THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

PALESTINIAN CAMP WOMEN'S NARRATIVES OF EXILE; SELF, GENDER,

NATIONAL CRISIS

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

GUPW: General Union of Palestinian Women

LNM: Lebanese National movement

PAWA: Palestine Arab Women's Association

PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PLA: Palestine Liberation Army

PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization

PNC: Palestine National Council

PRCS: Palestinian Red Crescent Society

PRM: Palestinian Resistance movement

PPS: Parti populaire syrien

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency

Note on names:

Most names in the text are invented, including those of all the life story tellers living in Lebanon. All names cited in field interviews, and a few names in the text, are real. These were cases where their owners could be contacted, and had no objection.

PREFACE

BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROJECT

I am aware of the need to explain the slow evolution of my
project to record camp women's narratives of exile, not begun
until mid-1990, seven years after starting fieldwork. The
reasons lie partly in the post-1982 situation of the research
community (Shateela camp), object of violence and siege; partly
in experiments with alternative roles to that of 'pure'
researcher vis-a-vis the research community; and partly in the
contradiction between my interest in women and gender as
research topic and the non-priority of this subject for female
as well as male members of the research community. This
contradiction remains unresolved: on the one hand, readings in
feminist theory have sharpened my conviction that gender is as
essential as class to social analysis; on the other, the
pursuit of this subject in a community in crisis still appears
an exercise of privilege and detachment. The aim of building
a national archive, of which this study will be the initiating
instance, though not without problems, finds partial
justification in the support of colleagues and discussants
within the research community. History-making appears as a
provisionally unifying project.

The history of Shateela since the war of 1982 has been one
of continuous crisis and insecurity. The restoration of
Lebanese Army control in October 1982 was accompanied by
arrests and kidnapping of Palestinians inside and outside the
Beirut camps. In May 1985, the Shi'ite militia Amal launched
the first of its attacks, which continued until April 1987,

causing heavy casualties, destruction of housing, and dispersion of the population. A year later, in May-June 1988, fighting between Fateh factions caused further destruction, and forced the expulsion of families identified as 'Arafatist'. From April 1987, Amal militia were replaced around Shateela by Syrian mukhabarat (Army Intelligence), who installed strict control over movement into and out of the camp.

Of the some 1,500 families living in Shateela in 1983, only a few hundred are currently resident there; others remain in temporary muhajjareen (war-displaced) locations, under eventual threat of eviction; Palestinians who used to live in the camp's periphery are not expected to be allowed to return. Accompanied by a sharp decline in income, these events have underlined Palestinians' chronic insecurity in Lebanon, and reinforced pressures towards emigration.

Specifying the position of the researcher in relation to the research community is as necessary a step in the theorization of an ethnographic project as in its presentation as text (Okely and Callaway, 1989). My involvement with Palestinians was personal long before it became professional, through marriage and mothering. Even after I adopted anthropology as a means of understanding 'difference', I remained attached through domestic responsibilities and political concern to a particular collectivity and geo-political region. Selection of Shateela camp as a research milieu in 1982 was influenced by its closeness to Beirut, so that I could combine research with home- and family-care. Doing research, I was neither 'at home' nor 'abroad', neither 'insider' nor 'outsider' but always 'in between'. The blurring of boundary between personal and professional within my

identity has been furthered by lack of an institutional setting: my ultimate reference has remained a specific collectivity rather than an academic career. Such an adoptive identification is no guarantee of understanding, but rather forms an element of positionality, along with nationality, class, gender, age and political orientation, of which the researcher must be aware from the outset.

The fieldwork which forms the basis of this dissertation has developed through three main phases, marked by specific conditions of the research community on the one hand, and my attempts to articulate these theoretically and practically to the subject of women and gender on the other.

i) From the massacres (September 1982) to the 'Battle of the Camps' (May 1985): in this first fieldwork phase, anchorage in a Shateela household visited before 1982 allowed me a gradual familiarization with the camp's inhabitants during a period of Lebanese Army arrests and harassment. Insecurity and fear dictated unobtrusive methods, hence avoidance of questions and in-field notes. As a response to community crisis, I took on roles in addition to that of researcher: as volunteer social worker, reporter on human rights violations, and occasional journalist. In a time of male and Resistance movement absence, action-oriented research towards income-generating projects for women seemed to warrant priority over theory.

Eventually, the strain of accommodating personal and political aims with professional anthropological ones became so acute that I decided to assert my professional purposes and identity through visible fieldwork, using interviews, recorder and camera. Professionalism was both an emancipating and

alienating move, giving me mobility between hostile factions and individuals, but also underlining my 'outsider' status both as researcher and as someone without 'belonging', an anomaly in any Palestinian milieu. In retrospect, it appears to have been a response to personal anxiety rather than progress towards theorization. My research idea in this first phase did not progress beyond the notion of 'change in women's roles'.

ii) From the first siege of Shateela (May 1985) until mid-1990: From the end of the first siege, I began recording people's siege experiences, discovering as chronicler a role that appeared to reconcile personal, professional and community concerns, based in the tradition of advocacy within anthropology, and responding to Shateela people's sense that their ordeal should be recorded for history. This move eventually extended into an oral history of Shateela camp, a deviation that broadened my contacts with the community, and brought a new awareness of structures of internal differentiation. Concurrently with this work, I re-formulated my theoretical approach to women from notions of 'roles' and 'change' towards an exploration based in Engels (1971), of the effect of women's employment and earnings on their family relationships. However, research with an economic focus carried out among people undergoing severe economic crisis raises ethical problems, arousing expectations of practical outcomes that it cannot fulfill. There was also the difficulty of separating out economic from other effects of national crisis in evaluating changes in women's family relationships.

Fieldwork during this second period was radically altered, first by the loss of my first Shateela friend and guide, Imm

Mustafa Mi'ari, forced by the destruction of her home to move to Sidon; and, second, by the installation of Syrian Intelligence control over Shateela camp, impeding entry and making research inside the camp impossible. Contact was now reduced to visiting Shateela people in <u>muhajjareen</u> locales. Though some researchers have found visiting a useful method of approach in Arab society, my awareness of its conventions (prize and penalty of prolonged exposure), inhibited me from fully using it for research purposes.

iii) Final research phase: In September 1990, I recorded the first 'life story' in the form of a prolonged interview with Zohra, a woman from Shateela living in Tunis. Thereafter I revised my research aim as constructing an 'open' register of Palestinian camp women's experiences of exile, based in Third World feminist theorizing directed to the relationship between women's material conditions and their representations of their 'reality' (Mohanty, 1984). In November 1990, I began a series of life story recordings with Shateela women, continuing throughout 1991 and 1992. Recording life stories would, I hoped, offer a relatively direct approach to women's subjectivities, produce a non-manipulated view of gendered experience, and create archives that would be available to other researchers and for other purposes.

The project is vulnerable to two main criticisms: i) as an example of 'naive phenomenology', in assuming that women can recount the ideological and material conditions that subject them; and ii) in the absence of women subjects from its initiation, thus failing to embody the element of social transformation that radical and feminist methodology calls for

(Popular Memory Group, 1985). To remedy the first defect I have attempted to construct a detailed objective framework for the life stories, using historical sources and fieldwork observations. As for the second, political conditions during the period of recording prevented 'collectivization' of the project. Women who participated expressed varying motives, such as 'Telling the world our story' (a longstanding Palestinian narrative convention), and 'Letting our children know'. Such post facto corroborations do not constitute a transformative dynamic, yet, closed for the purposes of this study, the project of recording personal experience remains an open one, available for collective appropriation.

Methods

Have taken the decision to record the life stories of camp women, I decided to restrict the sample to a single camp, Shateela, on the grounds of established familiarity. The next step was to construct the sample. As to its size, two considerations were at work: on the one hand I wanted to explore the diversity of women's situations and responses; on the other, the time needed to record and translate the life stories imposed an upper limit of 20. Twenty cases allowed variation along the most critical axes of age, marital status, social origins in Palestine, current socio-economic status, educational levels, employment experience, and relation to the national movement. Though I recorded 21 cases (apart from fragments recorded in earlier research phases) three were discarded on grounds of incompleteness; names, demographic, and social background details of the 18 life story tellers are

given in Appendix A.

Though obtaining recordings with a complex sample of women was the main aim of this last phase of fieldwork, it was an intrinsic part of my method that the total process, from discussing categories of women, preliminary visits to possible life story tellers, recording sessions, to 'follow-up' visits, should be part of research. Constructing the sample through discussion with Shateela people revealed indigenous ways of categorizing women; attempts to include deviant or nonconformist cases, even though they failed, demonstrated the force of exclusionary boundaries; visiting women to enlist their participation revealed causes of hesitation or refusal, as well as the conditions in which they live. Continuing visits to life story tellers, as well allowing further questioning, also helped to establish 'research friendships', and to 'embed' the project in the community. In other words, I did not draw a line between 'data' and the relationships through which the 'data' was obtained.

All but five of the recordings involved two or more sessions.[1] During the first session I aimed to minimize my intervention, so as to allow the subject all possible scope to give an 'autonomous' narrative. As a prompt I used a simple request for 'the story of your life' (<u>'ussat hayatik</u>), or 'your recollections' (<u>zikkariyatik</u>). Older women in particular were uncomfortable without more guidance. They would ask, "What do you want?", "What kind of things are you interested in?", or

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[1] Single sessions were the result of Shateela's siege, and the dispersion of its population. Two were with women who had moved to Sidon; another had moved to Bourj Barajneh; a fourth was living inside the camp; a fifth was in an old people's home. Two women from Shateela were recorded outside Lebanon, one in Tunis, one in London; but these were multi-sessional.

"Where shall I begin?" Sometimes I asked, "What is your earliest memory?" but mostly I tried to avoid suggesting a starting point. Refraining from intervention proved hard, since it contradicts the etiquette of visiting, as well women's expectations of audience participation in their stories. Only nine of the respondents gave self-sustained narratives, without hesitation, from start to finish. The other life stories are multi-vocal, with family and visitors joining in as well as myself. Though this means that the thread of sequence was not in most cases determined by the subject herself, encouraging multivocality helped to 'naturalize' the recording process.

At a second session I asked 'follow-up' questions for biographic data, clarification of obscure points, and material on questions of particular interest to me, such as subjects' relations with their mothers, and upbringing of their daughters. I did not work with a written list of questions, but pursued 'lines' based in what subjects had said before. In spite of my interest in gender ideology and practice, my scepticism about the effects of direct personal questions deterred me from using them to elicit data on this topic, except in the few cases when respondents themselves gave an opening. In addition to these follow-up sessions to elaborate or modify the life stories, I tried to sustain continuing relationships with as many as possible of the life story tellers, partly so as to transform the research relationship into another, more indigenous form that would enrich understanding; and partly to test the notion that temporal and situational context influences self-presentations, so that, far from subjects giving a fixed, once-for-all version of their

lives and 'selves', each subsequent elicitation would produce a different version. However I was only able to carry out this intention in one case, and then only partially.

Translating the recorded life narratives, involving collaboration with Palestinian colleagues, was a valuable part of the research process. All three colleagues were women aged less than thirty, from social backgrounds close to the camps. Two were married, and one lived at home with her parents. All had been involved to some degree with the Palestinian Resistance movement, that had dominated much of Lebanon between 1970 and 1982. Working together on the tapes elicited from them corroborative and contradictory comments, as well as fragments of their own life stories, that added valuable perspectives to my own on the camp women's narratives, and helped in interpretation.

Context needs to be taken into account in research using life stories, as affecting people's readiness to record, the mix of public and personal intentions that prompt the narratives, the sequence and contents of recollection, and the overall emotional tone (Popular Memory Group, 1985). Most of the narratives used for this study were recorded during 1991 and 1992. International, regional, Lebanese and local developments combined to create an exceptionally bleak conjuncture.[2] The life stories are thus coloured by feelings

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[2] Developments causing sharp socioeconomic as well as political deterioration for Palestinians in Lebanon between 1989 and 1993 in Lebanon were: the end of the 'Eastern bloc' (source of low-cost university training for Palestinian students as well as political support for the PLO); the Gulf war with its multiple consequences (deeper inter-Arab conflict, expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait, ending of Gulf state aid to the PLO); the beginning of US-sponsored Israeli-Arab negotiations; de-militarization of PLO forces in Lebanon in line with the Ta'ef Accords; Syrian control of Beirut and much

of frustration, disillusion and despair. Yet they are also infused with pride and a sense of obligation to 'bear witness', a form of struggle produced by a long history of national oppression. The atmosphere of fear caused by Syrian control of the Beirut area must also be taken into account as possible cause of political self-censorship.

It remains to outline the structure of the dissertation, and in particular the weight given in it to history (including the history of Middle East studies), as against contemporary social description and analysis. The persistence of Western constructions of Middle Eastern, Muslim, and Arab women as 'different', and as symbolizing a 'backward' area, makes the critique of Orientalism contained in Chapter One a theoretical and political pre-requisite for a study focussed on women and gender. Given the radical nature of rupture in Palestinian history, and given the necessity of historical and cultural background for studies of women in migrant groups (Morokvasic, 1983), Chapter Two is focussed on the lives of rural women in Palestine before 1948. Political, legal and economic constraints of exile in Lebanon are dealt with in Chapter Three, as objective framework generating change, and resistance to change at all levels of the refugee socio-cultural system. Given the importance of kinship, household family, and local community as space of conservation of identity and autonomy, and of the realization of gender ideology, Chapter Four is devoted to the effects of exile on these levels. In Chapter Five, I analyze the way the life story tellers represent their 'selves' in relation to national crisis and struggle; and in

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of Lebanon; and decline in PLO interventions, political and economic, on behalf of Palestinans in Lebanon.

Chapter Six, after linking national crisis to gender and sexuality, I analyze the various ways camp women express and suppress sexuality and gender consciousness. In the final chapter, I set Palestinian women's life stories in contrast to Orientalist constructions of Middle Eastern women; point to historical continuities and discontinuities in women's representations of their 'selves' and of their material reality; and discuss the values and limitations of life histories as method of approach to women's 'subjectivities'.

CHAPTER ONE

NEW APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF WOMEN AND GENDER

Any study concerned with women in a Middle Eastern, Muslim, or
Arab milieu must begin by placing itself in relation to the
body of literature that precedes it. In recent years
Orientalism has been subjected to profound theoretical
critiques.[1] Yet Orientalist constructions of Middle Eastern,
Muslim, or Arab women have shown a remarkable immunity to
criticism. They have continued to appear in both scholarly and
non-scholarly writing, and are an established configuration
that works politically and academically as an 'othering',
boundary-maintaining device.[2]

The purpose of this chapter is, first, to criticize this
literature, and to de-legitimize 'women' as a subject/object
of study; and then to propose theoretical perspectives and
interpretative schema from recent work in oral and feminist
history more appropriate for a study focussed on Palestinian
camp women's experience.

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[1] Notably E. Said, <u>Orientalism</u> (New York: Pantheon Press,
1978). Said's study has had an influence beyond the field of
literary criticism, in anthropology, women's and colonialist
studies, and cultural history. Some of its limitations have
been taken up by contributors to M. Sprinkler ed., <u>Edward Said:
A Critical Reader</u> (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), and
will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

[2] The role of 'bad sexuality' in European 'othering' of
the Middle East is mentioned but not elaborated by Said (1978,
pp 6, 68, 180, 182, 186-8, 190, 313-4). See also N. Daniels,
<u>Islam and the West: The Making of an Image</u> (Edinburgh:
University Press, 1960). R. Kabbani, while exoticising the
subject, makes a useful point about Europe's 'feminization' of
the Middle East as justifying economic and political
penetration: <u>Europe's Myths of Orient</u> (London: Pandora Press,
1986).

A. A Critique of Orientalist Constructions of Middle Eastern, Muslim, and Arab Women

The fundamental invalidating characteristic of Orientalist approaches to Middle Eastern, Muslim, or Arab women - one shared with Western social science approaches to women of the Third World generally - is lack of theory. 'Women' are not theoretically constructed as a subject for research but taken as self-evidently there, or, as Mohanty (1984) puts it, as "somehow socially constituted as a homogenous group identified prior to the process of analysis", one with "identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions" (p 336-7). The first thrust of the new feminist scholarship of the 1960s was to theorize the origins of women's apparently universal subordination, and to explore its economic, social, political and cultural contexts. By the 1970s, the problematic aspects of 'women' as universal category began to be raised by Black feminists as part of their revolt against the hegemony of white women over the feminist movement.[3] With these protests there developed the first theoretical formulations of the interaction between racial, ethnic, class and gender subordination.[4] Such critiques of the

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[3] See for example H. Carby, "White woman listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood", in University of Birmingham ed., The Empire Strikes Back (London: the Centre for Contemporary Studies, 1982). Also C. Moraga and G. Anzuelda, This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983).

[4] From a Marxist perspective, by F. Edholm, O. Harris, K. Young, "Conceptualising Women", Critique of Anthropology vol 3 no 9/10, elaborated in O. Harris and K. Young, "Engendered Structures: Some Problems in the Analysis of Reproduction", J. Kahn and J. Llobera eds., Anthropological Analysis of Pre-Capitalist Societies (London: Macmillan, 1981). An important text from this period is F. Anthias and N. Yuval-Davis,

use of 'women' or 'women's status' as the subject or object of research produced a shift towards the analytically more useful concept 'gender'. The arguments for 'gender' as a tool of social analysis proposed by feminist historians E. Fox-Genovese (1982), and J.W. Scott (1988), will be presented in a later section of this chapter as theoretical grounds for an approach to Middle Eastern, Muslim, Arab women totally divorced from research carried out within the limits of Orientalism.

Since Orientalism assumes 'women' to be a homogeneous social category that can be taken as subject/object of study, their 'objectification' follows with a logic that conceals a false scientific analogy and a hierarchical relationship. Within the tradition of empiricist social science, the 'objectification' of women allows them to be studied through observation. Masked as science, the politico-cultural power implicit in the act of observation hides from its practitioners its flaws as a method of reaching ethnographic understanding. Though self-critical anthropology has to a large extent worked through such problems, or at least become aware of them, observation as method survives in studies of Third World women.

From 'objectification' springs a set of linked practices which distort the reality observed: 'literalism', 'labelling', 'symbolization', and deprivation of subjectivity or 'voice'. This chapter shall focus later on Orientalist studies of Middle Eastern, Muslim, or Arab women as a special case of these practices, but only after discussing them in a general way first.

As used here, 'literalism' means a cluster of unself-

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critical research practices, from focussing on external, visible signs, to taking at face value verbal statements and responses to questions, always warranted by the observer's assumption of privileged understanding. Through 'literalism' the complex interactions of international, local and subjective factors are jumped over. A notable example of literalism is the practice of 'veil-counting', whereby observers assume that the incidence of 'veiling' can be taken as an unproblematic indicator of 'conservatism' (or 'Islamic fundamentalism'[5]), without any consideration of subjective meanings or local contexts. Another common form of literalism is the assumption that women in the home are thereby excluded from politics, economic production, and socio-cultural reproduction.

A more complex corollary of objectification is 'labelling', an essentializing practice through which women are identified with religions, regions, racial or national categories. Such identifications lead to 'symbolization', the practice whereby stereotypes of women are made to represent non-Western entities (for example, Islam, Africa, India), for Western audiences and readerships.[6] Both practices, 'labelling' and 'symbolization', are taken-for-granted steps in Western approaches to non-Western women, continually taking new forms, for example 'Third World women' or 'women of developing

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[5] 'Islamic fundamentalism' is a Western term with connotations of bigotry and fanaticism. The term used of themselves by those who profess a renewed Islam is <u>Islamiyyeen</u>, Islamists.

[6] In discussing essentializing practices, it is wise to acknowledge at the outset the simplifications involved in adopting terms such as 'Western', 'the Third World', 'colonialist' and so on. Clearly these terms mask internal differences, yet in as far as they refer to world systemic differences in wealth and power, their provisional use is justified.

countries'. The ideological nature of such labels is demonstrated if we replace them with labels such as 'Christian' or 'European', the meaninglessness of which is immediately evident. Lazreg rightly points to the non-neutrality of labels such as 'Arab' and 'Muslim' in the context of world politics.[7] Adoption of religious, racial, regional, and even national labels to identify women falsely assumes internal homogeneity, and masks crucial differences of class, sect, ethnicity and citizen/non-citizen status. As Lazreg notes, the labelling of women not only assumes a correspondence that ought to be seen as problematic (women are seldom full members of the entities with which they are identified), but they promote the 'essentializing of difference' which is both the starting point and conclusion of most Western studies of non-Western women.[8]

Through the operation of 'symbolization', women are transformed for Western readerships and audiences into signs or ideograms of the collectivity to which they (problematically) belong, signifying its backwardness, inhumanity, or merely 'difference', depending on the historical and international context. This process of symbolization is never a simple phenomenon but takes varied forms depending on the conjuncture, the audience addressed, and the medium of representation. Chatterjee's remarks on the way the British used the figure of 'Indian-woman-as-victim' to denote a

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[7] M. Lazreg, "Feminism and Difference: the Perils of Writing as a Woman on Women in Algeria", <u>Feminist Studies</u> vol 14 no 1, Spring 1988. D. Kondo makes a similar political point about the essentializing of 'the Japanese' in the United States: <u>Crafting Selves: Power, Gender and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace</u> (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), p 301.

[8] Lazreg, "Feminism and Difference", p 87.

barbaric religious tradition, in contrast to which British rule appeared enlightened and liberating, are a case in point.[9]

In another, more specifically academic form of 'objectification', non-Western women are transformed into 'mere bearers of unexplained categories' (Lazreg, 1988, p 94). Lazreg traces a direct line in approach and methods between colonial studies of Algerian women and contemporary studies by Western feminist scholars, and, calling for a 'radical ontological rupture', asks why academic feminism has failed to challenge the epistemological and theoretical assumptions of studies of non-Western women in the same way that it has challenged the 'male canon' in the social sciences, literature and knowledge production generally: "How...can an Algerian woman write about women in Algeria when her space has already been defined, her history dissolved, her subjects objectified, her language chosen for her?" (1988, p 86).

In a powerful theoretical and methodological critique, Mohanty also subjects feminist constructions of Third World women to rigorous questioning, beginning with their basic assumption that women form a single, universal category sharing a similar oppression.[10] Western feminists have elided the critical distinction between "'women' as a discursively

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[9] "In identifying (Hindu) tradition as 'degenerate and barbaric' colonialist critics invariably repeated a long list of atrocities perpetrated on Indian women...By assuming a position of sympathy with the unfree and oppressed womanhood of India, the colonial mind was able to transform this figure of the Indian women into a sign of the inherently oppressive and unfree nature of the entire cultural tradition of the country": P. Chatterjee, "Colonialism, nationalism and colonized women: the contest in India", American Ethnologist vol 16 no 4, November 1989, p 622.

[10] C. Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonialist Discourse", Boundary2 vol 12 no 3/13, no 1, Spring/Fall 1984.

constructed group, and 'women' as material subjects of their own history" (p 338), an elision that enables the application of supposedly universal analytical concepts and social categories to Third world women. Since feminist theory has already constructed women as 'powerless', the thrust of feminist studies of Third World women has been to find variants of powerlessness, rather than the more important task of "uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as 'powerless' in a particular context" (p 338). Definitions of Third World women primarily in terms of their 'object status', as affected by institutions such as religion or kinship, means that local specificities and women's struggles are ignored. In addition, their prioritization of gender as source of women's oppression means that Western feminist scholars have failed to take account of race, class and ethnicity, and the way these interact with gender to create specific types of oppression. But the main thrust of Mohanty's critique is towards the representation of Third World women as a homogenous category of analysis in implicit contrast to Western women.

Mohanty's methodological critique focusses on the circularity of Western feminist studies,[11] moving from the relatively simple form of 'veil-counting', whereby specific contexts and subjective meanings are ignored, to the more complex question of the use of supposedly universal, quasi-analytical concepts: patriarchy, the sexual division of labour, the public/domestic and productive/reproductive dichotomies,

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[11] As illustrative grounds for her critique, Mohanty takes six recent studies of Third World women ranging in approach from liberal to Marxist feminist.

'the' family. But unless research discriminates between the abstract level at which such concepts have universal truth, and the local context in which specific meanings and contents are generated, findings merely confirm the point of departure. As a result, the specific factors - historic, economic, social, cultural - that produce specific kinds of subordination are missed. Yet what appear to be similar phenomena, for example female-headed households, may have entirely different historical, economic explanations. Similarly, because women are generally found doing domestic labour, it is assumed that the contents of such labour is everywhere the same, as well as ideologies that assign it to women. Finally, Mohanty criticizes the methodology of empirical substantiation (or falsification) of systems of representation, a move that confuses 'discourse' with 'material realities'. If Third World women are defined only as 'material subjects' (exemplars of categories), the vital question of the relation between their materiality and their representations cannot be explored. This theoretical position is taken here as the primary point of departure for the present study of Palestinian women.

To have explanatory rather than mere descriptive value, concepts need to be generated from local, contextual analyses. As an example of such a concept, Mohanty cites the 'ideology of the housewife', formulated by Mies (1982) in her study of Indian women lace-makers, in which she demonstrates how international and local economic forces combine with local socio-cultural norms to produce an ideological form making women available for piece-work in their homes.[12] Further, by

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[12] M. Mies, The Lace-Makers of Narsapur (London: Zed Books, 1982).

additional focus on the level of women's subjectivity, Mies shows that "Narsapur women are not mere victims of the production process, because they resist, challenge and subvert the process at various junctures" (Mohanty, 1982, p 345). Ong's (1988) remarks about gender and sexuality as an arena of contestation, in an 'explosion of sexual discourses' adds to the move proposed by Third World women scholars to explore women's active participation in socio-cultural processes. Arising from her study of Malaysian factory women, Ong notes that gender ideology in Third World milieus, far from being monolithic and a-historical, is diverse, contested, and in differentially appropriated by women. Women are not merely the 'objects' of gender ideology, but themselves choose different elements of diverse gender ideologies as part of personal and cultural identities. Gender is revealed as "a symbolic system inseparable from family, the economy, and politics, embedded in discourses and images marking social boundaries and self-reflective identities".[13]

Ong also criticizes Marxist feminist studies of Third World women on the grounds that, because of their concern with economic analysis, they lose sight of them as encultured people. Consideration of women's lives "is subordinated to descriptions of the intersections between patriarchy and capitalism" (p 84-5). She makes another important point when she notes that feminist approaches to Third World women have a "scientific tendency to treat gender and sexuality as categories that are measurable, and to ignore indigenous

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[13] A. Ong, "Colonialism and Modernity: Feminist Re-Presentations of Women in non-Western Societies", <u>Inscriptions</u> nos 3/4, 1988, p 88.

meanings which may conceive of them as ideas inseparable from moral values" (p 85).

