married woman having been divorced because of such sexual misconduct. It seems that husbands do not want to admit loss of control over a wife's sexual acts in public, because it damages male honour. If a husband wants to divorce, he can do it at anytime without explaining the reason. His right to divorce is easy to exercise, because the ambivalent position of a married woman allows both her natal `*äila* and her husband to shift responsibility from one to one another. Once the wife abandons her sexual role, by denying her husband's monopoly over her sexuality, she loses her right to protection by her husband. Responsibility for her misconduct, in the view of both men and women, is then transferred back to her natal `*äila*, which restores her husband's male honour. The husband can justify himself with the explanation that he does not want to have a woman like her, who possesses a base disposition (*tabī`a*) either in her nature or acquired in the course of her upbringing by her natal `*äila* He does not need to discuss his wife's misconduct and damage to his honour. He just needs to mention that the divorce is caused by her base disposition. Yet, her natal `*äila* who had already conceded responsibility for her sexual actions to her husband, are no longer in control of her sexual activities. They regard this matter as a personal problem between the husband and his wife. If she is returned to her natal `*äila*, they must accept her and support her life. They however, do not need to intrude upon the problems occurring during her marriage.

When adultery takes place across group boundaries, that is between Kurds and Christians, or between Shawaya and Christians, these cases of adultery are not interpreted as group conflict, as told in stories of prohibited relationships. These cases are treated as private issues between husband and wife in the same way as cases of adultery within a group. The following case of an adulterous relationship between a Kurdish man and his Christian neighbour, was told by the man's sister-in-law, who

was a close friend of mine. Her interpretation of the extra-marital relationship was as follows:

> "They have been involved in this relationship for more than one year now. She phones him early morning at four, five or six o'clock. Her husband does not appear to know about the relationship. She leaves her small children with her mother, and meets her lover during the day when her husband is at work. They often go out in the lover's car. When they come back, my brother-in-law drops her off on the street where both their houses are. Therefore, all our neighbours know about the relationship. Even my son (who is eight) knows. What a shameful woman she is! "

I asked the sister-in-law whether rumours about such a relationship would not hurt her brother-in-law's social reputation. She said, "for my brother-in-law this does not cause any problem. For men it is not wrong to have extra-marital relationships, but for women it is shameful. If her husband finds out about the relationship, he can divorce his wife and return her to her natal family." I asked her how her parents would punish their daughter if the woman were divorced. She replied, "the woman will have to stay at her parents' place. That is all. They do not punish her. I guess her mother must have guessed about the relationship, because she frequently leaves her children with her mother and goes out. Why does no one suspect her? Her mother must know, but closes her eyes to it." This explanation tells us that adultery is a private problem between the adulterous wife and her husband.

My friend, the sister-in-law of the lover, lived with him in the same house. She and her husband were also fully aware of the affair, but did not bring it up with her brother-in-law; they just looked on the affair with humour. For example, on the first day of the feast after Ramaḍān, the sister-in-law and I were taking breakfast in her house. Her husband, the brother of the man who was having the affair, made the following joke: "Ramaḍān is over. Now my brother, who has not been seeing his woman during the holy month, can start to see her again." As expected, the lovers did restart their relationship. Since revenge by the woman's agnates or husband is not expected in cases of adultery, the relationship is not seen as threatening to 'aila of the lover, either physically or morally. The relationship is seen as proof of his manliness.

His behaviour does not trespass any moral boundaries associated with being a man. Adultery is shameful for the adulterous woman, because she does not care about her sexual virtue. It is not the lover, but her who disgraces the honour of her husband.

This lover was single and therefore I could not get the wife's view. I encountered several other women, mostly Shawaya, whose husbands had had affairs with other women. These wives sometimes expressed their sadness and anger at their fellow women. Their audience sympathises with these wives, but no one would think of intruding on their problem. Even in cases when a wife returns to her natal family, her audience interpreted this as the demonstration of her objection to her husband's affair. Thus her behaviour is useful in bringing her problem to the attention of the public and for gaining sympathy. No one would thus consider mediating, nor interfering. Such matters are regarded as a personal problem between husband and wife.

Christians do not exact revenge either. Adultery between a Kurdish man and Christian woman is not interpreted as a sign of Kurdish political hostility to Christians, but is regarded as a personal matter. A liaison between a Kurdish married woman and a Christian man is also understood as a personal problem between her and her husband. The adulterous woman's behaviour is regarded by both Christian men and women as shameful ('āɪ̄), and deserving of divorce. Some women however, sympathise with the adulterous woman in private. They understand their conduct to be in defiance of the prevailing social view that it is wrong for a woman to complain about her married life and her husband, as long as her husband fulfils his role as a bread-winner for his household. Since a woman's social position is established through marriage and a good reputation as an obedient and modest wife, women feel that they are obliged to hold on to their married status. Even if a woman is unhappy in her marriage, no one can intrude on the problem between her and her husband and help her. Women therefore regard the adulterous woman's conduct as that of a person seeking sympathy and understanding of her miserable life.

Adultery of a married woman touches the male honour of her husband who controls her sexual behaviour. The husband therefore does not divorce her because of her sexual misconduct, but chooses to turn a blind eye in order to protect his honour. If the wife's adultery is exposed to the public, it is not only the husband, but also his sons who are regarded by others in society as men who may have the same disposition (*ṭabī'a*) as their father who lost control of their mother (cf. Meeker, 1976: 390-1). The sons therefore inherit their father's personal characteristics which means that a disgrace for a father affects the male honour of the sons. Although exposure of adultery to the public does not directly affect the honour of the woman's natal family members, it implies that their personal disposition is such that they do not respect women's chastity. The sisters of the adulterous woman are regarded by others in society as the women who may have the same innate character as hers and may acquire such characteristics in the course of their upbringing by their family. Since the adultery severs the husband and the natal family of the adulterous woman from their individual sexual honour, it is better for both of them to chose to deliberately ignore the adultery.

Narratives of sexual assault and loss of virginity, both in the case of a woman being assaulted or having a love affair, eloquently depict who should be responsible for her sexual virtue and for confining her contact with the world outside in order to protect the honour of *usra* or *'āila*. In contrast, adultery of a married woman is regarded as a private problem between a husband and wife. Her natal *'āila* are not obliged to punish her or take revenge on the lover for their honour, since responsibility for her sexual activity lies with her husband as long as their marriage continues. Since a married woman is not incorporated into her husband's *'āila*, her adultery does not affect their family honour. Whether or not a husband terminates his marriage for the sake of his male honour, or chooses to close his eyes to his wife's affair in order to retain her, is his personal decision. Adultery is not treated as reflecting group conflict between aggressor and the victim, because it is a matter related to the individual honour of the adulterous wife and her husband, and does not threaten the honour of either of their families.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I examined how narratives of contemporary and historical incidents create understanding of ethnic or sectarian group relations. First, I looked at stories and rumours among Qamishly Christians told during the Gulf war. Examining what these stories mean, and why they are told in stereotypical plots, leads to the basic understanding how the Christians regard the local Kurds with suspicion, and attribute to them base characteristics which depict relations between themselves and the Kurds.

The issues which repeatedly appear in these stories are violence and assault on female sexual virtue. These characteristics which appeared in the stories of Kurdish attack on the Christians are the same as those attributed to stories of the Christian massacre by the Kurds in local history. I have argued that the Christians give meaning to contemporary events in the light of their knowledge of Christian-Kurd relations constituted through local history and their experiences in the past, and thereby interpret Kurdish actions with reference to their history. The depiction of Kurdish attitudes and dispositions, as attributed in local history by the Christians, is applied to contemporary Christian-Kurd relations, and creates current Christian anxiety over Kurdish assaults on them.

Stories of prohibited relationships produced by each group act as a touchstone for interpreting the relations between these groups, as well as the local history produced by the Christians. The stories suggest the potential possibilities of women's sexual virtue being assaulted by men from different ethnic or sectarian groups. These stories therefore generate male anxiety over protecting women in their family in order to maintain their own and their family's honour. Women understand that their contact with men from different groups is interpreted by others in society as behaviour damaging to both individual and family honour in the schema of prohibited relationships. Women are therefore afraid of being gossiped about regarding relationships with outsiders, and need to obtain social acknowledgement through acceptance by their male guardians of their activities outside the home. This need means that women themselves collude to maintain the norms of gender segregation.

The stories of prohibited relationships attribute dispositions to each group, both by themselves and outsiders. For the Kurds and the Shawaya, brutal revenge against sexual violation is deemed as fulfilment of their duty, and so reinvigorates their customs and identity. The Christians, however, understand this violent behaviour differently. Kurdish brutality is interpreted in the light of their historical experiences of Kurdish brutality towards Christian women. In the Christian version of a Christian girl raped by a Kurdish man in the context of the Gulf War, the man is regarded as exemplifying the same brutal and sly dispositions shown against Christian women in the past. The Christians interpret the Shawaya's brutality as resulting from their ignorance and backwardness, as portrayed in the Christian version of the incident involving the Christian dentist. In this light, the Christians attribute dispositions both to themselves and the Shawaya as a dichotomy of them as advanced (*mutaqaddim*) versus backward (*mutaakhir*). The Shawaya and Kurds regard the Christians as a weaker minority who are not able to rely upon co-operation between relatives to protect their honour.

These dispositions are referred to as criteria for identifying their own decisions and actions as distinct from those of other groups. Even though each group produces different criteria to separate their characteristics from others, common to all interpretations of prohibited relationship is the need to draw boundaries between 'inside' and 'outside'. Actual responsibilities and obligations of protecting a woman's sexual virtue are however attributed not to her ethnic or sectarian group, but to her family. Who bears these responsibilities becomes a boundary marker between her family and others in their group. The group members however feel responsibility for protecting women in their own group based on their awareness of the distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. For example, male villagers in Ḍubāna, who do not have responsibility for protecting the sexual virtue of their female neighbour, said to me, "when an unrelated man approaches her, we are afraid of his assault on her". This statement indicates that they recognise the distinction between their own group and outsiders and show a fear of their group being disgraced by outsiders. Protecting

women's sexual virtue does not only create boundaries between their family and outsiders based on their responsibility for the protection, but also produces insider-outsider distinctions between ethnic or sectarian groups.

Adultery is not understood in terms of group conflict. Who must take responsibility for women's sexual acts becomes ambiguous for married women, due to the retention of their membership of their natal *'aila*, even after moving out to the conjugal *usra*. The husband of an adulterous wife regards her adultery as caused by her innate character and her up-bringing by her natal family. He can thereby transfer responsibility for her sexual misconduct to her natal family. By divorcing her, he can restore his honour. Since her natal family have already transferred responsibility for protecting her sexual virtue to her husband at marriage, they do not intrude themselves into the matter, because they regard her adultery as caused by the husband's loss of control over her sexual acts.

Since responsibility for a married woman's sexual misconduct is ambiguous, adultery is regarded as a personal matter between her and her husband. Adultery damages her husband's male honour, because she did not care about her sexual virtue. His loss of honour is not regarded as a result of sexual assault on her by the lover. Adultery between a man and woman from the same ethnic or sectarian group does not create conflict between her husband or her natal family and her lover's family. Moreover, adultery between a man and woman from different groups is not interpreted as assault on her group by the lover's group. Adultery damages only the individual honour of the adulterous woman, her husband and members of her natal family.

CHAPTER 4. WOMEN'S DILEMMA

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, relationships between men and women from different ethnic or sectarian groups of Christians, Kurds and Shawaya are prohibited. An illicit sexual relationship signifies offence to the honour of the woman's family. In the context of group oppositions, it is in breach of group boundaries and marriage regulations, as well as a political challenge for the men's group vis-`a-vis the woman's, because the woman's group has been dishonoured by the assault on her sexual virtue.

Single women's activities outside the home are more restricted than those of married women. Who must take responsibility (*maswūliya*) for married women's sexual virtue, and who suffers by their sexual misconduct, is ambiguous. The natal family retains responsibility throughout a woman's life on the one hand, and on the other hand, the natal family acknowledges the woman's transfer into the hands of her husband through marriage. This dual position of a married woman renders her sexual misconduct an individual matter between her and her husband. In this context only the individual honour of the two is a matter of concern.

Single women's behaviour is scrutinised by society more intensely, in accordance with the prohibition of sexual acts for the sake of maintaining the family honour and the insider-outsider distinction between ethnic or sectarian groups. Single women's sexual virtue is not treated therefore only as a matter of individual honour, but also a matter of family and group honour. Although single women try to meet their obligations and responsibilities to other members of their family and community by

restricting their activities, they often are caught in a dilemma between accomplishing their social obligations to others and fulfilling their own wishes. Such problems arise in their activities outside the home, where they come into contact with unrelated men (*gharāib*). I shall therefore examine women's dilemma in these activities.

In discussing self and morality, Gilligan (1982: 64-71) deals with the moral decision facing American female college students as an exercise in meeting one's obligations and responsibilities to others, whilst being caught in a dilemma between reclaiming the self and meeting these responsibilities. Even though the cultural background of the Western students is different from that of Jazirah women, the conflict or dilemma between conforming to social norms and accomplishing private wishes is the problem of a divided self which is the human social condition. In Jazirah, women from all groups, Christians, Shawaya and Kurds, try to present themselves as morally good (*qais*), whilst this presentation of self sometimes goes against their individual wishes. Women's morality is judged by both men and women on the basis of the following aspects: good women show their dependence on male support and protection, are obedient to male authority, and do not express sexual desire. Although outsiders can easily distinguish between these two aspects of obedience to male authority and constraints on sexual actions, locals describe a woman who has these good characteristics as an honourable woman (*sharīfa*). One aspect of the characteristics of a *sharīfa* is deference to male authority in the context of family relations. Any behaviour which ignores this male authority is regarded as shameful (`*aib*) by others in society. `*Aib* is therefore tied up with the social evaluation of a woman's behaviour by others.

Another characteristic of a *sharīfa* refers to sexual modesty. I have already described how sexual relationships are used as a boundary marker between different ethnic or sectarian groups. Love and liaison across group boundaries are threats to the framework that orders sexual segregation between groups, and also to the honour of the patrilineal kin group. Family members related through patrilineal line must protect their women's sexual virtue if they do not want to lose their honour in the competition

between ethnic or sectarian groups, families, and individuals. The bonds of agnatic family are constituted for these competitions, and work to eliminate the risks to female sexual virtue, the loss of which undermines the honour of those in this competition. Male family members are responsible for eliminating threats to their honour, while elder male members have a right to control the choice of marriage partners and the women's daily behaviour through sexual segregation.

The moral code distinguishing a *sharīfa* is the most effective force reminding women of the importance of social order and of responsibility to their family and community, as well as their own social worth. Female virtue is seen in the display of deference to family male elders, who represent the authority of the family. Women achieve this social value through the denial of sexual desire, and by keeping themselves away from personal contact with unrelated men. Inevitably, women do not always wish to submit to the restrictions imposed by family relations. This poses a dilemma for women between their own freedom and responsibility. I shall discuss here their attempts at resolving this dilemma, which necessitates a judgement of their behaviour on the basis of women's own private views, as opposed to those of men.

4.2.   Women's Inner Conflicts

Women's honour anchors them in passivity, in a reactive rather than an active stance. Women must shoulder the responsibility and obligations of their behaviour in order to maintain their own good reputation and family honour. Social evaluation of their behaviour, becomes a collective force which restricts women's activities. Women's reaction in the face of this, is to behave in such a way in public as to prevent others (*nās*) from harming their reputation. Other people's evaluation of women's behaviour and the norms applied to this evaluation therefore elicit particular forms of women's behaviour. Thus, public behaviour requires the concealment of one's will, because of the need to please others and the fear of losing the self-esteem which can only be obtained through deference to male authority. Women rarely express their own wishes, and state scrupulously their attachment to the social standards of prudence

and deference. They force themselves to behave amiably and obediently in the face of both social rules and male authority, in spite of the potential contradiction between their own wishes and their obligations. This kind of behaviour is demonstrated by May, a daughter of the Ṭai paramount sheikh, in the following incident.

May, who wanted to attend a wedding reception, showed me an invitation card and explained that "the bridegroom is the son of a religious sheikh. He is not our close relative (*qarīb*), but from the Ṭai. We will attend the reception together." On the day of the wedding I came back from Damascus in order to attend the reception. When I rang May, she told me that she would not be going, but would ask her father's brother to take me to the reception. When I visited her, her relatives, both men and women, who had come to Qamishly in order to attend the wedding in the evening, were gathered in her house. May told one of the older women of her desire to arrange for me to attend the reception. By applying the notion of friendliness or kindness (*luṭf*) to me as a foreigner, she was finding a pretext under which she might also be allowed to go. May used *luṭf* towards me as an excuse in order to relay her true wish (*raghba*), which was to attend the reception. The older woman turned to one of her male relatives, "Noriko has come back from Damascus in order to attend the wedding. Will you take her to the reception?" He said to me, "I will take you there." But as we waited for the man and May's father's brother to arrange for a car to take us to the reception, May's request was turned down. While all her relatives left to attend the reception, we were left behind. May had no choice but to obey her elders.

May did not react when her request was turned down and hid her wish to attend the wedding reception. Since many of her relatives were present when she had asked for us to be allowed to attend the reception, it was now necessary for her not to arouse criticism. This is because her relatives might scrutinise her reaction after her request was rejected. If she failed to give the impression of obedience and deference to them, they might attribute to her a bad disposition (*ṭabī'a*) that is, that she had strong sexual appetite and therefore wanted to look for a man in the reception. If she was attributed with such a bad disposition, she would have no offer of marriage.

A wedding reception is an occasion when men and women mix and dance together. Even though most male guests in that reception were her relatives, and friends and members of the bridegroom's family, the couple were not May's kin (I knew of the situation because I was able to attend the reception, accompanied by Ḍubāna villagers, after our attendance was rejected by May's relatives). May's father's brother and relatives therefore decided that, as a single woman, May should avoid the contact with unrelated men which would have taken place at the wedding.

May correspondingly needed to show her obedience to their decision in a situation in which she saw herself as subject to a consensus enforced by the norms of *sharīfa* and authority by her family, whose protection and support she depended on. Her display of deference and consent was aimed at reconfirming the assessment of her as a good (*qais*) woman. She thus chose to accept her responsibility to her family for the sake of her own image and to acquire their approval for her behaviour. She could only measure her own self by conforming to an image of *sharīfa* with others' recognition of her behaviour.

The discrepancy between May's wish and the fulfilment of her responsibility and obligation to her family is a source of inner conflict for May. She was reluctant to speak publicly of her own wishes, and of the constraints imposed on her through family relations. Women from any ethnic or sectarian groups think that their behaviour is subject to the judgement and evaluation of others in society and they therefore need to sacrifice their private wishes. A good woman must mask her own desires, and strive to meet her obligations, even if this presentation of her self is not congruent to another part of her self who wishes to satisfy her private wishes. Although women are constantly seeking affirmation of their good character, I encountered many occasions when women were caught in a dilemma between their public faces, expecting to be socially evaluated, and their private desire for autonomy.

Scott (1990) analyses transcripts of the power relationship between the dominant and the subordinate, and points to the discrepancy in performance between the public

transcript, which he uses as a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate, and the hidden transcript.

> "The hidden transcript is produced for a different audience and under different constraints of power than the public transcript. By assessing the discrepancy between the hidden transcript and the public transcript we may begin to judge the impact of domination on public discourse" (1990: 5).

According to Scott the hidden transcript, which takes place beyond direct observation by power-holders and is revealed in the comparative safety of friendship, makes it possible for us to know how contrived or imposed the public transcript actually is (ibid.: 4-6).

Jazirah women judge their own behaviour in different ways from the public interpretation. They have commonly held private standards among themselves; but these are never talked about in public. Their private conversations and narratives are different from their public performances, in which they try to maintain their good reputation and family honour. Private conversations and narratives show how women contrive to create their public image, and what devices they use when faced with the discrepancy between their personal intent and the public face they wish to maintain. To demonstrate this discrepancy, I shall refer to information which I collected as a result of the personal trust between my friends and myself, as well as through my own direct involvement in their lives.

Women use devices to resolve the discrepancy between their non-sexual public image, which pays deference to male authority over them and their inner wish for autonomy and freedom. Salwa, a twenty-eight year old *Suriyan* Christian living in Qamishly, told me of her obligation to her family and the construction of a socially acceptable character. She also gave an example of how women can enjoy some freedom, without failing to fulfil their obligations.

In a conversation which took place in her house when her household members were all out, soon after the marriage of her sister, we talked about the social evaluation of women's behaviour in Qamishly. Salwa said:

> "I go out to work everyday. I *am obliged* (*lāzim*, literally 'necessary' or 'imperative') to commute directly from my house to the school where I

work. I am never allowed to drop in on a friend. I _must_ (*mulzim*, literally 'compulsory' or 'binding') come back home at a fixed time. Otherwise my eldest sister, who is like a mother to me, worries about where I've been. I cannot often visit my friends either. I _must_ behave in such a _good_ (*qais*) way, otherwise people may spread rumours about me having an illicit relationship with a man. People (*nās*) here always gossip about any woman they see with a man. A woman often slanders another women and talks of another's shameful behaviour in order to reconfirm her own chastity. She wants to boast and imply that she is better (*ahsan*) than these women. I am fed up with this attitude of Qamishly women.

It is _shameful_ (`aib*) for us to ever think of having sexual relations (literally 'sleeping together', *niyām m`a ba`ad*). Even so, there are women who secretly have boyfriends. For example, all of my family are absent now; I could lend the key of my house to my friend and she could meet her boyfriend in my house. No one would know except for us. As long as you are discreet in these matters, it is not a problem; she will be regarded as a good woman by others."

Salwa used words which define social and moral judgement - 'obliged', 'must', 'good' and 'shameful'. These words express her subjective intention to obey social rules and her concern over the evaluation of her behaviour by others. She knew that a social evaluation by others, imposed on her behaviour, would be recognised by society as her own personal characteristics (*tabāi'*). She was also afraid that evaluation of her behaviour might be used by others in order to boost their own good character in comparison to hers. Therefore, the evaluation of her behaviour by others forces her to restrict her behaviour. She felt it was right that she should be responsible for her behaviour not only to herself, but also to her family members, whose honour is affected by her behaviour. Moreover, her personal characteristics would be regarded by others as innate and common among her female family members. She thus strove to conform to the ideal that a good woman must never have personal contact with unrelated men. Although she gave priority to concern for the reputation of her family members and the ideals of female value, she was clearly unhappy with the tensions in her life.

The dilemma caused by giving priority to responsibility to one's family, creates a private view of women who covertly rebel against the restrictions imposed on their behaviour. Women develop their private view of how they can be free from the restrictions of gender segregation without damaging their own and family honour. Many other women told me in private; "if no one sees you when you meet a man, you are regarded as a good woman". Women create their own standards of behaviour in order to preserve their social reputation as honourable women and be free from social constraints on their behaviour. I myself never heard any of the women, whom I knew had engaged in forbidden romance in secret, express feelings of betrayal towards their family. Although they morally consent to respect family honour, this morality is derived only from their concern for social esteem. The women's main concern is how others in society evaluate them with regard to their fulfilment of their responsibilities and obligations to their family, rather than issues of morality or social values. For them, moral justice is tied to their social reputation, determined by their sexual modesty and family honour. Women's view of moral justice thereby sets their private standards for interpreting their own behaviour.

Women, therefore, believe that seeking freedom through romance is not wrong as long as it does not damage family honour. The concept of love is a socially accepted value associated with aesthetics and independence. Seeking romance is not regarded by women as egocentric, but as a way of fulfilling their freedom, aside from their responsibility for family honour and social evaluation. This private view of seeking freedom is reflected in their secret behaviour. For Qamishly women the telephone is the most useful means of pursuing romance without damaging their social reputation. I overheard several such conversations over crossed telephone lines. For instance, a woman said to her male friend; "do you still keep my photo?" He replied to her; "yes, I like it very much." She said to him; "I cut my hair. I think you will like my new hairstyle. I will give you my new photo with this hairstyle."

There is another example. The woman on the other line was talking passionately to her male friend; "I really love you. I will kill myself if I do not win your heart. Do

you think that I am a beautiful woman? I bought a dancing costume. It is an attractive one. I will dance in front of you in this costume. You will see how beautiful I am." My neighbour woman who was with me knew both the man and woman concerned. The man was an Alawi government official and the woman a local single Christian. Their relationship was forbidden because it involved sexual encounter outside marriage, outside the kin group and between individuals from different religious communities. Their love went against the social order, and if revealed, would bring dishonour to her family. Hence, such conversations often remain secret, not revealed even to one's close friends.

Alawis are a Shi`a minority sect, living in Jabal Ansariyya in north-western Syria. They represent only twelve per cent of the total population in Syria (Ma'oz, 1988: ix, 19). Qamishly inhabitants understand the government policy to send Alawis to Jazirah as follows. The Syrian president Asad relied on his fellow Alawi officers for political and military control. Alawi officers who are sent to Jazirah in charge of the security and intelligence networks therefore occupy higher and middle levels of government posts in this region. The government has also sent many young Alawi school teachers, including a large number of female teachers, to Jazirah in order to overcome the shortage of school teachers in accordance with the government policy which has increased the numbers of schools in towns and villagers in Jazirah. Both officers and school teachers are the agents of the government and perform political roles to keep watch over the locals.