A particularly pungent point of Mohanty's critique is that feminist scholars writing about Third World women are insufficiently aware of the effects of their writing, "undertaken in the context of a world system dominated by the West". The image of Third World women produced by feminist studies is a central element in producing 'third world difference':

> In the context of a first/third world balance of power, feminist analyses that perpetrate and sustain the hegemony of the idea of the superiority of the West produce a corresponding set of images of the 'third world woman', images like the veiled woman, the powerful mother, the chaste virgin, the obedient wife etc. These images exist in universal, ahistorical splendor, setting in motion a colonialist discourse which exercises a very specific power in defining, coding and maintaining existing first/third world connections.[14]

Middle Eastern, Muslim, and Arab women: a special case

Studies that explore the historic depth of sexual themes in European anti-Islamism have already been cited. These studies suggest that stereotypes of Muslim men as sexually rapacious and morally decadent helped to promote the idea of European purposes in the Middle East as civilizing and reformist; and how images of the 'Eastern woman' as odalisque were linked to the 'feminization of the Orient', inviting colonialist penetration and control. Muslim women's supposed exclusion from education, culture and society formed an entry point for Christian mission schools for girls from early in the nineteenth century, before the advent of European rule.

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[14] Mohanty, 1984, p 353.

Colonial administrations both proclaimed support for women's emancipation, and evoked 'local conservatism' as a pretext for preventing or even reversing women's access to higher education or public employment.[15] Today, with the shift in power from verbal to visual representations, the veiled or chador-clad Middle Eastern, Muslim, or Arab woman appears in countless contexts and media to signify an alien, backward region.

These transformations of the contents and meaning of images of women form a political and historical background to the social science studies that feed into them. For just as there is no clear break between the writings of early travellers and missionaries such as Jessup or Zwemer[16] and 'women's studies' carried out under French and British administrations, so (as Lazreg notes) there has been no critical rupture between colonial-era studies and those being carried out today. This is not to say that there have not been shifts in focus, and a continual extension of research in terms of region and class, only that there has not been a systematic critique of origins and dominant paradigms. Among these the

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[15] J. Tucker cites the ironic case of Lord Cromer's use of the idea of 'Islamic conservatism to justify excluding women from the foothold they had occupied in higher education before British rule: Women in nineteenth century Egypt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p 95. E. Fleischmann cites the British Government in Palestine's references to 'Oriental attitudes' when refusing a woman's application to practise law: "The Politics of Gender in Mandatory Palestine", unpublished paper, Georgetown University, 1991.

[16] See H. Jessup, The Women of the Arabs (New York: Dodd and Mead,1873). Jessup also published his journals, A Brief Chronicle of the Syria Missions, 1819-1870 (Beirut: American Mission Press, 1901), and Fifty-Three Years in Syria (New York: Revell, 1910). Another missionary who wrote critically of Arab family life was S.M. Zwemer, The Moslem World (New York: Revell, 1912). For travellers' descriptions, see J. Mabro, Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travellers' Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women (London: Tauris, 1991).

primordial one is, of course, the idea of collectivities of women who can be identified for research purposes as 'Middle Eastern', 'Muslim', or 'Arab'. Even national labels such as Algerian, Turkish, or Palestinian are misleading if not qualified by exploration of gender differences in the constitution of 'citizens', as well as differences between women as members of dominant and subordinate collectivities within the same state or national formation.[17]

Within this complex of identifications, the category 'Muslim women' has assumed a particularly tenacious form in the context of the longstanding conflict between Christian Europe and the Muslim Middle East. Critiques such as Lazreg's have demonstrated the distortions that arise from subsuming women who live in majority Muslim societies under the label 'Muslim'. Among the most serious of these is that Quranic prescriptions and <u>shari'a</u> family law have been presented, first, as monolithic, and second as totally determining women's lives. This perception ignores alternative interpretations of ambiguous and contradictory religious texts; variation between the four major schools of Islamic law; differences between heterodox movements within Islam (Shi'a, Druze, Sufism, and so on); and variations produced by ethnic and regional cultures underlying a formal profession of Islam.[18] These points apart,

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[17] Women scholars from the Middle East have also adopted national labels as unproblematic identifiers of women, without noting the way these subsume linguistic/ethnic minorities, and exclude non-national groups such as refugees and immigrants. See for example: UNESCO, <u>Social Science Research and Women in the Arab World</u> (Paris: UNESCO, 1984), which neither includes studies of women of marginal collectivities, nor notes the necessity for such studies.

[18] A rare symposium that underlines dissimilarities between women in majority Muslim societies is B. Utas ed., <u>Women in Islamic Societies</u> (London: Curzon Press, 1983). M. Modares also

Orientalist constructions of 'Muslim women' have until recently ignored women as religious subjects. Equally they have neglected women's invocations of Islamic law and access to Islamic institutions. Women's rebellions against Islam have been passed over, as have daily life evasions. But perhaps the most serious distortion created by the use of 'Muslim women' is that it elides other factors central to women's lives: the state, class, the economy, kinship. As Kandiyoti has noted, Islamic states incorporate different versions of Islam into their laws and policies, with variable effects for gender ideology.[19] Attention to these factors make visible historical, ideological and material variations in women's lives that are submerged by the Islamic paradigm.

A perception of Islam as a 'self-contained and flawed belief system impervious to change' (Lazreg, 1988, p 84) is fundamental to the cultural edifice of Orientalism. Equally, the construction 'Muslim women' is a core element in Orientalist presentations of Islam. The notion of a collectivity of women sharing a common and unique oppression helps sustain the artifice of a single geo-cultural zone that forms the subject/object of Orientalism, as of the sub-field of 'women's studies' within it. The two constructions are interlaced and mutually reinforcing. Together they differentiate between the West and the 'Muslim world' in terms of linked, value-laden contrasts built around women: active/passive, productive/non-productive, emancipated/

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stresses inter-Muslim differences in her "Women and Shi'ism in Iran" m/f, 1981.

[19] D. Kandiyoti ed., Women, Islam and the State (London: Macmillan, 1991). Kandiyoti's Introduction is an incisive critique of the 'Islamic paradigm'.

oppressed, progressive/backward. The idea of Islam as an uniquely oppressive religion is one with the notion of a collectivity of 'Muslim woman'.[20] Lazreg puts this point well:

> Although religion is seen in Western societies as one institution among many, it is perceived as the bedrock of the societies in which Islam is practised...The overall effect of this paradigm is to deprive women of self-presence, of being. Because women are subsumed under religion presented in fundamental terms, they are inevitably seen as evolving in non-historical time. They have virtually no history.[21]

The Islamic paradigm is closely linked to another that has been influential in studies of 'the family' and 'women' in the Middle East, the dichotomizing of time into 'traditional' and 'modern', a usage with strong value connotations (positive for 'modern', negative for 'tradition') that have passed into modern Arabic usage.[22] Apart from the questions that can be put to this paradigm as expressing a unilinear theory of history, its use in research imposes an ideological frame on perception, distorting what is observed and how it is represented. As labels applied to societies, milieus, families or individual behaviour, 'traditional' and 'modern' merely mask a more complex reality of continual contestation and change.

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[20] As illustration of this correspondence, see the symposium edited by L. Beck and N. Keddie, _Women in the Muslim World_ (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). In spite of the number of studies of Muslim women published since 1979, the idea of the 'quintessential Muslim woman' still survives: see C. el-Solh and J. Mabro, "Introduction: Islam and Muslim Women", _Muslim Women's Choices: Religious Belief and Social Reality,_ (forthcoming with Berg Publishers). El-Solh and Mabro underline diversity within Islam; similarities between conservative Christian, Judaic and Muslim gender ideology; and Muslim women's diverse, active appropriations of their faith.

[21] Lazreg, 1988, p 86.

[22] An instance of the way 'strong' languages influence 'weak' ones: see T. Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology", in J. Clifford and G. Marcus eds. _Writing Culture: Poetics and Politics of Ethnography_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

The term 'traditional' also abolishes history, reducing all variation before the beginning of European penetration to an ideologically conceived 'stagnation'.

Two other binary pairs, 'public/domestic' and 'production/reproduction', have been invoked by Orientalist and feminist approaches to women in the Middle East. Elaborated by feminist theorists of the early 1970s as an analytical tool for explaining the universal subordination of women,[23] the public/domestic dichotomy tends to circularity: what men do is classified as 'public', what women do as 'domestic'. It also ignores the actual historical construction of public spheres in specific societies.[24] The pitfalls of adopting the public/domestic dichotomy as paradigm is illustrated by Maher's study of women in a provincial Moroccan milieu.[25] Starting out from the position that "women's participation in the 'public sphere' is considered immoral", Maher sets women's multiple activities in a contrasted 'ascriptive, kinship sphere'. Thus she misses, even while observing it, women's role in socio-cultural reproduction. Further, where kinship is the primary determinant of class position, as well as access to property, office and state resources, it is clearly artificial to set women outside the 'public sphere'.

It is doubtful if the introduction of the concept

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[23] For example, M. Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview" in M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere eds., Woman, Culture and Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).

[24] See R. Reiter,"Men and Women in the South of France: Public and Private Domains" in R. Reiter ed., Toward an Anthropology of Women (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

[25] V. Maher, Women and Property in Morocco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

'relations of reproduction' would add to studies of women in the Middle East the element of theory missing until now.[26] Introduced by Engels (1884)[27] in contrast to 'production', the term 'reproduction' has remained residual in spite of the efforts of Marxist feminists to elaborate it. The same observation made of the public/domestic dichotomy applies to production/reproduction, that is, that women are automatically assigned to the 'reproductive' side of the pair. The association between 'women' and 'procreation' has always been especially strong in studies of Middle Eastern, Muslim, or Arab women, and contributes to the 'othering' that, as Mohanty notes, falsely contrasts Western women's control over their bodies with Third World women's lack of it.[28]

The ignoring of Third World women's subjectivities and struggles criticized by Mohanty, Riecker and Hammami (1988), and others, is nowhere more evident than in studies of women in the Middle East. Further, it is precisely those texts that most vehemently denounce women's victimization that remain farthest from their subjectivities. Le harem et les cousins by G. Tillion is a classic example.[29] Often praised because it traces women's oppression not to Islam but to the neolithic revolution, it is nonetheless a highly Eurocentric denunciation

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[26] Proposed by A. Rassam, "Toward a Theoretical Framework for the Study of Women in the Arab World", in UNESCO, Social Science Research and Women in the Arab World (Paris: UNESCO, 1984).

[27] Engels first proposed the division of all human life into 'production' and 'reproduction' in the Preface to the first edition of The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State (Zurich: 1884).

[28] An examination of illustrative material in books about Middle Eastern women reveals the extent to which a child in their arms (or on their backs) is as much a part of their image as the veil or chador. Much rarer are photographs of women in factories, hospitals, and offices.

[29] G. Tillion, Le harem et les cousins (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966).

of practices found in some strata in the Middle East and North Africa, in particular endogamy, seclusion, constrained marriage, and high birth rates. Tillion's re-phrasing of the 'difference' between Europe and the Middle East, from one of religion to one between a 'republic of citizens' and a 'republic of cousins' does not make it any less an instance of 'othering'. But what is most striking about Tillion's representation of Arab women's victimization is that not once does she quote a woman's voice or cite a woman's writing. Women's varied activities are equally ignored; they appear only as the victims of arranged marriages and bearers of children, never as workers, intellectuals, or participants in political movements.[30]

Orientalist constructions of Middle Eastern women have shown a remarkable resilience in spite of vigorous critiques, reappearing in scholarly studies, as well as popular material. Two recent examples are sufficiently striking to suffice. The first is a paper by an Arab socialist feminist, Mai Ghossoub, in which she reproduces the Orientalist notion of a monolithic and totalizing Islam:[31]

> The fate of Arab women has been set by a historical context in which Islam has been an all-encompassing, dominating reality...The early conquests and later triumphs of Islam established a continuity across centuries that came to form a kind of natural, permanent substratum in the Muslim unconscious. It was only after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of new nation states in the twentieth century that the seamless fabric of Muslim identity started to unravel.[32]

In a closely argued commentary which sets an agenda for future studies, Riecker and Hammami deplore Ghossoub's re-instatement of the idea of Islam as a 'monolithic, unchanging

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28 See also J. Minces, <u>La femme dans le monde arabe</u> (Paris: Editions Mazarine, 1980) as an example of a Western feminist who scrupulously avoids any approach to the subjectivities of the women whose victimization she denounces.

[31] M. Ghossoub, "Feminism or the Eternal Masculine in the Arab World", <u>New Left Review</u> no 161, Jan/Feb 1987.

[32] Ghossoub, 1987, p 4.

worldview outside history' that imposes a 'universal conformity'.[33] Ghoussoub also reproduces the Orientalist notion of the history of the Middle East as a void - "a thousand years when nothing happened" - between the classic age of Muslim expansion and the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt. It is ironic, furthermore, that an Arab socialist feminist should fail to present Arab women's historical and contemporary struggles. The writers call for scholarly attention to these struggles, which should be grasped not only as expressed in organized movements, but also through the forms and practices of everyday life.

A weightier example of the survival of Orientalist perspectives in 'women's studies' is the recent Women in Middle Eastern History (1991).[34] The introduction by N. Keddie again emphasizes 'difference': "Differences between the Middle East and other cultures [sic] regarding gender relations were in most ways smaller in the past than in modern times" (p 2). Just as the unity of the 'Muslim world' was taken for granted in the 1978 symposium, so the unity of the Middle East is taken for granted in that of 1991. There is the same focus on Islam as dominant paradigm for gender relations. Keddie's periodization of Arab Muslim history is more sophisticated than Ghossoub's, but essentially she reproduces the notion of a void between the 'Great Age' and 'modern times'. Further, in proposing that the aim of research should be "to provide a true history of how women fared over time in the Middle East", Keddie shows a

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[33] M. Riecker and R. Hammami, "Feminist Orientalism and Orientalist Marxism", New Left Review no 170, July/August 1988.

[34] N. Keddie and B. Baron eds., Women in Middle Eastern History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

striking absence of reference to recent theorization of gender by feminist historians such as Scott and Fox-Genovese (to cite only two). It is surely a symptom of 'regional closure' that all Keddie's references except one are to 'area studies'; and that while she admits some revisions to Orientalist perspectives from empirical research, yet essentially her presentation works to exclude new perspectives, and to maintain sub-field boundaries.

Lazreg's (1988) proposal to develop a new theoretical approach based on Husserlian phenomenology is to be welcomed, but it is arguable that existing studies contain the elements of the rupture with Orientalism for which she calls. From the late 1960s, L. Sweet, B. Aswad and C. Nelson began to present evidence of women in rural, urban and nomadic milieus in the Middle East carrying out economic management and political linkage roles, as well as exercising power.[35] E. Peters (1978) pointed to significant variation in women's roles and status in four different Middle Eastern milieus; and (1979) to the measure of power gained by women in Libyan pastoral groups through leaders' needs for marriage alliances that would provide access to vital resources.[36] Schneider (1971) analyzed women's situation over a broad circum-Mediterranean area as

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[35] L. Sweet,"The women of 'Ayn ad Dayr", Anthropological Quarterly vol 40 no 3, 1967. B. Aswad, "Key and Peripheral Roles of Noblewomen in a Middle Eastern Plains Village", Anthropological Quarterly, vol 40 no 3, 1967; "Visiting Patterns Among Women of the Elite in a Small Turkish City", Anthropological Quarterly vol 47, 1974; and "Women, Class and Power" in Beck and Keddie (1978). C. Nelson, "Women and Power in Nomadic Societies" in C. Nelson ed., The Desert and the Sown (Berkeley: University of California, 1973).

[36] E.L. Peters,"The Status of Women in Four Middle Eastern Communities", Beck and Keddie (1978); and "The Bedouin Sheikhs, Aspects of Power Among Cyrenaican Pastoralists", a paper presented at a seminar on Leadership, Beirut, 1979.

product of environmental and land-management factors. Pitt-Rivers (1977) <u>Fate of Schechem</u> was one of the first Middle Eastern studies that placed sexuality squarely within the realm of politics.[37]

Other scholars who have made forceful theoretical critiques of the Orientalist tradition of 'women's studies' while presenting innovative substantive research are S. Joseph, J. Tucker, N. Yuval-Davis, and D. Kandiyoti.[38]

The value of Joseph's (1983) study of women's networks in a low-income suburb of East Beirut (Lebanon) lies in the evidence it presents of women's participation in the 'public domain'. Based in fieldwork carried out in the early 1970s in a low-income neighbourhood of East Beirut characterized by a high level of sectarian and national-ethnic heterogeneity, Joseph's observations of women's visiting found them crossing religious or sectarian, national, and class boundaries in a particularly insistent manner.[39] Women's visiting thus clearly

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[37] J. Pitt-Rivers, <u>The Fate of Schechem, or the Politics of Sex</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[38] Key studies by these four researchers are: i) S. Joseph: "Working Class Women's Networks in a Sectarian State", <u>American Ethnologist</u> vol 10, 1983; and "Feminization, Self, and Politics: Research as a Mughtaribi", in S. Altorki and C. el-Solh eds., <u>Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society</u> (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988). ii) J. Tucker, <u>Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt</u>, and "Marriage and Family in Nablus, 1720-1856: Toward a History of Arab Marriage", <u>Journal of Family History</u> vol 13 no 2, 1988. iii) N. Yuval-Davis. "The Jewish Collectivity and National Reproduction in Israel", Khamsin ed., <u>Women in the Middle East</u> (London: Zed Books, 1987), and (with F. Anthias), <u>Woman-Nation-State</u> (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989); iv) D. Kandiyoti, "Women and the Turkish State: Political Actors or Symbolic Pawns?", in Yuval-Davis and Anthias, <u>Woman-Nation-State</u>, and 'Introduction' in Kandiyoti, <u>Women, Islam</u>.

[39] Her record of women's visits showed that, in a sample period, 60 percent of visits were outside religion and sect, and more than one-third outside the national or ethnic category. Kin were visited much less frequently.

did not reproduce existing structures, but rather built new social ties and new local identities, such as those of street and neighbourhood. Though most intense within the neighbourhood, women's visiting also transcended proximity and boundaries of class, offering each other "vital links to the polity, economy and society, for political brokerage, job-hunting and social services". For example, a Maronite woman close to the powerful Gemayel family helped a Sunni neighbour get treatment for a child in a Maronite hospital, and found a job for the son of a Palestinian Catholic neighbour. A Shi'ite woman helped Palestinian neighbours find places in school through her contacts with Shi'ite politicians. Thus women connected their neighbourhood to sources of patronage located within sectarian structures and at the highest level of the state. Such activity, termed waasta (connection), is a characteristic feature of Lebanese political culture. Joseph argues that women not only engage in it, but also that Lebanon's class-sectarian structure necessitates such linking and re-distributive functions for women's networks.

Tucker's (1985) study uses mainly primary indigenous sources such as court records to construct an historical account of Egyptian women between the late 18th and early 20th centuries. The period chosen is one of foreign invasions, economic transformation, change of regime, uprisings and social upheaval. Though its primary focus is upon the economic activity and property rights of rural and low-income urban women, this study is remarkable for its detailed interweaving of the elements that form the framework of women's lives - laws, state policies, administrative apparatus, guilds, markets, family, gender ideologies - a framework moreover undergoing rapid change. Far from living in a 'timeless, privatized world untouched by historical change', Egyptian women are shown to have been involved in economy and polity as

active agents. Tucker usefully suggests that only attention to
'the politics of street and field' reveals women's activities,
while her careful attention to the interplay of changing state,
legal, economic, cultural/ ideological, and social factors,
advances our conception of women's place in the history of
Egypt, and marks new, more rigorous standards in Middle Eastern
historical research.

The theoretical advance marked by Yuval-Davis's (1987)
paper is that it raises symbolic aspects of women's role in
social reproduction, as reproducers of collective boundaries
and identities. The problematic nature of the Israeli state,
the different collectivities it claims to represent, its
internal ethnic/class stratification, all make the control of
women as reproducers of boundaries central to state policies
and politics:

> The issue of national reproduction in Israel, both in
> terms of its ideological boundaries, and in terms of the
> reproduction of its members, has always been at the centre
> of Zionist discourse.[40]

The challenge posed by the Palestinian Arab citizens of
Israel falls within the larger issue of the undefined borders
and population composition of the Jewish state. The rapidly
growing Arab population - 17 percent of the combined Jewish and
Arab population in 1987, or one-third if the Palestinian
inhabitants of Occupied Territories are included - has formed
one source of pressure in favour of higher Jewish Israeli
birthrates. Within the Jewish population itself there is also
the question of the ethnic-class 'balance', as Jews of Oriental
origin increasingly challenge Ashkenazi (European Jewish)
domination. In addition to these pressures, there is also the
question of Israel's relation to the Jewish diaspora, with
Jewish Israeli women pressed to bear children to compensate for
the 'demographic holocaust', that is, the decline in the number

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[40] Yuval-Davis, "The Jewish Collectivity", p 60.

of organized Jews worldwide.

Yuval-Davis's analysis shows how the problematic nature of reproducing 'Israel' has led to an ever-increasing emphasis on Jewish Israeli women's child-bearing role, both quantitatively in the sense of producing more children, and symbolically in the sense that, since Jewishness is transmitted through the mother, only women who give birth in the correct manner can assure the future of the nation. It is this need that has put marriage and the family ever more firmly under the control of the Rabbinical courts. Yuval-Davis's paper illuminates the nation-state as an historically changing source of ethnic, class and gender discrimination, and points to the kinds of constraints placed on women when national identity is in process of construction and contestation. But its most important theoretical contribution is in pointing to symbolic aspects of women's role in social reproduction, a step that is elaborated in Yuval-Davis and Anthias' <u>Woman-Nation-State</u>. Here the editors theorize the relationship of women to state- and nation-formation: "central dimensions of the roles of women are constituted around the relationships of collectivities to the state" and "central dimensions of the relationships between collectivities and the state are constituted around the roles of women" (p 1). The relevance of this formulation for Palestinians (as for other stateless, national-ethnic minorities) is the likelihood of two kinds of discrimination in regard to women, that of the state against women as reproducers of a minority;[41] and that of the minority in

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[41] As an example, the Israeli state facilitates abortion for women citizens of Arab origin, while denying them family allowances.

reinforcing proprietary control.[42]

Kandiyoti (1991) raises fundamental questions about the 'Islamic paradigm', pointing to the failure of those who assume Islam as total determinant to account for variation between, and within, Muslim majority societies in regard to women. Whereas feminist theory has highlighted the role of the state in the reproduction of gender inequality, little attention has been paid to the state in Middle East women's studies, even though Muslim states have adopted variants of <u>shari'a</u> law incorporating varying non-Islamic elements to legitimate different policies towards women and families.

Focus on the state directs attention to historical transitions in the formation of Muslim states and nations, as well as to critical debates about 'modernization'. The 'woman question' was inserted into such debates from the late nineteenth century as a key symbol both for both modernizers and advocates of cultural authenticity. Kandiyoti notes the complex linkages of this debate: to history (colonial domination by Christian Europe, creating 'an area of cultural resistance around women and the family'); and to class conflict, a linkage that the 'international nexus' (oil wealth, international aid and development policies, autocratic regimes, economic polarization) continually exacerbates:

> Islam has been a consistent vehicle for popular classes to express their alienation from 'Westernized' elites. It marks the great cultural divide between the beneficiaries and casualties of the changing socio-economic order.[43]

In spite of an early nationalist/feminist discourse that

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[42] Such reinforcement is not strongly marked in the Arab diaspora, where sexual mores are similar, but has been remarked among Palestinian migrants in the United States.

[43] Kandiyoti, <u>Women, Islam</u>, p 8.

supported state intervention in education and reform of
personal status law, the impact of these factors on local
communities has remained slight. Kandiyoti underlines the
complex and contradictory forces at work: on the one hand,
local communities and kin solidarity have been eroded by
processes of capitalist penetration; on the other, because of
state failure to create and distribute resources, primary
groups (communities, families) have remained essential as means
of individual access to jobs and social services, and of
protection against the state. The 'communalization of politics'
in several states with Muslim majorities has intensified
control pressures focussed upon women. What remains similar
between Muslim societies in regard to women is not 'Islam', but
"the compelling association between women's appropriate place
and conduct, however defined, of notions of cultural
authenticity" (p 7).

The importance of the texts reviewed lies in the way that
they break with Orientalist approaches, placing empirical
studies of women within historical frameworks that give full
weight to world, regional and local politics, as well as state,
nation and class formation. What Lazreg calls the
'objectification of difference' of Middle Eastern women is
superseded. Equally subverted is the public/domestic paradigm,
through research showing Middle Eastern women actively involved
in the economy, politics and sociocultural reproduction; while
this activity may be invisible to most historians, it
demonstrably takes place in the 'public sphere'.

These studies also underline the importance of the state
as source of policies, laws and structures that have effects
for women; states are shown to mobilize women selectively

depending on their ethnicity and class, national movements to mobilize them differently over time; constructions of women's nature and role are part of ideologies that differentiate competing concepts of 'the nation', political movements, and old and new regimes.[44] As states-in-embryo, national movements such as the Palestinian one need to be placed in the same analytic perspective.

The problem that remains is to relate this re-drawn structural ideological framework to the questions that Lazreg raises about women's subjectivities, and to Riecker and Hammami's call for research attention to women's struggles.

B. The Politics of 'Self' Representation

A phenomenological approach such as Lazreg proposes in her 1988 critique would not in itself remove all questions that arise in research directed towards eliciting 'women's lived experience'. Among these questions are ones of focus, specification of milieu, selection of speakers, the researcher-researched relationship, control over interpretations, audiences, and ultimate purpose. Class and power are as much involved when indigenous women researchers 'appropriate' the experience of poor, illiterate women for international audiences as when Western feminist researchers do so.[45] In other words, exploding 'constraining categories' is not enough;

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[44] Kandiyoti's example of the role played by constructions of 'woman' in the transition between the Ottoman and modern Turkish state is suggestive. See: "Women and the Turkish state: Political Actors or Symbolic Pawns?", in Yuval-Davis and Anthias, Woman-Nation-State.

[45] Lazreg herself makes this point: "Feminism and Difference", fn 53, p 106.

the politics of representation must also be addressed.

It may be useful to set the problem of representing women in the context of self-criticism and revision within anthropology, as some currents within it strive to cut its historical involvement with European penetration of the non-Western world.[46] The inherence of political/economic power in the representation of the non-Western world has not ended with the phasing out of direct colonialism, but is reproduced in the different forms and loci of the continuing First/Third world asymmetry. Asad formulates this problem theoretically as centered on the ideology and practice of 'cultural translation'.[47] Assumptions of the superiority of Western thought as rational and scientific enables anthropologists authoritatively to interpret native meanings. Written for Western readerships (specialist and lay) rather than for native peoples, the interpretations of anthropologists are seldom put to the test of indigenous critique. Asad re-phrases this problem in the metaphor of 'strong' and 'weak' languages. In a continuing process of distortion, 'strong' languages impose Western understandings upon less powerful indigenous ones, simultaneously changing non-Western peoples' understanding of their own culture and history.

Though dissimilar in most other respects, in relation to the Third World Orientalism and feminism are both examples of 'strong' languages. The critiques of Western feminists' studies referred to earlier in this chapter can be re-summarized here

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[46] See T.Asad ed., <u>Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter</u> (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1973).

[47] Asad, "Cultural Translation", in Clifford and Marcus, <u>Writing Culture</u>.

in terms of their theoretical and political implications. First, these critiques point to the distorting effects of applying concepts and categories derived from Western women's experience to Third World women. Second they attack hierarchy within the feminist movement, expressed at the level of theory in 'ethnocentric universalism', and methodologically in the direction of research, that is, the application of Western feminist theory to Third World milieus and women. Black and Third World feminists insist on the rights of self-representation, or, in Mohanty's phrasing, an approach that constructs women 'as material subjects of their own history' (1984, p 338).

This phrase and the politics it expresses constitute a founding element of this thesis, that is, as directed towards 'recovering' the histories and experiences of Palestinian camp women. However, there is a need to reflect on the subject/object of research: is it 'selves' of women, whether as social constructs, or as created in the act of narration? Or their subjectivities as arenas of ideological contest? Or their 'lived experience' as gendered record of exile and national struggle? Or the possibility of reading out gender struggles, or shifts in gender ideology, from their narratives? In what ways is the perceived identity of the investigator likely to affect the narratives of the narrating women? What understandings does the investigator employ while engaged in fieldwork, and when 'reading' women's narratives? And what procedures are necessary to minimize, if not eliminate, mis-representation?

In a useful review (1990), I. Schick formulates the central dilemma of representation of Third World women as one

between 'objectification' and 'relativization'.[48] For him both have their dangers, since if through 'relativization' the attempt to find common elements in human experience is abandoned, it would lead to the division of the world into "unlike and distinct spaces, from one of which 'we' observe the others". Further, the move to make women 'subjects of their own history' does not solve the problem of representation, it merely shifts its ground. When women speak, whom and what do they represent? This question has been the subject of much debate in anthropology,[49] and has recently been developed in feminist oral history practice.[50] Schick also proposes that all views, including those of the researcher, need to be 'situated'. Such advice underlines the need for prolonged participant observation in the research milieu as a pre-requisite for recording women's experiences.

Theory, politics and methods are all involved here. There is need to theorize the relationship between an individual woman's life story on the one hand, and on the other society, history, and gender ideology. The effect of the researcher's identity on respondents' construction of their life stories needs to be taken into account, calling for particular methods of eliciting life stories to avoid overdetermination by two

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[48] "Representing Middle Eastern women: Feminism and Colonial Discourse", Feminist Studies vol 16 no 2, Summer 1990.

[49] E. Ardener first raised the question whether women have different models of society from men: "Belief and the Problem of Women", J. LaFontaine ed., Social Anthropology and Language (London: Tavistock Press, 1972). See also R. Keesing, "Kwaio Women Speak: The Micropolitics of Anthropology in a Solomon Island Society", American Anthropologist 87 no 1, 1985.

[50] See in particular S. Gluck and D. Patai eds., Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).

kinds of dominant discourse: the researcher's analytic concerns, and dominant societal prescriptions for women. The contents of subjectivity cannot be assumed to contain only the meanings of a particular subordinate category (for example women in Palestinian camps), but, on the contrary, should be expected to express dominant meanings as well. The problem then becomes: i) how to detect subtle personal and oppositional forms in the ways individual women express dominant societal gender norms; ii) how to encourage the "narrators' public naming of buried or previously only whispered experiences".[51]

Local milieus differ widely in the issues that are debated (and repressed) in them, and in the way that these are articulated to broader regional or international debates. Class, minority, and gender issues have been related to nationalism differently in the politics of national movements, but generally national unity has been prioritized in ways that repress or postpone 'sectional claims' (Jayawardena, 1986). This tendency is reinforced in collectivities and movements in which 'women' are made to represent cultural authenticity (Kandiyoti, 1991). Such prioritization of nationalism is particularly emphatic in the Palestinian national movement. Though, as noted in Chapter Two, independent women's organizations were formed in Palestine soon after the beginning of British rule, and though women have formed an important element in the post-1948 Resistance movement, yet 'feminist' demands have been minimally voiced. Thus the view that the national issue precedes the 'woman issue' is predominant, and tends to be expressed by Palestinian women, particularly when

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[51] K. Minister, "A Feminist Frame for Interviews", in Gluck and Patai, Women's Words, p 39.

speaking to outsiders.[52] Should the researcher be content to record this dominant perspective? Or should she actively seek alternative perspectives?[53] Debates within the contemporary Arab women's movement suggest that the orthodoxy of prioritizing national or class issues over issues linked to gender and sexuality is contested.[54] Given the sharpness of this debate in Arab intellectual circles, it is bound to affect women in most milieus to some degree, in ways the researcher needs to discover.

Besides cultural self-analysis, one of the implications of Schick's call for 'situating' is that subjects' positions within local social and political structures should be understood through anthropological methods of familiarization such as participant observation. The value of 'immersion' as enhancing interpretation has been argued by Joseph (1988), in a paper that contrasts 'feminine' methods of intersubjectivity with social science norms of 'objectivity', analytic rigour,

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[52] This may take the form of claiming that women have already gained their 'rights'. Peteet quotes Palestinian women telling her, "We're all liberated now because of the Resistance", adding that field observations quickly dispelled such claims, and showed them to be 'components of a discourse reserved for visitors': Gender in Crisis: Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p 17.

[53] Some feminist researchers have suggested that women in strongly 'patriarchal' cultures may be too timid to voice opposition unless encouraged by the researcher. However, this raises the problem of the researcher overdetermining responses through the exercise of cultural power. The life story partially answers this problem through allowing space for the expression of covert dissent.

[54] In a recent paper, Accad challenges the claim of Marxist feminists to speak for all Third World women in prioritizing economic needs over sexuality: "Sexuality and Sexual Politics: Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary Women in the Middle East", in C. Mohanty, A. Russo and L. Torres eds., Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

and strict control of research interaction.[55] Kondo (1990) makes a similar point when she suggests that informants' attempts to 'remake' her identity during fieldwork were a vital source of cultural understanding.[56] Jobs or identities within the research community additional to that of researcher 'naturalize' interaction and aid interpretation: as a returned migrant, Joseph's large kin network offered her a vital cultural resource; Kondo formed 'real' relationships with women through working in a factory. Other researchers have taken part in national or social liberation movements. For many feminist researchers, the creation of intersubjectivity is a more important goal than 'data'; for others it forms an essential tool of interpretation.[57]

But what precisely is the analytic goal of recording the life stories of women? Selecting the life story as method of approach to women's hitherto neglected subjectivities involves other problems than that of dominant discourses, notably the association between a 'life' and a 'self', an association implicit in language and the autobiographical genre. Recent writing in anthropology and elsewhere has underlined the problematic nature of concepts such as 'self', 'subjectivity' and 'experience'. The notion of 'self' as an unique and stable individuality, an internal essence that only needs to be uncovered for its uniqueness to appear, has been criticized as both eurocentric and androcentric. Feminist scholars have been

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[55] Joseph, "Feminization, Self, and Politics".

[56] Kondo, Crafting Selves, Chapter One, "The Eye/I".

[57] The contradiction between transformational and information-gathering goals in feminist research is confronted by several of the contributors to Gluck and Patai, Women's Words.

in the vanguard of the deconstruction of the 'self'.[58]
Ethnographers working in non-western cultures have pointed to
the eurocentrism of the self/society dichotomy on which the
concept of a bounded, self-consistent self is based. In the
theoretical prolegomena to her study (1991) of the 'crafting
of selves' in Tokyo workshops, Kondo points to entirely
different Japanese concept of 'self':

> ... a human being is always and inevitably involved in a
> multiplicity of social relationships. Boundaries between
> self and others are fluid and constantly changing,
> depending on the context and social positioning people
> adopt in particular situations.[59]

Yet we need also to note the political/cultural fact that
Black and Third World feminists in the US are constructing new
'selves' as part of their struggle against racial, class and
gender oppression, a struggle aimed also against suppression
of their voices within the US feminist movement. That women's
consciousness of 'self' is linked to popular struggles (Black
American, Third World and working class) is suggested by
studies of women's autobiographies.[60] Torres comments
ironically in a paper on Latina women's autobiographies that
it was just when 'people of colour' began to define their

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[58] Feminist deconstruction has underlined differences in
the structure of the female psyche, and the dualism imposed on
their consciousness by dominant societal images of 'woman'. See
for example S. Stanford Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical
Selves: Theory and Practice", in S. Benstock ed., The Private
Self (London: Routledge, 1988).

[59] Kondo, Crafting Selves, p 31.

[60] See S. Geiger, "Women's Life Histories: Method and
Content", in Signs 11, Winter 1986; M.J. Mayne, "Gender and
Narrative Form in French and German Working-Class
Autobiographies", in Personal Narratives Group ed.,
Interpreting Women's Lives (Bloomington: Indiana University
Press, 1989); and E. Fox-Genovese, "My Statue, My Self:
Autobiographical Writings of Afro-American Women", in Benstock
The Private Self.

subjectivity that the construction of 'self' became 'antitheoretical and problematic'.[61]

It is clear from such debates that concepts such as 'self', 'subjectivity' and 'experience' are not only elusive in meaning, but polysemic, existential and political. As Gutman notes in his essay on Rousseau, the 'self' is equally the site of subjection and opposition to subjection.[62] For groups in process of identifying themselves through opposition to systems of domination, these concepts have powerful identifying and mobilizing meanings. We need to be sensitive to the possibility of self-construction in women as a form of rebellion in particular social contexts and historical conjunctures.

Like 'self' and 'subjectivity', 'experience' calls for a definition that points to its emergence and plasticity, its nature as an arena of contestation rather than an 'already-constructed script'. Haraway expresses its problematic nature:

> 'Women's experience' does not preexist as a kind of prior resource, ready to be appropriated into one or another description. What may count as 'women's experience' is structured within multiple and often inharmonious agendas...'Experience' like 'consciousness' is an intentional construction, an artefact of the first importance.[63]

L. Passerini, who used life histories for her seminal

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[61] L. Torres, "The Construction of the Self in US Latina Autobiographies" in Mohanty, Russo and Torres, Third World Women.

[62] H. Gutman, "Rousseau's Confessions: A Technology of the Self" in L. Martin et al. eds., Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault (Boston: University of Massachussetts Press, 1988).

[63] D. Haraway, "Reading Buchi Emechta: Contests for Women's Experiences in Women's Studies", Inscriptions.

study of the Italian working class and Fascism,[64] historicizes the 'self', underlining the importance of studying subjectivity as an arena of ideological conflict, and as manifested in self-representations that reflect historical stereotypes rather than individual psyches. Feminist historian Chanfrault-Duchet also stresses the social, historical and ideological values of women's life stories, noting their power as narratives to reveal both collective representations of women, and women's modes of relating, as 'social actors involved in history', to 'hegemonic social models'.[65]

C. Gender, women's histories, and history

Since this thesis is directed towards Palestinian women's historical experience rather than towards their experience in present time (though this must be taken into account as shaping the recollection of experience), it should begin by discussing the concept 'women's history'. Feminist historian E. Fox-Genovese comments: "(A)dding women to the received account - especially in the form of a few more neglected worthies or a lot more descriptive social history - does not necessarily

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[64] L. Passerini, <u>Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Passerini's work will be further discussed in the next section, along with that of the Popular Memory Group (1985), as model for a study of Palestinian women's experiences of exile.

[65] M-F. Chanfrault-Duchet, "Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story", in Gluck and Patai, <u>Women's Words</u>. This writer's method of analysis of life stories as 'mythic' narratives will be referred to again in the next section.

change anything substantive in our way of writing history".[66]
Mere 'filling in' the gaps reinforces the idea of the
separateness of men's and women's histories, reproducing the
original schema of exclusion of women from mainstream history.
By passing over the role of women in state and class formation,
it leaves out their 'indispensable contributions to systems of
domination' as well as to resistance. Further, by focussing on
women as such, it fails to note the way that all language and
all social theory is impregnated with gender ideology, and thus
fails to theorize gender as an essential tool of historical and
social analysis:

> The domination of women by men figures at the core of the
> domination of specific classes, races, ethnic groups and
> peoples. It intersects with all forms of subordination and
> superordination and cannot be understood apart from
> them.[67]

Among feminist theorists, J. Scott offers a coherent
theory of gender in history, one that works transhistorically
and transculturally.[68] Like Fox-Genovese, Scott criticizes
'women's studies' because they assume gender difference, hence
do not theorize about how gender operates historically. To
theorize gender, Scott proposes an epistemological perspective
based in Foucault's theory of knowledge and power, a starting
point that leads to a definition of gender as 'knowledge about
sexual difference' that, like other forms of knowledge, is
implicated in relations of power. While the meanings given to
gender vary across time, cultures and social groups, its

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[66] E. Fox-Genovese, "Placing Women's History in History",
New Left Review no 133, May/June, 1982.

[67] Fox-Genovese, "Women's History", p 14.

[68] J.W. Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New
York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

implication in discourses that designate all other kinds of 'difference' is universal. Gender needs to be understood as a basic element in the organization of power, conceptualized as "dispersed constellations of unequal relationships, discursively constituted in social 'fields of force'" (p 42). The definition of gender Scott provides is both comprehensive and versatile. It has two parts: i) "gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes"; and ii) "gender is a primary way of signifying power"; the core of the definition rests on the connection between the two parts (p 42). Defined in this way, gender can be seen to be implicated in all aspects of social organization and culture: in cultural symbols; in normative concepts; in social institutions; and in subjective identity.

With regard to the series of dichotomies discussed earlier in this chapter (public/domestic, productive/reproductive, modern/traditional, and so on), Scott's formulation of the hierarchization implicit in all of them, and hence their correspondence with the male/female pair, is essential for a critique of their use in social research:

> Fixed oppositions conceal the heterogeneity of either category, the extent to which terms presented as oppositional are interdependent...Furthermore, the interdependence is usually hierarchical, with one term dominant, prior and visible, the opposite subordinate, secondary, and often absent or invisible. Yet precisely through this arrangement, the second term is present and central because required for the definition of the first.[69]

Through detailed examination of 19th century working class movements in Britain and France Scott suggests that they cannot be understood without attention to the explicit or implicit

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[69] Scott, <u>Gender</u>, p 7.

gender ideologies of their programmes. Such analysis opens up the possibility of 'reading' gender in national movement discourses whether or not the subject 'women' is explicitly addressed. Where earlier writing about Palestinian women has focussed upon organized frameworks of women's political action (unions, associations, Resistance groups),[70] we should be able to read gender ideology (or ideologies) from successive phases of national movement strategy, regardless of the fact that women and gender are seldom mentioned. Shifts in the historic conditions and leadership strategies of the Palestinian national movement are bound to have had effects at the level of class, kinship, household, and individual subjectivity. A reading of cross-generational women's narratives should illuminate these shifts as reflected in women's lives.

It will be necessary to place Palestinian women's life stories in an historical framework that includes a careful delineation of political and socioeconomic conditions, ruptures, and national movement strategies. But the main concern here is not to add women's history to national history; rather it is to analyse women's personal narratives as texts

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[70] Writing about Palestinian women has grown since the 1970s, and includes several women's autobiographies. A brief selection (in chronological order): M. Mogannam, <u>The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem</u> (London: Herbert Joseph, 1937); L. Khaled, <u>My People Shall Live: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary</u> (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973); Y. Haddad, "Palestinian Women: Patterns of Legitimation and Domination", K. Nakhleh and E. Zureik eds., <u>The Sociology of the Palestinians</u> (London: Croom Helm, 1980); L. Jammal, <u>Contributions by Palestinian Women to the National Struggle for Liberation</u> (Washington: Middle East Public Relations, 1985); R. Sayigh, "Femmes palestiniennes: une histoire en quete d'historiens", <u>Revue d'etudes palestiniennes</u> no 23, Spring 1987; F. Tuqan, <u>A Mountainous Journey</u> (St Paul: Greywolf Press, 1990); Peteet, <u>Gender in Crisis</u>; O. Najjar, <u>Portraits of Palestinian Women</u> (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 1992).

linking gendered individuals to society and history.

The use of life stories in anthropology has remained controversial and relatively undeveloped in comparison with their use in sociology and oral history.[71] In a 1984 review, Crapanzano comments, "[The life history] mediates, not too successfully, the tension between the intimate field experience and the essentially impersonal process of anthropological analysis and ethnographic presentation".[72] He quotes Barnouw, "The main difficulty with life histories...is knowing what to do with them"; notes the dangers of 'paternalism' and 'infantilization' arising out of the problematic ontology of the life history, as "product...of an arbitrary and peculiar demand from another" (the anthropologist); and criticizes most users of life histories as 'sentimental', and insufficiently analytical. He questions whether life histories reveal 'real' social processes, or, rather, the 'dynamics of narration'.

Another kind of difficulty felt by anthropologists in using life histories is expressed by Shostok, whose book Nisa (1981), based on recordings with a !Kung woman, is considered a model of scrupulousness.[73] In a paper that describes the experience of researching and writing Nisa, Shostok raises theoretical problems that concerned her during fieldwork: how far did 'Nisa' deviate from statistical norms? If she could not

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[71] For an overview of the life history in sociology, see D. Bertaux ed., Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences (London: Sage Publications, 1981). Bertaux distinguishes between the life story, an oral personal account, and the life history, which may include other materials as well.

[72] V. Crapanzano, "Life Histories" (review article), American Anthropologist vol 86 no 4, December 1984.

[73] M. Shostok, Nisa (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

be considered 'typical', how could her life story serve
ethnographic purposes? 'Nisa''s vivid account of the birth of
a baby brother at a time when she herself must have been aged
not more than two or three, also roused Shostok's doubts about
her reliability.[74]

An issue absent from Shostok's (1989) reflections on the
relationship between researcher and life history givers is the
moral-political one of power asymmetry. Though the !Kung
Bushmen were virtually disappearing at the time of Shostok's
fieldwork, her call to anthropologists to "go out and record
the memories of people...before they disappear" (p 239),
appears to put a higher value on the scientific record than on
people. Yet she raises here some of the moral-political
questions that can be put to the collection, writing and
publishing of life stories of Third World women: are informants
exploited? What did 'Nisa' gain from the exchange? How much
editing is permissible to appeal to a western specialized or
lay readership? Shostok's discussion of these questions is
flawed by her concepts of the authority of 'science', and of
the relationship of researcher and life story giver as one
between two equal individuals. The debate has been carried
further by feminist anthropologists and oral historians, who
have specified the issues involved, primarily those of
authorship, interpretation, and control.[75] Inevitably there is

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[74] M. Shostok, "'What the winds won't take away': The
Genesis of Nisa - the Life and Words of a !Kung Woman", in
Interpreting Women's Lives.

[75] See in particular D. Patai, "Ethical Problems of
Personal Narratives, or, Who Should Eat the Last Piece of
Cake?", International Journal of Oral History vol 8 no 1,
February 1987; also Feminist Studies, vol 16 no 2, Summer 1990
(a special issue on representations of non-Western women).

tension between the unique value of life histories as data, enabling a view of "the subjective mapping of experience, the working out of a culture and a social system that is often obscured in a typified account",[76] and the asymmetrical relationship through which most life histories are elicited. Beyond the question of rewards is what Patai (1987) calls 'informed consent', that is, that life history givers should understand and agree to the uses to be made of their lives; protection of identity; fidelity of translation/transcription; and the nature of the researcher-researched relationship.[77]

For guidance in this problematic area, this thesis look to two works in particular: the Popular Memory Group;[78] and L. Passerini's earlier mentioned study of Italian Fascism based in working class men and women's life histories. The Popular Memory Group's paper on oral history has several values for the present study. They offer a theory of the formation of 'popular memory', and of the relation of the individual to society, which overcomes the problem of 'typicality'. Theoretically and methodologically this guide is readily extendable to the recuperation of the histories of peoples and groups in the Third World, a task that has not been central to anthropology. Their critique of assumptions that oral history is inherently

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[76] R. Behar, "Rage and Redemption: Reading the Life Story of a Mexican Marketing Woman", Feminist Studies vol 16 no 2, Summer 1990, p 225.

[77] Patai, "Ethical Problems", expresses discomfort with "the appearance of friendship and intimacy that the personal interview situation generates..." She points to the powerlessness of women in subordinate classes or groups as the condition that makes the researcher's project possible.

[78] The Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory: theory, politics, method" in R. Johnson et al. eds., Making Histories (Minneapolis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

radical by virtue of giving voice to oppressed groups is a useful warning to anyone carrying out research in a Third World milieu.

The Popular Memory Group theorizes 'popular memory' by setting it in a field that they term the 'social production of memory', one that is dominated by 'dominant memory' produced by institutions (the state, the public education system, museums, official ceremonies) that express cultural and political hegemony. From the outset, work in oral history needs to concern itself with two sets of relations: between dominant memory and oppositional forms; and between public discourse about the past and private recollections. There is no guarantee that members of subordinate groups will not express dominant versions. Such theorization offers a valuable schema for interpreting Palestinian camp women's life stories, which are formed within dominant (national, male) memory.

The problem of the social structural significance of life histories cannot be solved without a theory of the social formation of individuals. All subjects "speak out of particular positions in the complex of social relations characteristic of particular societies at particular historical times" (p 234). The problem of 'typicality' raised by Shostak in relation to 'Nisa' is created by a concept of society as composed of discrete individual units, and does not arise if all members of a collectivity are seen as necessarily reflecting it in one way or another. All accounts are equally valid (though not all accounts are equally valuable). People vary in the degree to which they consciously express social structure, social struggle, change; but silence and self-censorship can be instructive about oppression. A fundamental point in the

Popular Memory Group's theory is that oral histories cannot be taken for 'nuggets of fact' but must be 'read through' to reach complex or hidden experience of social conditions.

The Popular Memory Group's theorization of work in oral history incorporates culture: as involved in the 'making and remaking of memory'; as influencing the contents and form of oral narratives; and as one of two main grids through which these must be read. Personal recollections are always the product of skill and artifice, and always involve 'authorship'. They also always draw on 'cultural repertoires' which include styles of telling, and elements of collective memory (for example, proverbs, set phrases, 'characters'). Omissions and silences (for example about sexuality) reveal culture. A cultural reading of oral histories is necessary so as fully to grasp their richness: "a concern for symbolic and cultural forms is <u>part</u> of historical and contemporary analysis, not just a problem of 'bias' in source material" (p 231).

The Popular Memory Group also emphasize the importance of the present context as influencing what people recollect and how they represent it. The past must be re-conceptualized "not as a given 'thing' that we must preserve, but as a...force constantly resonating in the present" (p 243). People make history in the dual sense of acting in the present, and reconstructing the past in the light of the present. Such a conceptualization of history has value for research among peoples who, like the Palestinians, carry on a protracted national struggle under alien governments. The particular conjuncture in which an oral history recording takes place is part of its formation, and must be taken into account in interpreting it.

The Popular Memory Group note the widespread use of life stories in the feminist movement, and support their use in oral history, as bringing to light "elements of lived culture and subjectivity not easily reached otherwise" (p 234). The uninterrupted life history allows the author fully to develop the connections between the individual and social structure, as well as between the individual and 'collective representations', or culture. Life histories may also reveal what the Popular Memory Group calls the 'salient experience', events that mark or change the course of a life, forming a 'structural hinge' that illumines the convergence of the social and cultural within individual experience.

Though based in British historiography, the Popular Memory Group's text on oral history offers researchers working in the Third World a finely articulated, comprehensive theoretical and methodological guide, particularly in their proposal of the two kinds of 'readings' - structural and cultural - required for personal accounts to yield their full meaning.

The second main model for this thesis is L. Passerini, who, for her study <u>Fascism in Popular Memory</u> recorded the life histories of a large sample of Turinese working class men and women born before 1922. Passerini justifies the use of life histories rather than questionnaires, or focussed interviews in these words: "[E]ncouraging subjects to present themselves as unique and irreplaceable through an autobiographical account... induces them to reveal their cultural values, and hence, paradoxically, throws light on stereotypes and shared ideas" (p 8). During the first recording session, subjects were simply requested to tell their lives, with minimum intervention: "To respect memory...means letting it organize

the story according to the subject's order of priorities" (p 8).[79]

As theoretical starting points, Passerini takes Durkheim's concept of 'collective representations', Malinowski's distinction between 'typifications' and actual behaviour, and the French Annales school's work on 'mentalities'; but notes the need to link these concepts to an understanding of individual subjectivity. Misrepresentations by socialist historians of the Italian working class as uniformly resistant to Fascism suggest the need to engage politics theoretically with culture, and to explore the mental features of working class life, which are not determined only by material conditions: "The relationship between the 'symbolic' and the 'real' demands to be more adequately analysed" (p 4). Though the Turinese working class life stories show the presence of politics in everyone's life, they also show realms of life - leisure and entertainment, cultural myths and stereotypes, families - which have a certain transhistorical autonomy.

In presenting the life history material, Passerini deals with 'selves' as collective, cultural constructions, in an analytic move that fulfills her aim of linking the individual to the cultural. In discussing these self-representations, Passerini points to their transhistoricity, distinguishing them on the one hand from 'deep psychological' aspects of the self, and on the other from 'real' behaviour which often contradicts self-presentations. Among such transhistorical 'cultural

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[79] The sample varied in terms of age, place of birth, education, occupation, level of skill, political and religious affiliation. Of a total of 67 life stories used in analysis, 38 were from women, 29 from men. Passerini used press reports, party manifestos, police records and film to supplement the oral material.

identities', Passerini presents the 'born rebel' or 'disorderly woman', the 'fool-who-is-really-wise', and the 'exemplary worker'. Passerini pays attention to gender-specific elements in the life histories, and this analysis is developed in a 1989 paper in which she discusses the women's life histories alone.[80]

A stereotypical self-representation that recurred in many of the women's narratives is that of the 'born rebel'. The transhistoricity of this stereotype is attested to by its expression in old folk songs, and in family traditions of women who ran away from home or marriage. Passerini points to the power of such stereotypes to influence behaviour, especially in times of rapid sociocultural change. For example, the 'rebel' stereotype may help women make innovative choices, such as marrying against their parents' wishes, or going out to work. More generally, myths and stereotypes help mediate between "traditional and new, reality and imagination, and between individual and collective" (1989, p 191). We should expect such historical stereotypes to appear in the life stories of Palestinian women of rural origin involved over generations in national crisis and resistance.

The form of the women's life histories also differed from that of men, who tended to organize their narratives chronologically, whereas women often began at a moment of emotional shock such as the death of their mother, and moved back and forth through time. Within individual women's life histories "areas of women's discourses are discernible and seem endowed with cultural and symbolic autonomy". This collective element is based in the telling of working class life stories many times over in family and workplace. Audiences play a role

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[80] L. Passerini, "Women's Personal Narratives: Myths, Experiences and Emotions", in Interpreting Women's Lives.

in constituting the contents of individual memory.[81] This theoretical perspective dissolves the problems raised by Shostok of the typicality and truthfulness of the !Kung woman whose life history she chose. Life histories cannot be understood as containing only individual experience, but rather as intrinsically social. "All autobiographical memory is true; it is up to the interpreter to discover in which sense, where, for which purpose" (1989, p 197). Further, Passerini's method of reading life histories discerns within them discrete levels, or three 'areas of discourse':i) family stories; ii) conventionalized traditions of long standing; and iii) personal narratives. The 'symbolic' and 'factual' levels do not coincide, and the distance or contradiction between them can be a source of affective energy which can be directed towards change. Interpretation of women's life histories should be directed towards locating such discrete levels, and related to historical conditions where they 'make sense'.