Although Qamishly inhabitants are kind and hospitable to the Alawis as well as to other outsiders, they do not wholeheartedly trust the Alawis. For example, my neighbour Alawi school teacher visited me and my host family every day. The family allowed her to use their telephone, lent her an iron and offered her meals. Although their kindness and hospitality towards her was genuine, they never told her their personal matters and political attitude. They told me behind her back; "these people (Alawis) try to spy out us. We therefore can not frankly tell her what is on our mind, even though we know that she is a good woman."

Romance is sought not only by city women, but also by women in villages. Village households usually have no telephone, and so do not have the same means of access to their fantasies of love. Instead, close relations between neighbours sometimes help them. Women may well fall in love with or have fantasies about their neighbour's relatives and friends, and will therefore visit their neighbours during these men's visits. I was secretly told by village girls in Ḍubāna of such feelings, and was asked several times to visit their neighbouring households with them so that they could see the object of their romance. Anyone can visit his/her neighbours freely. Close relations therefore makes it easier for a single woman to drop in on her neighbours and thus see the man concerned.

Women develop fantasies of secret love, which are shared in social situations in which responsibility for their sexual reputation and obedience to male authority in their family have restricted their activities. These women told me that they understood why women in their society seek such fantasies: "women who are looking for love want someone who truly wants and understands them, and who would not hesitate to contravene social obligations (ijbāt)." Women often fantasise about unrelated men who are regarded as potential aggressors to their sexual virtue. These fantasies are subversive of the social order and defy the authority of their family, whose honour is established through preserving this order. Contact with these men is a challenge to the authority of family elders and the social system, whereas love as a concept is admired as an ideal of autonomy and independence. True love might be realised by the strong will of a couple who do not hesitate to rebel against the social order in the exercise of their freedom and autonomy. Women therefore fantasise about such love.

Most women whom I knew, however, did not seek sexual relationships nor did they engage in sexual acts. They only enjoy feelings of love, through which they can relieve themselves from the tension in their lives caused by their striving to be honourable women. They do not want to distract from their public face, but it is too burdensome for them to care about their social reputation all the time. They therefore seek fantasies of love in order to be free from the social reality.

Women who are subject to the consensus and judgement of men in their family, do not show resentment towards these men. This may come from the mutual understanding of gender roles between them: men protect and support their women, and women respect men's authority and protect their honour, which depends on the women's sexual modesty. It is others (*nās*) in society whom women resent, because they feel themselves subject to their judgement and evaluation. Women do not think therefore that it is the men in their family who enforce obedience to these norms, but others in society. Others judge their behaviour according to the men's view which is the official language of society. It is not only men, but also women who apply this view to other women's behaviour. As Salwa said, it is widely believed by women themselves that women use other women's misconduct in order to highlight their own better (*aḥsan*) character in comparing their own and other's behaviour. Thus, this self-presentation, aimed at acquiring social acknowledgement, applies the men's view to the interpretation of other women's behaviour. The following example shows how a woman can fear assessment of her behaviour by others, who use it for their own self presentation.

Nuhā, a *Suriyan* Christian and my friend, visited me with her fiancé. I was with my neighbour, Salmā, a single *Suriyan* Christian. Nuhā asked Salmā about the employees of a foreign company in Qamishly. Both Nuhā and Salmā had once been invited to one of their parties by the wife of an employee. After Nuhā's departure, Salmā cried at having been shamed by Nuhā. Salmā told me that Nuhā wanted to present herself to her fiancé as an honourable woman (*sharīfa*) by comparison to Salmā. The fact that Salmā liked one of the employees at that company was an open secret. Salmā thought that Nuhā's intention in asking her about the company was to remind her fiancé of Salmā's open secret. Later I told Nuhā about Salmā's anger and asked the reason for her question to Salmā. Nuhā denied she had used Salmā for the sake of her own self-presentation in front of her fiancé.

Salmā's understanding was based on the feelings of vulnerability felt by women whose social evaluation is dependant on others' judgement of female sexual virtue.

Salmā thinks that Nuhā is one of those (*nās*) who are not close to her and who can easily label her as having a bad character or disposition (*ṭabīʿa*) towards a strong sexual desire; in other wards, that she does not know how to protect her honour. To highlight one's own honourable character often therefore takes the form of presenting another woman's bad characteristics. Even if a woman boasts her own good character by slandering other woman's shameful behaviour behind her back, the slandered woman is often acutely aware of who spreads such gossip. By hearing rumours of who slandered her, she is full of suspicion and fear that others may interpret her behaviour badly and attribute a base *ṭabīʿa* to her.

Wikan analyses gossip and slandering among women in Cairo. She says, "when a woman purveys gossip, she is actually more concerned with her own self-presentation than with the person she is slandering" (1980: 58). Jazirah women do not think that they themselves use these tactics of gossip and slandering in order to emphasise their own valued characteristics and to devaluate other's reputation. Moreover, they believe that close friends and relatives support each other and keep their secrets. When a woman speaks ill of her friend behind her friend's back, she loses the trust of her friend, and the friendship is terminated. Although betrayal happens in presenting one's own good character, no one admits to spreading gossip. Every one presents herself as a person who does not slander her friends and relatives. The gap between the trustworthy attitude in front of her friends and relatives and the slandering behind their backs is sometimes revealed through gossip. The slandered woman terminates a friendship with her two-faced friend. The reason of distrust is explained: "she speaks too much (*taḥaki katīr*) [about my private matters to others]". To be a gossipmonger is one of the worst characteristics used for judging one's character. It often happens among Jazirah women that a secret is revealed by close friends and relatives for the sake of their own self-presentation of good character. Women therefore, fear that their friends and relatives may in turn use these tactics. For Jazirah women, 'others' have the social power to ruin their reputation. On the one hand, they seek ideals of friendship, trust their close friends and ask their support when they are in

vulnerable situation, yet on the other hand, they are also afraid of telling their secrets to their friends, for fear that their friends may reveal them to others.

For women, establishing a social reputation as respectable and modest is the objective measure of their social worth, whereas love between a man and a woman is thought to be the true reflection of personal value between individuals who are not affected by social constraints. Women therefore seek romance as an act which reveals their own sense of self-worth. This act leads to the negligence of male authority over women's activities and the norms of gender segregation. Through personal contact with an unrelated man, a woman endangers her reputation and family honour. When a woman attempts to seek romance, and her clandestine activity is not found out by others, she can keep her reputation as a good woman and does not feel that her clandestine activity is morally wrong. Once it is revealed, she is not able to hide her indiscretion or maintain her respectable social front. Her clandestine activity is interpreted by others in society as sexual misconduct. She may lose marriage chances, because she may be sexually loose and have a strong sexual desire which undermines her husband's honour. This character is regarded as her personal disposition (*tabī'a*). Honour of her family members is ruined by her misconduct; her sisters receive the same disposition as her; male family members are labelled as men who lack the ability to control their woman's sexuality. The disgrace of the family is tied to the woman through patriline and therefore the family retain the bad reputation over generations. This risk constitutes a dilemma for many women. The following example of Ghada's clandestine visit to an unrelated man's flat demonstrates well a woman's dilemma: she does not want to tarnish her good social reputation, but her attempt to seek romance runs contrary to the behaviour required for a positive social acknowledgement of her disposition (*tabī'a*).

Ghada, a thirty-seven year old single *Suriyan* Christian woman from Qamishly and my friend, who wanted to meet a man secretly, approached me one day: "will you be free tomorrow? Shall we go to the ice-cream parlour?" I agreed to go to the ice-cream parlour, one of the few places women could sit and talk outside the house on hot

summer evenings. When we went out together the next day, she walked past the ice-cream parlour. I asked her, "aren't we going to this ice-cream parlour?" She replied, "no, we will visit my friend". I asked her "which friend?" She replied in a low voice, "Rāid." He was an Alawi man from another region, who worked as a civil servant. We had met him by chance in his office a month ago. I knew Ghada often rang him secretly. A man who was Rāid's subordinate in the office was waiting for us in front of a kiosk about a quarter of a mile from Rāid's flat. We did not exchange greetings, kept our distance from him, and followed him.

Rāid lived alone. He offered us coffee, fruits and sweets. We spent most of our time talking about the tourist attractions in Turkey, where we had all visited. The man who took us to the flat did not join in our conversation. We stayed just twenty minutes or so. When we were leaving, Rāid did not come with us. On the steps outside we came across a man and his family sitting in the courtyard of the house opposite the flat. Ghada suddenly jumped, "he is a friend of my brother. He must have seen me. If he tells my brother where I was, or someone in his family spreads gossip about my visit, · · · what shall I do?" She had obviously not told anyone about this visit.

Ghada was careful to hide her clandestine visit to Rāid from her family. She had even told me a lie to secure my company. As long as her activity was not noticed by others, she did not think that her search for romance was wrong. Such clandestine activities, however, create feelings of isolation from the family amongst many women. Without acknowledgement of their activities outside the home by their family, they cannot acquire self-esteem. Hiding their clandestine activities from their family and giving priority to fulfilling their own wishes (*raghba*) prevents women from access to this source of social evaluation and self-esteem. Their covert rejection of male authority within the family deprives them of their protection. Even though often no one finds out about women's betrayal of their families, the act of rejecting their obligations causes feelings of loneliness and isolation.

What Ghada worried about was the exposure of the discrepancy between her position within her family and her attempt to seek romance, with its potential threat to

dishonour her family. In order to solve this discrepancy she chose isolation from her family. Nevertheless her attempt to seek romance, while maintaining her responsibility to her family's honour, had failed when she feared that her clandestine visit was seen by her brother's friend. Even if no one directly brought Ghada's visit to the attention of her brother, she would not be able to control the gossip. She thus found herself in a dilemma trying to claim freedom through seeking her romance, and keeping a good reputation. For Ghada, 'the family' represents others (*nās*) who may spread gossip about her visit and tarnish her relationship with her family. They could attribute to her a base disposition (*ṭabī`a*) of a woman with sexual desire (*raghba*) to 'sleep with a man' (*tnām m`a shab*), as proved by her visit to Rāid. The social evaluation of her as a possessor (*ḍāt*) of such a disposition, would classify her as ignorant of the behaviour required of an honourable woman (*sharīfa*).

Raghba means personal wishes and desire. *Raghba* often causes behaviour which goes against the behavioural standards required of an honourable woman. *Raghba* therefore indicates sexual desire which undermines a woman's respect for her sexual virtue which in turn affects the honour of her family. What Ghada feared was being labelled by society as a woman whose strong sexual desire will lead her into illicit relationships. With this stigma, others would judge her as a woman whom no one wants to marry, and also judge her male family members as incapable of controlling the behaviour of their female kin.

In reality no one would tell Ghada's brother about her clandestine visit. This would be regarded as trespassing on others' autonomy, and interference with another's business, regardless of whether or not Ghada's brother was able to exert control over her behaviour. Such interference would be seen by him as confirmation of his inability and thus destroy his honour. A man should be a possessor (male: *ḍū*, female: *ḍāt*) of authority over his women, but must achieve this by himself.

Women whose behaviour deviates from social values are regarded by people in society as having failed to develop respectable dispositions. What is crucial in social interaction is "(1) *demonstrating* one's respect (*iḥtirām*) for the social honour of the

other in some symbolic act, which is simultaneously (2) a *demand* for respect of one's own honour, also demonstrated in a symbolic act, by the other" (italic original) (Caton, 1986: 294). Women's deference to male authority and sexual modesty are symbolic acts, through which they can identity themselves as respectable women. Through their modesty and respect towards male authority over them, the women also expect to receive acknowledgement of their honourable character from others in return. A single woman going out alone without her family's consent is seen by others in society as offending the male authority over women. Regardless of her intention, her act is interpreted with sexual connotations. One typical example was the case of Nabila, a twenty-eight year old Shawaya woman from Dubāna.

Nabila often visited her relatives in Qamishly alone. She exchanged greetings in the street with men whom she defined as her relatives, *krif* of her brothers, and neighbours (but they were from the neighbouring village). I visited her mother's sister in Qamishly with her several times. Once she asked me to visit her grandfather from her mother's side, who was recovering from a heart attack and was back home from the hospital. A few days after our visit, Nabila's young male neighbour, Hamīd, warned me against visiting others outside the village in the company only of one other woman, and especially with Nabila. On another occasion when I was talking with a middle-aged man, Abān, about our visit to Nabila's grandfather, he warned me: "do not visit people whom you do not know. Even though they are relatives of our neighbours, you should not go with only one other woman. It is bad for two women to go out alone."

One month later, Nabila asked me to visit her grandfather again, in front of Hamīd and his brothers. After Nabila had left, Hamīd said, "Nabila has many male friends and goes out alone to visit them. When her mother warns her not to go out alone, she does not obey her mother. She does not respect her mother and even hits her with her sandal. The man whom Nabila referred to as her grandfather is not her real grandfather. He is just her kin (*qarīb*). I am worried about you. You should not visit her tomorrow and should avoid going out with her." Another day when I was sitting with Nabila she told me privately: "I go to Qamishly alone like you. My

neighbours judge a woman like me as a woman whom no one wants to marry. I know what they are saying about me."

Nabīla was the only single woman in Ḍubāna who travelled to Qamishly alone. My conversations with Hamīd and Abān provided me with the male perspective on Nabīla's behaviour. They did not speculate on the reasons why Nabīla went out alone, or why she was not obedient to her parents. No one commented on the underlying reasons for her conduct, thus totally ignoring Nabīla's discontentment and her vulnerability, expressed through her anti-social behaviour. From the male perspective, Nabīla was disobedient to the authority of her senior family members and went out alone. Her lack of respect for her family was regarded by these villagers as a sign that she did not preserve her sexual virtue.[1] Nabīla was regarded as the possessor (*ḏāt*) of a bad disposition (*ṭabī'a*), unable to control her own desire (*raghba*), or to develop a sense of the behaviour required by a single woman. This failure made her lash out with a sandal, like a child trying to justify itself against the advice of its elders. More importantly, a sandal is a special object related to the social order created by Allah. A sandal with the sole up symbolizes disobedience to Allah's will. In order to demonstrate obedience to the social order, a sandal's sole should always touch the ground. Nabīla's throwing of a sandal at her mother was regarded, in the light of a child's action, as the behaviour of someone who does not know the social order that requires her to respect elders; someone who, faced with the gap between what she wants to do and the social constraints imposed on her, cannot control herself.

The interpretation of Nabīla's attitude by the men, classified her as a person who has failed to acquire any awareness of obedience to the elders in her family or control over her wishes, just like a child. Men regarded her disposition as derived from her lack of morality, which sustains social relations based on shared norms and values; her ignorance of the need to demonstrate her respect for the social honour of the others made her behave purely on the basis of her own individual needs.

From the male villagers' point of view, Nabīla's reason for going out, i.e. to visit her relatives (*qarāib*) - who would return her visits frequently - was unacceptable.

For these men, her behaviour was derived from her disposition, i.e. her failure to control her individual needs. Even though Nabīla insisted that she visited her grandfather, Hamīd doubted her intention and suspected her of meeting strange men (*garāib*), because he regarded her as a woman acting according to her wishes.

The man Nabīla mentioned as her grandfather was her mother's foster father and her mother's father's brother. Nabīla's mother, Warda, was brought up by this foster father from the age of three months, after her biological father's death (**Figure 2**). All of Nabīla's brothers and sisters addressed their mother's foster father as their grandfather. He was also Nabīla's father's patrilateral kin.

Figure 2. Genealogical relation between Nabīla and her mother's foster father
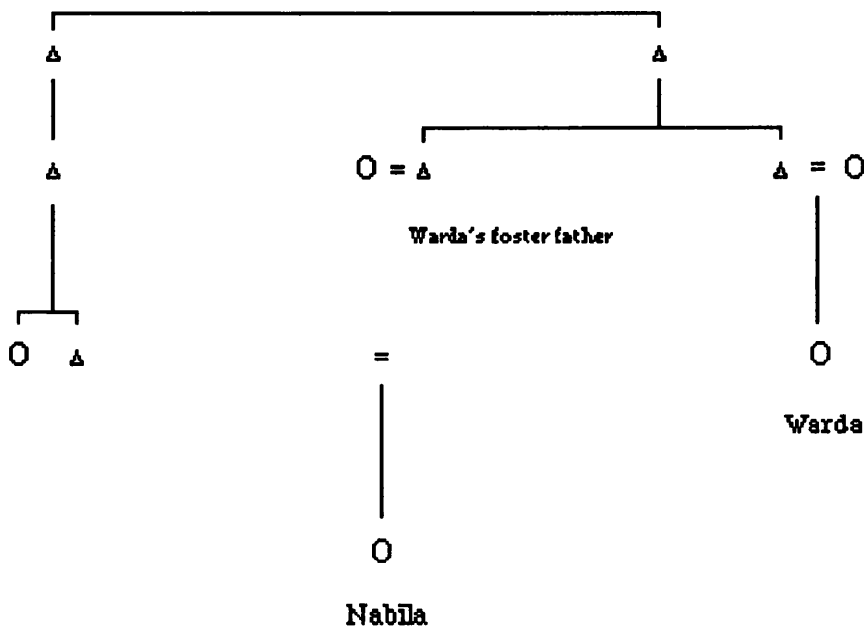
Nabīla's household and her grandfather's household were closely related. These two households frequently exchanged visits and supported each other. Nabīla's mother also often visited her foster father. Despite such close relations, Nabīla's visit was nevertheless defined by the male villagers as a challenge to the norm of male authority over women. Men define women in terms of the latter's social position that requires

respect for male authority and maintenance of her sexual virtue. A woman's obedience and modesty are a source of affirming individual honour for herself, as well as her respect for family honour. Nabīla's behaviour ignored concerns about her virtue and her family honour by failing to conform to the norm of gender segregation. Nabīla's wish to care for her sick grandfather and to keep intimate relations with her relatives - both of which are socially acceptable - was not however in keeping with the behavioural standards of a single woman.

Nabīla had confronted the fact that her future prospects, formed by her earlier life situation, had become marred. She had been engaged when she was eighteen years old. Her engagement had been broken off by interference by her male kin, encouraged by one of the tribal sheikhs, who had not been on good terms with her husband-to-be. The marriage had been cancelled by her *ibn `amm*, who had the right of *khyār* preventing her from marrying other men whose genealogical relation to her is more distant than him. After the breakdown of this engagement, Nabīla had had no offers of marriage. Thus, Nabīla was already a loser in the competition for prestige, for she had no hope of socially consolidating her position through marriage. Through my friendship with Nabīla and my observation of her behaviour, I knew that she had no intentions of seeking relationships with unrelated men, or of disregarding male authority over her. She had simply constructed an alternative behavioural rationale, based on the idea that exchange between close relatives is essential in order to solidify the patrilineal kin group. Such activity is allowed for middle-aged married women as a means of maintaining and enhancing relationships between women and their kin, and establishing a social position as a married woman who can be a spokes-woman among women in her household. Nabīla tried to construct her social worth through this social exchange. It is, however, not allowed for a young single woman, because refraining from going out alone in order to protect her sexual virtue, is the most important role for single woman.

Other village women viewed Nabīla's actions in different ways from men. The women usually did not criticise Nabīla in front of her; criticising others is thought to be

intrusive and offensive. Once a middle-aged married woman advised Nabīla in private not to go out alone: "no man wants to marry a woman who strolls alone in the street." This interpretation, similar to Nabīla's own analysis, focuses on the issue that others' interpretation of her behaviour, based on male values, becomes a social force which attributes to her an unrespectable disposition. Although the middle-aged woman did not doubt Nabīla's sexual innocence - there were no rumours about Nabīla's sexual relations -, she was concerned that Nabīla should acknowledge people's (nās) views of responsibilities and obligations which she must take, and behave in a way that would not allow others to attribute a bad disposition to her.

Women interpret other women's behaviour on the same basis as men, but for a different reason. Nabīla's female neighbours did not compare her to a child who has not yet learnt *dunya*, that is, the social relations constituted on the basis of norms of responsibility and obligation to others. Women understand very well how others judge them and their behaviour. If their behaviour is deviating from the way of *dunya*, they are regarded as women undermining their honour. Thus, Nabīla was advised to refrain from embarrassing behaviour in order to avoid social evaluation which lowered her social esteem. Women believe in the ideals of autonomy and freedom, and refuse to be dominated by men's values of confining their activities. They would not criticise Nabīla's actions because they signified her freedom, nor attribute to her the kind of personal characteristics which led her to refuse male authority. But at the same time, women recognise that women's autonomy cannot be achieved without the consent of their male elders and others in society whose view is authorised by social consensus.

4.3. Conclusion

If male control over women in their family is not publicly observed, people (nās) will say that these men have no honour. The construction of an honourable (sharīf) male self is crucially competitive and entails the others' evaluation of, whether or not his male authority over women in his family is exercised. The construction of this role-oriented male self, imposes social constraints on women. These constraints are derived

from the social value of honourable women (*sharīfa*), who must be obedient to male authority and sexually modest, and preserve gender segregation. These constraints sometimes cause a dilemma for women because they need to sacrifice their wishes (*raghba*) and their autonomy in order to protect male and family honour and establish their own social reputation. They are afraid that their individual-oriented behaviour may undermine their social self.

Women feel that their behaviour is constrained by these social obligations. They try to find a way to express their own wishes beyond the direct observations of their family and others in society by whom their behaviour is scrutinised. Secret romance is such an expression. Although extra-marital relationships and those between individuals from different ethnic or sectarian groups are prohibited, women seek their autonomy in romance and these prohibited relationships. Sentiments of love are subversive of the social order which demarcates groups and prohibits extra-marital relationships. To express love is a challenge to this order, and is disobedient to the family whose honour is achieved by serving this order. Love is, however, the paramount ideal because it gives priority to personal value and understanding between individuals. Women experience a sense of freedom, initiative, and autonomy through fantasising about love. However, they are well aware of the social situation in which they live. They must be aware of the inconsistency of being honourable women who attempt to seek love. They regard society as constituted of individuals who scrutinise their behaviour and prevent them from realising their fantasies by imposing on them the collective values of honour and norms of gender segregation.

Women are therefore concerned with the damage which others can inflict upon them, and try to find a way in which their wishes can be realised without damaging their reputation. They justify their fantasies as long as they remain undiscovered and their social reputation remains intact. This is the private view of women who have to gain their respective freedom within the social system which constrains their behaviour (cf. Abu-Lughod, 1992: 35). They know what others expect of them, and want to be acknowledged by others for the sake of acquiring social reputation and self-esteem. In

order to avoid damage to their social image, they contrive not to reveal their fantasies in public.

Men deal with women's misconduct on the basis of women's sexual modesty and their obedience to male authority. These male concerns are more formal, and impose expected roles on women. If women do not voluntarily pay deference to male authority, and are engaged in actions which are regarded as negligent of their sexual virtue, it is not only threatening to male honour and that of their family, but also challenges the social order constituting relations within the family, the marriage rules, and the insider-outsider distinction between ethnic or sectarian groups. Men in the community therefore attribute a woman's resistance to authority to her disposition (*ṭabī'a*), which they believe has not allowed the woman to acquire sufficient knowledge of her obligations and the need to control individual desire (*raghba*), including sexual desire. This labelling becomes socially imperative because men relate this disposition to the loss of individual and group honour, both of which are paramount values in society. Women accept this labelling, because they want to be evaluated as honourable women and this reputation is a source of their self-esteem. Women also know that other women, as well as men, support this labelling, and attribute another woman's misconduct to her base disposition as a way of highlighting their own good character.

Interpretative differences between men and women shed light on the meaning of single women's activities in seeking a sense of freedom and initiative. While women acknowledge the dominant discourse imposed on them by men to construct a conventional role-oriented self in public, they seek their own discourses in private on deciding their own behaviour and acquiring freedom. These discourses offer an alternative to reconciling the discrepancy between individual wishes and social obligations. Ghada's behaviour of seeking her freedom in romance, and Nabila's care of her grandfather through which she tried to acquire self-esteem as a woman adherent to the norm of mutual support between close kin, were based on such private discourses. Both of them are regarded as subversive of social relations which require

respect to male authority and family honour, once they are scrutinised in pubic. Both love and mutual support between kin are paramount ideals. The legitimacy of male authority restraining women from seeking these ideals is questionable in women's eyes. But single women's role and social evaluation based on honour render these women's attempts futile. Autonomy and freedom are admirable values, but on the behavioural level, women must face many obstacles in realising them. In the following two chapters I shall describe how women can achieve relative freedom and autonomy within a system in which deference to male authority dominates.

CHAPTER 5. TRIBAL RELATIONS

5.1   Introduction

In this chapter I shall discuss kinship and tribal relations among the Ṭai. The categories of kinship and tribal relations are described in the same way by both men and women. These categories are used for describing relationships between patrilineal kin, and are also used for defining alliances between tribal members among the Ṭai, especially between the sheikhs and commoner tribal members. Relations between the Ṭai paramount sheikh and the commoner tribal members are historically hierarchical, as mentioned in previous chapters. The commoner tribal members try to reduce status difference between themselves and the sheikh by applying the ideology of egalitarian tribal relations to their relationships with the sheikh. This chapter firstly describes those kinship relations which are constituted on the basis of the ideology of complementary tribal opposition and social obligations between kin, and then discusses how egalitarian attitudes of commoners affect political and economic relations within the Ṭai tribal community.