A third text has influenced this thesis: <u>Interpreting Women's Lives</u> (1989), a collection of papers from different disciplines (history, literature, anthropology, 'women's studies'), set in an editorial framework that addresses questions of context, form and the relationship between the researcher and those he/she does research among. A number of important issues are raised by editors and contributors, for example the elusiveness of the 'woman-subject', often distorted by male editing or buried under predominant cultural frameworks. A paper on autobiographies by Black women in 19th century America has already been cited (footnote 57) as suggesting that the writing of autobiographies by women may be a means of group- as well as self-affirmation. Only three papers in this symposium focus on Third World women, so that the issue of cross-cultural representation is not prominent as it was in the critiques of the Third World women scholars quoted earlier in this chapter.

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[81] Passerini notes "the great lucidity shown by the other women (in an old people's home)...in referring to stories they had already heard. Story-telling was obviously a part of their lives." (<u>Fascism</u>, p 27).

However, M. Mbilinyi's paper discussing her collaboration with an elderly village woman through which a single, extensive life history was produced, concerns this thesis because of her discussion of the way research relationships can correct interpretations and strengthen 'findings'.[82] Researcher and life history giver shared Tanzanian nationality, but were differentiated by age, class, education, and experience. Mbilinyi describes her long relationship with Kandilile, which went through phases of conflict and dispute; these, Mbilinyi argues, were a better aid to interpretation than harmonious 'rapport' would have been since they forced her to review her own assumptions. As a feminist, Mbilinyi was disturbed when Kandilile (a lay preacher) advised village women not to resist their husbands. But further discussions enabled her to correct her flawed interpretation of Kandilile's meaning: the older woman had not advocated subservience but rather <u>ujanja</u> (slyness, cleverness), a traditional rural women's way of handling men, experienced as violent and supported by local courts. Mbilinyi admits that her own brand of feminism had made her slow to perceive an older, indigenous kind rooted in a different social and historical experience. Her discussion of this episode underlines the ethnographic value of sustained relationships for correct interpretation, also the need for awareness of different kinds of 'feminism', and for avoidance of privileging that of the researcher. It also suggests the value of prolonged involvement in particular milieus, and of a continual process of checking the researcher's understandings against those of the life history givers.

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This chapter has juxtaposed a critical discussion of a powerful tradition of Middle Eastern 'women's studies' to theoretical approaches to the subject of women (or rather, gender) produced

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[82] M. Mbilinyi, "'I'd Have Been a Man': Politics and the Labour Process in Producing Personal Narratives", in <u>Interpreting Women's Lives</u>.

outside the field. The survival of the assumption of an unique collectivity of women labelled 'Middle Eastern', or 'Muslim', or 'Arab' requires its subversion before the researcher can move on to employ less constricting modes of research. Grounding the approach adopted here in Scott's theory of gender in history is appropriate for the study of the historical experience of Palestinian women in exile, since it enables movement back and forth between a specific group of women and nationalist discourse, understood as always implicitly containing gender ideology even when not explicitly referring to women. An added task, following Mohanty (1984), is the construction of Palestinian women as 'subjects of their own history', with the corollary of focussing on the interplay between their 'representations' and their concrete situation. The comprehensive discussion of the Popular Memory Group is proposed as a theoretical and methodological guide on how to carry out this task, while Passerini's work with Italian working class life histories provides a model of interpretation. Yuval-Davis and Anthias's (1989) formulation of the centrality of women in the reproduction of collectivities forms the institutional-ideological framework within which women are perceived in this thesis, even though the focus is on their experiences rather than on the framework.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LIVES OF PALESTINIAN PEASANT WOMEN BEFORE 1948

The necessity for detailed study of the historical and cultural background of migrant and refugee groups has been underlined by several scholars, including Morokvasic (1983). In her critique of the poverty of studies of migrant women, Morokvasic notes that most studies of migrants ignore women altogether; it is only when they enter the workforce that they begin to be recognized. In a perspective remarkably similar to that of Orientalism, such studies "attribute to women of extremely different origins one and the same simplified cultural background and label it 'tradition', meaning immobility and oppression of women, and oppose it to their own average Western models of modernity".[1] As a result of this perspective, research among migrant women tends to focus on changes brought about by migration, which are assumed to be in the direction of greater control by women over their earnings and fertility. Change is conceptualized as evolution towards 'modernity', and equated with promotion for women.

It is to avoid such distorted contrasts that this chapter presents a detailed reconstruction of the lives of Palestinian village women before the war of 1948. One ethnographic study, Granqvist's <u>Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village</u> (1931, 1935), has been chosen as basis for this description, on the grounds of uniqueness, richness of detail, and fidelity of cultural transcription. It is preceded by an introductory

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[1] The first theoretical and critical assessment of the subject is M. Morokvasic, "Women in migration: beyond the reductionist outlook", A. Phizacklea ed., <u>One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour</u> (London: Routledge, 1983).

overview of Palestine in the late Ottoman and Mandate periods; and followed by a resume of the pre-1948 Palestinian national movement's position with regard to women and gender.

A. The Historical Setting

Before focusing on the lives of women of the peasant class in Palestine before 1948, we need to place the peasantry within its historical setting and delineate its main political, economic and socio-structural features. This is no easy task given that the historiography of Palestine's indigenous inhabitants is still in its infancy. Most of the extensive literature on Palestine has focused on political movements, administrations, and economic change, with the consequence that "the native population has tended to be excluded from the historical narrative", in particular "the historically 'silent' majority of peasants, workers, artisans, women, merchants, and Bedouin".[2]

From the early 19th century, Palestine underwent invasions, radical changes of regime, and the beginnings of colonial settlement, as well as fluctuations in degree of central government control and administrative arrangements.[3]

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[2] From B. Doumani, "Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine: Writing Palestinians into History", <u>Journal of Palestine Studies</u> vol XXl no 2, Winter 1992, p 6. Doumani argues that historians have misunderstood modern Palestinian society through neglecting its Ottoman substructure.

[3] For much of the late Ottoman period, Palestine was divided into three separate <u>sanjaks</u> (administrative districts), with Jerusalem governed directly from Istanbul. In an earlier period, Palestine was part of a <u>wilaya</u> (province) centred on Damascus. In spite of this, Doumani argues, there were social, economic and cultural bases for a "shared historical memory and sense of identity" ("Ottoman Palestine", p 10).

Signal of the fundamental rupture of 1948 was the beginning of Zionist colonization in 1878, followed in 1917 by Britain's pledge (incorporated into the Mandate) to promote the establishment of a 'Jewish national home' in Palestine. Ottoman-decreed change in the land tenure system was another radical shift, threatening peasant producers' customary rights to land-use. In terms of its internal politics, late Ottoman Palestine was characterized by factional conflict based in cross-class regional confederations, frequent uprisings against central authority, and by the emergence of a Palestinian Arab nationalist movement.

Until more research has been done on indigenous records the impact of such conditions on the population can only be roughly estimated. From Ottoman census date it seems that for most of the nineteenth century, the population barely replaced itself, remaining at a sparse 700,000; besides insecurity, the prevalence of epidemics (for example malaria, cholera) as well as high infant mortality rates meant that only one in four of the population reached the age of twenty.[4] Ottoman military conscription increased the hazards of those strata unable to evade it. Yet in periods of stronger central authority, for example during the Egyptian interregnum of 1831-44, or the final years of Ottoman rule, agricultural and manufacturing productivity rose, leading to expansion in both internal and external markets. Between 1880 and 1914 new lands were brought

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[4] Economic, demographic and health data come mainly from: R. Owen, <u>The Middle East in the World Economy 1800-1914</u> (London: Methuen, 1981); also S. Graham-Brown "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus, 1920-1948" in R. Owen ed., <u>Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries</u> (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982); and A. Zahlan and E. Hagopian "Palestine's Arab Population", <u>Journal of Palestine Studies</u> No. 12, Summer 1974.

under cultivation, abandoned villages in the plains re-built, city populations expanded, and exports and imports increased. The diversification of agricultural production from a basis of grain, produced mainly for subsistence and tax, was favoured by the accessibility of urban markets and sea routes as well as by variation in climate, rain-fall and altitude. By mid-century crops grown for export included sesame, olives and olive products, cotton and citrus fruits, as well as cereals. Local products (wool, cotton, oil, wood, silk, leather) were used in local crafts and manufacture. Animal-rearing was profitable for villagers as well as pastoralists, serving for transport, haulage, hides, dairy products and meat. Standards of living in late Ottoman times were probably higher in Palestinian villages than in neighbouring Egypt, Syria and Lebanon.

While productivity and trade levels rose in the last half century of Ottoman rule, European pressures on the Ottoman Empire produced countervailing effects. Two may be singled out as particularly adverse in their impact on Palestinian peasant producers: the central government's need for higher tax yields; and changes in the land tenure system leading towards privatization. Owen estimates the tax burden on agricultural production as ranging from 10 to 50 percent. Taxes were collected through a system known as tax-farming, a method which added to the amount paid by the peasant producer, and intensified their subordination to the urban and rural notables who competed for tax-gathering rights. Ottoman military forces were used to assist in tax collection. While the Mandate government eventually abolished tax-farming yet its tax system also placed a disproportionate weight of both direct and

indirect taxes on peasant producers.[5] Accumulated from one generation to another, peasant indebtedness was estimated at an average P£27 per household in 1930 (by the Johnson-Crosbie Report), a figure that needs to be set against an estimated annual average household income of from P£25 to P£30.

The Ottoman Land Laws of 1856 began a process of registration of land in the names of individual owners that encouraged the building up of large estates and the expropriation of peasant users. Up to this time, the access of both peasants and pastoralists to land, considered inalienable in Islamic law, was rooted in custom and communal ownership (masha'). Such customary rights had been acknowledged by state, tax-farmers and large land-owners alike. Land privatization, however, combined with growing profits from agricultural exports, encouraged the sale of land to foreign and local capital. This process greatly facilitated the acquisition of land by the Jewish National Fund. Militant protests by peasants displaced by land sales to Zionist colonists began as early as 1886, with further large scale incidents in 1901-2 and 1901-1, in other words, before the formation of an organized national movement.[6] Thus, in contrast to the growing productivity of land and expansion of markets, there began a pressure on the supply of land, particularly in the fertile coastal plains. As a result of their subordination vis-a-vis both state and urban elite, peasant producers bore the brunt of this growing land

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[5] See T. Asad "Class Transformation under the Mandate", MERIP Reports no 53, December 1976.

[6] See R. Khalidi, "Palestinian Peasant Resistance to Zionism before World War 1", in E. Said and C. Hitchens eds., Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestine Question (London: Verso, 1988).

shortage, which led over time to: (i) a steady decrease in the average size of peasant land-holdings;[7] (ii) an increase in the share of village land owned by absentee landlords (estimated at 21 percent in 1930); and (iii) a steady growth in peasant landlessness which, beginning as early as 1890, is estimated to have reached a level of 35 percent of rural families by 1946.[8]

Economic change was reflected in shifts in social structure, with new intermediary strata based on new sources of wealth and forms of labour emerging to overlay, without erasing, older, pre-capitalist classes or 'estates'. Based on residence and economic specialization, these 'estates' were demarcated by deep socio-cultural boundaries: city-dwellers (madaniyeen, ahel al-mudun), peasants (fellaheen, ahel al-qariya) and pastoralists (bedu, also called 'arab); in addition there was a small class of black slaves. Though clearly hierarchical in terms of wealth, status, and access to central authority, stratification was gradated. Each city had its own elite of notable families; below this level came a large middle stratum composed of merchants, 'ulema (clerics), lesser officials, guild-masters, and manufacturers; then prosperous craftsmen and shopkeepers; and, finally, wage workers. The rural population was also stratified; certain bedu tribes and peasant clans dominated others; both clan and tribal

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[7] The Johnson-Crosbie Report (1930) gives 56 dunums as the size of an average family holding, contrasted with a minimum 'lot viable' of 120 dunums for cereals. Six years later, the Royal Commission estimated that 35% of peasant holdings were less than five dunums.

[8] Y.A. Sayigh, "The Scarcity of the Land: The Fact and the Problem", unpublished report prepared for the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 1946.

leaderships were linked to city notables and Ottoman officials. Palestine's urban population was culturally highly heterogeneous.[9] But the rapid development of the nationalist movement tended to suppress sectarian consciousness within the indigenous Arabic-speaking population.

The peasantry which formed 80 percent of Palestine's indigenous population at the beginning of the Mandate, was Arabic-speaking and mainly Sunni Muslim, with small Christian and Druze components. Blocked from working in Jewish industry, a fully fledged Arab working class did not develop in spite of the swelling of the urban proletariat through the migration of landless villagers. Most of these retained homes in, and ties with, their natal villages. Consideration of the situation of the rural population within this historically produced social-structural framework points to their class vulnerability, but also to the gamut of resources developed by them over time to enable social reproduction in conditions of insecurity and oppression. Among such defensive resources we note how rights in territories - villages lands and pastoral circuits - were invested in social groups whose identity over time remained stable, groups such as clans, tribes and discrete village populations. Such stability of identity, linked to claims to land use, created a tenacity of settlement that usually succeeded in countering oppression and displacement.[10]

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[9] See Zahlan and Hagopian, "Palestine's Arab Population". At the time of the first British census in 1922, Muslims formed 80 percent of the indigenous population, Christians 10 percent, and Jews 7 percent. Aside from immigrant Jews, Palestine attracted other European settlers (German, Russian, Maltese, etc), as well as Iranian Bahais, Circassians, and others.

[10] Artas, the village to be examined in the main section of this chapter, was twice destroyed and re-settled by descendants of the original population.

Given the absence of a 'strong' form of feudalism, the peasant class was able to sustain its own forms of social organization, in particular the hamula (clan, patrilineage). The solidarity of the hamula was sustained by the 'ideology of blood', and by well-defined practices such as revenge (tha'er), compensation (diyyeh) and reconciliation (sulh). Both villagers and pastoralists had recourse to local arbitrators to settle disputes rather than call in the forces of the state or use city courts. They invested heavily in hospitality, gifts and celebrations that reinforced ties of clan and locality. Such investments 'fed' small collectivities, but they also moved across boundaries of blood, territorial group, sect and political faction. Small group solidarity within the peasant class did not preclude broader intra- and inter-class ties. Peasant-based uprisings were frequent during the late-Ottoman period, usually directed against taxes. Historians such as Sanbar (1984) and Swedenburg (1988) argue that the Great Revolt of 1936-9 was essentially a peasant uprising. During this episode, mountain-based mujahideen (literally 'holy warriors', peasant fighters) showed considerable capacity for autonomous organization.[11]

The peasant hamula (clan), usually scattered across several villages, also offered a framework for economic cooperation. Graham-Brown in her Nablus study (1982) notes a

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[11] E. Sanbar, Palestine 1948: L'Expulsion (Paris: Institut des études Palestiniennes, 1984) notes the military effectiveness of peasant territorial and clan structures. T. Swedenburg "The Role of the Palestinian Peasantry in the Great Revolt (1936-1939)" in I. Lapidus and E. Burke eds., Islam, politics and Social Movements (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) also points to economic, social and legal organization enabling the mainly peasant mujahideen to control large parts of the country at the height of the rebellion.

"very dense and complex meshing of contractual and family relations" that gave poorer clan members some access to productive resources, while allowing wealthier ones to exploit market opportunities (p. 124). Hamula ties could also be used to extend economic cooperation beyond agriculture to transport, credit and marketing. While there was considerable variation in economic conditions between regions and villages, by the end of the Mandate, those close to cities showed diversification of economic activity into skilled crafts, trade and transport.[12] Along with the substantial proportion of foodstuffs most villages continued to produce, such diversification helped protect the rural population against price fluctuations, and against disruption caused by government repression and communal fighting. Practices of village and clan solidarity helped prevent the destitution of poorer families.

Less work has been done on cultural than political and economic conditions in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine. Swedenburg at the beginning of his study of the Palestinian peasantry in the Great Revolt writes of peasant culture and their long tradition of resistance to the state, urban notables and capitalist penetration: "Such traditions were kept alive in popular memory and could be drawn upon as powerful tools of mobilization".[13] Many elements of pre-capitalist ideology persisted, such as the ideology of 'blood' and 'honour' that sustained hamula solidarity, and the respect for noble descent

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[12] By the 1940s, the people of Al-Bassa (near Acre) had launched into trucking and transport; the village had coffee-houses and several shops. People from Majd al-Kroom, on the Acre-Safed highway, and Beled al-Sheikh (near Haifa), report a similar degree of commercialization. (Source: refugees in Dbeyeh and Shateela camps, Lebanon.)

[13] Swedenburg, "Role of the Palestinian Peasantry", p 170.

that underwrote ties of patronage. Several writers note the 'folk' character of Islam in rural areas, characterized by attachment to saints and shrines. Unique to Palestine, large popular festivals in spring and autumn brought together people from all regions, classes and sects. Even before the national movement called for inter-sect unity, Muslim and Christian villagers practised many kinds of reciprocity. By Mandate times, however, many factors for cultural change were at work, among them the slow spread of modern schooling; the urban-based Islamic Salafiya reform movement; change in occupation and economic conditions; and nationalist discourse and the beginning of modern political parties and unions.

B. Women and Gender in a Palestinian Village

The view presented here of the lives of Palestinian peasant women before 1948 is based on a re-presentation of a single source, Hilma Granquist's Marriage Conditions.[14] Justification for this strategy rests partly on the lack of ethnographies of

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[14] Finnish in nationality, Hilma Granqvist was born in 1891, and died in 1972. She studied in Germany and England before arriving in Jerusalem in 1925. Her first stay in Artas lasted from October 1925 to March 1927; she returned in March 1930 for 15 months, and again in 1959 for four months. E.E.Evans-Pritchard wrote of Marriage Conditions: "Her fieldwork methods have not been bettered by any anthropologist" (Man, 1937). Her complete works, all based on Artas, are: Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, vol 1, 1931; vol 2, 1935); Birth and Childhood Among the Arabs (Helsinki: Soderstrom, 1947); Child Problems Among the Arabs (Helsinki: Soderstrom, 1950); and Muslim Death and Burial (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum, 1965).

Palestinian or other Arab villages for the period in question, but more importantly because Granqvist's focus on the lives of women makes her work an unique historical benchmark for a study of rural Palestinian women in exile. Though her studies are seldom quoted, possibly because of a certain archaism of language, they are marked by their fidelity of cultural transcription, consequence of prolonged participant/observation, close collaboration with native informants, and 'careful listening'.

Granqvist's original purpose in going to Palestine was to observe 'life and conditions in the Holy Land' for a book, The Women of the Old Testament. This somewhat Orientalist project was quickly abandoned after a preliminary stay in Artas. As a result of discussions of polygyny with Artas women she came to the conclusion that "it would be wrong to take one custom and study it in isolation", and decided radically to revise her project:

> I asked myself whether, in order to understand fully the life and position of women in Palestine, one must not first understand a Palestinian society, seeing that it is guided by laws and regulations, and is held together by ties which, if we only knew them, would give quite another view and elucidation of the women's life.[15]

Adopting a Malinowskian view of social customs as part of an organic 'whole', Granqvist undertook a systematic investigation of all marriages made by Artas men over a period of a hundred years. Included in the scope of her study, besides the origins of wives, their relationship (if any) to the husband, endowment and type of marriage, is a mass of detail about the stages, negotiations, material exchanges, ceremonials

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[15] Granqvist, Marriage Conditions, p 3.

and rituals involved in marriage, as well as about the totality
of marital statuses: temporary separation, divorce, polygyny,
and widowhood. Besides providing unusual historic depth, such
an approach has the merit of articulating marriage strategies
to social structure and to culture, thus abolishing the false
dichotomization of 'public' and 'domestic'. For though
concerned with women, Granqvist does not frame them in 'women's
worlds, separate from men's, and so avoids the main distortion
of all Orientalist and some feminist approaches. The highly
visible gender division of labour and gender hierarchy in Artas
are not presented as a separation between 'public' and
'domestic', but, rather, as the mode of their integration. The
rules of gender are reproduced and manipulated by women as well
as men; issues of sexuality and fertility are shown as public
concerns; marriage links men and women (as well as men to men
and women to women) in publically defined social and economic
relations on which social reproduction depends.

Granqvist's methods involved working closely with two
elderly Artas women, Alya and Hamdiyeh. Every morning they
visited Artas families to gather material for the genealogical
and marriage tables; every afternoon they worked through the
material gathered, with Alya and Hamdiyeh adding information,
comments, and explanations. This method of working justifies
regarding Granqvist's text as a collaborative one that to a
large extent presents Artas women's experience and views;
Granqvist acknowledges that "most of my reports and information
have been obtained from these two women".[16] Juxtaposition of

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[16] Granqvist underlines the ethnographic need not merely
to observe but to understand: "When it is a question of the
explanation and cause of the custom or habit we are obliged to
obtain the information from the people themselves or mistakes

the original Arabic in the text includes a rich stock of proverbs, songs and verse commanded by peasant women. The skills of Alya and Hamdiyeh as informants also point to strong roles for senior women as keepers of local and family histories, and as custodians of customary rules.

To what degree do Granqvist's ethnographies express a specifically 'women's perspective'? This question forces us to consider whether women in a social structure like that of Artas can formulate a point of view that is both gender-specific and homogenous, and what forms it could take. That Granqvist's main informants were women only partly answers our question since, as senior women, they can be considered to have been socialized over time into a 'patriarchal' ideology (this is very clear in the case of Alya who often expresses the pride and proprietary claims of her own patrilineage). Much in the proverbs, wedding songs, and oral poetry quoted does indeed cohere around aspects of life that all women shared, for example being forced through marriage to leave their paternal household. Underneath these common themes, however, Granqvist's 'careful listening' enables her to record the many differences that divided women: different life-cycle stages; different marital statuses and relationships to men; different positions in the social structure. As between her women informants she notes how Alya, member of a large clan, denies the claims of Hamdiyeh to be related to her (Hamdiyeh belongs to a small, half-bedouin family). Among the songs that Granqvist records

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will easily occur. For this reason, even when I had witnessed a custom or ceremony, I had it related by my informers. I wished to learn their method of thinking in order not to give the events European explanations, or views and motives foreign to the people of the village" (Marriage Conditions, Bk 1, p 20).

is one of spite sung by a first wife when the co-wife first enters their home; another song warns a bride against the envy of the bridegroom's sister; women of the bride's lineage sing her praises, women of the bridegroom's sing his. Wedding songs in fact underline both the commonality of women's role as celebrants of life-transitions, and their antagonistic positions and interests in relation to men.

Given Granqvist's focus on marriage, the presentation that follows is based on a re-reading of her text that draws out of it material on three particular aspects of women's lives: women's role in production; their rights to material resources; and institutionalized claims and strategies of self-protection. The presentation also examines marriage as nexus that articulates social structure and culture, and underlines women's gender-specific role in the cultural manifestations surrounding marriages.

Artas: history, economy, social structure

Artas's location between Jerusalem and arid lands to the east had endowed it with special historic circumstances.[17] Its economy was based in its rich soil and sheltered position, enabling it to grow a wide variety of fruits and vegetables as well as olives and grain crops, and rear a variety of animals. Its closeness to Bethlehem, an important market centre, facilitated the sale of much of its produce. The picture is one

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[17] Artas was known to European travellers from the Middle Ages. Twice devastated, it had been re-settled around 1830. For a brief history, see K. Seger ed., Portrait of a Palestinian village: The Photographs of Hilma Granqvist (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, 1981).

of mixed agriculture, but the variety of products marketed – fruits, vegetables, dairy products, honey – gives little indication of levels of income.

Granqvist describes the people of Artas as 'poor'. Many were still living in caves at the time of fieldwork. Homes were single-roomed and minimally furnished. All members of the compound household family – parents, married sons, unmarried children – slept in the same space. Foodstuffs became scarce each year just before the harvest. Meat was only served to visitors or at celebrations: conditions probably common to all regions and villages of Palestine. A further testimony to the poverty of most Artas people is given by frequent mention of land sales and debts. Several villagers are indebted to Bethlehem people, and two households are mentioned as having been ruined by speculation. Such scattered remarks suggest that, however varied Artas's agricultural products and however favoured its location, income was insufficient to cover obligatory social expenditures. The villagers' sense of its burden is frequently conveyed: rules of social reciprocity are translated into the idiom of debt, as in the saying: "All is debt, even the tear in the eye".

Granqvist devotes considerable space to discussion of the 'bride price' or _fed_.[18] The size of the _fed_ in relation to peasant producers' income gives an idea of the importance of

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[18] There is no exact English equivalent of the Arabic term _mahr_ (Artas people used _fed_). This was the sum agreed on during marriage negotiations, and paid by the bridegroom's family to that of the bride. Granqvist uses 'bride price' even though she argues against the idea that it signifies the 'purchase' of brides (_Marriage Conditions_, Bk 1, pp 119-132). 'Marriage endowment' is more correct since the _mahr_ was supposed to be for the bride, to set up house. Until recently, however, in most classes and regions, the bride's father received the _mahr_, passing on a varying portion (called the _sadaq_) to the bride.

marriage in peasant life, and why men continued to depend on their father, brothers, and sisters, for their marriage.[19] At the time of Granqvist's fieldwork, the _fed_ of Artas girls marrying into other villages was P£100-150 (the in-village _fed_ was less [from P£50-100], the in-clan _fed_ only P£40-50). Such sums must be set against average annual income of peasant households at this time, estimated by one government report at P£25-30.[20] When we remember the many other expenditures that marriage entailed, the discrepancy becomes even more surprising. How were such sums raised by debt-burdened households? We may speculate that the need to provide marriage endowments was one force holding together _hamayel_ and compound households, similar in effect to a revolving fund.

Landholdings must have been insufficient to sustain all the village workforce since some Artas men worked as labourers in a nearby stone quarry. Several are mentioned as serving in the Army, others as having gone to Amman to seek work, others as having migrated to America. Artas was too small to support craft specialists; itinerant craftsmen came periodically; even builders were brought from other villages. There was a _sheikh_ who was also the school teacher (Artas had a Quranic school for boys), a policeman and a _khatib_ (mosque officiant). Artas appears less diversified economically and socially than villages of West Galilee, near Acre and Haifa. But, location apart, in terms of social structure and culture it may be taken

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[19] Tucker notes that the _mahr_ formed a far higher sum proportionate to overall income for working class than for upper class people: "Marriage and the Family".

[20] The Johnson-Crosbie Report of 1930 estimated that the average gross income from 100 _dunums_ of field crops was P£51. This was before the deduction of costs, rent and average debt.

as resembling the smaller hill villages of north and eastern Galilee.

Three distinct collectivities, components of a broader social structure, are shown by Granqvist's ethnography to be reproduced over time through socially controlled marriage: the local community, the hamula (peasant patrilineage), and the dar (compound household). Continuously resident, and forming the historic core of Artas's population, were four hamayel, aligned in relations of cooperation and conflict: village leaders and mukhtars were chosen from senior men of the largest hamayel, which for this reason dominated village life. In addition, there were a few smaller households, whose integration in the local community was partly expressed through marriage exchange (or lack of it) with the hamayel. It is evident from the history of one of these, the Shadehs, that the hamula continued to offer a model to which smaller families aspired. A Shadeh ancestor had come to the village as the orphan ward of one of the four main clans, and had been integrated into Artas, first through marriage, then through acquiring property. By the time of Granqvist's fieldwork they had reached a size enabling them to practice clan endogamy. Their status vis-a-vis the major clans is indicated by the fact that they had given eight brides to them, and received six in return.[21]

References to the sale of land suggest that tenure had moved far towards privatization, raising the question how far

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[21] Three smaller dars, less successful in clan terms, had been given three brides by the clans, whereas the clans had taken 13 brides from them. This discrepancy between wife-givers and wife-takers points to the power of the hamula as model, as well as to a possible motive for clans to protect smaller families.

the _hamula_ was still expressed in joint land ownership.[22] Discussing a case in which a land ownership certificate was used as pressure in marriage negotiations, Granqvist indicates that land was held by individual household heads (Granqvist, I, p 51-2).[23] The fact that Artas land had been sold to 'outsiders' is further indication of privatization, since one of the last vestiges of _hamula_ control over land was the power to prevent its sale to non-clan or non-village members. It is relevant to our subject to note that the influence of clan-elders over marriage appears to have outlasted their control over land. Granqvist reports several cases of elders interfering in marriage arrangements.[24] Such intervention continued in exile in Lebanon, but only in limited cases and not beyond the 1960s.

The marriage tables compiled by Granqvist point to the way that marriage reproduced not only each _hamula_ but also their interrelations. Out of all marriages (264), 151 are in-village compared with 113 with 'strangers'; of in-village marriages, 89 are clan-endogamous, 62 are between different clans or families. Though marriages between allied clans are more numerous than those between hostile ones, yet even between the latter there are marriage exchanges. Marriages that cross lines

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[22] A. Granott suggests that joint holding was more common in the plains, whereas land planted with trees was more likely to be individually owned: The Land System in Palestine (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1952).

[23] All bracketed references to Granqvist in the text are to Marriage Conditions unless otherwise stated.

[24] In one story a _mukhtar_ takes for his own son a bride for whom the marriage payment had already been paid for his own son (Granqvist, 1, p 49-50). Other cases show clan elders in conflict with individual household heads who try to gain a higher 'bride price' by marrying their daughters to 'outsiders' (Granqvist, 1, p 73-4).

of conflict (which are also ones of socio-economic differentiation), have an equalizing and unifying effect on intra-village relationships: Granqvist notes, "...village marriages are important because they tend to even out differences between families, which are only strengthened by clan marriages" (Granqvist, 1, p 88). The value set on marriage as a mechanism for reinforcing relationships and collectivities is suggested by the efforts deployed by clan and village elders to prevent the 'commercialization' of the _fed_. A clan elder whom Granqvist asked whether it was not advantageous for a family to have daughters because 'bride price' was obtained through them insisted that connection between money and _fed_ was _haram_ (sinful, forbidden) (Granqvist, 1, p 138).

The second basic unit of peasant social reproduction, the 'patriarchal' compound household appears still to predominate in Artas. After a man's marriage:

> [He] is allotted only his little corner for his and his wife's bed... In one single room live a man and his wife, his unmarried sons and daughters, but also his married sons with their wives and children. They take their meals together and find it specially advantageous to share these expenses. It is still the rule that one man in the family has the purse, receives all the money coming to his family and arranges the expenditures; this is the duty of the father or eldest brother; even when one member works outside the village he must give his wages to the common purse...[25]

A few Artas households were headed by widows, accompanied by unmarried children or married sons. As will be discussed later, such independence was not easily achieved, and cases were few.

One of the effects of non-agricultural occupations becoming available to villagers was the decrease of dependence

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[25] Granqvist, 11, p 141-2.

of sons on fathers, and younger brothers on the oldest one. This process is visible in Artas through the stories of sons who leave home, or threaten to do so, as a way of putting pressure on their father to procure them a bride (Granqvist, 1, pp 48, 51).[26] We also see what was probably the beginning of men initiating their own marriages through, for example, friends in the Army (Granqvist, 1, p 100), or through chance contacts in the market (Granqvist, 1, p 104-5). But the quasi-impossibility of a young man paying the _fed_ or negotiating his own marriage was a powerful force attaching junior men to the paternal household. Only one elopement occurs in the 264 marriages reported. It is evident - for example from the number of men forced to accept brides they do not want - that paternal control over land, inheritance and marriage still form an interlocking and almost unchallengeable basis to paternal authority.

The second main structuring relationship of the peasant household was that between mother-in-law and daughter(s)-in-law, crucial to the economy of the household, and its reproduction over time. Granqvist's data shows how having sons enabled peasant mothers to draw female labour into their households. An illustrative case is reported from an earlier famine, when a destitute family begged bread from the mother of Alya (a principal informant). Alya's mother immediately asked for one of the destitute family's daughters as a bride for a son so as to help her on the farm (Granqvist, 1, p 106-

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[26] The fact that son's rebellions took the shape of leaving (or threatening to leave) the village points to the way finding them a bride tied them into the local community. A father whose son went off in anger to Amman wrote to him promising to obtain the bride he wanted if he returned (Granqvist, 1, p 51).

7). This is only one of many examples of mothers taking the initiative in procuring brides for their sons, explicitly to add to the household's female workforce. The common practice of transferring girls before puberty to the household of their 'amm,[27] so that they could be properly trained by their mother-in-law, was still observable in Artas in the 1920s and 1930s in spite of a government ban on the marriage of girls under 16 (Granqvist 1, p 44; 11, p 151). Granqvist notes:

> The young girl gradually grows into the customs and views of her husband's family; one need not fear that she will come in with her own ideas and wishes if she has in her early years lived under the disciplining hand of her mother-in-law, who has moulded her to her own desires; by this means the housekeeping proceeds in the old way.[28]

Granqvist reports several cases of marital conflict that are really reflections of mother/daughter-in-law conflict, as when a man forces open his wife's property chest at his mother's instigation; husbands are reported to hit wives who do not treat their mother-in-law correctly. Another highly conflictual relationship within the compound peasant household was that between a man's wife and his sister.

The third social unit whose reproduction over time is displayed in Marriage Conditions was the village itself. Second to the preference for marriages within the clan, preference for marriages within the village connected clans, and helped create village solidarity. Granqvist notes, "...village marriages are important because they tend to even out differences between families, which are only strengthened by clan marriages"

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[27] 'Amm means both paternal uncle and (by extension) father-in-law. It is also used as a term of respect in addressing any older man.

[28] Marriage Conditions, 1, p 44.

(Granqvist, 1, p 88). The relative stability of its population, based on the stability of its component units (clans and households), gave Artas, like other Palestinian villages, a strongly articulated collective 'character'. As stable entities, villages played a part as a unit in larger social, economic, and political structures: village populations could be and were mobilized collectively, for example to pay taxes, extend land under cultivation, or support a particular political faction. A fundamental component of the stability of village populations (as of their constituent units), was the culturally ordered availability of women. Though clan right was considered the strongest, village members and maternal kin were accorded priority over 'strangers'.

In spite of the strongly expressed preference for clan and village endogamy, Artas's links with the outside world through marriage were extensive. From a total of 264 wives, 113 were 'strangers' while some 65 Artas women married outside the village. These marriage links surely reflect multiple social and economic relationships, and demonstrate the 'external relations' of Palestinian villages in the century covered by Granqvist's study, in contrast to what has sometimes been written about 'village autarchy'.

The marriage tables also show boundaries that were not crossed by marriage. Two Artas households are excluded from exchange of wives: one belongs to descendants of a black slave, the other to a bedouin family working as labourers. Neither of these households owns land. Shifting class boundaries are indicated here, with villagers taking wives from <u>sheikhly</u> bedouin lineages, but not from landless labourers. Religious boundaries are not crossed: no marriages link Artas to the

Christian village of Beit Jala', though it is a close neighbour and supports the same political (Qays) faction; nor with Christian Bethlehemites in spite of multiple economic ties.

Women and productive labour

The dependence of the peasant household on female labour is very clear in Granqvist's material, and her posthumously published photographs further illustrate the wide range of women's in-home and outdoor productive activities.[29] Home-produced subsistence goods made up a high proportion of total household consumption; little was bought from outside except tea, coffee, rice and ceremonial goods. Clothes and bedding lasted a lifetime. Much of the equipment used in domestic work was made by women themselves, for example the <u>tabun</u> (a mud oven), straw trays and baskets, water pots.

Households also depended on women because of the rigidity of the division of labour. In discussing the speed with which widowers remarried, as well as the rarity of divorce, Granqvist points to men's helplessness without women:

> There is a distinct line between a man's work and a woman's work which he cannot over-step. Who shall bring him water from the well? Who shall go and gather wood for him? Who shall bring grass and leaves for the animals and who shall take milk, fruit and vegetables to the market? Who shall grind his meal and bake his daily bread? Who shall make and repair his clothes and clean his room?[30]

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[29] Granqvist's field photographs show women harvesting, threshing and sifting grain; picking olives and fruit; making dairy products; weaving; making clay utensils; and carrying produce to market: Seger, <u>Portrait of a Palestinian Village</u>.

[30] <u>Marriage Conditions</u>, 11, p 293.

This passage makes clear that Palestinian peasant women's labour included production for the market as well as for subsistence. Unlike some studies of rural Arab women, Granqvist's material shows the women of Artas fully involved in marketing activities and dealing with money. Not only married women but also unmarried girls took part in this activity (Granqvist, 1, p 104-5).[31] Women also carried grain to be ground in the flour mill in Bethlehem.

Women's labour was both heavy and essential. Besides the daily fetching of water and wood, food production required lengthy processing. Some tasks, such as grinding corn, had to be carried out daily; others such as drying legumes were done seasonally. Seasonal shortages gave a special importance to drying and storage of foodstuffs. In addition to the basic grain component of daily diet, women also produced supplements through horticulture, poultry and small animal rearing, and through scavenging for wild herbs. Granqvist notes, "The women are proud of being able to carry heavy burdens. They train themselves to be strong and competent. It makes them respected..." (1947, p 158). That women's labour was indispensable to the peasant household economy is evident from the many references to the need for it as a motive for marriage.

Artas women are also shown engaged in a wide range of money-earning activities: spinning wool and trading in sheep and goats; selling fruit from personally owned tree stock; making and selling embroidery. Fatmeh Shahtur used her wedding gifts to buy a shop in Bethlehem (Granqvist, 1, p 146). Various

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[31] A Shateela woman from Yajur (near Haifa) remembers as a girl selling vegetables to Jewish colonists near her home.

Artas women are said to act as midwives (a task reserved for women past menstruation). Three women had worked for wages outside the village.

A few Artas women reached a situation of managing land and property. The property of the Shadeh family (mentioned earlier as in the process of becoming a <u>hamula</u>) was first built up by the widow Esheh, said to have built the family house and to have farmed land in a neighbouring village with a male partner (Granqvist, 11, p 322). Zareefeh Ahmad insisted on obtaining land and a certificate of ownership as <u>fed</u> at her second marriage, and planted the land herself (Granqvist, 1, p 128). By refusing re-marriage several Artas widows managed to administer their son's property as their guardians: "A widow can have great power when she is the head of a house, has money at her disposal and is the guardian of her children" (Granqvist, 11, p 324). At the time of Granqvist's fieldwork, there were three such powerful widows in Artas. Of one of them it was said, "She has land which she manages like man and better than many men" (Granqvist, 11, p 323).[32]

Women's rights to property and material resources

The most important rights to property and material support enjoyed by Artas women were: inheritance rights (in effect if not in amount); the sum of marriage endowments; men's duty to support their wives; divorce settlements; rights to individual property; and continuing rights to support from a woman's male kin.

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[32] Cases of widows who managed their son's land have also been told me by Shateela women.

Among most rural populations in the Middle East, it is usual, given conditions of poverty and land scarcity, to evade the Quranic ruling that daughters should inherit half the share of sons. Artas was no exception. It is evident that women only inherited land or buildings in exceptional circumstances such as lack of male heirs; and in such a case, the woman's clan made every effort to keep the land, mainly though <u>ibn 'amm</u> (paternal cousin) marriage. This was the motive for several cousin marriages in Artas.

From Granqvist's references to women's inheritance rights three points emerge: i) though it was normal to renounce them, some peasant women claimed their inheritance rights; ii) awareness that women had religiously sanctioned rights created an obligation in a woman's paternal household to provide life-long material and social support; iii) though women's rights to immovable property were conditional and insecure, they could in certain circumstances gain control of these. In addition, women could inherit rights to produce, cash or other valuables.

Another reason for supposing that women's inheritance rights were recognized, though not through literal implementation, is the use by fathers of the threat of <u>qati'a</u> (cutting-off) to enforce obedience from daughters. A <u>qati'a</u> woman would be deprived of the social and economic support of her paternal household.[33] This status appears to have been more feared by women than divorce, its meaning equivalent to 'destitution'.

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[33] This is made explicit in the case of Helweh 'Ali whose father "threatened that if she did not obey him he would cut her off from his house and property for her whole life" (<u>Marriage Conditions</u>, Bk 11, p 255).

Little mention is made of widows' inheritance from their husbands (specified in shari'a law). Much depended on the husband's family: if the widow was a member of the same hamula, or was on good terms with them, they would encourage her to stay among them as a widow and guardian of her children's inheritance. The levirate marriage (with a husband's brother) was another way of securing her. Alya, in discussing a levirate marriage in her own family comments, "It is very good if she [the widow] remains with us... our wealth will not go to others" (Granqvist, 11, p 307). This reference underlines two points, first that if a widow re-marries, she takes with her the outfit and gifts that her first husband gave her; second, the widow herself is seen as in some sense part of the wealth of her husband's family.

Clans were also zealous to recuperate property: women's need to prevent appropriation of their home by their husband's family in case of his death is illustrated by the story of a woman without a son, Sabha Isma'een, who pressed her husband into taking a second wife in the hope that she will bear him sons and thus secure both wives against eviction (Granqvist, 11, p 212). The frequent re-marriage of widows suggests that they lacked economic viability. A widow's brother(s) also put pressure on her to re-marry, often as a means of gaining a fed, or to reduce their own responsibilities towards her.

In Artas the marriage endowment is clearly directed towards fathers, as compensation for the loss of a female member, and in recognition of her productive and procreative value (Granqvist, 1, p 132/3). Though fathers or brothers often appropriated the whole fed, it was customary to give a part of it, called the sadaq, to the bride (Granqvist mentions one case

when the whole _fed_ was passed on, causing general astonishment).[34] There was a saying in Artas that "Nothing protects a woman's honour like land": failing land, the higher the value of goods that a bride took with her into marriage, the better she was likely to be treated.

The gifts made to women at the time of marriage were much more clearly intended as endowment than the _sadaq_, and were generally much more valuable. They were also clearly recognized as her private property, unlike the _fed_ which often remained with her paternal family whatever her fate (death, divorce, re-marriage). Considerable sums were spent both by the groom and by the bride's family on setting her up with clothes, jewelry and cash. Outfits (provided by the husband) would last most of a woman's life and required a considerable outlay: Granqvist does not attempt an estimate but the list she gives of the _kiswet al-arous_ (bridal outfit) is sufficient indication (Granqvist, 11, p 44 seq).[35] Periodic gifts of money and clothes by groom to bride were essential to moving the marriage process forward, and a woman dissatisfied in this respect had the right to delay the marriage (Granqvist, 11, p 226). On the wedding night the ceremony of _nqut al-arous_ (gilding the bride) was held, at which often substantial money gifts were given to

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[34] Customs varied in different parts of the country. One of the women recorded for this study (from Galilee) said, "It is our custom that the bride takes the _mahr_ and buys gold with it." Granqvist notes that when Artas women married a second time, they often insisted on keeping the _fed_ (_Marriage Conditions_, 1, p 128; 11, p 260).

[35] The _kisweh_ included several ceremonial dresses, the most splendid, the _malakeh_ (queen), costing from P£6, as well as an embroidered velvet jacket, a girdle and headcloth, gold rings and bracelets, shoes, underclothes, _henna_, and gold-leaf for gilding the bride's face.

the bride by her family and friends;[36] and when the bridegroom arrived, he also pressed coins on the bride's forehead as his contribution to the nqut. In a final ritual, the fakk al-wata (loosening of the shoe), the groom again gave money to the bride, so much for each item of clothing as she removed them (Granqvist, 11, p 117-22). From these details it is safe to infer that all brides began married life with an endowment of some value, a sum that in more prosperous families might well exceed the value of the fed.

A bride's possessions accompanied her at the time of her marriage in a wooden chest to which she alone had the key. This chest was one of the few pieces of furniture in a peasant home, and was material representation of a woman's rights to individual property (Granqvist, 11, p 76). In arguing against the Eurocentric theory of 'bride purchase', Granqvist notes:

> The strongest evidence...is that a married man, in spite of the bride price, has by no means absolute power over his wife. It is his duty to maintain her, but she can and does hold property over which he has no right of disposal. This is true both of the property she brings to the marriage and of what she earns while she is his wife.[37]

Once married, a woman had the right to adequate material support from her husband, and falling short in this regard could lead to strong complaints. Besides upkeep, a wife had space rights in her husband's home: this is clear from the case of the estranged woman whose kin urge her not to return unless her husband promises her a separate room, as required by

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[36] 'Gilding the bride' has survived as part of weddings of camp people in Lebanon, suggesting its economic and social importance.

[37] Marriage Conditions, 1, p 145.

Islamic law concerning polygyny (Granqvist, 11, p 191; also pp 222, 238).

Divorce rates were low in Artas (only 11 out of 243 wives had been divorced); of these, ten re-married. Whereas in many Muslim milieus it is customary to keep back some of the mahr as deferred payment (mu'akher), only to be paid in case of divorce, in Artas the whole fed was given at the time of marriage. Divorce payments stipulated in the shari'a are unlikely to have been observed in Artas; like widows, divorced women returned to their paternal household. Low rates of polygyny (only 26 Artas men had, over a century, made polygynous marriages) may be partly explained by women's rights in material resources. In polygynous marriage described by Granqvist, the first wife had to be outfitted at the same expense, item by item, as the new one (Granqvist, 11, p 177/8).

Women's rights to earnings from individual property (for example, fruit trees, vineyard or animal stock), or from particular crafts such as weaving or embroidery, suggest that they could accumulate cash from various sources to a point where they might constitute a source of loans. Somewhat like fed, women's property seems to form a quasi-separate circuit within the general circulation of cash and goods (at death it was also bequeathed separately). Primarily an insurance against destitution, such women's capital may have been increased through trade or loans.

Finally a woman's ties with her paternal kindred remained strong throughout her life, and involved material support. Granqvist underlines the structural importance, varied aspects and cultural phrasing of these ties throughout her text: women retain their father's name and pride in their hamula membership

(Granqvist, 1, p 96, 146); the effective backing of her kin enhances a wife's status and treatment in her father-in-law's household (Granqvist, 11, p 144, 252); women have the right of return to their father's house if badly treated (Granqvist, 11, pp 218-20); their brothers are supposed to visit them regularly and bring them gifts (Granqvist, 11, p 254); a woman "has a claim to the property of her father's house as long as she lives" (Granqvist, 11, p 256). The picture that emerges is one of material provision for woman closely tied to, and implicitly conditional upon, their fulfilment of socially defined kinship roles (as daughter, sister, wife, paternal cousin, and so on). It is a system in which bondage and protection are inextricably interlinked, one in which protection has its hidden costs and bondage its clear compensations.

Constraints, resources, strategies

Artas women's role in social reproduction is clearly both central and maximally constrained. Ideological and social structural factors combine to ensure that women's sexuality, fertility and productive labour are controlled at all times by an interlocking sequence of local, male-headed kin-based units. Constraints are strongest at puberty when an array of means (child-betrothal, filial obedience, the value placed on virginity, the threat of violence) enable the disposition of women through the social structure. Through arranged marriages, women procure 'bride-wealth', or exchange brides, for their brothers or father; they also produce legitimate offspring who, in most cases, are members of their own clan and village. Their 'placing' in marriage also reinforces (or creates) ties of

nasab (affinity) which play their part in sustaining peasant households economically and socially. Thus even though - as peasant sayings articulated so emphatically - women's productive and reproductive capacities were lost to their paternal household,[38] yet its reproduction was to a large extent dependent on their ease of disposal through marriage. Ideology concealed this dependence just as it formulated the grounds of their subordination. As noted earlier women's productive labour was essential to the economy of the peasant household. This appears to have been recognized as much by men as women, and is shown as strengthening women in moves to improve their status in their husband's household.

Marriage Conditions also gives evidence of women's multiple roles in socio-cultural reproduction, both on the level of specific social units (households, clans and villages), and more broadly as creators and signifiers of peasant culture. They are shown as transmitting sentiments of clan solidarity to their children; and as supporters of clan practices such as ibn 'amm/bint 'amm marriage.[39] Women like Granqvist's informant Alya who marry endogamously socialized in-marrying and younger women into the history and ways of the clan; such women identified with their hamula, and naturally expressed its ideology, for example the idea of women as part

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[38] Artas sayings associate daughters with loss: "A house of girls is a house of ruin", "A girl's house is ruined, she builds up the house of someone else". T. Canaan lists similar sayings in his "Unwritten Laws Affecting the Arab Woman of Palestine", Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society vol XI 3-4, 1931.

[39] A song quoted in Marriage Conditions expresses women's enthusiasm for cousin marriage: "The cousin - my darling / How sweet it is on his breast to rest / The stranger - the clumsy one / May he be wrapt in his grave clothes" (1, p 67).

of clan patrimony (kheir), hence its right to dispose of them through marriage. Similarly, as mothers-in-law, women trained their sons' wives into the ways of specific clans and households. In relation to the local community, women embodied and transmitted specific village identities and loyalties; their attachment to their natal village remained throughout life even when they married outside it. As to peasant culture, women's role is shown as central and multifaceted: as embodiment of fertility, home, patrimony; as creators and transmitters of customs and expressive cultural forms focused around life transitions; and, in later life, as keepers of family and village histories, and guardians of custom. As to gender ideology, Marriage Conditions shows women transmitting both the rules that bound them, and the rights, claims and loopholes allowed them within the system.

The resource most emphasized by Artas women was their claim to lifelong support form their paternal household. This continuing support was epitomized in the ritual phase when a bride left her home: "She has her father's house. Nobody can tread on the hem of her garment" (Granqvist, 11, p 75). Her brothers were also obliged to support and protect her; a number of sayings contrast the eternal and sacred quality of the brother-sister tie with the temporal, material nature of that between husband and wife.[40] Granqvist suggests that the lifelong responsibility of brothers for their sisters was based in recognition that men obtained wives through their sisters' marriages. Certainly a woman's right to support from her

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[40] A couplet quoted by Granqvist: "A husband may always be had; a son can also be born / But a beloved brother, from where will he come back?" (11, p 253).

paternal kindred was conditional on obedience: her father could disinherit her; even after marriage, her brothers could punish her for violations of the sexual code. Nonetheless, the support of male kindred is shown to have been strongly institutionalized, and frequently resorted to by women.

One of women's institutionalized claims vis-a-vis their male kin was the custom called hardaneh ('angry'),[41] a status of temporary conjugal separation permitted to a married woman who has been badly treated in her father-in-law's household, or deprived of recognized rights. It allowed her to return to her own family without incurring blame; and it could only be resolved through formal procedures. During the negotiations for a hardaneh woman's return, she made her demands through her father or brothers. Once the terms of reconciliation had been agreed on, a celebratory meal was cooked. In certain cases of bad treatment, a woman's brothers might insist on divorce (in shari'a law women's rights to divorce are severely limited).

Evidently women could only resort to this right if their 'case' was publicly defensible, and their paternal kin disposed to support them. Children presented a difficulty: if women took them, they were held accountable for anything that happened to them; if they did not, they suffered from the separation. In some cases separation might lead to divorce, an eventuality that women and their kin feared more than polygyny. Of women who succeeded in using separation to improve their situation, Artas people said, "She went a louse and came back a camel".

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[41] Palestinians in Lebanon use za'laneh instead of hardaneh, with the same meaning. Though dying out in urban areas, this custom is still resorted to in rural camps. See R. Sayigh, "Recording 'Real Life' in Wadi Zeineh", Middle East Report no 173, Nov/Dec 1991.

For women who failed there was a parallel metaphor: "She went a louse and she came back a nit" (Granqvist, 11, p 236).

Women's rights within the conjugal relationship and household were mainly material: to her own property, space, food and clothing. In addition, her rights to sexual intercourse were clearly specified, to the extent that women whose husbands neglected them could complain to their brothers or the men's club (Granqvist, 11, p 202). There was also a conventional formula through which women claimed the right to sexual abstinence, though its use may have been limited to women whose husband took a second wife (Granqvist, 11, p 203). Co-wives had the right to separate rooms as well as equal treatment.

Another social resource to which Granqvist makes passing reference is women's right to carry their claims or pleas to authoritative figures outside their kindred. Men were believed to earn merit by helping women oppressed by their families. Granqvist quotes a saying corroborating this: "I will break the wish of a hundred men but not one the wish of one woman" (Granqvist, 11, p 243). The mention is interesting as evidence of women's action in the 'public domain'.[42]

A system that maximizes constraints on women at puberty must be one in which their status tends to improve with age. Childbearing (especially the birth of sons) brought shifts in women's tasks and higher status in their father-in-law's household. Past menopause, social constraints were loosened, women's mobility and autonomy increased, and they could enjoy

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[42] Camp women in Lebanon frequently claim right of access to political and religious leaders to complain of oppression by the authorities (an example is given by Imm Sobhi, in Appendix B).

a status somewhat similar to that of clan elders. Though pre-menopausal women were usually obliged to marry again after divorce or widowhood, second marriages offered them greater choice and autonomy. Women sometimes arranged second marriages themselves, acting as their own agents in drawing up the contract, and appropriating the mahr.

The fidelity of Granqvist's 'listening' enables the reader to detect evidence of dissent and deviance, personal reactions and strategies, as Artas women confront the system of constraints and supports outlined above. That peasant women could enter the male-dominated religious world is indicated by the presence in Artas of a woman 'dervish',[43] who is described as "brood[ing] over the co-wife problem" (Granqvist, 11, p 205). Escape from the dichotomy of gender is signalled by the visit to Artas of a khanta dhakr (hermaphrodite), a woman who dressed as a man (Granqvist, 11, p 48). But of more interest for a long-span historical study is the evidence of strategies used by ordinary women to 'manage' the system by making use of the resources it offered to mitigate its constraints, construable as a women's tradition of 'gender struggle'.

Two of these strategies - women's role in arranging their children's marriages, and actions taken by widows to avoid re-marriage - are chosen for presentation here because of their elaboration in Granqvist's text, and the historical depth of their transmission. The way senior women recruited younger ones into their household as wives for their sons to help with domestic and agricultural labour was pointed out earlier. Another motive for mature women to arrange marriages was to

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[43] A dervish is a follower of a religious order.

bring into their household 'familiar' women, chosen from their own paternal household, clan and village. This motive was stronger if a woman was a 'stranger' wife in a household dominated by agnatically-linked women. Women also manoeuvred to reinforce their own kin ties through arranging the marriage of daughters to male kinsmen. Granqvist uses the phrase 'marriage policy' in discussing the way mothers arranged their children's marriages so as to re-knit their original connections. Two points need underlining: first, women's strong role in arranging marriages existed side by side with the ideology of paternal control over marriage decisions. Second, women's 'marriage policy' worked against that of clan elders, reinforced the tendency (noted in section 2) for marriages to traverse boundaries of clan and village, and to reinforce ties of _nasab_ (affinity) rather than those of _hasab_ (consanguinity). Women's 'marriage policies' thus contributed to cross-cutting ties between clans and villages.