The Ṭai is one of the largest Shawaya tribal confederations in north-eastern Syrian Jazirah. Their tribal territory stretches from Mount Singar in the south, to Diyarbakr in the north, and from Malkiya in the east, to Qamishly in the west. The sheikh of the Ṭai tribal confederation estimates their population to be 75,000, but actual figures are unobtainable. Tribal members regard the Ṭai as a confederation composed of twelve tribes (`ashāïr plural of `ashīra): `Asāf, Maharāt, Bu`āshi, Rashid, Jarīth, Jarb, Juwāla, Bni-saba`a, Baqāra, Ghanāma, M`āmara and Zbaid. They view the Ṭai as an affiliation of these `ashīra-s, and the `Asāf `ashīra as the sheikhly tribe within

which the position of the Ṭai paramount sheikh is passed down. Amongst the Ṭai the title of 'sheikh' is generally used to refer to members of the ʿAsāf, even though each ʿashīra itself has a head-man, called raīsu, who in some cases may be called a sheikh. The Ṭai tribal members believe that the judicial superiority of the ʿAsāf, as keepers of the position of the paramount sheikh, derives from their descent from Hātem Ṭai, a prominent ancestor who led the Ṭai from Yemen to Hijāz. Although genealogical relations between ʿashīra-s within the Ṭai are not identical, the Ṭai recognise that the tribal confederation is constituted by the alliance of each ʿashīra with the ʿAsāf.

The term ʿashīra is used to refer to a tribal unit. At the top level of the confederation, the Ṭai is referred to by the tribal members as ʿashīra, because ʿashīra in this sense refers to the Ṭai as a tribal entity. Below the level of the Ṭai tribal confederation, each tribal group, such as ʿAsāf, Harb and so on, to which the English term 'tribe' may be applicable, is also referred to as ʿashīra, in the context of where the affiliation of members inside each tribe is claimed in order to distinguish one's own tribe from others. This contextual usage of ʿashīra demonstrates that ʿashīra is a tribal category, which precedes actual description by actors and is used for distinguishing 'we', as members of an ʿashīra, from outsiders.

On the one hand, the term ʿashīra is used for distinguishing between their own ʿashīra A and ʿashīra B, whose members they regard as outsiders, or aliens, gharāib (single: gharīb). On the other hand, however, the relationship between the tribes, i.e., ʿashīra-s, within the Ṭai, is regarded by the Ṭai tribal members as that between 'brothers' (ikhwān), regardless of genealogical relations. By claiming ikhwān relations, each ashīra can define its relation to other ʿashīra and constitute alliances between them on the basis of Ṭai tribal confederation.

While the Ṭai is an assemblage of tribes, the sheikhly ʿashīra, ʿAsāf, is only one of the tribes amongst the Ṭai. However, the political and economic history of the Ṭai is characterised by the sheikhs wielding power over tribal members of other ʿashīra-s within the Ṭai. The relationships between the ʿAsāf and other tribes are historically hierarchical, whereas relationships between other ʿashīra-s are equal. Moreover,

below the level of tribe, the Ṭai apply the term ʿashīra to a tribal group, on the assumption that they constitute a tribal unit composed of members who can trace patrilineal genealogy. On this level, members within an ʿashīra are patrilineal kin and are in equal relations. Since ʿashīra is a category to describe tribal relations, its membership is explained by the members when the ideology of tribal segmentary opposition is working. Individuals identify their membership of an ʿashīra in opposition to a complementary group of their ʿashīra. When this complementary group is a tribe, they identify themselves as members of a tribe. In another context, if the complementary groups are tribal subdivisions, such groups too are referred to as ʿashīra-s and they identify their ʿashīra membership as that of a tribal subdivision. Since ʿashīra membership is defined in opposition to its complementary ʿashīra, in the Ṭai tribal structure, relations between ʿashīra-s must be equal. The commoner tribal members apply this idea of ʿashīra relations to their understanding of relations between themselves and the ʿAṣāf members, and seek egalitarian relation to the sheikhs.

A contradiction is found between egalitarian tribal relations based on the tribal structure and actual relations between the sheikh and his tribal members, which are largely affected by his political and economic influence upon them. The commoner tribal members try to resolve this contradiction through discourses on tribal alliances with the Ṭai sheikhs. I shall examine these discourses in terms of ceremonial exchanges and women's agricultural activities. In both of these, the value of 'brotherhood' (ukhuwa), constituted by tribal alliance, and the ideas of honour (sharaf), force the sheikhs to accept the tribal members' egalitarian attitude, while the sheikh's political influence on them is still accepted by the commoners.

5.2 Tribal and Kinship Relations

Below the level of tribe, the Ṭai tribal members assume genealogical relations with each other, even though they cannot actually trace the genealogical line to the upper level of the tribe. They use the word fakhd (plural: afkhād) in order to explain

genealogical division within an `ashīra. Fakhḍ means, literally, thigh. In everyday life in Dubāna, composed of people from different tribes, the villagers identify themselves, or other villagers, through their relationship to their `ashīra. For example, they understand that nine households among twenty-one households in Dubāna belong to the same tribal segment, the Garāksha of the Maharāt tribe. The members and other villagers refer to the Garāksha as an `ashīra, when they mention the Garāksha as a tribal group in contrast to other tribal groups, `ashīra-s, to which other villagers affiliate. Garāksha members identify themselves as belonging to the same `ashīra, regardless of the `ashīra's tribal subdivisions (afkhāḍ) which cannot trace genealogical relations each other. **Figure 3** shows genealogical relations which are recognised by the Garāksha members in Dubāna. They trace their patrilineal ancestors, at best, back to five generations at the level of the Garāksha fakhḍ. Although fakhḍ A and fakhḍ B cannot trace a common patrilineal ancestor, members of both fakhḍ A and fakhḍ B agree that they belong to the same `ashīra, the Garāksha. Through my interviews and conversations with them, I understood that relations between patrilineal kin (qarāib) incorporate them into `ashīra based on mutually agreed genealogical relations. They see genealogy as legitimising the present relationships between patrilineal kin.

Qarāib (single: qarīb), which means patrilineal kin, is a word derived from qurba, meaning 'to get close'. These close relationships are not only determined by genealogy, but also by actual practices according to the norm of patrilineal kin 'supporting each other' (musā`ada ma`a ba`ad). Past genealogical relationship is simply a presupposition, brought into play as present relations are constituted. Ṭai members sometimes complain about the qarāib behind their back: "qarāib cannot be close if they fail to fulfil their obligations (ijbār) in supporting each other." They understand that co-operation and mutual support maintain qarāib relationships. The following example is how Garāksha members in Dubāna describe their membership of the `ashīra by carrying out obligations of co-operation and how little reference is made to the genealogical past in order to maintain their relationship.

When Awid, one of the villagers, (see **Figure 3**) came out of hospital and returned to the village, most of the Ḍubāna villagers visited him in order to wish him well. Some villagers stayed with him when others had left, in order to prepare the communal meal offered as thanksgiving to God for the patient's recovery. One of the women who stayed on, Faṭima, told me, "we all here are from the Garāksha. We all

**Figure 3. Two *fakhḍ*-s of the Garāksha `ashīra* (▲ means deceased, or non-resident in Ḍubāna)

Fakhḍ A   **Fakhḍ B**
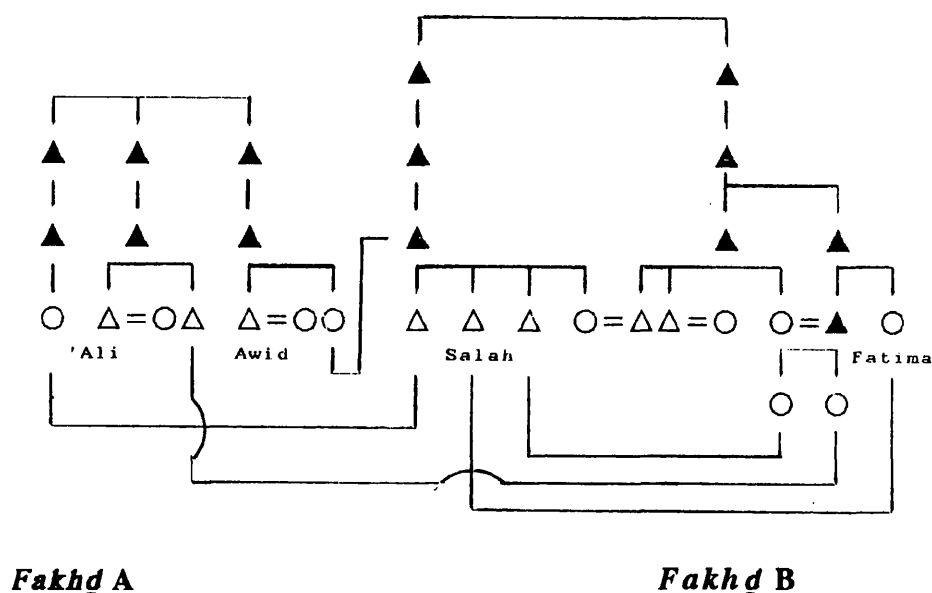
are his *qarāib*". As shown in **Figure 3**, because of intensive inter-marriage within the Garāksha, most of the women married to Garāksha men in Ḍubāna are also from the Garāksha. Among ten women who married Garāksha men in Ḍubāna, only two are married-in from the outside: one is Awid's Kurdish wife and the other is `Ali's wife, from a different `ashīra of the Ṭai. Faṭima is Ṣalaḥ's wife, and is from the same *fakhḍ* as Ṣalaḥ. Her natal family (`āila) and Ṣalaḥ's family belong to *fakhḍ* B, and are therefore not able to trace a genealogical link to Awid, who is from *fakhḍ* A. Faṭima explained the present relationship between the villagers from the Garāksha in terms of how 'we', members of the Garāksha, carry out our kinship obligation (*ijbār*)

preparing and participating in celebrating Awid's recovery, whereas other villagers, who did not attend the celebration were not Awid's *qarāib*. Dubāna villagers understand their kinship relations in terms of their incorporation into *ashīra* relations based on the fulfilment of their obligations. The fulfilment of obligations between kin requires their participation in reciprocal social exchanges. Awid's kin who participated in the preparation of the communal meal and celebration of his recovery, can expect the same kind of service from Awid's family, when they need it. Relations within *ashīra* are constituted through such kinship obligations. They are close, because they fulfil their obligations each other. `*Ashīra* is not an abstract concept. Since `*ashīra* defines relationships between kin who fulfil obligations to one another, the relationships imply separation from people who do not take part in carrying out their kinship obligations. The Garāksha is described as an `*ashīra* whose members owe obligations to support each other, in contrast to other villagers who do not participate in the circle of their social exchange.

The Garāksha is not always recognised as composing one tribal group in contrast to another tribal group to which other villagers affiliate. The `*ashīra* is composed of patrilineal kin and therefore relations between members within the `*ashīra* are defined in terms of genealogy. Since `*ashīra* refers to a tribal group, kinship relations among the `*ashīra* and those in segments of the `*ashīra* must be explained from the point of tribal structure. I shall take an example of how the villagers from the Garāksha `*ashīra* understand their inclusion into segmentary groups of the `*ashīra* and how they describe the relationships between them. Their cognition of `*ashīra* relations is affected by their contextual definition on the basis of the ideology of complementary group opposition. In talking about relations with Widād, Sleiman and Husain, who were Dubāna villagers from *fakhd* A of the Garāksha, I was told how they define subdivisions (*afkhād*) of the *fakhd* A, and the relationships between them. **Figure 4** is drawn based on Sleiman's kinship chart. I omitted some names and people shown on his chart, as they are not directly related to our discussion about relationships between their patrilineal kin.

Figure 4. Aswad and Hawiwu _fakhd-s_

```
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        Δ                              Δ
      Aswad                          Hawiwu
  ┌────┬──────┐                        │
  Δ    Δ      Δ                        Δ
'Antal  Muhaimîd                       │
        │    ┌──┬──┐                    Δ
        Δ    Δ  Δ  Δ                   ┌──┬────┐
      ┌──┬──┐      │                   Δ  Δ    Δ
      Δ  Δ  Δ      Δ                        ┌──┐
        Hadi      Hani                      O  Δ
        ┌──┐      ┌──┐                     Widâd
        Δ  Δ      Δ  Δ
     Sa'id Nabîl  Sleimân
        │
        Δ
      Husain
```
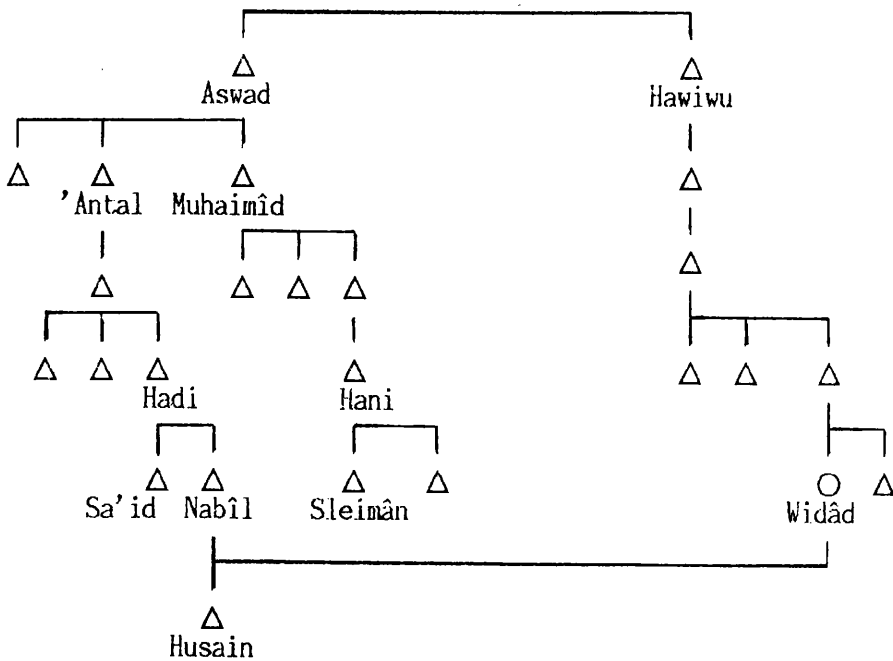
Sleiman explained to me that all the people on this chart are related as _ibn ʿamm_-s patrilateral parallel cousins (_ibn ʿamm_ is literally FBS, but here he used it in a classificatory sense), and are members of one of the _afkhād_ of the Garāksha. He depicted his _fakhd_ by separating it from others in Garāksha ʿ_ashīra,_ and expressed the relationship of his _fakhd_ members as _ibn ʿamm._ He referred to members of the Garāksha, other than his _fakhd,_ as patrilineal kin, _qarāib,_ in comparison to relations between members of his _fakhd._ _Qarāib_ in its comparison to _ibn ʿamm_ refers to relations between more distant patrilineal kin than _ibn ʿamm._ Then he started to divide his _fakhd_ into two. For Sleiman and Husain, anyone who can trace his/her descent from Aswad is related as _ibn ʿamm._ However, Widād is descended from the Hawiwu line, and therefore, she and all the people who trace descent from Hawiwu are _qarāib_ of descendants from Aswad, but not _ibn ʿamm._ Sleiman expressed the close patrilineal relationship between members of the Aswad _fakhd_ as _ibn ʿamm,_ in order to

differentiate the relationships between themselves from those with members of the Hawiwu *fakhḍ*

Then Sleiman explained kinship relations between Widād and her husband Nabīl as *ibn khalu. Ibn khalu* is literally, MBS, but used in a classificatory sense. Widād's and Nabīl's mothers are sisters and Widād and Nabīl are maternal first cousins. Maternal and affinal ties are mentioned in cases where relations between two persons are distant in patrilineal line, but actual relations between them are close. In cases where the patrilineal genealogical relations between two persons are sought, affinal or maternal links become devices to explain alliances between those who belong to different genealogical lines. This thought is supported by notions that marriage ties should be found between two genealogical lines to which the persons concerned belong, because preferential marriages between patrilineal kin are highly practised. Even though maternal ties are not always found between persons whose relationship is defined as *ibn khalu* among patrilineal kin, they suppose that marriage must have been conducted amongst their kin in previous generations in order to reinforce relations between these two patrilineal lines. Referring to relations as *ibn khalu* is a means of reinforcing the patrimonial bond among `ashīra* members from different *afkhāḍ* through maternal and affinal ties between them.

Sleiman divided members of the Aswad *fakhḍ* into three categories according to genealogical lines derived from Aswad's three sons. He said that the greater the sharing of common *nisba*, the closer the relations. *Nisba* itself means 'attribution' and 'relationship'. *Nisba* is shown in patrifiliative pedigree as composed of a series of names of male ancestors. *Nisba* is a classificatory device, and becomes an indication that the persons who share certain *nisba* may be affiliated to the same patrilineal association. *Nisba* carries information about the person's genealogical relationship. In our conversation about relationships within the Aswad, Sleiman distinguished himself from Husain by *nisba*. Husain's pedigree is shown as Husain Nabīi `Antal Aswad, whereas Sleiman is Sleiman Hani Muhaimīd Aswad. Their *nisba* -s show division of lines to which Husain and Sleiman belong. On the basis of their respective *nisba*,

members of the Aswad who share several common patrilineal ancestors' names, are in closer relations, because they are included in the same segmented groups.

There is, however, no decontextualized usage of *nisba*. *Nisba* shows a person's affiliation to patrilineal groups and how that person is included in larger segments of tribal groups. Although the ancestor's name represented in *nisba* suggests a genealogical link, the importance of *nisba* describes significant relations between patrilineal kin who are living in comparison to others whose patrifiliative pedigree indicates more distant genealogical relations to them.

Since *nisba*, patrifiliative pedigree, becomes a means to explain his/ her affiliation, the person mentions his/her own patrifiliative pedigrees in different ways according to his/her relation to others involved in conversation with him/her. For example, when Husain mentions his *nisba* in conversation with Sleiman, his *nisba* is Husain Nabii `Antal. This *nisba* conveys enough information to indicate his affiliation to a genealogical line of `Antal and distinguishes his kinship affiliation from Sleiman's. This *nisba* also suggests a genealogical link between Husain and Sleiman, because `Antal was a son of Aswad who was a common ancestor both of Husain and Sleiman. Meanwhile, he may introduce his *nisba* to non-Aswad Garaksha members as Husain Nabii Aswad. He needs to reveal his pedigree derived from Aswad in order to indicate his affiliation to one of the *afkhad* of the Garaksha `ashira and also to differentiate his affiliation from the person to whom he talks. He may give his *nisba* as Husain Nabii Garaksha, which shows his affiliation to the upper level of tribal grouping, when he introduces himself to people other than Garaksha members.

Patrifiliative pedigrees are the attribute of a person. This attribute indicates his/her affiliation into tribal segments. This also suggests a genealogical relationship between the person using the *nisba* and his/her audience, and thereby indicates social distance between them. They do not aim to understand their relationship by tracing all the ancestors who link them. In many cases this is not possible, because at best, they possess genealogical knowledge for five or six generations back. The significance of genealogical links is to provide a means to understand relations between people in the

present by categorising their genealogical relations through *nisba*. Eickelman (1977: 47-52) suggests that among the Bni Battu in Morocco, the genealogical linkage to the past continues to pervade the present, and that temporal order to a certain extent is directly related to social order, in which past events provide a positive value to the present relationships.

Nisba primarily signifies tribal affiliation of actual persons through genealogy, whereas other terms, such as father, brother, father's brother, *ibn `amm* and *qarāib*, refer to kinship relations between the persons involved. These terms constitute categories of kinship relations, which are supported by the ideology determining roles of patrilineal kin. Kinship relations affect the domain in which patrilineal kin sustain bonds by carrying out obligations (*ijbār*) with each other. Relationships between persons charged with these obligations are typically described in stories of murder and revenge, in which the conceptual structure of tribal segmentation reveals itself. The obligation to seek revenge over an offender is defined by genealogical closeness to the victim. Although the Tai is not fully segmented into levels, obligations between patrilineal kin are understood with reference to the notion of kinship relations, such as brother (*akh*), *ibn `amm, qarāib*, and the ideology of complementary group opposition in which their kinship relations are defined.

Segmentary lineage theory has been prominent in studies of Middle Eastern tribalism. Gellner discussed what this means, by developing the model of Evans-Pritchard (1940). Gellner's idea is that the notion of a segmentary society contains a theory of social cohesion which can be maintained by a balance of power between constituent groups; reliance on opposition to generate cohesion will be achieved within this system (1969: 41-44).

Peters, however, in his study of the Cyrenaican Bedouin, criticises the theory which Gellner attributes to Evans-Prichard and says that "the model [of lineage system] ···can only be a representation of what a particular people, the Bedouin, conceive their reality to be; it is a kind of ideology ··· to understand their field of social relationship" (1967: 270). He suggests that the Bedouin act contrary to the model, and

they do not maintain equivalent relationships in terms of balanced opposition between structurally equivalent groups (ibid.: 271). One of his reasons for objecting to lineage theory is that the numbers of segments at the tertiary order of the Cyrenaican Bedouin are more than two at a given level, and that combinations can occur which are not explicable by the theory of balanced opposition (ibid.: 271).

Salzman (1978) suggests that deviation of actual behaviour from the lineage theory does not necessitate disregarding the role of indigenous lineage ideology (ibid.: 65-66). He says that lineage-based complementary opposition does not work exclusively, and that extraneous principles are recognised by the actors as additional principles which are used within the agnatic system (ibid.: 61). He says that it is possible to establish the extent to which the ideology of contemporary opposition is exhibited on a behavioural level, and that it is necessary to comprehend actual patterns of behaviour not only by referring to the complementary opposition, but also by taking into consideration other principles held by the actors (ibid.: 80).

The Ṭai clarify themselves as a confederation of tribes (`ashīra-s). They do not assume anything about the kind of entity they constitute. The confederation is not regarded as having a common ancestor. Below the level of tribe(`ashīra), the members are regarded as sharing descent. The shared descent lines, however, are not elaborated.

Tribal members do not have a unifying economic and political structure. The only norms which allow them to cooperate with their patrilineal kin are obligations of reciprocal support between kin and alliance based on the idea of complementary group opposition. At the ideological level of complementary opposition, closer patrilineal kin stand in opposition to genealogically distant kin when conflicts arise. They, however, do not constitute groups of solidarity at a higher structural level. The Ṭai concern with genealogical relationships is only from the viewpoint of closeness between living people. They can classify relationships between patrilineal kin according to genealogical closeness with terms indicating kinship relations, such as *ibn `amm* or *qarāib*. Yet, although they say that group conflicts involve all the *ibn `amm* or *qarāib* in accordance with the level of complementary group opposition, their description of who

are actual participants in a dispute is ambiguous. Moreover, men who are expected to take action, such as revenge and settlement of blood money, in order to fulfil their obligations in restoring the honour (*sharaf*) of patrilineal kin, are limited at the range of FBS of individuals who caused the dispute. Although their more distant kin may offer suggestions to close kin of the men who caused the dispute, as to how the group should settle the dispute, these distant kin may not get directly involved in the settlement.

I shall examine how the Ṭai tribal members conceive of the reality of group opposition and obligation between patrilineal kin. The following story of conflict between men who are from different `*ashīra*-s (tribes) told by Ḍubāna villagers, relayed to me their understanding of group alliance on the basis of complementary opposition and persons who actually take responsibility for carrying out vengeance.

> `Ali and Balu were friends, but were from different `*ashīra*-s. `Ali asked Balu for a cash loan to which Balu agreed. Ideally, if a person is in a vulnerable situation, and asks help from his/her friend, the friend should give him/her assistance. Furthermore, it is a shame for Balu to ask `Ali to pay back the debt. However, because of Balu's urgent need for his money, there was no way but to ask `Ali for the money back. `Ali, however, refused to honour his debt, thereby infuriating Balu. In the ensuing fight `Ali killed Balu. One month after the murder, Balu's two brothers' sons ambushed `Ali early one morning in the field, on his way to work, and shot and killed him. `Ali's kin, *qarāib*, who had accompanied `Ali to the field, fought back and killed both men. One of `Ali's kin (*qarīb*) (informants could not give the exact relationship to Balu) was also killed in the fighting. Younger brothers of these two brothers have yet take revenge. One day, however, when the younger brothers have grown up, they are expected to carry out an attack on one of `Ali's kin, because the number of the victims on each side is presently unequal.

I heard this story from persons not involved in this conflict. It represents a stereo-typical understanding of those involved in seeking vengeance. This story is an example of a conflict between men from different tribes among the Ṭai. The narrator told me that the conflict involved all of `Ali and Balu's kin, *qarāib*, that is, members of their tribes. When someone is killed, the victim's kin should kill one of the offender's

kin, or ask the offender's kin to pay blood money as compensation to the victim's kin for the loss of his life so as to restore the honour of the victim's kin; otherwise the victim's kin suffer shame (*ār*). Women, however, cannot be a target of vengeance. According to my interview subjects, all the *qarāib* of `Ali may become a target of vengeance.  It means that any men from the same tribe (` *ashīra*) as `Ali may be attacked by men from Balu's `*ashīra*. This conflict is understood on the basis of balanced opposition between `*ashīra*-s which are structurally equivalent groups in a segmentary tribal structure.

The narrator's concern was to describe kinship relations between persons involved in this conflict: those who carried out the vengeance, and their degree of closeness to Balu and `Ali, were therefore important in describing this conflict.  Ideally speaking, as I was told by Dubāna villagers, persons obliged  to seek vengeance are firstly, the victim's brothers, and then his brother's son and FBS, *ibn `amm*. The order is determined by genealogical distance from the victim. The victim's father or father's brother are generally regarded to be elders who do not participate in physical confrontation, even though they take responsibility for the vengeance and sometimes carry it out as the victim's closest kin. Young close kin of the victim are therefore usually expected to carry out the vengeance. The closer one's genealogical relationship to the victim is, the greater the responsibility (*maswūliya*) he bears. In this case, Balu's closest kin who were able to participate in the vengeance were his brother's sons. Once these brother's sons were killed, the responsibility for vengeance would lie with their younger brothers who were the closest kin of the second victims. No other member of their kin, *qarāib* is expected to take vengeance. Even though the conflict ideally involves *qarāib*, in terms of constituting a balanced opposition between kin groups of `Ali and Balu, actual vengeance is expected to be sought only by the victim's closest kin.

All the participants in this conflict are identified in terms of kinship relations to `Ali or Balu.  Interestingly, the men who killed Balu's brother's sons and the man who was killed by these brothers, were identified as `Ali's *qarāib*, and the details of their

genealogical relationship to `Ali were not in question. *Qarāib* in this context means patrilineal kin who belong to the same tribe as `Ali, but who do not necessarily belong to the same tribal subsection. Since this conflict was described as that between the two `ashīra-s to which `Ali and Balu belong, all the participants are classified according to kinship categories which describe their relation to `Ali and Balu: Balu's 'brother's sons' and `Ali's '*qarāib*'. Who murdered Balu's brother's sons, or who was killed by them, was explained according to the classification of their kinship relations to `Ali. There was no concern for who had actually murdered Balu's two brother's sons, or indeed for the person they had killed.

The relationship of the persons to the victim is classified according to their genealogical closeness to the victim: his brother (*akh*), and then, brother's son (*ibn akh*), father's brother's son (*ibn `amm*) and kin (*qarāib*). *Ibn `amm* is not a category which refers only to FBS, but also to the victim's *fakhd* members who share a patrilineal ancestor with the victim of five generations back. *Ibn `amm* is seen as a closer relation to the victim than other patrilineal kin, *qarāib*. A group members involved into a conflict are subdivided according to their genealogical closeness to the persons who started the conflict.

In the case of killing, when the two kin groups which are involved in the conflict do not share a common ancestor five generations back, men who share a common ancestor five generations back with the murderer will be chosen as a target of vengeance. The bereaved group recognises these men as *ibn `amm*-s of the murderer and therefore, they share the responsibility for the killing. In the context of the vengeance, even though ideally all the patrilineal kin who share a common ancestor five generations back with the victim constitute the vengeance unit, only a few of these men, whose relationship to the victim is defined such as B, BS and FBS, conduct the act of vengeance (cf. Lancaster, 1981: 29).

In cases of conflicts between close patrilineal kin, the conflict is regarded as between members of a division or subdivision of tribes. In such cases, *ibn `amm* stand against each other. The following story, which was told by Dubāna villagers, reflects

the idea that the genealogical closeness to the victim defines the responsibility to take vengeance. In such cases, conflict splits close kin into two opposing parties. The participants on each side are structurally equi-distant in relation to their opponents.

> `Adnān killed a ferocious dog kept by his FB, Bāsim. Bāsim became angry with `Adnān, and they quarrelled over the matter. After the quarrel, Bāsim killed `Adnān. In revenge `Adnān's brother, A1, killed one of Bāsim's sons, B1. The conflict continued between `Adnān's brothers and B1's brothers: B1's brother, B2, killed A1,; A1's brother, A2, killed B2; B2's brother, B3, killed A2. `Adnān's brother, A3, will kill B3, because the numbers of the victims are not equal between the parties: `Adnān's side lost three persons, whereas Bāsim's side had only two victims.

The conflict between `Adnān and his father's brother, Bāsim, split the kin into two groups. `Adnān's brothers stood with each other against Bāsim's sons who are in relations of *ibn `amm* to `Adnān and his brothers. The *ibn `amm* group was subdivided in terms of the vengeance. 'Brothers' as a category, are in a closer relationship than *ibn `amm* and therefore, should ally and share the obligation for vengeance against their *ibn `amm*. `Adnān's brother, A1, chose B1, one of the members of Bāsim's group, as a target according to the principle that Bāsim's closest kin take the responsibility for the killing. A1's obligation to participate in vengeance is defined according to his relation to `Adnān as his 'brother', which is regarded as one of the closest kinship relations. In this respect, the obligation is determined by closeness between individuals in terms of kinship relations. The degree of closeness between the victim and his kinsman defines the kinsman's obligation to participate in the vengeance. For example, B1's brother, B2, was obliged to take vengeance, because of his brotherhood relation to B1. No one asserts that an *ibn `amm* except descendants of Bāsim and `Adnān's father is involved in the conflicts. Obligation to actual participation in the conflict is determined by kinship relation between two individuals, that is, the victim and his avenger.

A conflict is therefore understood as that between groups, which are defined according to genealogical distance between the persons who initiated the conflict. Even though a conflict happens between men who do not share a common ancestor five

generations back, kin other than B, BS and FBS of the victim avoid the obligation to participate in the conflict. As a result, large scale avenging groups are not constituted at any level of group conflicts. Even though only close kin of the victims are obliged to take vengeance, they do so for the sake of honour of their kin group. Why does the discrepancy between classification of the vengeance group and members who owe the obligation of actual vengeance emerge? This should not be understood as a discrepancy between the ideology of complementary opposition and behavioural patterns. Dresch criticises Salzman's approach to lineage theory (1978) as reducing segmentation to a summary of empirical observation (1986: 318). He says: "the categories and the structure [of complementary opposition] preexist the actions. A new set of actions (a pattern of alliance) that does contradict the original categories becomes possible only with explicit redefinition" (ibid.: 320). If complementary opposition is not just an ideology, classification of groups involved in conflict and the obligation of vengeance among the Ṭai must be congruent with their cognition and descriptions of kinship categorisation.

Their cognition of present kinship relations which define one's relation to others among the members of a tribal group, seems to be similar to the Rwala Bedouin. Lancaster (1981: 152) constructs a diagram to illustrate the ego-centred kinship relations of the Rwala, in which an individual defines one's relationship to the other in terms of the kinship categories in which both of them are included. In this sense, genealogy and definition of kinship relations are not static. As with the previous example of the Garāksha ʿashīra (see **Figure 4**), relationships between people in the Aswad *fakhḍ* and the Hawiwu *fakhḍ* of the Garāksha are described by members of the Aswad in various ways according to the setting of its complementary group. When the Aswad derive meaning as a patrilineal kin group in opposition to the Hawiwu, relationship between kin within the Aswad *fakhḍ* is expressed as '*ibn ʿamm,*' in opposition to the Hawiwu *fakhḍ* whose relations to the Aswad are defined as further distant kin, *qarāib.* In another context, in which the Aswad and the Hawiwu are regarded as constituting one *fakhḍ* in opposition to other *fakhḍ* of the Garāksha

`ashīra` which is not composed of descendants of these two brothers, Aswad and Hawiwu, the Aswad and the Hawiwu are in relations of '*ibn `amm*', and other Garāksha members are classified as '*qarāib*' in their relation to descendants of Aswad and Hawiwu. The Ṭai describe kinship relations with consideration of contexts in which group opposition is recognised. Kinship relations within the group are considered in terms of genealogical links which include oneself and others in a kinship category. The basis of understanding kinship relations and obligations between group members is to discern one's relation to his/her kin A from his/her relation to his/her kin B, whose relation to him/her is more distant than his/her relation to kin A in genealogy. This principle of differentiating kinship relations is applied so as to constitute both complementary group opposition and social obligations between kin.

Classification of kinship relations within the group has meaning when its complementary tribal group is established. For example, when relations between members within the group are referred as *ibn `amm*, the relation is understood by the Ṭai in its differentiation from *qarāib* relation, which is the relation between more distant kin than that of *ibn `amm*. When group membership is referred to as *qarāib* relation, the relationship separates them from people from different `*ashīra* or outsiders. Within a group, kinship relations are further classified according to the genealogical distance between the members on the bases of differentiation of one kinship category from the other. When relationship of members in the group is classified as *ibn `amm*, sharing an ancestor five generations back, relations of the group members are subdivided into different kinship categories according to genealogical distance between each group member. One's relations to his/her B/Z, FB/FZ and FBS/FBD are recognised as closer than those of *ibn `amm*, which include all the group members.

In everyday conversations, classification of kinship relations and obligations adherent to kinship relations are understood by the Ṭai according to the same principles applied to cases of vengeance. For example, women gossip about a woman's marriage and say that she was obliged to marry her *ibn `amm*. In the context of marriage arrangements, the category of *ibn `amm* includes her patrilineal kinsmen who share

with her an ancestor five generations back, and who thereby have the primary right to ask her family for her hand in marraige. *Ibn `amm* also have a right of *khyār* to annul marriage arrangements between her and her more distant kin or outsiders. The *ibn `amm* relation is classified in order to define genealogical closeness between patrilateral parallel cousins, in contrast to relation to other distant kin or outsiders, and admits special rights and obligations between them, because of this closeness. The women talking about the marriage keep in mind the genealogical division which separates men included in the *ibn `amm* category from more distant kin. They also recognise the bride's obligation to accept a proposal from her *ibn `amm*, and regard this obligation as part of the kinship relation between her and her *ibn `amm*.

One of the women then explained the reason for the bride's acceptance of marriage; "the bride feared that no one wanted to propose to her as long as this *ibn `amm* had not given up the idea of marrying her". Here, the narrator subdivides the men included into the category of *ibn `amm* according to their genealogical distance to her. Her husband was her first patrilateral cousin, and therefore had the primary right to marry her, more so than any other *ibn `amm* whose genealogical relation to her was more distant. Kinship closeness therefore laid greater responsibility on the bride to accept his request. This attribution of kinship right and obligation, according to subdivision of the kinship category, confused me many times during my field research. This is because people talked as if all the men who are included into *ibn `amm* category, in terms of their relation to the bride, share the same right to her, their patrilateral parallel cousin. However, the rights and obligations between individuals in *ibn `amm* relation are affected by their genealogical distance. Even though relations between first cousins and second cousins are both mentioned as *ibn `amm*, the relation between first cousins imposes greater obligations in comparison to that relation between second cousins. There is an implicit understanding in conversations about kinship obligations which are defined according to the genealogical distance between the individuals involved. Members who are categorised into a kinship category, such as *ibn `amm*, are

therefore further subdivided according to the rights and obligations which are defined by genealogical distance between them.

Another matter related to the principle of complementary opposition and the definition of obligations among the kin, is the subject of female sexual virtue. Female sexual virtue should be protected from offence by unrelated men who belong to different ethnic or sectarian groups. Although these groups are not tribal, the group membership is explained by separating their own group from other ethnic or sectarian groups and attributing group characteristics to each other. Their membership is defined by differentiating other group's characteristics from their own (see chapter 2 and chapter 3). Outsiders, that is, men from other ethnic or sectarian groups, are attributed the characteristics of potential enemies who assault women within their group. Sexual offence, or the possibility of women being assaulted, is described as assaulting the honour of the women's group.

However, as has been discussed in previous chapters, actual obligations to protect a woman's sexual virtue, or the obligation to seek vengeance - if she was assaulted by outsiders - is shouldered by her male family members: her father, father's brothers, brothers and father's brother's sons. Actual obligations surrounding the matter of female sexual virtue are defined by closeness between patrilineal kin. No other kin except for her family members can intrude on the matter, because it is regarded as the family's business. Jazirah inhabitants understand sexual assault in terms of conflict between groups to which the woman and her offender belong, and define the obligation of vengeance according to the classification of kinship relations to the assaulted woman.

## 5.3. Relationship between the Paramount Sheikh and his Tribal Members

Kinship classification and obligations adherent to kinship categories are important for establishing everyday interactions among the Ṭai. Relationships between

the sheikhs from `Asāf tribe and other tribal members are also important in everyday life among them, and attribute obligations to each other. These relationships however, cannot be identified as kinship relations. Their obligations therefore, cannot be defined according to classification of genealogical distance. In examining the relationship between the paramount sheikh and his tribal members, firstly, the structure of the Ṭai tribal confederation and the relationship between the sheikh and commoner tribal members within the tribal system should be described. Each tribal member refers to his/her relationship with a member of a different tribe as 'brotherhood' (*ukhuwa*) in the context that they express their fellowship as members of the Ṭai. 'Brotherhood' (*ukhuwa*) in this context is not the same meaning as 'brothers' which is based on blood relations in kinship relations. 'Brothers' in relationship between tribes means that the tribal groups and their members are associated with each other as the Ṭai through their alliance to the `Asāf sheikhly tribe to whom the paramount sheikh belongs.

Figure 5 is drawn by a tribesman in Ḍubāna when he and an old man, who was a relative of a family in Ḍubāna, explained to me the nature of the Ṭai confederation. This chart shows that the Ṭai members understand relationships between the tribes among the Ṭai as a configuration composed of each tribe's alliance to the `Asāf. There is no idea of a shared descent between these tribes constituting the Ṭai confederation. The system of the Ṭai confederation cannot therefore be explained by the segmentary lineage system, in which there cannot be any single authority in a tribe, as Evans-Pritchard described in the ideal case of the Cyrenaican Bedouin (1949; 59). Even though relations between `ashīra-s among the Ṭai are those between equals and are described as 'brothers', they admit the political authority of the `Asāf as the sheikhly tribe.

At an ideological level, each tribe within the Ṭai confederation allies to the Ṭai paramount sheikh. The Ṭai paramount sheikh, however, cannot command tribal heads of these tribes to form an alliance with him, because the confederation is ideally constituted on the basis of voluntary alliance of each tribe to the `Asāf. The ideal of

Figure 5. Tai tribal confederation
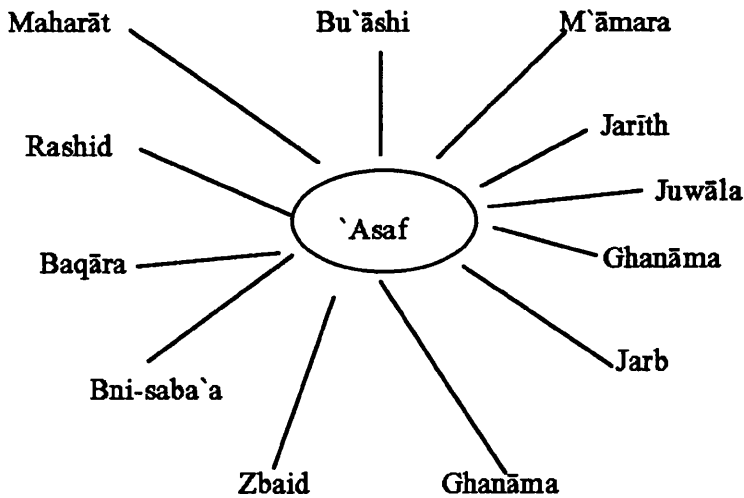
alliance existing in tribal configuration does not always allow the Tai paramount sheikh to win support from these tribal heads. For example, in the 1990 Syrian parliamentary elections, the Tai sheikh was one of the candidates in Hassaka province. The sheikh invited these tribal heads and other influential tribal members amongst the Tai in order to ask for their support. The sheikh started his meetings with communal meals at the end of the fasting month of Ramaḍān, more than one month before the voting day on 22 May. Following the first meeting, around fifty men gathered in his tent everyday. Accepting their host's hospitality, sharing meals with him and drinking the bitter coffee served by the host's party, signalled the declaration of the guests' support for the host. Although at the gatherings, the sheikh's guests promised their support for him, according to news reports of election returns distributed by the Government, the sheikh had gathered only 18,178 votes - the nearest elected candidate had got 26,592 votes - and was therefore defeated. Even though the sheikh insisted that there were 75,000 Tai members in this region, he had failed to form a tribal alliance.

This fact demonstrates the gap between the sheikh's political influence, and the abstract position of the paramount sheikh inherent in the Tai tribal confederation. The formal structure of tribal confederation allows for the superior political position of the

paramount sheikh, alliance to whom constitutes the configuration of the Ṭai confederation. The structure also allows the voluntary alliance of each tribe to the `Asāf. At a behavioural level, whether or not tribal members accept his authority is largely dependent on their own personal intentions.

The patronage relationship between the sheikh and tribal members among the Ṭai coexists alongside the configuration of the Ṭai tribal confederation which defines tribal alliance with the paramount sheikh. This patronage, however, contradicts the principle of the Ṭai tribal system that relationships between tribal members are between equals, as members of tribes `(ashāir) among the Ṭai. Yet, patronage and egalitarian tribal structure coexist among the Ṭai, even though they seem contradictory, as in case of the Yemeni tribes studied by Dresch (1984: 32).

Relationships between the sheikh and the Ḍubāna villagers largely depend on patronage based on the sheikh's personal economic and political circumstances. Since the grandfather of the present Ṭai paramount sheikh moved into Ḍubāna at the beginning of the 1950s, in order to engage in commercialised agricultural business, the political relationship between the two parties has been affected by the sheikh's economic wealth. This derived largely from the land he owned, given that he was a great landowner and his estate was in the tribal territory of the Ṭai. Each tribe within the Ṭai had its own territory, where the right over the land had been monopolised by tribal heads, or sheikhs. The commoner tribal members had not owned any right of land possession of their territory, as individual property owners. The domain of sheikhly power was largely dependent on the sheikhs' economic power. The sheikhs or tribal heads therefore cultivated followers through this means. The commoner tribal members were obliged to be dependent on sheikhs in order to survive. They became underpaid workers in sheikhs' fields. The Ṭai paramount sheikh was more powerful than the other tribal heads in terms of economic means and the political influence derived from his ability to manipulate ethnic or sectarian group relations (see Chapter 2).

Looking at the population composition in Ḍubāna, it is seen that the villagers who constructed the village under the leadership of the grandfather of the present Ṭai paramount sheikh and those who moved into it later, when the father of the sheikh introduced productivity enhancing machinery in the late 1960s, were from various tribes. Most of them were members of tribes among the Ṭai other than the sheikhly tribe, ʿAsāf. The villagers explained to me their own, or their fathers' motivation for moving into the village: "we moved here in order to work for the sheikh". Although the tribal structure of the Ṭai confederation allows them to ally with the sheikh, this alliance is alien to the hierarchical relation based on patronage. The villagers, however, admit that they used to be followers (ʿabīd) of the sheikh.

Among the villagers there are people, for example, from the Sharābīn tribe, who did not originally belong to the Ṭai. They later became followers of the sheikh. The villagers from the Chumal tribe, who were originally Kurds and had converted their alliance from the Shammar to the Ṭai a few generations ago, constructed their status among the Ṭai through personal alliance with the paramount sheikh. These villagers from Chumal and Sharābīn are recognised by other villagers as members of the Ṭai, even though their status within the tribal structure is ambiguous, being based on patronage, that is, personal relations with the Ṭai paramount sheikh. The manner of this relation is different from that defined by the principle of tribal confederation, where relation between the sheikh and tribal members among the Ṭai is defined as alliance between the sheikh's tribe and tribes to which the commoners belong.

Since the sheikh's influence had been largely dependant on his economic means, his followers regard their status in relation to him as having changed, as a result of their gradual economic independence caused by the regional industrial development and Syrian land reform. In their discourse they refer to their status in the past as the sheikh's slave-followers (ʿabīd) who were obliged to accept the sheikh's political leadership, even to commit murder, because they did not posses the economic means to survive separately from the sheikh. Since the commoner tribal members have gradually become economically independent of the sheikh, they think that class

difference between the sheikhs and the commoners has also diminished. Commoner tribal members insist that their support for the sheikh is no longer that of slave followers, but that they willingly support him now as their representative and tribal leader. The sheikh's political power, dependant on class difference, is therefore challenged by his followers.

The villagers express their attitude to the sheikh as: "if we want to help the sheikh, we will do so". Even though this egalitarian view emphasises their voluntary alliance to the sheikh based on the structure of the Ṭai confederation, the behavioural patterns of commoner tribal members toward the sheikh both in everyday interaction and on ceremonial occasions, suggest political inequality between them. Their support for the sheikh often takes the form of labour assistance, although they never expect to receive the same kind of support in return from the sheikh. This kind of personal service is similar to the obligations imposed on the `abīd, who were assigned to act as the sheikh's domestic servants.

The most striking aspect of their behaviour towards the sheikh was reflected in the conduct of unmarried village women, who occasionally stayed at the sheikh's flat in Qamishly in order to carry out domestic chores for the sheikh's family. This flat was set up for the sheikh's sons who attended school in Qamishly, and also served as a meeting place for the sheikh's relatives and tribesmen. Even though the sheikh's daughter and his father's widow did their own household chores, one of the village girls was sometimes asked to help. The girls would stay there a few days at a time without their family. A single woman is never allowed to stay in a household other than her family in any other circumstances because of concerns over the protection of her sexual reputation and family honour. I asked these girls who worked for the sheikh's family, whether or not it was a shame (`aib) for them to stay at the sheikh's house, without their family. The girls tried to explain their behaviour as voluntary help for the sheikh's family, but were not able to justify their staying there.

Domestic services to the sheikh's family are not carried out only by these girls. Both single and married women are asked by the sheikh's wife to provide labour, when

the sheikh has guests. Male villagers also assist in the slaughtering of animals for communal meals and serving coffee to the guests. They try to explain these services as social exchanges between neighbours (*jirān*). Neighbourhood relationship requires such obligations of social exchange, such as mutual visits on a daily basis and assistance on ceremonial occasions. This domain is constituted not only by their close relations based on residential proximity, but also on the basis of 'brotherhood' (*ukhuwa*) relationships between tribal members among the Ṭai. 'Brotherhood' means tribal alliance among the Ṭai who are equals. The paramount sheikh as a member of the Asāf tribe is also in 'brotherhood' (*ukhuwa*) relations with his neighbour tribal members. The commoner villagers apply this principle to their relationship with the sheikh and so justify their services to the sheikh as fulfilling the obligation of helping a neighbour.

Despite the egalitarian attitude of commoner villagers, the sheikh's family have a strong class consciousness. This is reflected in marriage. The sheikhly family believe that, as a principle, they should marry within the ʿAsāf. Although marriages between the sheikhly family and other influential families from different tribes or Kurdish sheikhly families are sometimes undertaken, marriage between the sheikhly family and commoner tribal members is never considered. The pattern of marriage distinguishing the sheikhly family from the commoner tribal members thereby reflects the class consciousness of the sheikhly family. Marriage is allowed only between two families of equal political and economic status.

In my private conversations with sheikhly women, they sometimes suggested that there were two different kinds of people in their society; sheikhs and ʿabīd. Since they are well aware that their class consciousness can create antagonism and lead to potential conflict between themselves and the other villagers, they usually disguise it. Yet, these women, sometimes in an oblique manner, expressed their status consciousness and disapproval of the attitudes of commoner tribal members, much like the women in the Oasis community in Oman (C. Eickelman, 1984: 136). May, one of the sheikh's daughters, revealed her status consciousness to me in private. In

describing the wedding party of a sister of her father's sister's husband, she mentioned a woman who had been dancing in the party.

> May: Laṭifa is very dark skinned. She sang in the wedding party. All of us laughed at her singing. Do you know her?
>
> Noriko: Yes, I met her twice in your house.
>
> May: In Jazirah, there are two kinds of people: sheikhs and 'abīd. All human beings are 'abīd who must obey the will of God. She is from the Ṭai, but from a household working for a sheikh. She was brought up in a sheikhly household and helped with their domestic work, such as washing, cooking, and cleaning. She married, but her husband has died. She has married sons and daughters. Her father is still well, but her mother has died. She likes to put lipstick on her lips and use powder on her dark-skinned face. At the party, she had make-up on her face, and was dancing oriental and foreign dances. She made crude gestures.
>
> Noriko: Are there a lot of 'abīd ?
>
> May: People do not say that they are 'abīd. All the villagers here are 'abīd. We are sheikhs, and they are 'abīd. They never admit that they are 'abīd. Laṭifa said, "I am 'abd. I am a daughter of an 'abd." When Laṭifa talked to Raghd in this village, who suggested that Laṭifa should not label herself as an 'abd, Laṭifa replied to Raghd, "I am 'abd, or bint al-'abd. Why do you say that you are not 'abd ? You are 'abd." 'Abīd still exist. We are all 'abīd of God.