Consideration of the interplay of social pressures and personal reactions brought into play by widowhood is valuable for what it reveals of women's strategies and resources. Widowhood constituted a moment of extreme vulnerability for peasant women. As noted earlier, wives inherited little if anything from their husbands; the home was likely to be appropriated by the husband's kindred; gender norms placed a veto against a still fertile woman living alone, and a widow's brothers bore the moral and social responsibility of arranging her re-marriage, a step that also served their interests since they might obtain a second _mahr_, and avoid the burden of her upkeep. For a woman, widowhood brought into contradiction her two strongest ties, to brothers and to children. Re-marriage

meant separation from children, who 'belonged' to their father's household; but refusing brothers' pressures for re-marriage was both socially and economically hazardous. In this dilemma, a widow had recourse to a custom called <u>khashat al-qabr</u> (going down into the grave), through which she refused to allow the dead husband to be buried until the men present promised that she would not be forced to re-marry. The public and sacred character of the occasion gave this form of 'women's struggle' its effectiveness. At the same time the widow would give her brother(s) a sum of money (the <u>ihdaneh</u>) equivalent to half her <u>mahr</u>.

As noted earlier, several Artas women had succeeded in remaining widows, and were respected, independent figures who managed the property of their sons. Achieving such a status clearly required intelligence and skill in balancing the potentially contradictory claims and obligations arising out of women's dual belonging in paternal and conjugal households. The success of the <u>khashat al-qabr</u> resource depended on good relations between the widow and her husband's kindred. If a widow's in-laws wanted her to remain with them, they could arrange her re-marriage to her dead husband's brother (the levirate), in which case the whole process of betrothal, contract, <u>fed</u> and wedding would be gone through again.

The Artas material gives evidence that women pursued the rights and claims allowed them by the system with an energy that suggests that they were usually satisfied. Even though ultimately based in the principle of compensation, these claims were not phrased in terms of abstract rights, but inhered in women's relationships with specific males (father, brother, husband, and so on), relations in which women's subordination

and dependence were also inscribed. The material suggests that women actively helped to reproduce all parts of the system, including those that oppressed them: to do so sustained their rights and claims within it; further, it never oppressed them all equally and at the same time. As a corollary of the inherence of their rights in specific relationships, we notice how women were systematically pitted against each other through their different positions in family and authority structure; daughter-in-law against mother-in-law; wife against husband's sister; step daughter against step mother; first wife against durra (co-wife); 'insider' women against 'strangers'.[44] Thus, though we can discern cases of 'gender struggle' scattered through Marriage Conditions, it is characteristic that these are individual, limited to specific moments of life crisis such as widowhood or the coming of a second wife, and often waged between women in different relation to the hierarchy of authority, with men as necessary allies.

On the one hand we find common themes and experiences strongly articulated in women's songs - for example the suffering of constrained marriage, and being forced to leave home. On the other, we observe that it is mainly older women who arrange the marriages of younger ones and it is they who usher them through all its phases. This tension between a common consciousness of gender oppression and women's conflicting positional interests within the system is a pattern that endures across the rupture of exile.

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[44] Palestinian folktales are a revealing source on conflict between women in peasant households. See I. Muhawi and S. Kenaana Speak, Bird, Speak Again, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, p 19-29.

Marriage in peasant culture

In conclusion, let us set <u>Marriage Conditions</u> in historical and comparative perspective, to see what it tells us about Palestinian village women's lives before and after 1948. First, marriage is clearly the central institution through which the 'sex-gender system', or 'relations of reproduction' as defined by Meillassoux (1975) was articulated to the socio-economic system, or relations of production. At another level, marriage can be seen as carrying on (while continually modifying) the web of relations within and between different social units within the village, and linking the village to the outside world. As Meillassoux suggests, and Artas corroborates, filiation is the constant concern of such systems, while women form its 'raw material'; yet it is important to notice that Granqvist's data shows women not as passive victims of the system, but reproducing, manipulating, and contesting it. At yet another level, marriages form an important articulation point between social relations and culture, with material, aesthetic and symbolic cultural elements concentrated around marriage celebrations, and women centrally engaged as cultural producers.

First, the Artas material underlines the obligatory nature of marriage for men and women, an inescapable condition of membership in the community, and of access to material resources. Socialization into marriage began at birth: babies were welcomed into the world as 'bride' and 'bridegroom'; children were told their probable future spouse. Granqvist found few Artas men of marriageable age unmarried, and only two 'old maids' (Granqvist, 1, p 40-1); divorced and widowed women

were pressed back into the matrimonial circuit. Obligatory
marriage had the effect of harnessing the productive and
procreative capacities of all village members to reproducing
the collectivity and its constituent parts; even if some women
were married outside clan and village, they created thereby
links of <u>nasab</u> (affinity), which played their part in
reproducing both. Obligatory marriage gave fathers and clan
elders power over junior men, since access to land, women and
adult status could only be reached through them (cf.
Meillassoux, 1975). The economic dependence of sons on their
father or clan for the <u>fed</u>, as well as their social dependence
on them for carrying through the complex negotiations required
by marriage, had the effect of 'fixing' them into a system of
productive and reproductive relations based in land rights and
village membership.

A second structural consequence of the obligatory marriage
is that it fuses the 'domestic' with the 'public' domain in a
single moral/social arena. All Artas villagers knew, and had
the moral obligation to know, the sexual status of every
member. Women's ages were indicated in terms of their sexual
maturation; only in special circumstances could a woman still
capable of pregnancy remain unmarried. Equally the state of
every marriage was known: a woman whose husband was impotent
or neglecting her was viewed with concern as a possible source
of <u>fitna</u>.[45] If a woman exercised her right as <u>hardaneh</u> to
return to her father's household, other villagers strove to
heal the breach and return her to her husband. If she appeared

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[45] <u>Fitna</u> (subversion, disorder, chaos), is both a political
and gender concept in Arab and Islamic culture. <u>Fitna</u> in the
gender sense is the result of illicit male/female interaction,
but more closely associated with women than with men.

to be pregnant while estranged, public steps were taken to ensure the legitimacy of the child. Though such pressures lessened slightly with age, there was no complete escape: concern extended beyond first marriage into each successive phase - estrangement, divorce, widowhood, re-marriage - until menopause. Marriage in its broadest sense appears not as an occasional individual event but as a continual collective preoccupation.

Parental control of marriage necessarily raises the question whether, and to what extent, it is used to increase access to material resources and improve social status. Although Artas's population was stratified, there is little evidence that marriage choices contributed systematically to stratification. Indeed, most of the evidence points in a contrary direction. Since 'giving' women was a central way of tying men into productive and reproductive relations, language stressed their equal availability to all. It is true that individual fathers are shown as susceptible to money considerations when deciding between spouses for their daughters, but motives were immediate rather than long-term (for example, to pay off debts), and were constrained by countervailing pressures: the prior rights of clan and village, the claims of cousins, the intervention of elders, mothers, and so on. There is also abundant evidence that pre-capitalist values still worked powerfully to prevent men maximizing individual benefit through the marriage of their daughters: rights to women were still an integral part of membership in

a community.[46] Another point to note is that fear of pre-marital loss of a daughter's virginity put strong pressure on fathers to accept the first acceptable proposal. A further factor reducing the influence of socio-economic advantage in marriage choices was the fact that women often pre-arranged betrothals while their children were still young (Granqvist, 1, p 33). There is no evidence that clan elders systematically initiated marriages to increase clan wealth or standing: all the interventions of elders in marriage arrangements recorded by Granqvist show them attempting to enhance clan solidarity, for example by supporting the prior right of paternal cousins, or trying to reduce the level of the in-clan fed.

Marriage caused shifts in social relations at all levels of village structure: within households, between households, within and between clans. It expressed or modified lines of conflict and called out renewals of alliance, signalling shifts in people's relations to land and property, and occasioning the transfer of substantial amounts of money and goods. The fed by no means exhausted the expenditures made by the bridegroom's household on marriage. Each of its complex stages was marked by material transfers: gifts of jewelry and clothes to the bride; gifts to the bride's relatives (uncles and siblings as well as parents); and compensation paid to a whole range of persons if a bride was given outside her clan or village. The

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[46] A custom beginning to fall into disuse at the time of Granqvist's fieldwork was 'atiyeh al-jora (gift from the pit), whereby anyone using a particular formula of congratulation to the father of a newborn girl received her as a promised future bride, usually for his/her son. At a period still within living memory in 1929, payment of 'blood money' (compensation for a killing), could still take the form of brides from the murderer's family. The availability of women for marriage was so culturally stressed that a man welcoming visitors to his home offered them his daughter in marriage (11, p 240).

importance of such material transfers underlines the diversity of public interests in marriage, and the vulnerability of particular marriage arrangements to disruption.

Consideration of the meaning of food in peasant life, signifier of <u>kheir</u>,[47] human happiness, and social bonds, gives the feasting that accompanied each phase of marriages their full significance. Beginning with the feast marking the betrothal, sharing of food drew the whole village into the celebrations. The phrase, "He has cooked for her" was synonymous with engagement, and was considered as binding as a written contract; feast food prepared for the betrothal was served to all the village men in their capacity as witnesses; their eating signified consent (Granqvist, 1, p 155; 11, p 14). The wedding was preceded by 'evenings of joy' around the home of the bridegroom, and on the day of the fetching of the bride a second feast was offered by the bridegroom to his own guests and to the bride's family. If the bride was a 'stranger', he gave the young men of her village a sheep.

Each marriage caused shifts of status at every level of the system, bringing gain to some, loss to others. From Granqvist's detailed exposition of the transfers, celebrations and rites that marked the marriage process, we sense peasant concern to protect an institution at once central and vulnerable. Those who lose must be compensated; envy must be averted; misfortune and evil spirits must be countered by adhering faithfully to traditional magico-religious procedures. Two moments in the marriage process were believed to be particularly vulnerable to evil spirits or envy: the writing

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[47] For the meanings of food in Palestinian peasant life see Muhawi and Kenaana, <u>Speak Bird</u>, p 37.

of the marriage contract; and the bride's crossing the threshold of her husband's home.

Granqvist's descriptions of marriage celebrations show them as articulating material, aesthetic and symbolic aspects of peasant culture. Some instances are: the ritual feasting that includes the village community; the singing, dancing and poetry recitations that accompanied betrothal and wedding; the adorning of the bride for the wedding; the rites surrounding the bride's entry to her husband's household; the special clothes worn by women and men for the wedding procession; the procession itself, accompanied by more dancing and singing and displays of horse racing. All these form a striking contrast to the poverty of village life, and underline the importance of marriage in reproducing peasant culture and specific village 'entities'. Palestinian refugees could still give detailed descriptions of their weddings after decades of exile in Lebanon, and restored their style when circumstances permitted.[48]

The placing of women in relation to culture is a fundamental distinction between Orientalist and 'nativist' representations of women in Middle Eastern, Muslim, or Arab societies. Missionaries, most travellers, Orientalists, and some feminists, have emphasized their exclusion from culture, a perspective based in a Eurocentric concept of culture and distance from indigenous daily life. Hilma Granqvist's immersion in Artas and closeness to women's subjectivities

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[48] It is becoming harder to find survivors from the 'generation of Palestine', but in 1988 I recorded a man from Majd al-Kroom describing his marriage celebrations in the early 1940s, and in May 1992 a woman from Kabri in 'Ain Helweh camp singing wedding songs.

enables a view of women as central to cultural reproduction. This offers a starting point for examining the way that women express their stance towards dominant gender ideology and practices, and the way this is influenced by their 'positionality'. In their study of Palestinian folk tales, Muhawi and Kenaana point to women's specialized role as tellers, but also the ways in which the tales express a specifically women's viewpoint, for example in their understanding of household family relations and tension. As fictions, the tales subvert social norms: mothers wish for daughters rather than sons; women are often the heroines, initiators of action, and husband-seekers; the power of women's sexuality is a frequent theme.

> Omitted from the formal kinship structure, women are left to define their role in society themselves. They do so through the tales, and in other forms of folklore that in Palestine are traditionally their domain: embroidery, basket weaving, pot making, and verbal arts like wedding songs and laments for the dead. Women provide a large measure of the creative and artistic energy in the society, as these folk tales amply demonstrate.[49]

C. Women and Gender in National Movement Strategy

The national movement in Palestine developed as part of the broader Arab nationalist movement, formed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in reaction first to Ottoman rule, then to European domination. Under British rule (1917-1948), the national movement in Palestine consisted of a loose coalition of social forces and political formations, presided over from 1921 by Hajj Ameen al-Husseini, Grand Mufti and Chairman of both the Higher Islamic Council and Higher Arab

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[49] Muhawi and Kenaana, Speak, Bird, 'Introduction', p 19.

Body. The main opposition to the Mufti's leadership came from the pro-British Nassasheebi-led National Defence party. Social, regional, religious and ethnic/cultural specificities contributed to a high degree of heterogeneity in the indigenous population, but factional politics cut across such internal boundaries. In spite of factionalism, the national movement in Palestine achieved a considerable degree of unity in the process of struggle against Zionist colonialism and British rule (Tamari, 1982).

All factions of the national movement were hostile to Zionist settlement, but differed in stance towards British rule, the Nassasheebi faction supporting (and supported by) the British government, while the Mufti-led main stream moved ever further towards open rebellion. The mainstream national movement's principle strategy was directed to pressing the British to fulfil pledges made in the Balfour Declaration, alongside those to the Zionist movement, to safeguard the rights of the indigenous population, a promise understood by them to mean eventual self-determination. The Palestinian leadership's expectations of self-government determined a strategy that combined limited contestation of Mandate authority with building national political unity, succeeding to a large extent in unifying Muslim and Christian Palestinians. Offshoots of the leadership's central strategy were: continual attempts to dissuade the British authorities from their policy of support for the Zionist movement; threats of popular insurrection; efforts to influence political parties and public opinion in Britain; and campaigns to gain Arab government and popular support. The women's movement played an active and symbolic role in this overall strategy.

The main body of the Palestinian women's movement, the Palestinian Arab Women's Association (later Union), was formed in 1929, a year of rioting, communal conflict and repression.[50] From early in the Mandate there had been women's political committees in several major cities. However, in 1929, a permanent Jerusalem-based leading body, the Arab Women's Executive, was established simultaneously with the PAWA; PAWA branches spread rapidly throughout the country. The women's leadership showed a talent for creating spectacular public events, for example the motorcade to deliver the resolutions of the founding conference to all embassies and legations in Jerusalem. Again in 1933, in protest against Allenby's visit to Jerusalem, the AWE strikingly demonstrated Muslim-Christian unity by having a Muslim member address the public from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and a Christian member from the Dome of the Rock.[51] Such actions were powerful public enactments of national mobilization, simultaneously expressing the degree of national crisis and the nationalist emotions that propelled women out of their homes and into public space.

The formation and history of the PAWA shows an ambiguous dependence/independence of relationship vis-a-vis the national leadership. Organizationally it was separate, depending on its own members for funding; indeed, one of the PAWA's activities was to collect donations to the national movement. On the other

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[50] The story of the establishment of the PAWA is told by one of the founding members, Matiel Mogannam (in The Arab Woman). Educated in the United States, married to a Jerusalem lawyer and leading member of the National Defence Party, Mogannam was active from the 1920s in journalism and the women's movement. Her book is an early and valuable example of 'Arab nationalist feminism'.

[51] Mogannam, The Arab Woman, p 93-4.

hand, since leading members came from the same elite stratum as the national leadership, and were linked to them by ties of blood and marriage, it is likely that there was informal consultation and coordination. Some of the pre-1948 leaders interviewed in exile underlined the close links between the national and women's leadership.[52] Yet other members asserted the independence of PAWA actions, both at the national and branch levels.[53] There is also evidence that women formed part of the 'vanguard wing' of the national movement, pressing the national leadership to more militant action (Kayyali, 1969).

Among overt kinds of political action undertaken by the PAWA were: initiating and joining demonstrations; visiting British government officials, and submitting official memoranda; sending messages to heads of foreign and Arab states; and publicizing the Palestinian struggle at Arab women's conferences. Nationalist women also took part in campaigns to inform and mobilize local public opinion around national issues, through speeches, newspaper articles, and informal networks.[54] An important part of their work was

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[52] For example, Mogannam (a founding member of both PAWA and AWE), said: "We always combined forces with...the Executive Committee of the men. For example, if we were to send a Memorandum to...the King in Britain we wouldn't do it without having the Executive Committee look it over to see if it's alright...They encouraged us to protest...and they encouraged our charitable functions" (interview with R. Sayigh and J. Peteet, May 1985, Washington).

[53] Women's independence of decision was asserted by several of the surviving leaders of the PAWA interviewed by the writer in Lebanon between 1979 and 1985. Relations between the national and women's movements are discussed by E. Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement: Its Agenda, Politics and Contribution", unpublished paper, Georgetown University, 1991.

[54] Several nationalist women wrote for the press (Mary Shehadeh, Sadej Nassar, Matiel Mogannam, Ruqeyya Huri, Asma Toubi). The Palestinian press gave substantial coverage to

social and charitable: visiting prisoners, and helping the families of the victims of struggle. Women's activism undoubtedly varied between periods and regions. Both urban and rural women in the Galilee area were active in the Great Revolt, cooperating with local PAWA leaders.[55] During the communal fighting of 1947-8 some PAWA branches set up field hospitals, and women began to take military as well as First Aid training. A sign of their more militant activity was the increase, in the last years of the Mandate, of British arrests and imprisonments of women.

Women's exclusion from mixed political formations helped to keep factional conflict out of the women's movement.[56] Though PAWA leaders in exile were disinclined to discuss conflicts within the women's movement, younger Palestinian women point to personal and family rivalry as a basis for cliques that limited expansion. A divisive issue that continued after 1948 arose from the debate between 'modernism' and 'cultural authenticity', and the degree to which activist women should challenge conservative forces. This issue frequently crystallized around how women should present themselves in public; some women believed in expressing activism and autonomy

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women's writing and activities.

[55] Ruqeyya Huri, a leading member of the PAWA in Haifa, told of transfers of money and arms, and the hiding of guerilla fighters, as examples of cooperation between PAWA and village women (interview, Beirut, February 1981). See Sayigh, "Femmes palestiniennes".

[56] All surviving leaders emphasized women's ability to work together across lines of factional and family conflict. Such harmony probably did not last beyond the end of the 1930s, when bitterness grew between the main anti-British wing of the national movement and the Nassasheebi faction, as the result of the latter's role in helping Britain's suppression of the uprising of 1936-9.

by adopting freer Western clothing; the dominant tendency, however, argued that flouting public opinion would jeopardize women's role in national politics; they advocated a strict conservatism of clothing style. The PAWA leadership explicitly opposed 'feminist' tendencies, which they associated with Huda Sha'rawi and the Egyptian women's movement.[57]

Critics of the pre-1948 women's movement point to its class limitations, symptomatized by its 'charitable' approach to poor urban and rural women, and failure to incorporate them into the movement. It is symptomatic of the absence of the PAWA from village women's lives that Granqvist's accounts of Artas, a village close to Jerusalem, contains no mention of it. Retrospective evaluations ought, however, to take account of socio-cultural constraints on middle and upper class women's mobility that limited their outreach to rural areas, as well as the material conditions of other-class women which constrained their availability for organized political work.[58]

Sources on which to base a discussion of the stand of the national leadership towards women and gender are harder to find than information on the women's movement.[59] An important

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[57] Interview with M. Mogannam by R. Sayigh and J. Peteet, Washington, May 1985. Another leader, Wadia Khartabeel, expressed PAWA anti-feminism thus: "Women's education, Yes! Women's rights, No!" (interview with R. Sayigh and J. Peteet, Beirut, 1981).

[58] Urban women could not easily travel to, or stay in, rural areas. One of the few to do so was Sadej Nassar, a PAWA leader based in Haifa who tried to set up a branch in Beisan (Ruqeyya Huri, February 1981). Obstacles to the membership of non-elite women are suggested by the answer of Imm Jihad (a Fateh woman leader), when asked if her mother had been a PAWA member: "How do you expect her to join ? She had ten children !" (interview, Tunis, April 1989).

[59] Fleischmann notes two main problems: the dearth of primary sources quoting or describing leadership attitudes to women; and the bias of accounts written by foreigners ("The

reason for national leaders to avoid the topic was its potential for arousing and dividing public opinion. Fleischmann notes a commonality of interest between the British Government and the Palestinian elite in maintaining the status quo on gender: on the British side there were the aims of facilitating their control by conserving indigenous authoritarian structures, and diffusing nationalist opposition through conciliatory policies towards conservative opinion. On the Palestinian side, cultural conservatism was reinforced by the intrusion of an aggressive, socio-culturally alien group. The slight evidence that exists points to both progressive and conservative currents within the nationalist elite not, as foreigners often alleged, a global conservatism. The dilemma over gender within national movement politics is well expressed by an unnamed Palestinian 'leading citizen':

> Zionism brought an awakening of nationalist consciousness and a sense of necessity for social uplift which must affect women. To oppose Zionism we have realized the necessity for the same weapons that the Zionists have. The Jews maintain a high educational level both for men and women. Hence, to bring up the Arab level, we must educate women. But the Mandate power in giving protection to the Jews has made it necessary for us to safeguard Moslem traditions. The awakening of Arab interest has led us to re-examine the Arab religious sources and to keep the true idea of the veil.[60]

The close identification between 'Arab' and 'Moslem' traditions in this quotation points to a resolution of the dilemma produced in a particular moment of the Nahda (the cultural renaissance that was part of political Arab nationalism), and in the reformist current of Islam associated

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Politics of Gender in Mandatory Palestine", unpublished paper, Georgetown University, 1991).

[60] The original quotation appears in R. Woodsmall, <u>Moslem Women Enter a New World</u> (New York: Round Table Press, 1936), p 196; re-quoted by Fleischmann, "The Politics of Gender".

with al-Tahtawi and Abduh. It is crucial to our understanding
of the role of women and gender in the strategy of the pre-1948
national leadership to see women as symbolizing the restoration
of an Arab independence whose roots were located in the first
century of Islam. This strategic re-formulation of the 'woman
question' is illuminated by Mogannam's introductory narrative
in which she celebrates the great Arab women of the 'Golden
Age' - women such as al Khansa (poet, proselytizer, and
'heroic mother'), Khadeeja (the Prophet's first wife), and
A'isheh ('mother of the faithful'). This adversion to 'female
ancestresses' is nationalist rather than feminist in intent,
and seems to have formed a strand within the ideology of the
Palestinian national movement.[61] Common political action by
Muslim and Christian women within the PAWA was a particularly
visible enactment of the articulation of Islam and Arabism
specific to early modern Arab (and Palestinian) nationalism.

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The detailed description of the lives of rural Palestinian
women presented in this chapter takes its rationale from the
way that contexts and habits they display were carried over
into refugee camps, where the majority of settlers were of
peasant origin. The first point to be underlined was the
centrality and multifunctionality of marriage: i) as nexus of
the reproduction of units and relations integral to economy and
polity (the compound agnatic household, patrilineage, and
village community), ii) as articulating social structure and

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[61] It is significant that Mogannam, in the Preface to The
Arab Woman, acknowledges the help and guidance of several
Palestinian nationalist scholars: As'ad Shukairy ("who provided
me with much material on Arab women"), Isma'il al Hafez, Saleh
al Barghuthy and 'Ajaj Nuweihid (p 13).

culture; and iii) as means of distributing women through the field of social relations, and of controlling their sexuality and fertility. Peasant women were socially valued for their strong productive and managing role in household economies as much as for their procreative role. Their socially recognized rights to various kinds of material resource formed both protection against destitution and bondage to the social relations in which they were inscribed. These also formed the basis of social claims and resources which women used to defend or improve individual situations, partially offsetting their gender subordination. Since Palestinian women in exile remained embedded in pre-1948 family and village clusters, their material and social rights as well as creative role in culture and habit of productive labour continued to be reproduced in exile. This prevented their exploitation in Lebanon as destitute, isolated migrants, but maintained their subordination through marriage.

The continuation in Palestine of 'traditional' class and gender relations was in part the result of a national leadership strategy aimed at national independence. Though initiated by nationalist women, the establishment of a national women's movement in 1929 (the PAWA), was also linked to this strategy, which entailed building national unity (between Muslims and Christians), and preventing divisive movements. The restricted social base and mainly elite leadership of the PAWA limited its capacity to reach poor urban and rural women, but the radicalizing effects of uprooting and exile eventually produced a more militant, and more nationally integrated women's movement, in which women in camps also participated.

CHAPTER THREE

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON (1948-1982):

FRAMEWORKS OF CONSTRAINT

During the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948, some 800,000 inhabitants of Palestine fled from the battle zones into adjacent areas. Of the four principal host countries, Lebanon received the largest share of refugees proportionate to its own population, more than 100,000 compared to an approximate 1,000,000 nationals.[1] Such absence of limitation on refugee ingress can be attributed to Arab solidarity, belief in the temporariness of the refugees' stay, and a short-lived moment of Maronite-Sunni harmony, based in the National Pact of 1943.[2] Maronite opposition to the massive inflow of mainly Muslim Palestinians was initially confined to a few marginal voices.

Not more than the main outlines of the history of Palestinian-Lebanese relations can be given here, but we need to note, as primary causes of instability, first Lebanon's permeability as polity and society to external forces and events; second, the effects of these on its sectarian political

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[1] Refugee numbers fluctuated widely in the first two years. Y.A. Sayigh estimated the number of refugees in Lebanon in 1951 as 130,000 ("Implications of UNRWA Operations for the Arab Host Countries", MA thesis, American University of Beirut, 1952). For details of the exodus of 1948, see B. Morris, The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem, 1947-1949 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[2] In 1948, President Bishara al-Khoury was still in power. Together with Prime Minister Rashid al-Solh, he had been the primary architect of the National Pact, and his open-door policy towards the refugees has been interpreted as a concession to Muslim and Arab nationalist sentiment. See W. Khalidi, Conflict and Violence in Lebanon (Cambridge MA: Harvard Center for International Affairs, 1979) p 37.

system, 'tilted' in favour of the Maronite community; and third the 'weight' of the Palestinian cause and population in Lebanese politics.[3] Among regional upheavals that influenced Lebanese politics in the 1950s were the emergence of radical nationalist regimes in Egypt (1952), and Iraq (1958), and the union between Egypt and Syria in 1959, producing tougher control over Palestinian camps by the Lebanese Army under President Chehab (1958-1964). The 1960s were marked by the Arab League's establishment in 1964 of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); by the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967, enabling the emergence of the hitherto clandestine Palestinian Resistance movement; and by uprisings in the camps in Lebanon in 1969, giving birth to a new Palestinian-Lebanese entente, the Cairo Accords.[4] In 1970-1, the closure of Jordan and Syria to Resistance operations forced the Resistance movement to transfer its forces to Lebanon, inaugurating a new era of national mobilization and relative autonomy for Palestinians, deepening crisis for the Lebanese polity. The 1970s witnessed an escalation of Israeli attacks, and Lebanon's slide into civil war. The Palestinian camps became the targets not only of attacks by Israel but also by the Lebanese Army and Rightist Maronite militias; among major episodes were the Civil War of 1975-6 (during which thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese

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[3] Good sources on Lebanese-Palestinian relations are: R. Brynen, Sanctuary and Survival: the PLO in Lebanon (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1990); H. Cobban, The Palestine Liberation Organisation: People, Power and Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1984); Khalidi, Conflict and Violence; and T. Petran, The Struggle Over Lebanon (New York: Monthly Review press, 1987).