This conversation illustrates well the snobbery of the sheikhly women. May tried to distinguish the commoner tribal members as inferior to themselves, the sheikhs. She took for granted that the role of commoner women in carrying out compulsory labour for the sheikhs, such as domestic chores, indicated their inferiority. She also suggested that the dark-skinned face of Laṭifa indicated the status difference between commoner women, who were obliged to work in the fields, and the sheikhly women, who stayed at home. May tried to say that only the sheikhly women could keep fair skin, which was one of the most important elements of female beauty. She spoke of her superiority to a commoner tribal woman simply because she enjoys the status of a sheikhly woman. May tried to attribute Laṭifa's behaviour in the wedding party to her inferiority, meaning her disregard for her honour. A woman singing in front of men and putting on make-up is generally considered to be a show of sexual charm intended

to attract men. Such behaviour threatens the honour of herself and her family. In wedding receptions, where female guests are accompanied by men from their family and relatives, and other male guests are in close relations with the host family, no one offends the honour of the participants. The women can even enjoy dancing with these men, forming a line by standing next to one another, touching their bodies. Latifa's behaviour, therefore, is not directly connected to base traits inherent in commoner tribal women. May tried to indicate Latifa's lack of caring about her honour in order to distinguish the attitude of the sheikhly women from these commoners. There is, however, nothing to testify to the commoners' inferiority in this respect. Even though a woman may be criticised because of her way of dancing and singing, connoting sexual actions on such occasions, these traits are attributed to her personally, not to her group.

The class consciousness of sheikhly women often leads them to make demands on the commoner villagers such as various forms of labour support. They understand that showing obedience is the obligation of inferior to superior. Since commoner villagers are aware of the sheikhs' class consciousness, which is indicated in their requests for labour support, the commoners apply the norm of mutual support between neighbours to the services which they subsequently render to the sheikhs. By applying this norm to their services, they can to some extent, reduce status differences between themselves and the sheikh. Although they seek an egalitarian relationship between themselves and the sheikh, the hierarchical aspects of their relationship are nevertheless revealed in social exchange between them, which are not completely reciprocal. The sheikhly family gives the commoner villagers help in the form of gifts or money on occasions such as a wedding, or a child's birth, boy's circumcision, sickness and a funeral. These exchanges can also be conducted between the commoners, and are regarded as reciprocal. The sheikhs, however, never give the commoners labour support. Egalitarianism based on tribal ideology and the status difference between the sheikh and commoner tribal members therefore seem to contradict, yet coexist, in their society, but creates tension between the sheikh and the commoner tribal members. In the next two sections, I shall examine discourses of ceremonial exchanges and

women's agricultural activities, where such tension between the sheikh and commoner tribal members in Dubāna is to some extent resolved.

5.4   Exchanges on Ceremonial Occasions

On tragic occasions such as death, the neighbourhood network is immediately activated and is of crucial significance. Neighbours of the deceased immediately suspend all other activities and rush to offer their sympathy and labour assistance to the family. During the funeral, which usually continues for seven days, the family of the deceased (i.e. spouse, parents, children, brothers, brothers' sons, father's brothers, father's brothers' sons and their household members) are busy arranging the burial, and receiving callers offering condolences. The support offered by neighbours of the deceased is crucial, and is considered as their obligation (*ijbār*).

Male and female neighbours have different tasks. Since male and female callers are received separately, the male and female neighbours prepare separate rooms. Women usually place themselves in the front of the deceased's house. Men prepare a tent for the callers in another place. During the time when the male family members of the deceased secure the legal papers for the burial and arrange for a religious specialist, *mulā*, to recite from the Quran, some of the neighbouring men undertake to notify the relatives and close friends of the deceased. Other neighbours, usually young men, go to the graveyard with a few men from the deceased's family in order to dig the grave. Since burial must be carried out within a day, the corpse is taken to a *mulā* who performs the ritual washing and sprinkling of fragrance, after which the body is wrapped in a special white shroud. When the deceased is a woman, a few elder women perform the ritual washing. Henna is applied to the hair, hands and feet of the corpse[1].

The corpse is put on a mattress, with the head facing the direction of Mecca. The *mulā* and another religious man sit in front of the corpse and recite from the Quran. As soon as the corpse is ready, the sons, grandsons, brothers' sons, father's brothers'

sons and sisters' sons of the deceased carry it to the grave (if the deceased is a woman, her husband usually organises the burial). Only male relatives and the husband can attend this procession. All of them help fill in the grave, and recite the *Sura* of *al-fātiḥa*

While the procession is taking place, the wife or daughter of the deceased receives the female callers in the women's section. Since male household members and close kin are busy arranging the burial on the first day of the funeral, and female household members receive the callers throughout the funeral, neighbours willingly take responsibility for preparing meals. While the family attend the procession, the neighbours start to prepare the meal for the callers. Since the funeral, or period of mourning (`aza'), usually lasts for seven days, neighbours divide themselves according to descent groups, and each group takes turns in preparing the meal composed of meat and bread, and serves it to the callers.

In Ḍubāna, the villagers refer to each group of neighbours as `ashīra (tribe or tribal section). When the villagers say, for example, that "the Garāksha `ashīra takes its turn today", the participants whose households are sharing the cost of the meal and offering labour may only consist of some neighbours of the deceased from that `ashīra In fact, all the neighbours from the same `ashīra do not always act together. Other neighbours from the Garāksha may take their turn another day. Since a neighbouring group is classified according to their relation to the family of the deceased and his/her `ashīra, their support to the family is organised according to the principle of mutual help between their `ashīra and `ashīra of the deceased's family.

I shall show an example of such groupings during periods of mourning. Sāhir and his brother, who are from the Garāksha, co-operated with two men whose relationship to Sāhir is *ibn `amm*, and who share a common ancestor five generations back with Sāhir. They also co-operated with an old man who was from the Garāksha, but from a different *fakhd* (sub-section of Garāksha `ashīra), in order to share the cost of the meal and to cook it. All their households' members co-operated in taking their turn on the first day of the funeral. On the fifth day, one of Sāhir's brothers, Majd, co-

operated with another Garāksha member, who belonged to a different *fakhd* from Majd, in preparing the meal.

When neighbours of the bereaved family constitute a group which gives the family help, the `ashīra division acts as a framework of group composition. Temporary co-operation between kin is constituted, with regard to categorical divisions between the neighbours, in terms of *ashīra* affiliation. Genealogical distance between the participants is not important, because they co-operate in order to fulfil obligations to the family of the deceased as neighbours. Co-operation (*musāhama*) between patrilineal kin accomplishes the task of helping the deceased's family, who are neighbours and 'brothers' in the structure of the Ṭai confederation. Co-operation between kin is not derived from fulfilling obligations between them, but is organised in order to fulfil obligation to their neighbours, i.e., the bereaved family. In their relation to this neighbouring family, they need to label their group as `ashīra in order to stress the 'brotherhood' relation to the bereaved family and to define obligation between themselves and the family. Co-operation between kin is organised for fulfilling this obligation, and hence the group which is composed in this context is of a practical nature. Therefore it does not matter who, within the `ashīra, co-operates in order to fulfil this obligation to the deceased's family.

Patrilineal kin of the deceased also take turns to prepare meals. Their groups are identified by the name of the `ashīra to which the deceased belonged. These temporary co-operative groups are composed of kin who are neighbours to each other. This grouping of kin is referred to as *qarāib* of the deceased, from such and such a village. They fall within the same `ashīra and can constitute a co-operative group in order to fulfil their obligation to the family of the deceased, based not on genealogical relations among them, but on their closeness to the deceased, whose family they are obliged to help. They make up an ad hoc kin group in the same way as the neighbours of the deceased organise their groupings. Their `ashīra members contribute in order to fulfil their own obligation to the family of the deceased.

Neighbouring women of the deceased are identified by their membership of their respective households, and therefore, married women are incorporated into their husbands' kin groups. Elder women take a role in attending the condolence ceremony as female representatives of their households. Single women and young wives offer labour support more than the elders. Even if their group is not in charge of preparing the meal on that day, they help by baking bread and washing the dishes, offering their assistance not to other groups of neighbours or kin of the deceased, but to the bereaved family as their neighbours.

Financial and labour assistance between neighbours is a reciprocal exchange. Members of the deceased's household who are offered help by their neighbours will reciprocate the same kind of assistance to their neighbours in their time of need, according to the principle of mutual help (*musā'adam'a ba'ad*).

The family of the sheikh, however, never offers assistance in the preparation of the communal meals, even though his commoner neighbours give assistance to the sheikh's family when a family member dies. Despite the lack of reciprocity, which signifies status difference between the sheikh and commoner tribal members (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1981: 276-7), social exchanges on religious occasions have great importance for the commoner villagers in their insistence on neighbourhood relations with the sheikh. Commoner villagers stress the obligation of organising kin group support for the bereaved neighbours whenever they offer their labour support to the sheikh. Since this obligation is conducted on the basis of assistance between neighbours who belong to different `ashīra-s among the Tai, an alliance between `ashīra-s which are 'brotherhood' relations in system of the Tai confederation is in operation.

The focus of the following discussion is the way in which commoner villagers constitute a discourse insisting on egalitarian relations between themselves and the sheikh at the funeral ceremonies. I shall, firstly, consider religious ceremonies held for expressing the suffering of the living and for the redemption of the soul of the deceased, and then, compare the religious meanings of these ceremonies with those

held on Islamic feast days. Secondly, I shall discuss the social domains of these religious ceremonies, especially social exchanges between the commoner villagers and sheikhs on these occasions.

Condolence ceremonies are occasions on which women communicate their sense of sharing in the tragedy. They wear black, dark blue or brown dresses, expressing their grief by the observance of sombre colours. A mother, sister, wife or daughter of the deceased expresses her grief by wailing, crying, beating her breasts, scratching her face and pulling her hair. One of the women close to the deceased becomes the performer of these acts while the rest are less expressive. The performer's concern is to express grief at the loss of her much-loved family member. She has a great deal invested in evoking the callers' sympathy for her family's tragedy. The callers cry in sympathy with her.

The following laments of a mother who had suddenly lost her young son, who had just finished his military service, moved the callers to tears. The mother repeated the following phrases while crying and pulling her hair:

> "his heart is upon us. O, my father, my father (*Ya qalbu `alaina ya abui, ya abui*) ! You left us, my father. You left us. You left us. O, my father (*tarakna abui, tarakna ya abui*) ! Big disaster strikes me. How did you leave us, my father O, my father (*yawwaili siloon tarakatna ya abui ya abui*) ? O, my father, your death has burnt my heart, O, my father, and O, beloved my heart, O, my father (*ya abui, haraqt qalbi ya abui wa ya `asir qalbi ya abui*)."

Callers reply in stock phrases for consoling her sorrow:

> "[I wish that] life will continue [even without the deceased], and other family members will remain with you all your life (*baqiya bi-hayatichi*). A living person is better than a dead one (*al-haya abqā mina-l-mayyit*)."

It means that the deceased has already left, but you will not lose any one or any pleasure again. Living people have further opportunity to behave religiously, but the deceased no longer has any opportunities to acquire religious merit through good deeds. Callers also ask for God's mercy upon the deceased through the good conduct of his family: "the deceased remains with children (*al- khalq birās al-awlad*)." They believe that the soul of the deceased will acquire God's blessing when the adult

members of the bereaved family guide children onto the right path, since children cannot themselves distinguish right from wrong.

The mother's grief is for her loss and love toward the deceased son. She addresses her deceased son as her father. It implies that the deceased son would support her if he were alive, as would a father. However, her expression of sorrow is regarded by men as forbidden (*harām*), because death is brought by the will of God. Secondly, the expression of sorrow, especially the pulling of her hair and shedding of blood by scratching her face, pains the soul (*rūḥ*) of the deceased and therefore this expression by women is sin (*harām*). Men believe that once in paradise, the deceased will see the rivers flowing in the garden of paradise (*genna*), mentioned in the Quran, filled with hair and blood shed by the women during the condolence ceremonies[2]. After resurrection, hair and blood are believed to bother the deceased. Even though expressing grief at losing a much-loved individual in this world is against the belief of official Islam, women nevertheless express their suffering.

Sered characterises the domestic religious realm thus: it is "the area in which the ultimate concerns of life, suffering and death are *personalised*. Thus domestic religion has to do with the lives, sufferings and deaths of *particular*, usually well-loved, individuals" (Sered, 1988: 516)(italic original). Sered (1988) discusses domestic religion and the religious behaviour of Jewish women in Jerusalem, where women professing their alliance to a wider religious system use the same symbols and rituals as those used on formal religious occasions, and by gaining access to them, they make personal petitions.

In Jazirah, rituals conducted at condolence ceremonies, which use the same symbols and ritual frameworks as those used in Islamic feasts, express the devotion of the bereaved family and the callers to Islam. Women's condolence ceremonies describe the path to understanding the meaning of death in Islam and ask God to bring them personal and family blessing by redeeming the soul of the deceased. Women's ceremonies are composed of two parts: performances conducted by women from the bereaved family who express their suffering and personal loss by using religiously

forbidden acts; and performances by female callers who console the bereaved family and advise them to behave in accordance with religious dictates in order to assure themselves and the soul of the deceased of the blessing of God (*khair*). The callers try to persuade the bereaved family to accept the death as a trial by God, and that their personal benefit (*khair*) will be acquired through their religious behaviour. If they overcome their sorrow and ask for God's mercy upon the deceased through their devotion to God, their good conduct will bring them and the soul of the deceased religious blessing (*khair*).

Death for Muslims "is seen as part of a natural pre-oriented, immutable order, · · · and part of a continuing process in the destiny of the individual" (Ahmed, 1986: 130). No one can escape from the consequence of death. According to the Quran, death repudiates ties between the deceased and living people. The fate of the soul of the deceased is determined by God. The only way people in this world can redeem the soul and relieve themselves of the suffering caused by the death, is to ask for God's redemption of the soul through their devotion. The women's condolence ceremonies describe the path by which accept the fate of human beings is accepted.

In Jazirah, Muslim women's behaviour and role in condolence ceremonies seems to be highly gender-specific. Although they orient themselves towards dealing with their own suffering and the concern of the entire family, their performance contrasts to that of men. During funerals men never shed tears or grieve. They believe that the women's weeping is caused by the weakness of their heart or mind (*qalb*), which renders them unable to endure the pain of loss. Women do not agree with this male explanation. Their way of expressing suffering is highly formalised. This expression separates the women's ceremonial role from the men's in the funeral. Women from the bereaved family express their suffering by stereotyped manners only during formal condolence ceremonies. They seek the most efficacious moment when interpersonal communications between themselves and the callers would enhance the feeling of suffering caused by the loss. Female callers talk about the wailing woman thus: "she cannot eat after the suffering she has gone through by the death", or "she cannot open

her eyes because of her continuous weeping". These women sympathise with the sufferer in their stereo-typed expressions and shed tears. Their formalised performance expressing sorrow and sympathy for the loss is not the only feature which contrasts with the men's performance. The prominent feature of the women's ceremony is that the women of the bereaved family and the callers share the sorrow of the deceased's departure to another world, and the callers try to lead the women of the bereaved family to religious deeds bringing religious blessing (*khair*) to the soul of the deceased and the family.

Women are not allowed to hold religious readings and recitations of the Quran, in which they could beg for God's blessing for the soul of the deceased. Their access to religious expression in asking for God's salvation for the deceased's soul is limited. Men, in contrast, are able to perform religious activities which convey God's blessing during condolence ceremonies. Recitations from the Quran and other religious readings are all conducted by men. The most remarkable ceremony which specifies men's religious role during the mourning period is *mawlid,* held on the last day of the period of mourning (`aza') for the sake of redemption of the soul of the deceased. Women are not allowed to perform or attend this ceremony. A religious man presents readings from the book on the prophet Muhammad's life, <u>*Mawlid Ibn Hajar*</u> ( `Umal Riḥāwī and others, n.d.). At the end, all those present recite: "*al-fātiḥa* for the soul of the deceased to beg the blessing of Allah (*al-fātiḥa `an rūḥ al-mayyit wa natlub khair min Allah*) ", and recite the *Sura* of *al-fātiḥa.* Men's ceremonies are concerned with redemption of the deceased's soul by showing their own devotion to God.

The only religious act in which women as well as men are able to receive religious merit (*baraka*) during the period of `aza' , is the communal meal. Communal meals in religious ceremonies can be analysed from different dimensions: their Islamic meaning which the locals evaluate in their practices, and their social meanings which link with moral and political evaluation (Tapper and Tapper, 1986: 63). Gathering in order to partake in communal meals and foods which are served at ceremonies is regarded as bringing *khair* (religious power, blessing). Acquiring *khair* is important in

terms of carrying out one's Islamic obligations in the religious domain. In the social domain, gathering for acquiring *khair* serves to constitute relations between a host and his guests by feeding the guests and sharing the meal, and confirms self-respect of the participants engaging in religious conduct. In Ḍubāna, only the Ṭai paramount sheikh sacrifices and hosts Islamic festivals. This act is important to legitimise his religious and moral authority and social status. He honours his guests with ritual food which indicates his hospitality and wealth.

The Ṭai follow the practical obligations based on the religious doctrine of Hanafi sources. Ceremonial food must be religiously sanctioned (*ḥalāl*), in order for Muslim obligations to be fulfilled and access to *khair* gained. Ceremonial meat must be *ḥalāl*. Animals, mainly sheep and cows, should be sacrificed by evoking the name of God, and the meat should be clean by allowing the blood to run from the animal. Through this processing, the sacrificial animals become *ḥalāl* for dedication to God. Although women cook the meat, they are not allowed to sacrifice animals themselves. Women can sacrifice animals only if the men are absent. Forbidding women access to the religious sacrifice of animals is to some extent associated with blood. Because of menstruation and childbirth, women are regarded as being associated with religious impurities more than men are. They are thus discriminated against and prevented from gaining the religious blessing of God. Men, who can purify meat, are allowed to acquire religious merit.

The main foods for communal meals are meat and bread. Lamb boiled with fat, salt and onions served with fresh bread, is the best in terms of flavour, and is the most prestigious food which the host can provide. This meal is served in private religious gatherings, such as a funeral, or religious ceremony for redemption of the deceased (*mawlid*) during the month of Ramaḍān, or on the Islamic feast at the end of Ramaḍān (`Id al-fiṭr), and in other private parties, such as weddings.

Meat is the primary focus which conveys religious merit (*baraka*). The Ṭai also pay special attention to bread, salt and sweet foods. Bread means food in general and is regarded as vital food. It therefore brings *baraka*. Bread is never thrown away. A

piece of bread dropped on the ground is kissed and pressed to the forehead and kept. Dried bread, which is not edible, is stored and given to animals. It is also donated to the poor who feed their animals with it. Salt is regarded as an essential ingredient which enhances the flavour of the meal and brings power to the body.

Sweets are another notable food which convey *baraka*. Sweets are distributed on various occasions - *mawlid*, Islamic feasts, visits to the graveyard. At the end of *mawlid*, dates, sweetmeats and soft drinks are distributed with salt and wheat grain among the host and guests. After the *mawlid*, which is the last ceremony of the funeral which has continued for seven days, the household of the deceased offers bread and sweets to one of their neighbouring households on the following day, and then bread and sweets to another neighbouring household on the next day. This is called `asha' maytīn. Then, they distribute sweets and bread to all their neighbouring households on the same day. This is called `asha' tawīl. After `asha' tawīl, the household of the deceased bring sweets and bread to one of their neighbours every Friday during the period of mourning. How long they mourn the death is decided by the household, and is less than one year. Dubāna villagers explained to me that distribution of sweets was conducted in order to contribute to the redeeming of the deceased's soul. This religious dedication to God, conducted by the bereaved family, asks for God's blessing on the soul.

Sharing food within a community is a social action in which all participants fulfil their obligation as Muslims. All participants achieve a sense of communality while asking for God's favour (*khair*), and sharing the food imbued with religious merit (*baraka*). God acknowledges these dedications of *halāl* food which have *baraka*, and in return, favours the participants who petition God to redeem the soul of the deceased and happiness of their family. God receives their spiritual dedication. There is no sense however, that they share this food with God. (cf. Tapper and Tapper, 1986: 75). In this framework the participants can achieve equality in the eyes of God. Through food-sharing women as well as men are enabled to beg for God's blessing.

There is no status difference between the sheikhs and other commoner tribal members who dedicate themselves to God and ask for God's blessing.

The women's ceremony describes the path to understanding the meaning of death in Islam, whilst men's ceremonies during the mourning period only manifest their devotion to Islam in the same way as Islamic feasts. For example, *mawlid* ceremonies held during the mourning period and the prophet's birthday, follow the same procedure and use the same religious symbols. Even though men's ceremonies during the mourning period are intended to redeem the soul of the deceased, their ceremonies cannot express why their devotion to God will bring religious blessing to the soul of the deceased and themselves. It is women's ceremonies which tell the meaning of death in this world where living people should overcome the suffering caused by loss of the deceased. To accept the loss of the deceased as a trial by God, behave religiously, and show their devotion to Islam, makes it possible for the community and the family of the deceased to ask for God's redemption of the deceased and to petition for happiness for themselves.

Commoner villagers sacrifice animals only on the occasion of domestic religious ceremonies. They ask for *khair* for a good life for their own family and for the soul of deceased members. Personal religious ceremonies share symbols, ritual frameworks and belief in dedication to God with official religious ceremonies which are the great tradition of Islam (Gulick, 1983: 171-80). Sacrificial animals in Islamic feasts are implicitly identified with the victim, whose life is dedicated to God. This spiritual dedication is seen to elicit God's favour. The difference between the meaning of sacrifice in Islamic feasts and that in domestic rituals is intention: official feasts are occasions to manifest abstract devotion to Islam; domestic rituals concern the life and death of members of the family. Even though the intention of the performers differs between official and domestic ceremonies, domestic religion interacts with the great tradition of Islam (Sered, 1988: 516). The symbols of ritual congregation, food and the communal meal used in domestic rituals, are applicable to Islamic feasts. In this respect, commoner villagers can carry out Islamic obligations by playing host to

domestic rituals in the same way as the sheikh who alone can act as host in Islamic feasts in Ḏubāna. Their ability to dedicate victims to God and share meals which have *baraka* with their guests, makes it possible for the commoners to insist on equality between themselves and the sheikh in terms both of religious piety and hospitality.

All households in Ḏubāna can host domestic religious ceremonies as social gatherings. The commoner villagers as well as the sheikh, honour their guests with ritual food. The hosts, who are represented by men, fulfil their religious duty through the congregation. Hosts should be generous and humble to their guests. Hosts require their guests' acceptance of their hospitality. Guests in turn, put themselves in a position where they can receive their hosts' hospitality(*ḍiyāfa*) and, therefore, obtain the right to receive both food and religious *khair*. Guests confirm the hosts' political ability to offer the prestigious meat dish. At such ceremonies, relations between the host and guests are of unequals. Since neighbours invite each other to their domestic religious ceremonies, their exchanges are reciprocal. The host household in a domestic ceremony will be guests of another ceremony held by other neighbouring households. Since host-guest relations may be reversed at some later date, status relations between neighbours, even the sheikh and other villagers, are equal in the long term.

At Islamic feasts, host-guest relations do not work in reverse. In Ḏubāna only the sheikh arranges official Islamic gatherings and communal meals on the Islamic feasts of `Id al-fiṭr and on the prophet Muhammad's birthday, *mawlid al-nabwī*. He enjoys the superior position as a host to his guests. The sheikh feeds all the household heads in the village on `id al-fiṭr and *mawlid al-nabwī*. On the Islamic great feast of sacrifice (`Id al-aḍḥa), it is only the sheikh who sacrifices sheep or cows in order to distribute the raw meat amongst other village households. This distribution is called *daḥīya* which on the one hand means an act offering a victim to God in order to show devotion to God and on the other hand, is an act of charity to the poor for the sake of the host's access to *khair*.

Women are excluded from these gatherings. This exclusion of women may implicitly differentiate domestic ceremonies concerned with life and death in a family,

from official Islamic ceremonies. Women take an important role in the link between domestic ritual, that is, making family petitions to God, and that of Islam. While Islamic feasts solely express dedication to God and devotion to Islam. Differentiation of purposes between domestic and official Islamic rituals separates rituals in which women can participate from those only permitted for men.

Commoner villagers pay respect (*iḥtirām*) to the sheikh and voluntarily accept a communal meal in which the sheikh acts as a host. Without the commoners holding the sheikh in veneration (*iḥtirām*), the political influence of the sheikh cannot be achieved. The sheikh is obliged to apply the code of hospitality (*ḍiyāfa*) to feeding his guests. His hospitality to his guests signifies his claim of his religious piety and political superiority over those whom he feeds. The sheikh, however, cannot arbitrarily force the commoners to accept his political superiority, because the commoners honour him with respect for his virtues of observing religious duties, which is the only way to legitimise his religious and moral authority. Even though the commoners do not sacrifice sheep on Islamic feasts, they do intend to carry out Islamic obligations. During the two big Islamic feasts, they prepare sweetmeats imbued with *baraka*, which can be substituted for sacrificing animals, and offer them to their guests. Their economic inability to dedicate victims to God does not create inequality between themselves and the sheikh in terms of religious piety (cf. Tapper and Tapper, 1986: 67). Moreover, the commoners can insist on their equality with the sheikh by hosting domestic rituals in which they affirm their devotion to God and can claim their political ability to be hospitable to their guests, in the same way as the sheikh on Islamic feasts. In this sense, the commoners try to seek an egalitarian position through their religious performance. Religious symbols of food and the communal meal provide grounds for reducing political inequality between themselves and the sheikh. The sheikh is then obliged to claim his political superiority by applying the code of hospitality (*ḍiyāfa*) to the religious congregation in which his religious and moral virtues are acknowledged by his guests.

5.5   Women's Agricultural Labour

In the past, the power of the Ṭai paramount sheikh has not been based solely on his position in the Ṭai tribal structure, but also on his economic wealth and on the class difference between the sheikhs and commoner tribal members. It was the sheikh who imposed the tribal members' submission to his authority based on patronage, and who enjoyed the status of constituting alliances between 'ashīra-s among the Ṭai tribal confederation. His power was used to enhance his political influence in state politics. These days, as the State succeeds in integrating minorities and tribes[3], tribal sheikhs have few opportunities to exercise influence on their tribal members by dealing with conflicts with other tribal or ethnic groups, and negotiations with the state. Moreover, tribal members are economically more independent of the sheikhs than in the past. Tribal leaders are therefore no longer powerful figures in charge of all their affairs.

Although the economic disparity between the Ṭai paramount sheikh and other tribal members in Ḍubāna is still enormous, the sheikh no longer enforces slave labour on tribal members. Most household heads in Ḍubāna have income sources outside the village, independent of the sheikh. Although most young men cannot find jobs in Qamishly, or the other industrial sites nearby, because of the shortage of employment, they only rarely work for the sheikh as agricultural labourers. The sheikh thus finds it difficult to hire his tribesmen for his agricultural business. As a result, he employs managers, tractor drivers, shepherds, horse breeders, and seasonal labourers from a Christian villages next to Ḍubāna, Yazīdī[4] immigrants from Iraq, or peasants from villages near Aleppo and so on. Male villagers in Ḍubāna no longer accept hierarchical subordination to the sheikh on the basis of his economic power and wealth.

Women are more caught up by the restrictions on production activities, which are created by norms of gender segregation and family honour. Because of these restrictions imposed on these women, their scope for finding work outside the home is limited. These women find an opportunity to be engaged in agricultural activities as seasonal agricultural labourers in the sheikh's fields. This, however, seems to contradict their egalitarian attitude to the sheikh. They seem to be caught up by the

historically created class differences between themselves and the sheikh derived from the obligations to do compulsory labour for the sheikh. The focus in this section is on examining the discourses of women's agricultural activities in the sheikh's fields that reflect the commoners' egalitarian attitude toward the sheikh. I shall first look at women's production activities which are restricted by gender roles.

Agricultural production divides men's tasks from women's. Weeding and the harvesting of cotton and lentils are exclusively undertaken by women. Both men and women say, "it is shameful (`aib) for men to do such tasks". The men's role in agricultural labour is ploughing, seeding and harvesting wheat and barley. All these tasks are mechanised. Women are not allowed to drive cars and tractors, which is regarded as shameful. Shame in the context of agricultural work means conduct which breaches the assignment of tasks according to gender division. This notion separates women's tasks from the men, and confines both men and women to participating in tasks which are allocated according to gender division. Sahlins argues that taboo creates "the social nature of persons and groups, [and] tabu is itself the principle of these distinctions. For the same reason, tabu is never a simple reflection upon practice; it is *in* the order of practice, as [is also] the organisation of it" (1981: 51-2)(italic original). Exclusion of one gender from particular agricultural tasks is derived from a kind of taboo related to ideas of shame (`aib). This prohibition and exclusion establishes social distinction between men and women in agricultural production. Women depend on men for core production activities. Moreover, only men have the privilege of storing crops, transforming them into cash and distributing them for consumption. Women are not allowed to acquire these male privileges, even though they have become a major part of the agricultural labour force.

These gender divisions in production activities are applied to seasonal agricultural labour. Women carry out actual production labour, weeding and harvesting cotton. Men have access to more privileged jobs - as tractor drivers and managers of female labourers and the harvest. Production relations between men and women among agricultural labourers, require enormous female labour forces, especially in the fields

which are owned by big landlords. The Ṭai paramount sheikh as a big land owner needs a female labour force and it gives commoner women opportunities to work as seasonal labourers.

Women's engagement in agricultural labour cannot always be accepted, even though their work satisfies the practical need both of the sheikh and these women. There is another taboo which prevents the women from working outside the home. As a principle, women cannot work outside the home, because the activity threatens female sexual virtue unless in conditions which guarantee its protection. Women in Ḍubāna say, "we work in the sheikh's fields, but do not work in fields next to the village owned by the State. It is shame for us". This statement reflects insider-outsider differentiation. The state farm is managed by men unrelated to women in Ḍubāna. As discussed in Chapter 3, Jazirah inhabitants believe that unrelated men (*ghrāib*) are potential enemies, threatening women's sexual virtue. Sexual assault is understood by them in terms of ethnic or sectarian group opposition. Men in the Ṭai feel that if their woman is assaulted, it means that the Ṭai are dishonoured by the group to which the aggressor belongs. Female workers in the sheikh's fields need to justify their engagement in agricultural work on the basis that they must be protected by the sheikh who is a member of the Ṭai.

In opposition between the Ṭai and outsiders, the value of 'brotherhood' (*ukhuwa*) as structured by tribal confederation may justify engagement of female tribal workers in the work on the sheikh's fields. If their engagement is justified solely by tribal alliances based on 'brotherhood', these women should be able to work for any landlord among the Ṭai. In reality they are not allowed to work for most of them. The Ṭai landlords, including the paramount sheikh, are not obliged to undertake responsibility for the protecting the sexual virtue of their female workers. Only the family (*āila*) members are obliged to take responsibility for women's behaviour. This obligation is derived from the principle of kinship classification. The closer their relations, the more obligation they owe, as discussed in the previous section. If an illicit relationship is revealed, male family members of the woman involved in this act

are obliged to kill her and the male lover for the sake of restoring their family honour. According to this principle, no relatives or tribal members, except for the women's family members, are obliged to take vengeance.

Even though ethnic or sectarian opposition works as a protective factor for women inside the group, the actual obligation to protect them is not attributed to the tribal members other than from the women's family. The principle of insider-outsider opposition should have meaning in its connection to another principle. Women can work on condition that they do not threaten their family honour through illicit contact with men. Work for the *krif*, who is a guardian of their brother's circumcision and a friend of their father, fulfils such a condition, if the *krif* is from the Tai. *Krif* is a category within which children of the *krif* cannot marry the circumcised boy, his brothers and sisters. Women in the family of the circumcised boy can have contact with his *krif's* family, regardless of any sexual implication.

The relationship between the families of the circumcised boy and his *krif* is based on personal alliance between the father of the boy and his *krif*. Since the problem of female sexual virtue is a family matter, male family members of the women are obliged to protect it for the sake of their and the family's honour. These men, especially the household head of the women, who is a representative for her protection, are required to create the conditions in which their women can work without damaging their sexual virtue. Personal alliance with *krif* makes it possible for the women's family to ask the *krif* to take custody of them during their work. The *krif* guarantees the protection of these women through personal alliance with men in the women's family.

It is possible for the Tai paramount sheikh to have custody of his female workers. His guarantee of protection involves his politics in tribal and regional matters. This is an important means whereby the sheikh establishes his political influence. The relationship arising from this guarantee obliges the sheikh to protect the women from sexual offence by outsiders. Such relations are supported by tribal 'brotherhood' relations, which are inherent in ties between the sheikh and other tribal members.

'Brotherhood' relations cement an alliance, when the sheikh takes custody of the women and protect them from outsiders.

When women can justify working for the sheikh, alliance between their family and the sheikh should contain factors which reinforce guarantees of their protection. This is derived from the sheikh's political influence. I shall present a case in which the sheikh took a woman involved in an illicit sexual act into protective custody. The reason why I present this here is that this case reveals how his custody has meaning both in tribal relations and regional politics. This case helps me to understand why women can be allowed to work for the sheikh on the basis of alliance between their family and the sheikh.

The Ṭai paramount sheikh took a woman involved in illicit sexual acts into protective custody. She, a single woman from the Ṭai, had had a stillbirth and her illicit relationship had been exposed to the public. Police investigated the case and asked the sheikh to become an arbitrator in order to save the woman's life. The woman's family agreed that the sheikh could accept taking custody of her. The family cannot therefore kill her because the murder would disgrace the sheikh (*yaīb-hu*) who is her custodian. The settlement does not however prevent revenge, that is, the murder of her male lover. Ḍubāna villagers say that the revenge may be conducted when her brothers who work abroad return, or when her younger brothers grow up. As for the settlement of the problem, the sheikh's arbitration establishes a specific relationship between him and the woman's family: the sheikh has her in his custody and prevents her from further sexual offence; the family can save face without sanctioning the woman out of respect for the sheikh's dignity (*min shan waj-hu*). While the sheikh acts as a guardian, anyone who interferes with the woman's life is seen as disgracing the sheikh. Since such a guarantee for the woman's life and the honour of her family exemplifies the sheikh's authority, anyone who tries to offend the settlement is regarded as a challenger to the sheikh's political authority. Since tribal structure does not define his right to intervene in the problem of the woman's family, his undertaking depends on his personal

influence. The acknowledgement of this guarantee by society illustrates the political success and influence of the sheikh.

As shown, the sheikh's political dignity provides a guarantee of protection of the woman's sexual virtue to her family. When tribal women work for him, a woman's family, especially the household head who is obliged to take responsibility for her sexual virtue, respects the political dignity of the sheikh and agrees to entrust the woman to him for work. Although the household head can ask for the sheikh's protection over the woman's sexual virtue, it is conducted by paying respect to the sheikh's political ability, and the principle of alliance of their tribe to the sheikhly tribe, `Asāf. The commoner tribal members are not subject to his influence on the basis of sheikh- `abīd relations. The egalitarian attitude of commoner tribal members does not accept such hierarchical relations. The sheikh cannot depend on his advantaged status created through the course of history, nor convert his wealth into political power over his tribal members. His political power is accepted by the commoners in the sense that they pay voluntary respect to his personal ability to prevent his tribal women from sexual offence. His dignity is acknowledged as his personal disposition (ṭabī'a), which enables him to carry out his responsibility to the female workers, and his honour which he receives from his ancestors who played important political roles in the past. His political power supported by alliances of his tribal members is enhanced, and no one can offend his dignity. This power guarantees protection of women who work for the sheikh.

The women's relative freedom is acquired by the demands for their labour, respect for the sheikh's political ability to guarantee their sexual honour and egalitarian tribal alliance. The acceptance of the sheikh's political influence in the form of paying respect to his dignity and tribal alliance, underpins women's liberation from `abīd status. In practice, both commoner men and women need the sheikh's undertaking in order to acquire opportunities for women to earn income from agricultural labour. The sheikh also needs the female labour force in his fields. Both sheikhly influence and commoners' egalitarian attitudes are therefore sustained in part, in the course of

fulfilling the economic needs of both sides. Consequently, women enforce their opportunity to retain income from their work to some extent, and acquire relative freedom from the restrictions imposed on them by the principle of gender segregation.

CHAPTER 6. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

6.1 Introduction

Regional economic developments in Jazirah have had a considerable impact on the productive activities of Shawaya village women and their access to economic resources. Village women have been engaged in animal rearing and dairy production, and have contributed to the household economy, following increased regional demands for their products. These productive activities of the women not only contribute to the provision of domestic food, but are also a source of cash income for the household. These activities reflect commoner villagers' economic independence of the tribal sheikhs. They think that the ownership of small numbers of sheep and cows, as well as the right to agricultural land leased out by the Syrian government, symbolise their liberation from slavery status. The villagers regard the lack of access to these economic resources, which used to be monopolised by the sheikhs, as the root of their enslavement by the sheikhs. The acquisition of these economic resources therefore, becomes important in reducing status difference between commoner and the sheikhs.

The following narrative told by a married woman, who has been living in Dubāna for more than thirty years, describes how common villagers view the improvement of their life, brought about by the land reform and ownership of livestock:

> "We were all poor. All the fields in Jazirah used to be owned by five tribal sheikhs, before the land reform. There was one rich man in this village, and the others were poor. The sheikh was the only rich man. In those days there was no other work except for working for the sheikh. We worked hard in his fields for ten hours every day, but he paid us only two lira a day.[1] We were slaves (`abīd) of the sheikh. We did not have any dishes to eat on. We did not have makarona (spaghetti), makhashi (stuffed

vegetables) or other food which are now available to us. We only had boiled onions (which represent poor food for the Shawaya) and clarified butter. We rarely ate wheat bread. I often went to the field after harvest and picked up grains from the ground, to bake bread for my small children. We could not afford to eat meat. God blessed us. We now have the right to our own land for cultivation and our own sheep and cows. Our life has improved. Few people nowadays say that they are `abīd of the sheikh."

The political motivation for common villagers to acquire economic autonomy is to resist the hierarchical sheikh-`abīd relation. They believe that acquisition of economic resources has brought an opportunity to insist on a politically equal status to the sheikh. Even though the size of their flock and agricultural land are small in comparison to the sheikh's, they now possess the same kind of economic resources as the sheikh, by which they are able to live independently. They no longer need to subject themselves to the sheikh in order to acquire economic gain. Therefore, there is an overriding economic and political need for livestock rearing and the processing of dairy products, as a means of establishing economic and political independence of the sheikh.

Different roles in production are allocated to men and women. Women process most of the available surplus into valuable commodities and bring cash income to the household. Women shoulder a heavy work load. They feed and water animals, process their dairy produce, and sell these at Qamishly market, whereas the men's participation in animal production only goes as far as hiring a shepherd, making a contract with a shopkeeper for selling the dairy products, and trading their animals in the livestock market. There is no co-operation or exchange of labour between households.

Women, as well as men do not think that their work brings cash income to their households nor do they receive acknowledgement for their economic contribution to the households. Neither the women nor the other members of the household value their sale of dairy produce in the market as independent commercial ventures. Their economic activity is regarded as part of the female role within the household. Women are reminded that their work fulfils their responsibility (maswūliya) to provide

sustenance for their household members. Their income is used for buying food and other daily necessities for the household. They do not retain the fruits of their labour, i.e. cash. Therefore, women cannot turn their activities into a source of power, either in the public or domestic sphere.

The rationale underlying these perceptions rests on the norms; women's role is to process food which is extracted from resources men possess; a woman should be at home and avoid contact with unrelated men (*gharāib*) in order to be an honourable woman (*sharīfa*) who respects her own sexual virtue. Although women acknowledge these norms, they are actually engaged in productive activity and commercial contacts with unrelated men[2].

Women's sale of their dairy products at Qamishly market and their participation in commercial activity are undertaken with the consent of their family, whose honour is affected by the women's sexual modesty. Although the marketplace is a public space where a woman's appearance, activities and contacts with unrelated men (*ghrāib*) are open to public scrutiny, they walk freely in the market among unrelated men and sell their dairy products to them. In this context, the socially pervasive idea that unrelated men are potential enemies threatening female sexual virtue does not directly affect women's activity in the market place. Thus normative rules that confine women's activities within the domestic arena, in order to keep them out of sight, prove to be of limited use.

Activities of these women in the public space, however, cannot acquire value as a commercial activity in which they are given a free hand, as in the case of *baladi* women in Cairo (Early, 1993). *Baladi* women show initiative as merchants and creditors in the marketplace, and their individualized work is accepted by the traditional value system as *mualimma*, a tough "street woman" who is respected and is untouched by innuendoes of loose morals (ibid.: 87-8). On the contrary, Jazirah women's commercial activity in the marketplace is understood as a part of women's role to provide sustenance to household members and is protected by their household heads. Their work is not independent of men in their household and this interdependence of the men's and

women's spheres makes it possible for women to participate in the business. Men possess animals from which women extract dairy produce. Women provide their household members with these products and with other food which they purchase with money gained by selling these products. Because of the sexual codes that women should avoid unrelated men, they require their household heads to make contracts with shopkeepers to whom they sell dairy product. The shopkeeper is an unrelated man, with whom women should avoid personal contact in order to protect their honour.

Field studies of Arab women dealing with their economic activities have revealed that the development of the commercial market has created shifts in the boundaries between the various spheres of action for both men and women. This process works on subtle levels of cultural articulation. Commercial development provides women with opportunities to participate in work outside the home and earn income, or conversely confines them to activities which have economic value. For example, Altorki suggests that women in the Saudi Arabian city of `Unayzan are given opportunities to acquire their own sources of income from employment and to retain autonomy in disposing of it. This can, however, breed feelings of insecurity in their husbands. The dependency of women on male responsibilities such as providing food, shelter, clothing and health care, and on resources controlled by men, are prominent features in traditional patriarchal gender relations between men and women (Altorki, 1992: 107-8). Women taking up work creates a fear amongst men that the traditional boundaries between men and women could be eroded and thus curtail male authority over women.

Abu-Lughod's study of an Egyptian rural community, Awlad `Ali (1986), suggests that the development of the commercial market economy has generated change in gender roles in terms of productive activities. Both men and women used to contribute to the subsistence economy within the framework of the traditional division of labour: the men cared for the sheep, and were involved in cultivation and trade; the women were responsible for milking and milk processing, gathering wood for the cooking fire, and weaving tents and blankets. The shift from subsistence to market production has resulted in women's work becoming peripheralised. Their work is

confined to an economically devalued domestic sphere. Women have become profoundly dependent on men as subsistence is now based on cash rather than on the exploitation of herds and fields. Mechanised transport on the other hand, has increased men's mobility and business contacts outside the camp. Meanwhile, the women have no such access, because the sexual codes require that women avoid male nonkin and strangers (ibid.: 72-4). Thus, the development of a market economy tends in fact to encourage the confinement of women's activity and constricts their freedom of movement.

Whether the development of the commercial market confines women's activities or gives them more opportunities to be engaged in economic activities, it brings changes to the relations between a husband and his wife and their relative status. Discussions both of Altorki and Abu-Lughod suggest problems which have arisen in the two societies as well as in Jazirah: people in these societies are caught in a dilemma as to how to cope with the different configurations created by a market economy whilst maintaining the traditional values and relations between men and women.

In this chapter I shall describe Jazirah village women's dairy production and its contribution to the household economy. In considering the impact of regional economic development upon the domestic sphere, I shall examine the way in which women identify their production and commerce as a part of their domestic chores. The codes of modesty and sexual segregation determine to a much greater extent what women do outside the home. They must be vigilant in keeping away from personal contact with unrelated men during their work. These female roles and behavioural norms contribute to the observance of traditional relations between men and women within the household[3].

6.2 Women's Dairy Production

Among the twenty-one households living in Ḍubāna, nineteen are engaged in animal rearing: of sheep, goats, cows, chickens and ducks. They keep different animals for different purposes. Chickens and ducks are kept for their eggs which

provide food. Most households expect their sheep and cows to provide for their needs in milk and fuel, made of dried dung kneaded with straw and water, for heating and cooking. Both are needed for the household's own consumption, while market demand for milk provides them with the opportunity of generating cash income. The milking season lasts nine months throughout winter, spring and summer, with ewes giving milk throughout the lambing season. For three months between August and October ewes produce little milk.

Table 1. Household composition

| Type of Household	Number	%	People	%
a) Paternal Joint (parent(s), single children and one married son)	3	14	30	17
b) Affinal Joint (one married man, wife and her parent)	1	5	5	3
c) Simple (one married man, wife and children)	17	81	137	80
Total	21	100	172	100

The household (*usra*) forms an independent unit of production and consumption. There is no co-operative labour or exchange of labour between households. A common budget and sharing of living space are important elements in defining a household as an economic unit. The household is also a unit composed of

parents and their children. In this sense, sons and daughters who are married still keep their membership in their natal household. One of the married sons with his wife and children live in the same compound as members of his natal household in order to care for his old parents. The son's conjugal household and that of his parents can be identified as a joint household in terms of common budget and sharing living space. However, the villagers sometimes separate the joint household into two conjugal households: the son's and his parents' households. **Table 1** shows that eighty percent of the village households are composed of parents and their children, and twenty percent are joint households, which include an aged parent or single brothers and sisters of the household heads. The villagers describe a conjugal or a joint household as an economic unit in which the members take responsibilities for carrying out their respective roles: the male household head is a representative for conducting commercial ventures and controls productive resources; the women cooperate for processing the food and milk, both of which are extracted from resources owned by the household head. I have examined a household in the context of the domestic economy and therefore, I refer to a conjugal or a joint household as one social unit defined by a common budget, co-operation in production and consumption, and the sharing of living space.

Women in each household are responsible for most of the labour involved in animal rearing and milk production. Men take little part in this labour. In Dubāna, where the economic situation of the village households is similar, there is a correlation between flock size and household size, between flock size and the size of the female labour force, as well as between flock size and the occupation of household head (**Figure 6, Figure 7**). New households which are usually composed of a young couple and their small children are smaller and own a few ewes and cows. These are expected to provide for their domestic needs in dairy products and fuel. In a new household, the wife is the only source of labour for rearing sheep and cows, and for processing the milk. Throughout the developing cycle of the household, grown-up daughters therefore become indispensable to the labour force. When daughters reach

thirteen, they can manage almost all the tasks of animal rearing. The more grown-up daughters a household contains, the larger the flock it can keep.

Figure 6. Flock size and household size, scatter
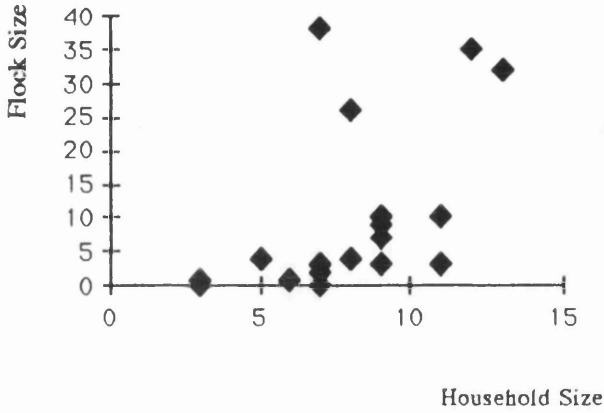
Household Size

Figure 7. Female labour force, occupation of household head and flock size, scatter

Female Labour Force (over 13 y.o.)
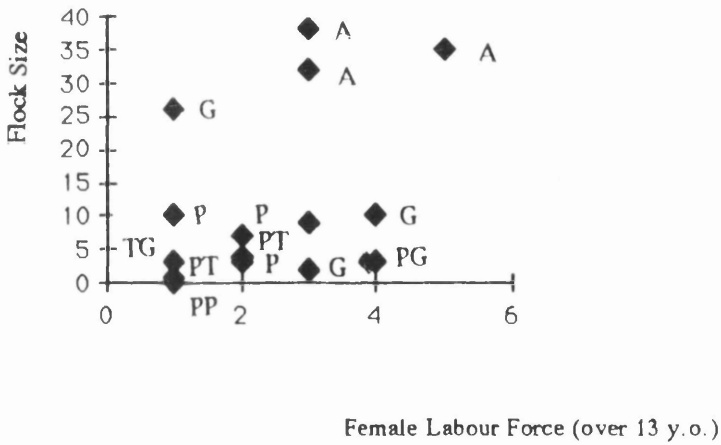
Occupation

G: Public Sector   P: Private Sector   A: Agriculture and Livestock Breeding

T: Livestock Trader

The labour involved in animal rearing and milk processing within a household is allocated to women in accordance with the hierarchical division of labour between

them. Age, experience and status are important criteria for this allocation. Young girls who mow the grass used for grazing the animals are responsible for watering, and bringing back the flock after a day's pasturing by the shepherd. Senior girls feed the animals and help their mothers in milking. Milk processing, and the making of yoghurt, clarified butter and cheese are the jobs only of married women requiring special skills. According to seniority, a young bride cannot be engaged in this work if there is a senior woman such as the mother-in-law or widowed sister of her husband living in the joint household.

Significantly, the number of animals retained in a household is affected by the occupation of male household head and the size of the female labour force (**Figure 7**). Households whose heads are wage earners in government establishments, or the private sector — such as workers in foreign companies and taxi drivers — own a relatively smaller number of sheep and cows than households whose heads are engaged only in agriculture and livestock breeding. In households of wage earners, the size of the female labour force influences the flock size, because male heads are not able to engage intensively in controlling flock size, the numbers of ewes and rams and in selling livestock at the daily market.

Tasks related to market business are regarded as the men's role. Women are not allowed to participate in negotiations about prices with livestock dealers, because the sexual codes require that women avoid these unrelated men (*ghräib*). The animal market thus belongs totally to the male domain. Therefore, households of waged labourers are more interested in rearing small numbers of cows rather than larger number of ewes, because a higher milk productivity is expected from the small numbers of cows. This means that the engagement of male heads in livestock control and marketing is minimized. Since milk production is the main purpose of these households, their livestock business is largely dependent on women's labour. The greater the number of women in a household, the more animals they can rear.

In households whose heads are livestock traders, the number of animals kept fluctuates. These heads sometimes buy lambs and cows, and keep them until they can

make a profit on their sale in the market. This aspect of business needs the participation of the female labour force in the household, in order to rear these animals. We can find a correlation between the number of animals and the size of the female labour force in these households, although their purpose is different to other households in which dairy production takes priority.