[4] The Cairo Accords recognized Palestinian national and civic rights. However they were never passed by the Lebanese National Assembly, and were unilaterally abrogated in 1988.

were expelled from the 'Maronite enclave'), the Israeli invasion of the South in 1978, and the larger invasion of 1982.

This chapter focusses on the three main structures that together form the objective framework of Palestinian existence in Lebanon: UNRWA, the Lebanese state, and the Palestinian national movement. But the history of refugee communities is also influenced by pre-flight characteristics, whether of region, class, sectarian affiliation or historical experience. It is necessary therefore to note that the majority of Palestinians entering Lebanon in 1948 came from villages in Galilee, with a sizeable minority of city-dwellers, mainly from the coastal cities of Acre, Haifa and Jaffa. These were areas early affected by Palestine's entry into world trade, and all had been centres of pre-1948 nationalist struggle.[5] Barriers between the refugees and Lebanese nationals were less than in most refugee or national minority situations, constituted by Lebanon's sect-based political system and by the Palestinians' non-citizen status rather than by cultural difference. Christian and middle class Palestinians at first encountered few obstacles to residence, employment, and naturalization. It was mainly refugees of rural origin, predominantly Muslim, who were forced by destitution to settle in camps, where free shelter, basic rations, and social services were provided.

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[5] The hills of Galilee were an epicentre of the mainly peasant rebellion of 1936-9. Jaffa and Jerusalem were the sites of the first nationalist demonstrations, while it was from Haifa that Sheikh Izzideen Qassam organized the first armed uprising, in 1935. Haifa and Jaffa were also the centres of a thriving nationalist press.

A. The United Nations and the Palestinian refugees

As a result of the internationalization of the 'Palestine problem' that preceded the war of 1948, responsibility for the upkeep of the refugees was rapidly transferred to the UN where, unique in the annals of refugee groups, a special agency was created to deal with them: the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).[6] Documents related to the establishment of UNRWA indicate that, while providing temporary relief, its basic mission was to promote the economic integration of the refugees into the host countries.[7] The most powerful proponent of integration as a solution to the refugee problem was the United States, which constituted the formative influence on UNRWA's mandate: i) as patron of the Clapp Plan, antecedent to UNRWA, which proposed large scale development schemes for the entire Fertile Crescent region using US capital and refugee labour; ii) as major supporter in the UN and elsewhere of Israel's refusal to repatriate the refugees;[8] and iii) as major contributor of UNRWA's funds.[9] Although Arab and refugee opposition to <u>towteen</u> (resettlement outside Palestine) succeeded in aborting the

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[6] UNRWA was established on December 8, 1949, by UN Resolution 302. It began operations in May 1950, taking over from the earlier UN Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA, <u>A Brief History, 1950-1982</u>, Vienna, nd, p 14). Its field headquarters was initially in Beirut.

[7] This is the conclusion of H.Adelman, after researching UN archives and diplomatic correspondence: "Palestine refugees, economic integration and durable solutions", A. Bramwell ed., <u>Refugees in the Age of Total War</u> (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

[8] See Morris, <u>Birth of the refugee problem</u>, p 254-266.

[9] As of 1982, the US had contributed $1,000,000,000 to UNRWA since 1950, five times as much as the next largest donor: UNRWA, <u>A Brief History</u>, p 220.

'Works' component in UNRWA's mission, limiting its role to relief and maintenance, yet UNRWA has formed a major vehicle of Great Power (primarily US) policies towards the refugees, the host governments and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Even shorn of its original large-scale development plans, UNRWA benefitted the Arab states both politically and economically. As a permanent recognition of international responsibility for the creation of the refugees, UNRWA shielded the Arab states from much of the blame for their failure effectively to confront the problem. UNRWA also relieved the host states of most of the cost of maintenance of the refugees, while its expenditures formed a not inconsiderable item in the economies of the host countries (particularly in Lebanon where its main purchasing office was located until the Civil War of 1975/6). The Agency provided a channel of communication and coordination between the Great Powers and the host governments from which the refugees were excluded. Concern for the stability of the host governments was as much an incentive to the establishment of UNRWA as was the fear of the spread of communism among the refugees if they were abandoned to suffer the full effects of land-loss and statelessness.[10] Through presiding over the transformation of Arab citizens of Palestine into 'refugees', and by assuming their representation to the international community, UNRWA furthered the dissolution of

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[10] Adelman suggests that "relief measures were seen as preventing riots and domestic discontent among the refugees and the local population" ("Palestine refugees", p 305). Morris quotes the British consul in Jerusalem, among others, asking for employment funds for "maintaining the morale of male refugees and preventing them lapsing into anarchy and Communism" (Birth of the refugee problem, p 266).

Palestinian national institutions that followed the debacle of 1948.

Coordination and division of labour between UNRWA and the host governments formed a total management and control network through which the refugees were integrated into the Arab economies while being kept distinct in terms of legal and political status. UNRWA's role consisted of providing basic necessities (shelter, food supplies, water, hygiene) as well as medical and educational services. The role of the host government was one of ultimate authority, and included the issuing of laws and regulations, control of movement, administration of justice and the provision of necessary documents. Informally, the host governments exercised a large measure of control over UNRWA appointments. Another channel of government influence, at least in the case of Lebanon, was the unofficial rule that UNRWA's lawyer should be a Lebanese national. As an internationally-financed and directed body in which Palestinians were represented only as employees and workers, UNRWA in many ways formed a continuation of the pre-1948 British Mandate Administration, even to the point of favouring minorities in its early employment.[11]

UNRWA provided the first authoritative definition of who constituted a bona fide 'refugee' and, by providing a definition that was essentially economic rather than national, skewed international understanding of the refugee problem for

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[11] A Palestinian who worked with UNRWA from the beginning said that former Mandate employees of Maltese and Lebanese Christian origin were taken on by the Agency (K. Tabari, interview, Beirut, August 1983).

at least two decades.[12] At the time, the refugees did not

fully grasp the political significance of UNRWA's definition;

many did not register with the Agency, and the closure of UNRWA

registration lists in 1953 made subsequent correction almost

impossible. This point became politically important later, when

the Maronite Right began to call for the expulsion from Lebanon

of all Palestinians not registered with UNRWA.

UNRWA's register was only the first step in tracing,

stabilizing and categorizing the refugee population. Further

ones were establishing the <u>nufoos</u> (local registration point)

of each refugee family, to be used in the distribution of

rations and services; the difficulty for refugees of

transferring their <u>nufoos</u> from one registration centre to

another underlined their non-citizen status, and formed a

constraint on their mobility. In addition, all registered

refugees were divided into different categories of

qualification for relief, a form of internal differentiation

which gave rise to abuses and bitterness.[13]

As part of the registration process, a file (<u>malaff</u>) was

opened for each refugee household in the name of the <u>rabb al-</u>

<u>a'ileh</u> (household head). As a corollary, each household head

was required to designate his family name. In many cases

brothers gave different family names, one choosing a father's

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[12] UNRWA defined a refugee as "a person whose normal residence was in Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the conflict in 1948, and who, as a result of the conflict, lost both his home and means of livelihood..."(UNRWA, <u>A Brief History</u>, p 66).

[13] Depending on income, registered refugees were initially sorted into two main categories: i) those eligible only for medical and educational services; and ii) those eligible for services and basic rations. A third category termed 'hardship cases' receive minimal additional aid. The distinction between categories i) and ii) has recently been abolished.

name, another a grandfather's, since in rural Palestine the naming system had remained unregulated and flexible. Now, in exile, family names became fixed, inherited from father to son along with the UNRWA identity card. Such procedures can be assumed to have an effect on kin and family structures, contributing to the weakening of ties between agnates, and increasing the authority of the male household head.[14] The malaff remains in the name of husband/father even after his death.

Settlement of the refugees in official sites administered by the Agency might also be assumed to have affected kin and village ties, by separating formerly co-residential units. However, the ease of settlement procedures left scope for choice, enabling the re-assembly of relatively large fragments of original villages. The lack of studies contemporary with settlement make it difficult to determine why some villages and kin-groups are relatively concentrated in one camp while others are widely dispersed.[15] As to whether settlement in different camps disrupted kin ties, Palestinian discussants say that only national borders seriously impeded the maintenance of kin ties. It is possible that male Palestinians were less restricted in mobility than women and children. Contacts between camps has

[14] Palestinians I have discussed this question with do not believe that bureaucratic procedures could influence kin ties. But perhaps this is to ignore long-term effects.

[15] A critical factor may have been the presence/absence of a village or family leader. In the case of the semi-sedentarized tribal people of Ghweir (near Tiberias), almost all the village followed their emir to 'Ain Helweh camp, where they still form an entire quarter. When Shateela was first settled, the founder, who later became UNRWA Director, gathered the people of his own village, Majd al-Kroom. An UNRWA official who helped with early settlement said that when branches of the same kin group settled in different camps, the reason was usually pre-1948 conflict (K. Tabari, August 1983).

also been affected by political conditions, becoming more
restricted in periods of tension. Certainly interaction between
kin was reduced in frequency and changed in meaning in exile,
becoming a matter of special occasions rather than of daily,
taken-for-granted occurrence.

The rest of this section shall focus upon two aspects of
UNRWA's operations that have had profound and long-term effects
on the socio-cultural development of the refugee population:
one is its educational programme, the other its role in forming
a Palestinian bureaucracy.

The UNRWA educational system

Drawn up at the very outset of UNRWA's operations with UNESCO
assistance, the Agency's educational programme consisted, then
as now, of: i) the universal provision of ten years of free
general education to all registered refugee children between
the ages of six and 16 years; ii) selective subsidization of
education beyond the end of the preparatory level for a small
quota of students; iii) in addition, UNRWA set up its own
teacher and technical training institutes which provide high
levels of competence, but had space for only a small fraction
of camp youth.[16] Owing to the Agency's chronic budgetary
deficit, its educational programme has remained relatively
unchanged in scale and quality since its inception. Lacking
access to the Lebanese public education system, camp families
who want their children to continue beyond the preparatory

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[16] In 1977-8, there were 490 students in UNRWA's technical
training institute in Lebanon (Sibleen), while 39 university
students were awarded UNRWA scholarships (UNRWA-UNESCO,
Department of Education, Statistical Yearbook, 1977-78).

cycle have to put them in private fee-paying schools, involving considerable financial sacrifice.

Refugee recollections of the first decade of exile suggest that UNRWA's school programme succeeded in equipping the first generations of school-age youth with the basic literacy and discipline needed to become a workforce known throughout the region for its competence. Other factors besides the provision of free schooling were crucial in producing what some older Palestinians term the 'educational revolution', among them the zeal of the early UNRWA teachers, remembered as patriotic and conscientious. Another vital factor was parental pressures on children to study, result of their realization that education offered the only escape from low-paid manual labour. Children's own perceptions also played a role.[17] Hunger for education appears to have been particularly strong among camp inhabitants of peasant origin, less so among poor city people: rural Palestinians curbed expenditure on food, clothing and domestic equipment in order to invest in the further education of their children (including daughters). A significant proportion of camp youth that became adult in the 1960s was enabled by UNRWA schooling to make the leap into technical and professional jobs in the oil-producing countries, their remittances leading to higher standards of living for parental households, further

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[17] The first generation to become adult after 1948 was particularly affected by economic pressures, in many cases working both to help parents, and educate siblings. One of the first Shateela women to become professionally employed, Fayrooz (Appendix A, case no 11), born in 1947, said that from her earliest childhood she was burdened by a sense of her family's poverty.

investments in education and, in a few cases, movement into rented or bought accommodation outside camps.[18]

Undoubtedly a large part of the early success of UNRWA's schooling programme arose from the specific moment of its launching, one of a sharp increase in oil royalties and public expenditures throughout the oil-producing countries, in most of which administrative and technical skills were in short supply. It was clearly part of UNRWA's purpose to train workers to take part in the development of the oil-producing countries.[19] UNRWA schooling helped produce the pattern whereby the more highly skilled and educated of camp youth tended to migrate, attracted by higher salaries in the oil states, leaving behind in the camps mainly manual and casual labourers, old people and children, a pattern that persists with some modifications today. This pattern emerges clearly from a survey of the Palestinian camp labour force in Lebanon, carried out in 1980, that found that 81 percent had primary certificates or less, while 39 percent were barely literate; only 5 percent had secondary or vocational certificates (2.5 percent had a university degree).[20]

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[18] Observations in Shateela suggest that such a move was confined to families with several adult, professionally employed sons.

[19] "Care was taken to ensure that vocational and technical training reflected the potential for employment in the area, and the rapid economic development of the oil states, then in its infancy, remained a formative influence in the development of training policies" (UNRWA, A Brief History, p 135).

[20] TEAM, The Palestinian Labour Force in Lebanon (Beirut, 1983), p 84. The report adds, "It is clear that in addition to whatever are the economic, social or legal forces that shape and determine the structure of Palestinian camp employment, an important additional factor is the role played by low educational standards. These keep the bulk of the labour force in menial, low skilled employment and hence receiving low salaries".

In assessing the aims and effects of UNRWA schooling, it is important to note the basic principle that the syllabus should conform to the official syllabus of each host country. Conformity to Arab syllabi, text-books and examinations was determined by the need of the refugees to live and work in these countries. It also fitted with post-independence moves throughout the Arab region to standardize and 'Arabize' educational systems. Yet, in adopting the principle of conformity to official programmes, UNRWA education also expressed the Agency's underlying mission of promoting the integration of the refugees in the Arab economies. Not only was no role allocated to Palestinian educators in the original setting up of the UNRWA programme but, over the years, practically no modification of the original programme was admitted, effectively insulating it from pressures emanating from the refugee population.[21]

Early Palestinian critiques focused on the absence from UNRWA schooling of any specifically Palestinian element, manifested in the lack of Palestinian history and geography text-books, itself a reflection of the slightness of such an element in Arabic school syllabi. Refugee recollections of the early period suggest that UNRWA schools did to a limited degree serve as focal points of nationalist sentiment: schools were given names of villages and towns in Palestine; national days were commemorated; and teachers enjoyed a small margin of freedom to 'Palestinianize' the syllabus.[22] Schools were also

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[21] M.Tayesh, retired UNRWA education inspector, Sidon, May 1992.

[22] "One of our teachers...always used to tell us nationalist stories. We liked his stories though we didn't understand their meaning until we grew older. They (teachers)

sites for the politicization of students and, in the 1960s, became launching points for protest demonstrations. However, all such activities were carried on outside the official programme, and in the face of state repression.

A different type of criticism was formulated later by a group of scholars given the task of planning a Palestinian Open University.[23] This was that UNRWA's educational programme did not address the special situation of Palestinians, as non-citizens competing with Lebanese and other Arabs in a contracting labour market. Though in two of the host countries - Jordan and Syria - the refugees enjoy the same educational and work rights as citizens (in Jordan Palestinians were given Jordanian nationality in 1949), this has not been the case anywhere else in the Arab region, where Palestinians face a growing discrimination. An education that was well adapted to economic conditions in the two decades following the war of 1948 has become less so since the 1970s, as the regional labour market has both contracted and became more discriminatory. Lebanon in particular provides an example of a labour market increasingly closed to Palestinians. A changing regional economic environment calls for a type of education more attuned to the development of camp communities.

After 1969, social institutions linked to the Resistance movement attempted to fill some of the gaps in UNRWA's educational programme, for example in the field of pre-school and out-of-school activities for children, and vocational

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weren't allowed to practise politics" (Fayrooz, Appendix A [1], no 11).

[23] UNESCO, "Palestine Open University Feasibility Study", Paris, 1980.

training and literacy classes for adults. As for UNRWA schools, the period between 1969 and 1982 was one of decline both in standards and attendance, as teachers and students were drawn into Resistance group activities, and better-off families in camps increasingly turned to private schooling.

UNRWA as employer of Palestinians

UNRWA has been a formative influence in regard to the large section of the Palestinian people that lives in the field of its operations,[24] to whom it offers quasi-governmental services, and the smaller number, around 16,000, whom it employs.[25] The structural similarity between UNRWA and the classic form of colonial government lies in the dissociation between its decision-making levels and the refugees. UNRWA's authority and funding derive from the UN Headquarters in New York, not from the people whom it administers. Its Commissioner General is appointed by, and responsible to the UN Secretary General. Decisions are taken by the Commissioner General in consultation with the major donor governments. As noted earlier, there was no space within UNRWA's structure for the representation of the collective interests of the refugees. Even after the establishment of the PLO and its admission in

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[24] UNRWA operates in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Approximately 73 percent of the Palestinian people lived in these areas in 1975.

[25] In 1982, UNRWA's area staff numbered 16,626. "Area staff are recruited locally, predominantly from Palestine refugee sources" (UNRWA, <u>A Brief History</u>, p 45.)

1974 to the UN as 'observer', it was some years before formal channels of communication were set up.[26]

Resemblance to a colonial government is most clearly expressed in the dual classification of UNRWA staff into two main categories, 'international' and 'area' (or 'local'), separated by a wide gap in status, influence, salary and allowances. All statuses above grade 13, in other words all decision-making positions, were occupied until the end of the 1970s exclusively by 'internationals'. From 1979 UNRWA began to admit a small number of 'locals' to higher levels of responsibility. The rigidity of this two-class system created resentment on the part of Palestinian employees; their subordination within the Agency was a critical factor pushing many of them to identify with the people of the camps and with nationalist demonstrations; low pay levels were another. Yet the solidarity of Palestinians working within the Agency was undermined by internal differentiation: a finely graded ranking system, accompanied by differences of pay, benefits and pensions; the difference between 'employees' and 'workers', each group with its own union; and the contractual difference between those with fixed appointments ('thabteen'), who cannot be dismissed except in special circumstances, and 'temporary' appointees, paid on a daily basis and subject to minimal notice. Combined with the difficulty for Palestinians of finding employment, competition between local staff for promotion cut across their solidarity as Palestinians, and as a subordinate group within UNRWA.

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[26] PLO sources say that unofficial contacts with UNRWA began around 1971.

With some exceptions, UNRWA in Lebanon has drawn local staff mainly from modest socio-economic strata, urban Palestinians without high educational levels, capital or business skills. Salaries initially paid to local staff were low in comparison with income from entrepreneurial activity, university teaching, or jobs with large companies. In many cases UNRWA local employees lived in low-rent areas close to camps, and were differentiated from camp inhabitants more by their urban status (a pre-capitalist class boundary that persisted into exile), than by income. The employment of camp-dwelling refugees by UNRWA was limited at the beginning by the requirement of literacy even for relatively unskilled work such as transport. Each camp had a resident Camp Services Officer, or Director, whose work was to coordinate between the Agency and camp populations. This was a salaried post with informal power attached to it. Installations and services in camps also gave rise to a number of low-level, salaried posts. Small commissions were also available, such as supplying milk powder or foodstuffs to the Feeding Centre. More highly skilled service workers - doctors, nurses, teachers - generally lived outside camps, at least until the 1970s.

Though UNRWA's Palestinian employees were disfavoured in comparison with that sector of middle class Palestinians who participated in, and benefitted from, Lebanon's 'development boom', yet from the perspective of the mass of refugees they constituted a privileged group. Being a part of the Agency gave them certain advantages that, in a refugee context, counted for much. Among the most important were: priority for limited bursaries for secondary and university study, and for places in Sibleen (UNRWA's teacher and technical training college,

established in 1963); insider information about job vacancies; and possibilities of profit (or graft) through Agency purchases of foodstuffs and materials. Since UNRWA was the main channel for the distribution of many kinds of material aid (mainly clothes) from other donors, this also gave employees opportunities for prior selection: "al-muwazifeen akaluha" ('the employees ate it') is a general refugee explanation of the insufficiency of distributions.[27]

At the beginning most UNRWA's local employees were of urban background, so that the pre-1948 class-cultural boundary between urban and rural Palestinians was reinforced in exile by the boundary between those administering UNRWA aid and services and those receiving them. Over time, as camp inhabitants acquired qualifications, this double boundary became blurred. Certain villages appear to have been particularly successful in penetrating UNRWA; though such penetration was not necessarily the result of 'strategic' decisions but rather of dozens of small favours over time based on the principle of village-and clan-solidarity, yet for the mass of refugees it underlined a general truth, that only those with connections in UNRWA could obtain anything from it. At the camp level too, UNRWA employees formed a privileged group, helping each other, as well as members of their own kin and villages, to obtain general entitlements and special benefits.

The formation of an 'UNRWA clique' in Shateela illustrates both its origins in pre-1948 village and kin ties, and its mode of self-reproduction over time. Of particular interest is the

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[27] As a volunteer relief worker during the 'Battle of the Camps' (1985-7), I had the opportunity to observe how taken-for-granted this custom was.

way the Director balanced his favour to his own 'following' with his activities on behalf of the camp as a whole. The post of Director was an important one in local terms, especially in the first years after the exodus. Not only did in-camp jobs and commissions lie mainly in the Director's hands but he also had the key voice in admitting residents to camp sites and, later, in legitimizing the rent or sale of accommodation. In the 1950s, before the establishment of Lebanese Army and police posts inside the camps, the Director also controlled order and security, and mediated between camp inhabitants and the police. Recollections of Shateela's first Director, Abed Bisher (retired 1969, died 1978), present a picture of an archetypal rural strongman. Bisher himself negotiated the donation of the Shateela camp site, and recruited its first settlers from the scattered members of his own village, Majd al-Kroom; although he did not prevent other settlers, he facilitated the settlement of his own village and close associates from other villages. Bisher's subsequent appointment as UNRWA camp Director also owed something to his link with the Mufti, who had influence over UNRWA appointments in the 1950s.

Even those who were not part of the Director's following remember him as 'good' and as taking pains, at the time of the feasts, to visit every family in the camp. At the same time, it is clear from the pattern of distribution of UNRWA posts, as well as the fortunes of the Director's family, associates, and fellow-villagers, that his position constituted a nucleus of socio-economic differentiation within the camp community. First, the Director's own family and affines constituted quite a large proportion of in-camp UNRWA employees. Many of these appointees were still in place at the beginning of fieldwork

in Shateela for this thesis in 1983, a fact that suggests that status, influence and possibly material advantages inhered in these posts in spite of low salaries. The position of Director is currently occupied by a grandson of the first Director, after passing in 1969 to a son.[28] Other members of Abed Bisher's family have acquired property and businesses, live outside the camp, and send their children to study in the United States. Of Majd al-Kroom people, only a few families still live in the camp. Such signs of differentiation suggest that Abed Bisher succeeded, through his UNRWA post, in building a following that reproduced itself over time, and improved its situation.

This brief presentation may have possibly exaggerated the 'group status' of UNRWA's Palestinian employees, who differ from each other as to grade, specialization, national politics, and personal reputation. Further, within the UNRWA bureaucracy, teachers (who are invariably Palestinian), form a sub-group that deserves special consideration because of their number, social influence and closeness to camp populations.[29] Yet the length of UNRWA's existence - more than 40 years so far - has allowed the Agency's staff to form a strong self-image and set of practices. Whatever their internal differences, UNRWA's Palestinian employees are united by their interest in the continuation of the Agency, by the status they share as UN employees, and by the measure of protection this gives them vis-a-vis Israel and the host governments. Even while

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[28] Such inheritance of official posts is not uncommon in the Middle East, especially in rural communities.

[29] The importance of teachers as camp community leaders is underlined by B. Sirhan, "Palestinian Refugee Life in Lebanon" Journal of Palestine Studies, vol lV no 2, Winter 1975.

criticizing specific aspects of the Agency's operations, its Palestinian employees perceive and represent it as a humanitarian rather than a political institution.

B. Lebanon as host

As a framework of control and integration, Lebanon differed in several fundamental respects from other Arab host countries. It was a constitutionally weak state, designed under the French Mandate to allow free play to sectarian institutions and mercantile interests.[30] Its small, professional army, and its pluralist political system, a legacy of colonialism, combined to form a framework in which control of the refugees has been precarious, diffuse and fluctuating. As a potential addition to the Sunni community, the main challengers of Maronite hegemony, the Palestinians could not but be involved in Lebanon's sectarian politics in spite of their non-national, non-citizen status. Although the state developed a range of mechanisms of control, its weakness in the face of a broad alliance of parties and movements that opposed Maronite hegemony and supported Palestinian national struggle stimulated the formation of anti-Palestinian, mainly Maronite militias. Yet in spite of the outbursts of anti-Palestinian violence it has produced, Lebanon also offered a crucial staging post for the development of the post-1948 Palestinian national movement. Its pluralist politics and relatively uncontrolled media favoured symbiosis between the two populations. In Lebanon, alone among the host countries, a broad coalition of political

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[30] See Petran for an analysis of the origins and structure of the Lebanese state: Struggle Over Lebanon, p 23-40.

groupings, the Lebanese National movement (LNM), made support for the Palestinian Resistance movement a central element in its platform.[31]

Rather than enter the complexities of Lebanese-Palestinian relations, this section will examine the three main components of the Lebanese framework that, between them, determined refugee existence: laws (or lack of them) regulating the refugee's status, rights and obligations; the state's apparatus of control; and the economic system.

The legal framework

Arab League resolutions concerning the refugees were theoretically binding on all member states: these recommended that they should keep their Palestinian identity but be granted basic civic rights, in particular the right to work. It was, however, only gradually that the Lebanese state began to deal legally with the refugees, and then it was piecemeal, by implication, with many gaps and ambiguities. In fact, no coherent code defining refugee status, rights and obligations has ever been produced, and it is this absence that is the underlying principle of the Lebanese official approach to an issue that has always been implicated in domestic politics.[32]

It was not until 1962 that a decree issued by the Ministry of Interior regulating the residence of foreigners made it clear that the refugees were considered by the Lebanese state

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[31] For the history and composition of the LNM, see Khalidi, Conflict and Violence, p 73-9. Also Petran, Struggle Over Lebanon, p 122-5.

[32] S. Natour, "The Legal Status of Palestinians in Lebanon", unpublished document (English), 1984.

as forming a special group within the 'foreigner' category, defining them as "foreigners who do not carry documents from their country of origin"[33]. It was then that residence permits were issued for the first time to registered refugees, with the obligation of annual renewal. One of the prejudicial consequences of this 1962 ruling has been the application to the refugees by default of most regulations covering foreigners, for example the necessity of their applying for permits for most kinds of work; also the principle of reciprocity which states that foreigners in Lebanon should be treated as Lebanese are treated in their country. The reciprocity principle has been invoked to exclude Palestinian workers from the benefits of the state social security system (even though contributions are deducted from their pay), on the grounds that Lebanese workers in pre-1948 Palestine did not benefit from social security.