There are two exceptional households, each of which contain only one female worker, but own larger numbers of animals (**Figure 7**); one owns ten and the other owns twenty-six sheep and cows. In these households females, that is, the wives, are not engaged in animal rearing. Their husbands contract the rearing out to others. The rearers receive dairy produce and the owners gain a profit by acquiring new born animals and increasing the flock size, or by selling them.

Figure 6 and **Figure 7** do not include the household of the Ţai paramount sheikh who owns considerable economic resources which are not comparable to other commoner village households. Moreover, his female household members do not make up the actual labour force for his animal rearing business. He hires men from a neighbouring village and from Qamishly for grazing and managing his flocks, and hires women from a neighbouring village for dairy production.

The male role in animal rearing is to hire a shepherd for pasturing the animals and to control the size of the flock. Most household heads, except for the sheikh and the other two villagers who leave their flock with others, cooperate to draw up a contract of grazing with a shepherd who receives £S 25 per a month for each animal, instead of village males participating in grazing by themselves. The strict division of tasks between men and women, is evident with grazing and related work regarded as men's tasks, carried out outside the home, leaving women responsible for all the animal care in the domestic sphere. These spheres of responsibility become clear when the animals are brought back from the pasture. Young girls go out to the pasture in groups, and bring back their animals. When they arrive home, the men can help the girls water the animals and take them to the shed. Once the animals are back in the shed, the women are responsible for all the remaining tasks pertaining to the animals.

6.3   Women's   Market Activities and Domestic Economy

Dairy products are brought to Qamishly market by middle-aged wives who set off in a pick-up truck in groups in the early morning, along with their loads. How often they go to the market depends on the amount of dairy produce they obtain from their animals and on their daily food shopping needs. Because of the respect for seniority, single women are not allowed to deal with the selling of dairy produce. Senior daughters go to the market instead of their mothers when the latter are sick, but younger daughters can never replace their senior sisters.

The women in Dubāna sell milk and dairy products to one particular shop with which their household heads have reached an agreement. Women bring their produce to the shop and are paid for it. The shopkeeper is a Kurdish man who belongs to a different social category from the Shawaya villagers in Dubāna. Thus, he is an unrelated man, *gharīb*, to these women and is out of bounds to them without permission of their household head. Even though their household heads are not directly selling the product to the shop, male intervention in the contract confirms to both the men and women that the women's commercial activity is carried out with male consent. By authorising their women in this commercial deal, male household heads can keep control over products and their women's activity.

Women spend almost all their income from the sale of dairy produce on the provision of the household's daily diet. These is a range of foods which women purchase: vegetables, meat, bread, spaghetti, a few luxuries, such as fruit, sweets, tobacco and ice-cream, if they are able to afford it. Women buy food only for daily consumption. The basics of the diet, such as salt, sugar, flour, rice and tea, and other important necessities such as clothing, paraffin-oil, coal for the stove and propane gas for cooking facilities, are bought by household heads.

Household expenditure on food and domestic consumption of dairy produce are impossible to ascertain. The estimates I was given were unreliable because of the high value give to the appearance of conspicuous consumption in Qamishly society. I have thus presented my own estimates of what I believe to be the women's income from the

sale of dairy products and income earned from other activities, based on my own observations as well as my informants' statements.

My examples are of the incomes of three households, including income from dairy products in April 1990 (see **Table 2**). Spring is the season during which they can expect plentiful milk supplies. The type of cow largely affects the level of productivity, and therefore, the number of rearing cows in a household does not necessarily correlate to the volume of milk products. I show the contribution of dairy production to the household monthly income by presenting income from other sources.

Household A is composed of a couple and seven children; there are only two women, the wife and her daughter of thirteen, who has not gone to school and works for the household. The household head is an employee of a foreign road construction company. His monthly salary is £S2,500. They rear two cows and one male calf; one cow and the calf are owned by the household head and the other cow belongs to his wife, who was given it by her father. The wife sells milk and yoghurt to the market shop every three days and her monthly income is approximately £S 490. She has additional income from selling soft drinks and ice-cream to the villagers, mainly to small children. She makes a profit of £S 60 a month.

The head of household A has two married brothers, who make up independent households. These brothers divide the wheat crop equally from the land left to them by their deceased father who took it on lease from the government. Their crop was 125 sacks. According to the villagers' accounts of the relation between agricultural land size and wheat seed needed for cultivation, one sack of wheat (100 -120 kilograms of wheat per a sack) is required for seeding ten *dwānum*(single: *dunom*). These brothers said that they needed eighteen sacks of wheat for their land. They harvested wheat seven times the amount of seed required for their land. The price of wheat per kilogram in 1990 was £S8.5. The income of these three brothers' households from the wheat crop was £S116,875. After deducting the cost of seed, the actual income of household A was £S33,348.

Table 2. Household income, composition and flock size in April 1990

i) Household Income

Household	A	B	C
Dairy Produce (Value in Syrian Pound)	490	2,100	3,917
Agricultural Crop	38,958/year* =3,247/month	——	18,700/year =1,558/month
Agricultural Seasonal Labour	9,000/year =750/month	9,600/year =800/month	12,000/year =1,000/month
Animal Sales	——	——	6,600/year = 550/month
Sale of Soft Drinks and Ice-cream	60	——	——
Employment	2,500	2,500	——
Total	7,047	5,600	7,025
Income from Dairy Produce/ Household Income (%)	7	38	56

ii) Household Composition

Father	1	1	1
Mother	1	1	1
Son (under 13 y.o.)	5(2)	4(1)	6(4)
Daughter (under 13)	2(1)	3(0)	4(0)
Total	9(3)	9(1)	12(4)

iii) Flock Size

Sheep	–	5	17
Cattle	3	5	3
Goat	–	–	15
Total	3	10	35

* All the income from agriculture was spent on the marriage of a brother of the head of household A. The bride price (£S100,000) and cost of the wedding reception were paid for by the crop income of A and A's brothers (£S116,875).

Agricultural seasonal labour is another source of income. The wife in household A worked as a supervisor of female labourers for the cotton harvest. Her three sons worked as recorders, writing down the amount of cotton gathered by each labourer. Their total income was £S9,000. The income generated by women's dairy produce in this month makes up around seven percent of the total household income.

Household B is composed of nine people: a couple and seven children. Their three daughters are over thirteen. Four women are engaged in the rearing of five cows and five ewes. Their income from the sale of dairy produce was approximately £S 2,100 a month. This income covers the cost of most daily food for the household. The income represents thirty-eight percent of the monthly cash income of Household B.

The household head is a worker at a petrol station and his salary is £S2,500 per a month. He has agricultural land equivalent to three sacks for seeding. Because of the shortage of rainfall in winter they had a small barley crop in 1990. They harvested only three sacks, which is the same amount of barley which they consumed for seeding. They stored this for feeding the animals the following winter. I do not therefore include this crop in the household income.

Income of Household B from agricultural seasonal labour is earned mainly by the two younger daughters working in the cotton harvest and weeding the wheat field (the eldest daughter has a bad leg and cannot work in the fields). The cotton harvest takes

around thirty-five days from the middle of September to the middle of October. Work is often disturbed by rainfall which usually starts from the beginning of October. Wages are paid according to the amount of cotton which each person gathers. A woman gathers between eighty to a hundred kilograms of cotton a day. The wage is £S1.5 per a kilogram. A woman's income from the cotton harvest is approximately £S3,500. Girls work at weeding the wheat fields for ten days from the end of May to the beginning of June. Their wage is £S50 per a day. The two daughters of Household B together earn a total of £S8,000 as agricultural seasonal labourers. Household B's two sons were engaged in work controlling the flow of water to the cotton irrigation canal in June and in supervising female labourers weeding the wheat fields. Their total income was £S1,600.

Household C is composed of twelve persons. With one son conscripted into the army, the actual number of persons in the household in 1990 was eleven. The household head was engaged in agricultural and livestock breeding. Household C's income was derived from the thirty-five acre wheat fields, and the sale of sheep and dairy products.

Household C's wheat crop in 1990 was small. Their land requires fourteen sacks of seed, and they harvested only forty sacks of wheat and paid half of the crop to their sharecropper who had provided the seeds and cultivated the land. Household C's income from agriculture was £S18,700. Household C's three daughters worked as seasonal labourers harvesting cotton, and earned £S12,000.

Household C's flock was composed of seventeen sheep, fifteen goats and three cows, controlled by the household head. Most of the goats reared by this household are owned by others. This household only receives their dairy produce. During the two years of my research, the flock size did not grow. Animal mortality is quite low, and there was no killing of lambs for meat or sacrifice. Aged ewes are sold and replaced by ewes born the year before. Only one male lamb is reserved as replacement for the mature ram. Household C sold six sheep in 1990. The price of sheep, which differs

according to its age and sex, was between £S1,000 and £S1,200. Their income from sheep sales was approximately £S6,600.

Consumption of dairy products, such as cheese and clarified butter, was affected by household size and its economic situation. As I observed, members of Household C ate more dairy products in comparison to the other households. Since Household C did not have a regular cash income from a salary and depended on income from agriculture and animal breeding, their household economy was more precarious compared to that of households whose heads earned cash income from sources other than agriculture and livestock. Because Household C owned nine ewes and three cows, and reared fourteen nanny-goats and three cows, their monthly income from dairy products was approximately £S3,917.

These three households are representative of the other animal rearing households in Dubāna. The heads of both Household A and B are salaried workers and have an income other than from agricultural or animal breeding. Among twenty-one household heads in Dubāna, seventeen are either employed or self-employed. Most of them have lease-hold agricultural land, which was allocated to them by the government, or which they inherited from their fathers. The size of these fields does not exceed fifty acres. The size of land is not always correlated to the amount of crop. These villagers cannot afford to invest money in irrigation, and therefore the crop is highly influenced by levels of precipitation. Their income from agriculture fluctuates annually, depending on the weather.

The economic situation of Household A and B is similar. They earn the same amount of salary. Household B had a poor crop of barley in 1990 because of the lack of precipitation. They farm a plot of 7.5 acres, which is smaller than the field held by Household A, which retains one third of 45 acres. Household B, however, rears more animals than Household A. As shown in **Figure 3**, a correlation is found between numbers of animals and the size of the female labour force in these examples. Household A contains only two females and so owns only two cows. Household B

contains four females and is able to rear ten livestock. Household B is therefore more dependant on income from dairy products than Household A.

For Household C, whose head has no income other than from agriculture and animal breeding, dairy production is its most important source of income. There are only three household heads in Dubāna among commoner villagers who are fully engaged in agriculture and livestock breeding. Household C is one such example. The amount of income from dairy products represents fifty-six percent of the household's monthly income. As the household head only arranges agricultural and commercial contracts and controls flock size, household C is largely dependant on female labour and the income generated by it.

Even though the social ideal of men as bread winners for their household is dominant in society, the women's contribution to the household economy has become greater in accordance with the size of the female labour force and the degree of the household's dependence on animal breeding. The villagers' daily diet, whose ingredients the women buy in the market, costs £S80 per a day for an average household size of nine persons. Income from the sale of dairy products covers most of the expense of daily food in Households B and C.

Going to the market regularly to sell their dairy products in order to buy provisions with the money earned seems to provide women with relative freedom. They can get satisfaction from providing the food for their household, and even sweets and small gifts for their children, when they can afford to. They are able to move freely in the market, in order to make their purchases, in the company of other women. The atmosphere on these excursions is relaxed; they are not reprimanded for having contact with individual men and women in carrying out their tasks in the market.[4] It is still vital to avoid encountering strange men, but the women are not shy when dealing with shopkeepers and their husbands' friends.

Retaining this limited control over dairy production, enjoying the relative freedom to decide what is bought daily, and participating in activities alongside unrelated men, are all carried out by the women without threatening their sexual

honour. This is not to say that on their outings women can be independently involved in trade. Nor can their participation in this trade be admitted by the traditional value system. The sexual code that requires women to avoid unrelated men, prevents these women from being independent traders. This code restricts women's commercial contacts and even prevents them from making contracts with the shopkeeper to whom they sell the dairy produce. Trade requires personal agreement and confidence between business partners and the sexual code does not allow women to be involved in such personal relations with unrelated men. Women can however sell their produce only at a particular shop with which their husbands have made contracts. Women can buy expensive items, such as meat, on credit, but only at particular shops. Such trade between the shopkeepers and their customers, the village women, is based on personal confidence between the merchants and these women's husbands.

Male support proves that women's contact with unrelated men in the course of trading does not relate to any sexual desire (*raghba*). If asked whether women consider it shameful (`*aib*) to speak to a shepherd or market trader, the women immediately reply, "it is my father/husband who has allowed me to participate in this activity". Women clearly have no power to protect themselves from others' base judgement of their contacts with unrelated men. They cannot acquire self-respect in their contacts with unrelated men even for purely commercial purposes, without the permission of male household heads. Men's involvement in commercial contracts is a political manoeuvre aimed at maintaining male authority over their women through controlling their commercial activities outside the home. Women show obedience to male authority and acquire men's consent to their activities. Obedience to male authority means women's public display of their sexual virtue and modesty.

Women, as animal rearers, milkers, milk processors and milk sellers, turn most of the animal products into valuable sustenance. Men prepare a means to convert this sustenance into commercial products. Women's dairy produce is largely reliant on the market, due to the high price their products now fetch, and is extracted from productive resources which are owned by household heads. Most of the sheep and cows acquired

in the market or through personal commercial contracts are owned or controlled by fathers, brothers or husbands. Women do not make contracts with the owners of livestock to rear their animals, nor do they inherit livestock, except as occasional presents from their fathers. In Dubāna, only two women had received such presents; each had received a cow from her father. Yet, even these women do not seem to derive any benefit from their ownership of livestock other than as insurance for the future. Their animals are treated in the same way as those which belong to their household heads. Income from their animal is consumed in the same way as that from animals owned by the household head. This male control over resources allows them to control women's productive activities (Meillassoux, 1984: 44-8). Men are owners of livestock and the produce extracted. Women have no right to any commercial gain extracted from the produce, even though it is the fruits of their labour. Women do not insist that income from dairy produce is their own. It is yielded by both men's and women's complementary skills contributing to the household economy.

Women's acceptance of male control over activities creates the illusion that their economic activity is under the full control of male authority. The villagers, both men and women, understand that women control their special tasks in animal production. They are responsible for all the tasks in which they are involved, and do not submit to men in activities in their sphere. They are responsible for the work of production and consumption in the household and therefore women's animal rearing and its produce processing activities are regarded by both men and women as part of the activities of the domestic domain. Women's role here is to participate in activities constituting the household as a unit providing sustenance.

Women's activities in the market place are also regarded as a part of this process. Thus, income generated by the sale of dairy products must only be spent on daily food. Women's activities in the public arena are transformed into domestic tasks, regardless of their economic contribution to the household. Their economic activities become an extension of their female role within the relationship between men and women in the household, insofar as they are evaluated in terms of whether or not they carry out

female roles (Stroller, 1968: 10). They assess their own economic contribution by saying that "livestock business has brought 'us' improvement in 'our' life". They use communal 'us' or 'our' which imply that their work is conducted within a male-female interdependent relationship within the household for the sake of benefit to all its members.

Since sustaining the household economically underpins men's prestige, the women should be respectful to this male role as bread winners (Ortner & Whitehead, 1981:19). The cognition of their activities as domestic and the acceptance of male control over productive resources and their products, display women's respect to men and their respective roles. Women's involvement in a market economy does not undermine this male role. Women also pay respect to male authority to arrange contracts with unrelated men in the course of their production and trading, and admit control over the products. Women's acceptance of male authority brings them a good social reputation and self-esteem: they carry out the female role well within the household; showing their obedience to male authority proves respect for sexual modesty, even though they work in the market. In these respects, it may be said that women need to act in collusion with men to reproduce their own subordinate position in the relations between men and women within the household (Kandiyoti, 1991: 34). Women themselves do not think that they are submitting to men, even though they acknowledge restrictions imposed on them in the course of their animal production and trading. They think that different roles are allocated to both men and women.

I have heard no accounts of women who went against male control over animals and their products. A woman who is engaged in animal rearing, daily production or purchase of daily necessities thinks that she takes responsibility of all her work and has a free hand in it. No one, even her household head, can intrude on her business. Women in Dubāna say; "the only role which my husband/father takes in the livestock business is to bring income to our household". Women acknowledge the male role of converting animal produce into cash, because they respect the fact that this role is

allocated to men in their household alongside their own work which contributes to welfare of their household members.

Income from livestock products is obtained by male-female cooperation within a household. Women assess their contribution as an improvement in their life achieved through the business. Improvement of their life signifies the welfare of their household members in terms of the economic condition of the household and the richer provisions which women can directly provide to their household members. Moreover, male-female cooperation in livestock business provides one of the economic bases with which these commoner tribal members can claim their economic independence of the tribal sheikhs.

CHAPTER 7.   CONCLUSION

Different approaches are often taken by ethnographers to the issue of social restrictions and obligations imposed on women, and their reactions towards these constraints (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1985, 1990; Azari, 1983;, 1977; Olsen, 1985). Although the premise of these approaches is that social obligations lead to women's individuality being subordinated, women are also caught in a dilemma between fulfilment of these obligations and accomplishment of their personal wishes. Women's struggle with the dual objectives of ensuring their own and their family's honour and position in society have seldom been systematically investigated. The approach taken in this thesis is firstly, to investigate how women label themselves as members of particular groups. When they label themselves according to an ethnic or sectarian identity, they insist on their shared group characteristics in order to distinguish themselves from other group members. Members of each ethnic or sectarian group share ideas as to how members of other groups hold particular characteristics which are different from their own.

Among the Ṭai, the commoner tribal members label themselves as those who used to be slave followers (ʿabīd) of the tribal sheikhs. Most commoners wish to liberate themselves from this subordinate position to the sheikhs. Commoners in Ḍubāna try to describe social exchanges between themselves and the paramount sheikh as those between equals. They apply the principle of 'brotherhood' relations between tribes to their relations to the sheikhs, obliging the sheikh to accept their voluntary respect in return for his political influence.

Individuals are obliged to carry out particular roles and social obligations in order to identify themselves as members of particular groups. As discussed throughout this thesis, women are obliged to follow restrictions based on the relation between men and women in order to establish their social position. The second aspect of my approach to Jazirah women is that a woman must present herself as honourable (*sharifa*): sexually modest and obedient to male authority over her. Women are often in a dilemma between being *sharifa* and accomplishing individual wishes to be free from restrictions implied by being an 'honourable woman'. Expressions of emotion and comprehension of this social duty and obligation through narratives and actual behaviour tell us how women struggle with the dual objectives of ensuring their own and their family's honour and expressing themselves as individuals. The Syrian scholar, Na'im al-Yafi, suggests that problems related to Muslim women's social position are created not by Islamic thought, but by their relations with men, where women bind themselves to the men's oppressive hold over women and sacrifice their freedom by acting in collusion with men (al-Yafi, 1985: 6, 36, 72, 83). In Jazirah, I have argued that women often criticise the social restrictions being imposed on them. Despite their reluctance to consent to these restrictions, women try to show obedience to male authority and to their own chastity, by which they protect both their own honour and that of male family members. Social acknowledgement for women who possess honourable characteristics is the route to acquiring self-respect and also to defining women's role in their relation to men.

The approach taken in this thesis is thirdly, to find out how personal characteristics and problems affect the honour of one's relatives or group members. The data presented here show that the different groups in Jazirah, despite clearly distinguishing between themselves in terms of ethnic, religious or class relations, share common ideas of honour linked to female sexual virtue. Loss of sexual honour, especially for single women, brings great shame not only to herself, but also to the woman's family. Evaluations of a woman's sexual actions by others in society have the moral force to attribute to her the possession of a strong sexual appetite (*raghba*) and

also to dishonour to male members in her family who do not have the ability to control her behaviour. Such social evaluation of women's sexual actions can ruin the honour and self-respect of all family members for generations. Sexual misconduct damages the social reputation of a woman's female family members, because they are regarded by others in society as possessors of the same characteristics. The male family members are obliged to inflict punishment on her lover or his family in order to prove themselves as men who respect male honour.

The ideas of women's sexual honour prevent women from extra-marital relationships and marriage between men and women from different religious groups. The ideas of honour are repeated in widely known stories of prohibited relationships. These stories tell that unrelated men are potential threats to women's sexual virtue. This understanding is shared in common by all the groups in society. The Christians regard Kurdish men as potential threats to Christian women, because the Christians regard the Kurds as inclined to assault Christian women's sexual virtue as a means of venting their political hostility towards the Christians. The Christians construct this discourse with reference to historical precedents, namely when Christian women were sexually assaulted by Kurds during the political conflicts between them at the beginning of this century in Turkish Anatolia. The Christians apply their history to contemporary concerns that they may be regarded by the Kurds as a political opponents, and are hence at risk of Kurdish attack. The Christians also depict the Shawaya and Kurdish character as violent, avenging a male lover who has dishonoured their women's sexual virtue. The Christians regard such violent characteristics as evidence of Shawaya and Kurdish dispositions (*tabāī*) of backwardness (*mutakhallif*) and inhumanity. These group dispositions are regarded as shared characteristics among the Kurds and Shawaya. The Christians apply these group dispositions to individual Kurds and Shawaya when judging their behaviour.

This view, however, is emerging at a time when the Christians are losing their superior economic and political identity as the advanced urban middle class. This is because the increased economic and educational opportunities are enabling rural

Shawaya and Kurds to acquire a similar status to the Christians in the urban sphere. The Christians' efforts at reconstituting their status by using criteria differentiating themselves from the others, lead them to attribute inferior characteristics to the Shawaya and Kurds. The Shawaya and Kurds in turn reinforce their traditional premises that vengeance is an admirable way of showing respect to their personal, family and group honour. For Kurds and Shawaya, Christians are a weak minority who are not able to take vengeance, because of their fear of counterattack by Kurds and Shawaya. Such labelling of group characteristics creates hostility between these groups. The hostility reinforces fear of sexual assault by men from other groups. This view confines women's activities outside the home and reinforces norms of gender segregation.

Others in society evaluate women's behaviour with reference to the ideas of honour related to female sexual virtue and what roles women play in their relations to men in their family. Women cannot avoid encounter with unrelated men in everyday life, especially when they work and visit their kin and friends. There are frequent possibilities for women to be judged by others as having sought sexual contact with men. If it is judged that a woman's behaviour is such that she is seeking to satisfy her sexual appetite, what she fears is that she might be regarded as a woman who is unaware of what constitutes an honourable woman. Since this is regarded as her personal characteristics (*ṭabī'a*), she loses both the social and self-respect that is acquired by social acknowledgement of her behaviour.

Women sometimes criticise this social view, because it becomes a social force which confines their activities enormously. They understand however that it is not only men, but also women themselves who bolster this view of the behavioural norms of an honourable woman (*sharīfa*). Women slander other women's behaviour which does not satisfy the norms of *sharīfa*, with the intention of contrasting their own rationality and good character. In this competition between women, women fear that other women may interpret their behaviour as suggestive of sexual action.

Matters relating to married women's sexual virtue are regarded as personal problems between a husband and his wife. Others, both men and women, do not give

advice to either the husband or wife, because the autonomy of the couple must be respected. Even in cases of single women who are gossiped about as having had contact with men, only the women's family members are regarded as being responsible for these women's misconduct. Women other than their family members rarely comment on these women's actions, nor do men interfere, because such interference would undermine the authority of the woman's male kin. To understand how men should behave in order to keep their authority over their women, or how honourable women behave, is the responsibility of each individual. To respect one's own honour is at the same time to be responsible for one's family honour.

Since the respect of another's autonomy does not allow others' intervention into personal or family matters, it leads to the isolation of individuals. Each individual experiences increased anxiety about what others might say about him/her. In order to acquire a good social reputation and affirmation of one's own behaviour, women often force themselves to accomplish their social duties (*wājibāt*) and to accept social obligations (*ijbār*). Whether they do this willingly, or by force, finds expression in their everyday language. For example, *mulzim*, *lāzim*, and *ijbār* are all used to express duty to obey the social order. While *ijbār* expresses submission to social regulations and evaluations, regardless of one's own will, *mulzim* expresses a willingness to support the order more than *lāzim*. Women thus experience great difficulty in trying to free themselves from the norms of *sharīfa* and the relations between men and women within a family, if they wish to survive in social competition and protect their own and their family's social reputation.

Because of women's need to establish an honourable identity, they bind themselves to the presentation of themselves as chaste and obedient to male authority in their family. Women's personal vulnerability, which is caused by the dilemma between obedience to the decisions of their family and their wishes to go against such decisions, frequently emerges in their conversations over the choice of spouse, and the prohibition of sexual encounter outside marriage, or regarding marriage between different religious

communities. These stories illustrate the narrator's dissatisfaction and that of the audience with women's obligatory submission to family decisions.

The dilemma of facing a social reality which deprives women of the right to decide their own lives drives women to seek romance. This is because love between a man and a woman based on mutual respect and mutual understanding is regarded as the ideal (cf. Abu-Lughod, 1993; 229-31; Davis and Davis, 1989: 118). For women, the dilemma between constructing an honourable self and liberating oneself from its obligations is, to some extent, resolved by fantasies of romance. Married women often talk in private about their own marriage as if it were based on love, even if their marriage was in fact arranged by their family by taking account of marriage regulations, economic and social equality between the bride and bride-groom's families, and personal characteristics of the principals. Single women secretly express to their intimate friends their fantasies of romance for, or covert meetings with, unrelated men. Women, however, do not try to subvert the dominant ideology of respect for family decisions about their marriage. They try to justify fantasies of romance as the means for resolving their dilemma, that is expression of their individual wishes and their adherence to the norms of an honourable woman's behaviour. Furthermore, they maintain that meeting with men does not threaten their honour as long as it is not exposed. Actual contact with men, however, frightens women, because the possibility of exposure in public becomes a threat to their own and their family's reputation.

One of the most important problems in Jazirah society is class differences between tribal sheikhs and commoner tribal members. Tribal sheikhs had risen to positions of power when they began to seek commercial gain in agricultural business by cultivating wheat and cotton, and so monopolised former tribal territory as their own land. They integrated their economic means, and increased their political power as leaders involved in the region's ethnic or sectarian conflicts until the 1950s. Commoner tribal members understand that the sheikhly status has been constituted in Jazirah history, and that the sheikhs' monopolisation of economic and political means was the foundation for the enslavement of commoner tribal members. The Syrian land reform

and regional economic development, which brought relative economic independence to commoner tribal members from the sheikhs, enabled the former to seek liberation from the status of slavery followers (`abīd). 'Brotherhood' relations in tribal structure also invigorates egalitarian relations between the sheikhs and commoner tribal members.

The Tai is a tribal confederation in which alliance between tribes (ashāīr) among the Tai is described as 'brotherhood' relations, which are those between equals. The alliance of the tribes to the `Asāf tribe, within which the position of the Tai paramount sheikh is passed down, constitutes the commoners' association with the paramount sheikh. Tribal members respect the political ability of the `Asāf, who took on the role of political leaders in Jazirah history. This political authority becomes a disposition (tabī`a) of the `Asāf, which is passed down from their ancestors. Tribal members also insist that the `Asāf is one of the tribes among the fiai with reference to 'brotherhood' relations between the tribes.  In this respect, relations between the `Asāf and other tribes can be regarded as those between equals.

Members of each tribe believe that they share patrilineal genealogy and therefore their relations are defined as those between patrilineal kin. This definition indicates that these kin share membership of a group in the system of tribal segmentation. Their kinship relations are referred to by using kinship categories, such as qarāīb, ibn `amm and ukhuwa. Each category indicates genealogical distance between people who are involved in the relations.  These group categories have meaning in opposition to their complementary groups.  For example, when relationships between members are classified as ibn `amm, they set another ibn `amm group on the same level of segmentary opposition. These kin are able to keep close relations by carrying out social obligations of 'mutual support'. Meanwhile relations between tribes among the Tai are not defined by kinship relations. Social exchanges between people from different tribes are understood as obligations between allied tribes, based on either egalitarian 'brotherhood' relations, or patronage, shown in the relation between commoner tribal members and the sheikhs from the `Asāf tribe.

In the light of the transformation of relations between commoners and the paramount sheikh, religious ceremonies contribute to the enhancement of the commoners' egalitarian attitude. Women take the important roles in giving Islamic meaning to mourning ceremonies as domestic rituals. The women acknowledge the suffering of living people caused by the death as a trial of God. They direct themselves to the religious aspect of the ritual which can make for the redemption of the deceased and the bringing of God's blessing (*khair*) to him/her soul. Women's performance shows the process of their understanding that the fate of the soul of the deceased is determined by God. It becomes apparent through women's ceremonial performance that petition for God's favour for domestic benefit leads the community to the fulfilment of their Islamic devotion to God. Mourning rituals are intertwined with acts offering dedication to God as a means of showing devotion to God.

All household heads in Dubāna can host mourning ceremonies and fulfil their religious duty through the dedication of animals to God and the sharing of the ceremonial meat dish with their guests, thereby showing devotion to God. These religious symbols used in mourning ceremonies are the same as those used in formal rituals in Islamic feasts held by the sheikh. In this framework, the commoners can achieve their duty as Muslims.

As a social action, relations between the host and guests are those of unequals during the ceremony. The guests put themselves in a position where they can receive their host's hospitality (*diyāfa*), through which the guests obtain the right to receive both religious *khair* and food. Guests confirm the host's political ability to offer the prestigious meat dish. In domestic rituals, neighbouring households invite each other, and today's host will be tomorrow's guest in another ceremony held by his/her neighbouring household. Since this exchange is reciprocal, status relations between neighbours, even the sheikh and the commoner villagers, are those of equals.

On Islamic feasts, the sheikh can show his wealth and affluence by offering food and meat to his village neighbours. His affluence designates religious blessing (*khair*) and welfare brought to him by God. The sheikh gives beneficence to his poor

neighbours by offering food and meat, and this act will be blessed by God. From the view point of the commoners, their respect for the sheikh is derived from admitting the sheikh's access to religious *khair*, to which they can also gain access through their hospitality as hosts in domestic rituals. The commoners' religious and political ability reduces status difference between themselves and the sheikh. The commoners accept the sheikh's economic, political and religious ability through identifying the act as the sheikh's hospitality (*ḍiyāfa*) which calls for the commoners' voluntary acknowledgement of his political power on the basis of their alliance to the sheikh in the structure of the Ṭai confederation. The sheikh acquires respect and honour, which is men's ideal quality for holding political power admired in the Ṭai tribal members, and these personal dispositions reinforce his political influence.

As the relations between the paramount sheikh and the commoner tribal members are reconstituted in the discourse on religious ceremonies, so the meaning of agricultural labour in the sheikh's fields has also transformed their relations. Commoner women working in the sheikh's fields do not consider themselves as entering into a position of slave labourers (*'abīd*) of the sheikh, even though their labour is used to symbolise their inferior status to the sheikh. Families of these female labourers, especially the household heads, who have responsibility for their women's activities but cannot directly control them while they work, respect the political authority of the sheikh and commit their women to him. The women's sexual honour is not spoiled by their engagement in work with unrelated men outside the home, because any offence to their sexual virtue would dishonour the sheikh and suggest a political challenge to him. In this discourse, the female workers and their families can protect their honour related to women's sexual virtue, without putting themselves in the position of enslavement to the sheikh. Women acquire opportunities to engage in work, but accept the authority of their household heads. They constitute an alliance with the sheikh based on the structure of the Ṭai confederation. The sheikh acquires respect and honour in return, which enhance his personal dispositions (*ṭabāi*). These dispositions in turn enhance his political authority.

Showing sexual modesty and respect for male authority within the family is necessary for women to be engaged in work outside the home. Women's economic activity must be conducted on the condition that it does not threaten their sexual virtue and men's role as bread winners. Income from animal rearing and dairy products generated with enormous labour contribution by women, is consumed to provide sustenance to all the household members. Ownership of livestock and the income generated from it, symbolise economic independence from the sheikh. Women insist on the importance of these economic resources for their liberation from the 'abīd status. Women do not recognise their work, for which they receive acknowledgement as their economic contribution to the households. All female tasks involving the rearing of animals, the processing of dairy products, their sale in the market, and the buying of foodstuffs with the income from the dairy products, are part of the process of providing food to the household. It is men who are the owners of animals and the produce extracted from them, while women only contribute to the processing. Women conceive of their activities as domestic, accept male control over the property and products, thereby involving themselves in economic activities based on respect for the male role as breadwinners for his household members.

Women respect the authority of their household head in arranging their trade with unrelated market traders. Through this arrangement, these household heads can retain their control over these women's trading activities. Acceptance of male authority, which means to show obedience and chastity to male family members, gives a woman the self-confidence to act without fearing that she may be judged as behaving with sexual intent. Male members in their family can preserve their honour through these women's sexual modesty. These women's trading therefore do not threaten their own or their family's honour.

Strategies used for differentiating their own ethnic or religious group from others, and for overcoming class differences among the tribes, give rise to local discourses over constituting social positions which respect their own and their group honour in terms of female sexual virtue and gender roles. Such social obligations

should be carried out in order to constitute their position in society as members of groups. As far as women want to keep their position in society, the behavioural norms of an honourable woman (*sharifa*) oblige them to confine their activities. *Sharifa* is a disposition attributed to individual women, which influences both the honour of her family and even that of the ethnic or sectarian group. Since autonomy and independence of each individual is respected, no one intrudes on others' private matters, even though they are gossiped about behind their back. The codes of *sharifa* confine each woman's social and economic activities and define her role in the relation between men and women, because a woman owes responsibility to her family's honour.

Among the Tai, both men and women take interdependent roles to reduce tension in relations with the tribal sheikhs. Ritual ceremonies in Dubāna oblige the paramount sheikh to accept voluntary respect for his religious and political position from the male commoners. The role of women in giving domestic rituals the meaning of Islamic devotion to God, makes it possible for commoners insist on their fulfilment of Muslim duty in the similar ways to the sheikh.

Agricultural work and animal business give women opportunities to be involved in economic activities. Women's participation in such work makes much of the interdependence of the men's and women's spheres. Men and women cooperate for the welfare of their household, and politically acquire the means whereby they can establish their independence from the sheikh. However, the right conferred on men to control women's activities, in order to protect their sexual virtue, allows them to intervene in women's decision making as to their activities and confines women's autonomy.

Notes

Chapter one

1. Spiro suggests that anthropology needs to develop a cross-cultural theory. He warns contemporary cultural relativism that "the processes that characterise the working of human mind are the same everywhere - even though human cultures are different ⋯ there are certain psychological criteria by which such judgements can be made" (Spiro, 1984: 327). This discussion is interesting. However, to discuss whether or not the minds of people in different Middle Eastern societies work in accordance with the same principle, despite the structural differences in their cultures, is beyond the topic of my present discussion and my ability.

2. The name Shawaya is used to refer to Muslim rural peasants by the Christians and Kurds in order to differentiate Christians from themselves in terms of religion, and from Kurds in terms of ethnicity. Shawaya refer to themselves as Arab peasants. See chapter 2.

3. D' Andrade suggests that a cognitive schema is not just a recognition device. It permits a range of possibilities to constitute various interpretations and consists of various elements which are activated for someone by producing interpretations. "Not all parts of the total schema could be likely to produce conscious interpretations at any one time, but all would have the potential of doing so under the right conditions (D'Andrade, 1992: 52-3).

4. There are small numbers of Jews living in the town of Qamishly. According to Friedman these are estimated at between 120 to 300 (Friedman, 1989: 95) and their numbers are decreasing because of emigration abroad. Even though their population is small, local Jews are still recognised as a group when Qamishly inhabitants divide themselves into ethnic or religious groups. I however, do not include Jews as a unit of my study. The main reason for this is political sensitivity and prevalent views that have been constructed by Qamishly populations other than the Jews in evaluating position of local Jews in society. Any contact with the Jewish inhabitants would have made it difficult for me to carry out my research among the Christians, Shawaya and Kurds. The political utility of hostile feelings to Israel in the context of national politics invokes emphasising the role of a Syrian nation and allegiance of non-Jewish Syrian citizens (Pipes, 1990: 186-7). There are moments of official demonstration, such as the march in memory of the 1973 War, including school children and employees of the government sectors, when this official ideology makes sense for Qamishly inhabitants to demand consideration for their social role against Israel. In the local context, local Jews become a target for other inhabitants to project their hostility to Israel (e.g. Friedman, 1989: 95-100). Qamishly inhabitants other than the Jews create antagonism towards Jewishness by their understandings of local Jews as Israeli supporters. For example, in October 1989, there was a widely spread story that a Syrian Jew working as an Israeli spy in Syria, had stolen a Syrian military plan and fled to Israel with secret information. All his family members who remained in Syria were arrested and sentenced to death. This kind of story encourages Qamishly inhabitants to identify local Jews as Israeli supporters. According to the press, the pilot was a major of the Syrian Air Force and was not a Jew. Israeli officials said the pilot had defected, but Syrian officials insisted that he had been forced to make an emergency landing (Times,

12 October 1989; Diehl, 12 October 1989). In Qamishly however, bias against local Jews created the distorted story.

Chapter Two

1. One Syrian *dunom* is equivalent to 0.25 acres, which is approximately 1,000 square meters (Warriner, 1957: 91).
2. The Syrian Central Bank uses both Lira in Arabic, and Syrian pound in English, as the currency unit. I use £S as an abbreviation of Syrian pound, following Warriner (1957) and Perthes (1992). The Syrian pound's official exchange rate of £S11 to one Us dollar on 31 December 1987 and commercial rate of £S22 to one US dollar taken in 1989, were abolished in 1991. The rate of £S42 to one US dollar has been spread over a broader variety of imports. I use $ as an abbreviation of US dollar.
3. I use the term peasant(s), *fallāh* (plural: *fallahūn*), as one who gets part of his/her living by cultivating land that he/she does not own, and who identifies him/herself as a cultivator. I categorise peasants, whether or not they grow their own food, or sell a surplus or some inedible crop for which there is a market (see Mair, 1984: 21-20).
4. Wives use birth control, whereas husbands usually do not use contraceptive devices themselves, even though they agree to birth control. Men usually do not adopt devices which may undermine male sexual ability and thus their manliness.
5. Perthes mentions that the inflation rate in Syria at the end of 1980s was at least 40 percent (1992: 43-4).
6. Price of food stuffs was rapidly increasing in the black market. For example, the price of sugar rose to £S50 per kilogram at the end of July 1989, from £S25 the previous month. Sale of vegetables is free from State control and their price fluctuates according to supply and demand. The price of garlic, which is a necessity for preserving winter food rose rapidly form £S35 per kilogram in its harvest season to £S65 that summer.
7. The Syrian government, in which Alawis, one of the Syrian minorities, had power, promotes pan-Arabism and pan-Syrianism as an ideological option to get support from the Sunni majority and other minorities in order to stabilise their power and inspire nationalism (Seale, 1988: 186-7). The Qamishly Christians feel supported by this campaign, regard themselves as Syrian citizens and Arabs in the broader political context, and by doing so try to secure a position in Syrian society.

Chapter Three

1. Kurdish anti-government uprisings in Iraq did not win support from the Western coalition. From early March 1991 the United States asserted that it did not intend to become involved in the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq. President Bush summarised the coalition's position on 23 March, and stated that 'it would be better if everybody stayed out and let the Iraqi people decide what they want to do'. By the end of March, Saddam had repressed the insurgence and regained effective control of most of the Kurdish territories (Dannreuther, 1991/2, 60-1).
2. Military challenge by Turkish nationalists to the Ottoman government began in areas Kurdish nationalists claimed as a part of their homeland. Moreover the Turkish nationalists were locked in struggle with the Greeks and Armenians. The Turkish nationalists needed the support of the Kurds to claim the land and properties of the Armenians. After the defeat of the Greeks and Armenians in 1922, and recognition of Turkey at the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, it became easy for the Turkish government, collaborating with the British, to depict the Kurdish demands for independence or autonomy as treason. The largest rebellion was the rebellion of sheikh Said in 1925, a religious sheikh who led the rebellion as a challenge to secularism and who was also one of the most outspoken nationalists. The Turks sent troops to put down the

rebellion and burned houses and entire villages. Kurdish people were deported, persecuted and harassed by Turkish officers, soldiers, and gendarmes (see Olson, 1989: 36-7, 85, 101, 119-20, 126).

3. Throughout this thesis the following conventional abbreviations will be used to indicate kin relations: F = father; M = mother; B = brother; Z = sister; S= son; D = daughter.

4. Considering their income levels, the size of brideprice is not very big. In 1990, one month's salary of a government employee was between £S2,000 ($50) and £S2,500 ($63). I, however, was told by Shawaya and Kurdish men who were eligible to marry, that even though they had steady sources of income, they still could not marry. Their difficulty is derived from the following reasons. Although a young single man who works independently and does not use household resources to earn income is allowed to keep part of his income for his own use, part of his earning must accrue to his household members. Inflation and increase of living expenditure make it more difficult for the household to pool money for paying brideprices. Young men cannot save enough money for brideprice and a wedding reception by themselves. Moreover, agnates who will help with brideprice payment are only *usra* members of the bridegroom, that is, his father and brothers. His household head has responsibility for arranging marriages of its members. The household head receives brideprices for his daughters and is expected to use them for paying brideprice for his sons, even though the brideprices he received become his property. His young son is obliged to ask the permission of his household head and for financial support to pay brideprice. Without the permission and financial support from his *usra* members, he cannot marry.

5. Where a man has children by different wives, children borne by different wives are siblings, but are not the members of the same *usra*. The man is a head of separate *usra* -s composed of each wife and her children.

6. The Christian wedding ceremony seems to have western influences. I could not trace new elements introduced to the Christian wedding ceremony, and therefore I did not refer to the meaning of women's transition in Christian ceremonies. In the wedding ceremony of *Suriyan* Christians, for example, a brother of the bride (not her father) takes her to the entrance of the church, where the bridegroom takes her hand, and they enter the church together. Both the bride's and the bridegroom's kin attend the wedding ceremony.

Chapter Four

1. According to my information about Nabīla, I found no evidence of her involvement in any relationship or in prostitution.

Chapter Five

1. The use of henna refers to symbolic blood. Women apply henna during religious celebrations to their hair , hands and feet, suggesting an implicit identification of their devotion to God through their association with ritual sacrificing of victims for dedication to God.

2. 'Rivers in Genna' are mentioned many times in the Quran (The Koran, 1990: 46, 70, 81, 90, 187, 189, 261, 316, 409, 531, 594, 638, 653: The House of Imran, 13, 193, 197; Women, 60, 121; Repentance, 73, 90; The Bee, 33; Ta Ha, 77; The Spider, 58; Victory, 5; The Forbidding, 8; The Constellations, 11; The Clear Sign, 7): God will admit the believers, who do deeds of righteousness, and turn to God in sincere repentance, into gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein dwelling for ever even, God's promise in truth.

3. One of the examples of the government incorporation policy can be seen in the 1990 parliamentary elections. The government's innovation in this election was to reserve a

large number of seats for independent deputies. The election of these deputies encouraged ethnic and sectarian groups in Qamishly to testify to political rights given to them by the government. This policy incorporated them in an advising function rather than giving them a slice of power (see Perthes, 1993: 26).

4. Yazīdī is a Kurdish tribal group who live in the district of Mōṣul, Jabal Sinjār, Diyarbakr, Aleppo and Armenia. Their religion perpetuates with the admixture of Manichaeism, Syriac Christianity and Islam (Menzel, 1987:1163-65). There were three families working as agricultural labourers for the sheikh in Ḍubāna. They took refuge in Syria in 1983, because they were afraid of persecution by the Iraqi government. According to them, five hundred Yazīdī families took refuge from Jabal Sinjār in Syrian Jazirah where they settled in several places, such as Ras al-`ain, Ḥassaka, Ḥawl, Qaḥṭanīya and Malkīya. They find work as seasonal agricultural labourers in various villages in Jazirah.

Chapter Six

1. The standard wage for female labourers in the field in 1990 was 150 Lira per day. A comparison between the wages and price of tea, which is one of the daily necessities, is helpful in assessing their economic situation. According to informants, the price of tea before the land reform was five Lira per kilogram, and 250 Lira in 1990.

2. Friedl suggests a theoretical direction for analysing the shift in gender roles which includes contradictory phenomena to gender norms (1991): although neither norms of gender roles nor definition of public and private have shifted, boundaries of various action spheres between men and women have. This inconsistency reveals a contradiction to these generalised norms. Concepts of gender role and public versus private continue to be of limited use in the context of tracing shifts in women's participation in productive activities. Friedel also suggests that these concepts are elusive and imprecise tools in analysing social processes that seem to proceed in different directions simultaneously (195-214). I think that regardless of this inconsistency, as long as people in society use these concepts to define the boundaries in the course of daily routines, it is important to analyse how these concepts are applied and manipulated for their understanding of these productive activities.

3. I focus on attributed difference of gender roles in animal production, and male-female relations constructed by imposition of gender division. In the native discourse of Jazirah women on animal production, there is no demand for equal opportunities for controlling production resources and income as men have. The management of labour, income and resources is something which is bound up with household organisation and the gender division of labour (Moore, 1988: 56). This division of gender labour is created with reference to gender attributes in processes of constructing different identities between men and women.

4. From the other point of view, relative freedom of these women is their control over their daughters' labour which is important for animal rearing. Compare Schildkrout's study of secluded Hausa women's economic activity (1982: 55-81).

Glossary[1]

`ār	عار	great shame
`āila	عائلة	family
`abd	عبد	slave, servant
(pl. `abīd)	(عبيد)	
`aib	عيب	shameful
akh	اخ	brother, fellowman
(pl. ikhwān)	(اخوان)	
armani	ارمني	Armenian
`asha'	عشاء	dinner
ashūrī	عشوري	Nestorian Christian
`ashīra	عشيرة	tribe, lineage, tribal
(pl. `ashār)	(عشائر)	confederation
`aza'	عزاء	period of consolation or
		mourning
bait	بيت	house, residential space
bint	بنت	girl, unmarried woman
badāil	بدائل	direct exchange marriage
baraka	بركة	blessing, religious merit
bint `amm	بنت عم	cousin, father's brother's
		daughter

ḏāt	ذات	person, personality, nature,
(pl. *ḏawāt*)	(ذوات)	essence, possessor,
		female characteristics
ḍaḥīya	ضحية،	an act offering a victim to
		God in great Islamic feast,
		victim
ḍiyāfa	ضيافة،	hospitality
dunya	دنيا	this world
ḏū	ذو	possessor
(pl. *ḏawū*)	ذوو	
dunom	دونم	a square measure, 1*dunom* =
(pl. *dwānum*)	(دوانم)	0.25 acres
fallaḥ	فلاح	peasant
(pl. *fallaḥīn*)	(فلاحون)	
fakhḏ	فخذ	branch of family or tribe,
		thigh
(pl. *afkhāḏ*)	(افخاذ)	
genna	جذة،	paradise
gharīb	غريب	unrelated person, outsider,
(pl. *gharāib*)	(غرايب)	stranger
ḥaq	حق	right, full possession
ḥāra	حارة،	quarter
ḥawfa	حوفة،	the first seven days after
		wedding
ḥalāl	حلال	permitted, legitimate,
ḥarām	حرام	forbidden, inviolable, sin
ḥubb	حب	love, affection
ḥurma	حرمة،	woman

ibn ʿamm	ابن عم	cousin, father's brother's son
ʿId al-aḍḥa	عيد الأ ضحى	great Islamic feast, literally "the Feast of Sacrifice of Abraham"
ʿId al-fiṭr	عيد الفطر	religious feast at the end of *Ramaḍān*
ijbār	اجبار	obligation, compulsion
iḥtirām	احترام	respect, veneration
intifaʿ	انتفاع	utilising agricultural land vested in the state
ʿishq	عشق	love, ardour of love, passion
jar (pl. *jirān*)	جار (جيران)	neighbour
kanna	كذة	daughter-in-law, a woman protected by a family
khair	خير	religious power, blessing, personal benefit
khyār	خيار	precedent marriage right of male patrilateral parallel cousin
krīf	كريف	a male guardian of a boy's circumcision
kuldānī	كلداني	Chaldean Christian
lāzim	لازم	necessary, imperative, obligatory
mahr	مهر	bride-price
mālik	مالك	owner, proprietor
maswūliya	مسؤوليه	responsibility

mawlid	مولد	religious ceremony for redemption, or prophet's birthday
mulzim	ملزم	binding, compulsory
mullā	ملا	religious specialist
musā'ada	مساعدة	help, support, contribution
musāhama	مساهمة	contribution, participation, sharing
mutaakhir	متاخر	backward, late
mutakhallif	متخلف	staying behind
mutaqaddim	متقدم	advanced, preceding
nās	ناس	people, others
nisba	نسبة	attribution, relationship
nugūl	نقول	a gift dish composed of rice and clarified butter and its exchange between women
qalb	قلب	heart, mind
qais	قيس	polite, good
qarīb	قريب	patrilineal kin, relative
(pl. *qarāib*)	(قرايب)	
raghba	رغبة	wish, desire, object of desire, sexual appetite
(pl. *raghbāt*)	(رغبات)	
Ramaḍān	رمضان	lunar month of fasting
rūḥ	روح	soul, spirit
sharaf	شرف	honour
sharīf	شريف	honourable, honourable man
sharīfa	شريفة	virtuous woman
Shawi (male)/	شاوي	rural Arab inhabitants
Shawiya (female)	شاوية	

(pl. *Shawaya*)	شوايا)	
sheikh	شيخ	tribal or religious leader
suriyan	سريان	Syriac Christian
ṭabi`a	طبيعة	disposition, characteristics
(pl. *ṭabāi'*)	(طبائع)	
ukhuwa	اخوة	brotherhood
usra	اسرة	household
wājib	واجب	duty
(pl. *wājibāt*)	(واجبات)	

Note

1. The words which are presented here are used in ordinary conversations as spoken language in Jazirah region and therefore some of them take different forms from standard Arabic.

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