As a category of 'foreigner', without specific rights as refugees unable to return to their country, the Palestinians were at the mercy of what PLO representative Shafiq al-Hout once called 'the politics of convenience'.[34] This meant that the state could alter regulations concerning them to suit conjunctural political or economic needs. Another consequence was the power of individual ministries to issue decrees at variance with declared government policy or previous precedent. An early example was when, in 1951, Labour and Social Affairs Minister Lahoud declared all employment of Palestinians illegal on the ground that they were working without work permits.

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[33] Ibid, p 12.

[34] S. al-Hout, interview, October 1989.

Another consequence of their classification as 'foreigners' was that Palestinian refugees were excluded from a range of employment where they would compete with national labour, for example in all public bodies, in the transport sector, and in large foreign companies.[35] In 1983, Labour Minister Mroueh extended to 50 the number of jobs that foreigners (by implication Palestinians) were barred from.[36]

Laws governing employment - the most vital for refugee existence - constituted the most confusing area in the legal system, as well as the most prejudicial in application. Although in fact there were no laws restricting non-national labour before 1964 (a consequence of Lebanon's liberal economic system and the demand of its employers for cheap, unskilled ex-patriate labour), yet as early as 1951 refugee employment was the topic of bitter debate in the Lebanese National Assembly. Soon after the arrival of the refugees, the prime minister had explicitly assured them of the right to work. Yet, as already noted, the then Minister of Labour and Social Affairs categorically refused them this right. According to the 1962 classification of the refugees as 'foreigners', their need for permits for any kind of remunerated work other than casual, daily-paid labour appears clear and binding; yet the practical application of the law offered a primary example of the 'politics of convenience', with refugee applications for work

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[35] Of the Arab host counties, Lebanon possessed the most skilled and unionized work force, and the massive influx of refugees caused a sharp drop in wage levels. It was thus natural that the state should seek to protect national labour. But sectarian politics were also involved, since the emigration rate of Christian Lebanese is higher than that of Muslims.

[36] In January 1993, Labour Minister Abdallah al-Ameen again added to jobs barred to foreigners, bringing the number of banned jobs to more than 70.

permits subject to the constraints of political and economic fluctuation, as well as individual extortion.

Laws governing the exercise of the 'free professions' - law, medicine, pharmacy and engineering - restricted this to members of associations or unions, who could only be Lebanese nationals[37]. While this stipulation did not entirely prevent middle class Palestinians from entering the professions, since they could obtain naturalization without much difficulty, it tilted them away from the unionized fields, and effectively barred these occupations to the mass of non-naturalized refugees.

Restrictions embodied in various parts of Lebanese law formed powerful pressures on the refugee labour force, pushing the greater part of it into the least regulated sectors of the economy, and a smaller part into adopting Lebanese nationality. Increasingly over time they constituted a pressure towards migration, as refugee educational levels and qualifications improved without any concomitant change in labour regulations. Only under the Cairo Accords were Palestinian rights to employment recognized, a recognition only applied during the period of Palestinian Resistance movement autonomy (1969-1982).

Naturalization (as a recourse to overcome employment restrictions, as well as those on travel and, later, on property ownership), was easily obtainable by Christian Palestinians during the presidency of Chamoun (1952-58); for Muslim Palestinians it was harder, but if they could afford

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[37] Natour, "Legal Status", gives the dates of laws regulating the professions as follows: Pharmacy, 1950; Engineering, 1951; Law, 1970; Medicine and Dentistry, 1979. Yet oral histories of camp Palestinians show that they were aware from the beginning that they could not practise these professions.

lawyers' fees and prove Lebanese ancestry, this option was also available to them. However, ease of naturalization ended in the early 1960s. Lebanese naturalization law is governed by concern for the sectarian equilibrium, with the result that each individual application must be approved by the entire cabinet, a condition that effectively excluded all Palestinians from Lebanese nationality, apart from exceptional individual cases, after the beginning of Kata'eb participation in government under President Chehab (1958-1964). Natour notes that though, as 'foreigners', Palestinians should be eligible to apply for Lebanese citizenship after five years' residence, or if married to a Lebanese woman, in fact these openings are not applied to them.[38]

In regard to the operation by foreigners of businesses or companies, and to the ownership of property, Lebanese law in the 1950s was exceptionally liberal. Non-Lebanese employers were supposed to obtain work permits but, unlike the countries of the Gulf, they were not obliged to have a Lebanese partner.[39] The possession of LL50,000 (about $17,000) working capital was sufficient, on condition that at least three Lebanese were employed. Foreigners could also form joint venture companies if each partner provided a similar sum, and as long as the company employed three Lebanese to every one non-Lebanese.[40] Of cash and capital transferred outside by Palestinians at the time of the exodus, a considerable

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[38] Natour, "Legal Status", p 33/4.

[39] This stipulation was introduced under the Hariri government that assumed office in October 1992.

[40] Natour, "Legal Status", p 18. Non-Lebanese employers must also hold work-permits.

proportion found its way to Lebanon.[41] With time new legislation has been brought in to restrict foreigners' rights to own immovable property, or set up businesses.

In conclusion, it is clear from this brief summary that the legal status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon differed radically both from their status as citizens in pre-1948 Mandate Palestine, and from their status in other Arab host countries.

The state apparatus of control

The different bodies established by the Lebanese state to manage the refugees show a clear development towards articulation with bodies concerned with national security; and increasing involvement of the president's office. The earliest official body, set up by the al-Solh government during the al-Khoury presidency, was the Central Committee of Refugee Affairs, directed by Georges Haimari essentially towards relief in cooperation with UNRWA. It was replaced in 1959 by the Directorate of Palestine Refugee Affairs, a section within the Ministry of Interior, with a regulatory role: registering change of status (marriage, birth, and so on), processing applications for travel documents or transfer from one camp to another, designating and leasing camp sites. A year later, in 1960, a Higher Authority for Palestinian Affairs was set up under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to provide a coordinating mechanism between bodies of the state

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[41] Sayigh's contemporary assessment suggests that the largest amount of Palestinian capital transfers went to Amman, with Beirut coming second ("Implications of UNRWA Operations", p 26-7).

such as the President's Office, the Ministry of National Defence, the Palestine section within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Army's Intelligence Bureau, and UNRWA.[42] This new high-level body reflected the growing anxiety of the Chehabian regime over the 'de-stabilizing' potential of the refugees.[43]

It was under President Chehab that control of the camps shifted from the police to the Army's Intelligence Bureau. The Army had occasionally been used in the early years of refugee settlement, for example to transfer them from agglomerations near Tyre to areas more distant from the Israeli border. The Army also acted to remove Palestinians from the border villages (declared a prohibited military zone in the early 1950s), and to prevent their cross-border movement. But President Chamoun is said to have relied on the Department of General Security rather than the Army for political information and control, and the camps during his presidency were left under the jurisdiction of the nearest police post. Under Chehab, however, police and Army Intelligence Bureau offices were set up inside every camp. Under a standing Emergency Law reactivated after the attempted PPS coup of 1961, homes could be broken into and searched without a magistrate's warrant, and persons suspected of illicit activities detained. Though the Act was not specifically targeted against Palestinians, it was mainly applied in the camps to harass political activists and

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[42] Natour, "Legal Status", p 8-9.

[43] PLO representative al-Hout tells an anecdote: when he complained to President Chehab of Army brutality, the President said to him, "We have a hard time controlling 100,000 Druzes. What do you expect us to do with 250,000 Palestinians all tuned in to Sawt al-Arab?" (interview, October 1989). (Sawt al-'Arab was an Arab nationalist, pro-Palestinian radio programme broadcast from Cairo.)

intimidate the rest. Not only were all activities deemed political forbidden (such as meetings, distributing pamphlets, listening to the Cairo radio station Sawt al-'Arab, reading certain newspapers, or putting up pictures of President Nasser), but so also were expanding or repairing homes, and building concrete roofs or private cesspits. The smallest repairs required a permit; fines were imposed for allowing washing water to trickle into streets; supplies of piped water and electricity were restricted. These measures were not the subject of law or ministerial decree, but were imposed de facto by the Palestinian section of the Army's Intelligence Bureau.

The presence of the Lebanese authorities inside the camps brought about their closer knowledge of, and involvement in, intra-community and intra-household relations. Kin, conjugal and friendship ties were brought into play in attempts to isolate political activists and coerce them to give up their activities. In the case of one Arab National movement activist living in Shateela, his wife was advised to divorce him; when this failed, hints of rape were used in an effort to force him to stay home to protect her. Fathers were told to keep their sons out of politics lest harm befall them. Collaborators and informers were recruited, engendering mutual suspicion and eroding community solidarity. To imprint the message of their total control over camp populations, the Lebanese authorities used a sexual metaphor, "We know whenever any man sleeps with his wife".[44] Loss of domestic privacy expresses here an extreme of political subordination.

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[44] S. al-Hout, October 1989.

During the camp uprisings of 1969, the forces of the state withdrew from inside the camps and, in accordance with the Cairo Accords, their defence and control passed into the hands of a Palestinian force seconded from the Palestine Liberation Army.

Economic pressures and constraints

The following examination of the Lebanese economy as a source of constraints and pressures on the Palestinian refugees shall exclude from review middle class urban refugees who brought to Lebanon capital and skills that were readily absorbed into the economy in a phase of expansion. Both in initial reception and subsequent development the history of the middle and upper bourgeoisie has been quite different from that of the mass of refugees of rural or poor urban origin. Indeed this separation was largely legal in origin, with Lebanese labour laws operating to constrain Palestinian capital to employ Lebanese labour, while cheap, non-unionized refugee labour benefitted Lebanese capital. Recollections from the early days show that penalties against employers giving jobs to Palestinians were severe.

As already noted, the operation of the labour laws pressed the refugee workforce into labour designated as 'casual', mainly seasonal agriculture and construction. Such pressures were reinforced by two other factors: i) the precedent economic history and capacities of the refugee masses; and ii) coordination between UNRWA and the Lebanese state in the zoning of camp sites and provision of refugee labour for public works. The structure of the Lebanese economy, characterized by its

orientation towards trade, finance and services, neglect of
industry and agriculture, and high rates of unemployment, also
placed severe limitations on the employment of refugee labour,
particularly in the first decade, before the provision of
schooling to camps produced its results. Pre-exodus occupations
are suggested by the rural origins of the majority of the
refugees (67 percent of those entering Lebanon), and the even
larger proportion (73 percent) that had previously worked in
'extractive' or 'constructive' labour.[45] In Lebanon, certain
camps were zoned in rural areas (principally in the South and
the Beqa',) with the intention of making refugee labour
available for agriculture. Other camps were situated close to
the coastal cities, providing labour for the building boom of
the 1950s and early 1960s. Public works constituted an
important outlet during the early years, when refugee labour
was supplied for the large-scale projects for which Chamoun's
presidency was famous - the international airport, autostradas,
boulevards, and a Sports City. The use of refugee labour in
construction conformed to the tendency of the economy to
'ethnic' specialization, with all manual, poorly paid wage
labour the province of non-national workers (Kurds, Syrians,
Palestinians). Private construction formed a more long-term,
remunerative outlet for men in camps sited near cities, giving
rise to that specialization in the building trades that still
characterizes camp labour today. Most remained at the level of
specialized free-lance workers (house-painters, tile-layers,
carpenters, and so on), with a minority evolving into small
contractors.

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[45] Sayigh, "Implications of UNRWA Operations", p 15 and
Appendix C, item 1V.

The third sector into which the operation of the work permit system pressed refugee workers was into small trade and crafts serving camp communities. In Shateela, small shops began while people were still in tents - shop-keeping was and has remained a favoured occupation for older men, one in which wives usually cooperate. Beginning with vegetables and fruits, general groceries and cloth, commerce in camps has grown and diversified, reflecting a rise, however slow, in capital accumulation and spending power. The stratification of commerce in the larger urban camps such as Tell al-Za'ter (destroyed in 1976), or 'Ain Helweh, near Sidon, shows three distinct levels: a small group of relatively wealthy rentier-businessmen (referred to by camp people as zenaqeel); small shop-owners; and ambulatory and pavement sellers, a category that Mundus, in his 1979 study of Tell al-Za'ter, found to compose 3 percent of the labour force.[46]

As to industry, its small size relative to the total economy acted to prevent the entry of Palestinian refugee labour even after their acquisition of technical skills. Even as late as 1960, industry contributed only 13 percent to Gross National Product and employed only 50,000 workers (about 9 percent of the Lebanese labour force).[47] It thus formed a privileged sector, one largely closed to non-national labour. Only in one camp, Tell al-Za'ter, sited near to a major industrial zone, was a majority of camp labour (60 percent) employed in industry. But Mundus notes that, out of a total of

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[46] H. Mundus, <u>Al-'Amal wa al-'Umal fi al-Mukhayem al-Filasteeni</u> (Beirut: Palestine Research Centre, 1974).

[47] M. Hudson, <u>Lebanon: Precarious Republic</u> (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p 67-8.

1,355 Tell al-Za'ter industrial workers, only 50, or 3.6 percent, were employed in factories employing 50 or more workers, the rest working in small establishments where conditions were minimally regulated. As non-national, non-unionized labour, Palestinians were paid lower wages, and did not enjoy benefits such as sick leave, or compensation for injury. They could also be dismissed without compensation. Thus, even though a small sector of younger refugee workers acquired industrial skills as machine operators and repairers, this was generally in the context of small enterprises in or on the edge of camps. Before the advent of the Resistance movement-sponsored economy the number of productive enterprises in camps was small, usually household-based and restricted to a very few commodities in common demand such as foodstuffs, shoes, or coffins. Experience of industrial organization, whether as workers or managers, was limited to the brief period of Resistance autonomy when the productive complex Samed set up factories producing furniture, clothing, leather goods and foodstuffs, employing at its peak more than 2,000 permanent employees and workers, as well as 4,000 mainly women 'piece-workers'.

Reporting on the characteristics of the Palestinian labour force after 30 years of exile in Lebanon, a survey notes: "The occupational distribution of the camp labour force in 1980 exhibits overwhelmingly 'blue-collar' characteristics".[48] The report adds that not only do a majority of workers (51 percent) work in the productive sectors - agriculture, industry and construction - but that even in the services sector, a high

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[48] TEAM, "Labour Force", p 76.

proportion of Palestinian workers are occupationally 'blue-collar', working in less skilled, manual and menial tasks. As noted earlier, the report also remarks on the low educational level of the employed work force.

What these survey findings underline is, first, the way that structural constraints generated by the Lebanese labour laws and stratified economy have pressed camp workers into the lowest paid, least regulated levels of the economy, that is, the 'informal sector'. Second, they point to the way these constraints have put pressure, in combination with the attraction of higher salaries in the oil-producing countries, on the most highly skilled technical and professional workers to emigrate. Even after the end of the 'development boom' in the Gulf, and the beginning of constraints on the entry of Palestinian workers, war and insecurity in Lebanon have created strong migratory pressures on skilled and unskilled alike. Thus, though Palestinian workers have acquired education and skills in Lebanon, they have been largely constrained to use them elsewhere. From the perspective of the refugee community, Lebanon has constituted a platform of re-emigration that has most strongly affected the most active and qualified sector of the population. Though earnings have been sent back, the costs in terms of alienation and family rupture have been high.

The rise of the Resistance movement and its transfer to Lebanon engendered political constraints that added to already existing economic ones to reduce the degree and level of Palestinian participation in the Lebanese economy still further. Politically caused closure is most dramatically exemplified by the expulsion of thousands of Palestinian workers from the 'Maronite enclave' during the Civil War of

1975-6, with accompanying massacres.[49] This displacement accentuated an already existent feature of the zoning of the refugee camps in relation to Lebanon's sectarian 'map', that most were located in predominantly Muslim, less economically developed areas. The development of a separate, 'Palestinian economy' between 1976 and 1982, employing an estimated 65 percent of the Palestinian workforce, was largely in response to such attacks and exclusions. Even in predominantly Muslim areas, Palestinian workers found it harder to obtain jobs after the early 1970s.[50]

In conclusion to this section on constraints generated by the Lebanese state, it is important to discriminate between official policies and popular attitudes towards the refugees. In colonial states and societies with immigrant minorities, socio-cultural boundaries between superordinate and subordinate groups interact with state policies to maintain subordination. The inapplicability of the colonial and immigrant minority models to the Palestinians' situation in Lebanon shows up most clearly in the slightness of socio-cultural boundaries between the national and refugee populations. Even politically, there have been as many bases for fusion as for hostility. Lebanese anti-Palestinianism has been primarily political and sectarian in origin, and has become violent only in moments of sectarian mobilization. Individual hostility or discrimination encountered by Palestinians in Lebanon have arisen mainly from

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[49] Higher levels of industry and construction in East Beirut and its suburbs attracted a large number of Palestinian and Lebanese Shi'ite workers. Their camps and shanty-towns were razed by the Rightist Maronite militias in 1976.

[50] As an example, the Maqassad, a large Sunni medical-educational institution that had trained and employed many Palestinians in the early years, stopped doing so around 1970.

two sources: class tension, and the Palestinians' non-national status, which deprives them of protection within Lebanon's class-sectarian system.

C. The Palestinian national movement in relation to the camps

In 1969, as a result of camp uprisings supported by the Lebanese National movement, the Army's Deuxieme Bureau abandoned its positions inside the camps. Palestinian-Lebanese relations were now officially regulated by the Cairo Accords, which recognized Palestinian national rights (including Resistance movement operations from South Lebanon), and the right of the camps to autonomy.[51] In 1970-1, as a result of confrontations with the Jordanian Army, the Resistance movement transferred the bulk of its forces to Lebanon, setting up its headquarters close to Sabra and Shateela. Shateela became part of the mantaqa ra'isiyya (chief locality) of the PLO/Resistance movement and LNM domain, and the site of Resistance training schools, offices and projects.

Whereas UNRWA and the Lebanese state formed external, non-representative and coercive frameworks, the PLO/Resistance movement was identified with by Palestinians of the camps as 'our revolution'. Indeed the question of the responses of camp families to the national movement's mobilizational pressures is interesting precisely because of the degree of identification between the two. For the Resistance movement, also, the camps had a particular importance: as a 'liberated

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[51] Khalidi gives the full text of the Cairo Accords (not published at the time) in Conflict and Violence, Appendix 1, p 185-6.

zone' and substitute for a national territory; as source of fighters, and of support for specific Resistance group stands.

We need to note that even during its years of autonomy, from 1969 to 1982, the PLO/Resistance movement did not totally replace UNRWA or the Lebanese state in control of the camps, but coexisted with them in an uneasy, often openly conflictual relationship. UNRWA continued its routine functions, but was forced by the altered political situation to take the PLO/Resistance movement into account as a political force on the ground. As noted earlier, semi-official contacts between the two bodies began from 1971. The Resistance encouraged camp populations to demand improved services; Resistance consent was required for UNRWA staff to enter camps. Inter-Resistance group rivalry also affected UNRWA appointments and promotions; educational standards suffered as both teachers and students were drawn into Resistance activities. Though critical of the Agency's inadequacies, the Resistance leadership did not aim to supplant it, but, rather, assumed its basic services in planning (or in some cases not planning) its own.[52]

As for the Lebanese state, the Cairo Accords, while recognizing Palestinian national and civic rights, also reaffirmed Lebanese sovereignty, and prescribed that camps should be controlled by Palestinian police units in cooperation

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[52] Among social institutions developed by the PLO/Resistance movement, medical services were prioritized. Workshops and productive projects were also well developed, as was the field of pre-school education; post-preparatory education was liberally subsidized. In spite of its criticisms of UNRWA's syllabus, however, the movement produced little historical reading material for school or popular use.

with the Lebanese authorities.[53] Outside the camps, the Army's Deuxieme Bureau continued to pursue Resistance and LNM activists; clashes with the Army and the Maronite militias increased in frequency. An episode of fighting in which Shateela was involved was the hawades ayar ('events of May') in 1973, when the Army besieged camps near Beirut, using the air force to strafe Shateela. Though relations between the Lebanese state and the PLO/Resistance movement continued to deteriorate, yet the pluralism of both structures always left channels of communication and dialogue.[54]

The pluralist structure of the post-1948 Palestinian national movement deeply affected its action at the level of the camps. The PLO was an official, representative 'entity', established in 1964 by the Arab League under pressure from President Nasser; a later Arab summit (Rabat, 1974) recognized it as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The Resistance movement, originating in clandestinity, was aimed at armed struggle, and appeared to many Palestinians as more independent than the PLO. Although the PLO and Resistance movement were formally fused in 1969, when Fateh leader Yasser Arafat was elected Chairman of the PLO at the fifth National Assembly, the two remained distinct in origins, ethos, and approach to the camps. The PLO's activities were political and diplomatic rather than mobilizational, and its

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[53] The Kifah Musellah (Armed Struggle) was an acting police detachment formed from the Palestine Liberation Army. The Accords specified that the Kifah would work "in cooperation with Local Committees to ensure good relations with the Lebanese authorities" (Khalidi, Conflict and Violence, p 185-6).

[54] See Brynen for details of Lebanese-Palestinian relations in this period: Sanctuary and Survival, p 53-71.

presence in the camps was slight in comparison with that of the Resistance groups.

The Resistance (or Armed Struggle) movement took shape as an assembly of small, secret groups, each with its own leadership, origins, history, strategic ideological 'line', Arab state support, and Palestinian following.[55] Brought together by a common nationalism and situation, as well as membership in the PNC and PLO Executive Committee, the Resistance groups have differed deeply over long-term goals, strategies, and positions on international and Arab issues. Of the seven or eight groups represented in the PLO Executive Committee in 1969, only three had roots in the camps in Lebanon: the PFLP (in its pre-1968 form as the Arab Nationalist movement), Fateh and Sa'eqa. But after the liberation of the camps in 1969, all the other groups rapidly opened offices and began to recruit, among them the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA), which formed a popular militia. To add to confusion, each group had its own security apparatus, while different branches of the largest group, Fateh, also opened offices in the camps that acted independently of each other.

The internal disunity of the PRM had a number of negative consequences for the people of the camps: armed clashes; competition for membership; absence of a coherent plan of mass mobilization; improvisation, and replication of socio-cultural projects. However unavoidable, the conflictual character of the Resistance movement frustrated camp people's aspirations for national unity, as well as wasting lives and resources. Yet the

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[55] See Cobban, <u>Palestine Liberation Organization</u>, for histories of each of the Resistance groups; also Y. Sayigh, "The Palestinians: Politics of Exile", <u>Third World Quarterly</u>, vol 9 no 1, January 1987.

Resistance constituted a powerful force for the ideological, political and material transformation of the camps.

Structures of control and communication

No simple description can be given of the structure of control in the domain of the PLO/Resistance movement. Just as formal agreements between the PLO and Lebanese authorities had little effect on the ground, so, at all levels within the PLO/LNM alliance, and within the PLO/Resistance movement itself, there was a state of continual contestation. If ultimate decision lay with Chairman Arafat, as controller of the largest budget and military force, this was a power that he often could not, or chose not to, use. If we take Shateela as illustration of the question of control of the camps, we find a plurality of bodies vying with each other to exercise rights of access and representation: for example, the authority of the Kifah Musellah was contested by certain Resistance groups.[56] Eventually, a formula was found integrating the Resistance groups into the Kifah in a single supervisory unit, while informal consultations with the camp's Popular Committee smoothed its relations with the people of the camp. In practice, each Resistance group exercised de facto jurisdiction over its own members.[57]

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[56] Criticisms of the Kifah involve two main issues: first, Resistance groups opposed to Fateh resisted the Kifah's early attempts to limit their autonomy. Second, the Kifah were accused of behaving in an authoritarian way towards the people of the camps.

[57] For a case study in Shateela, see J. Peteet, "Socio-Political Integration and Conflict Resolution in a Palestinian Refugee Camp", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol 16 no 2, Winter 1987.

However limited by each other and by the Kifah Musellah, individual Resistance groups also constituted small domains within the broader PLO/Resistance movement, each with its own structures of control and communication in the camps: offices and bases, local political and military leaders, security units, memberships, clienteles, and projects. The positive aspect of Resistance pluralism was that it permitted a rapid integration of camp people into the national movement, one that offered positions of responsibility to a much larger number than a monolithic structure would have allowed. On the other hand, the proliferation of small powers in a disarticulated structure was retrospectively viewed as chaotic and self-defeating.

Popular Committees in the camps were officially decreed by the PLO in 1973, but had been in existence under other names since the camp uprisings of 1969, and even before.[58] The Popular Committees' composition and tasks were laid down in the PLO decree, which also allocated them small budgets for the improvement of material conditions. The capacity of the Popular Committees for representing camp populations was vitiated by those points in their constitution that specified a fixed proportion of Resistance group representation, Fateh chairmanship, and a limitation of their role to one of executing PLO/Resistance policies. Yet though

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[58] These local committees went through several metamorphoses: their embryo can be seen in Shateela in the unofficial Mosque committee formed a year or two before the uprising, and in 'neighbourhood committees' formed during it. Immediately afterwards, a Unified Command was set up composed of local Resistance leaders, the UNRWA director, and respected senior men of the camp.

political representation was not part of its mandate, Shateela's Popular Committee did on occasion act as a channel of communication between the population of the leadership. The man who combined the position of UNRWA camp Director with a leading role in the Popular Committee said:

> I kept the wujaha' [notables], as my father had done, to solve problems, and as witnesses. Let's say I want to meet Abu Ammar [Chairman Arafat] because there's a problem, I'd put them in my car and go to the offices, and I could talk strongly because I had them with me. They are the fathers and uncles of the feda'yeen, they are the owners of the camp and the reservoir of the 'Revolution'.[59]

Between 1976 and 1982, there were moves to make Popular Committees more representative by adding 'independents', and, more radically, by holding elections. However, such developments were aborted by the Israeli invasion of 1982.

Besides these formal mechanisms and channels of control and communication, there were unstructured means for the transmission of popular complaints to the national movement leadership. The accessibility of Resistance leaders to 'the masses' was an important part of its ideology, and is demonstrated by the practice described above, of encouraging popular delegations to represent camp populations to the leadership. Formed from respected senior figures, such delegations point to the existence of a moral and social collectivity, al-ahali al-mukhayem (the families of the camp); however reduced the authority of the shuyyukh (old men) and wujaha' (clan and village notables) who represented the 'families', the Resistance movement clearly did not want to alienate them. In addition, whether to contain challenges from the leftist Resistance groups, or to appease conservative

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[59] Quoted in R. Sayigh, Too Many Enemies: the Palestinian Experience in Lebanon (Zed Press, forthcoming).

opinion in the camps, Fateh made moves after 1976 to reinstate the authority of the _wujaha'_ stratum.[60]

Transformation of the camps

The first popular response to political liberation was to expand homes - upwards and outwards - in ways that corresponded with repressed needs for space and privacy. Forbidden before, cement roofs were laid as the foundation for upper storeys; walls were built to demarcate and protect domestic territory; private latrines and washrooms were installed. This outburst of private construction remains a central theme in Shateela people's recollections twenty years later, and stamps the beginning of PLO/Resistance autonomy with a moment of family expansion and celebration. Camps began to lose their stigma of special poverty.

Public space was both created and politicized, a process that took many forms: the raising of the Palestinian flag; the opening of Resistance group offices; the allocation of areas for military training. The larger groups gave their names to the _ahyya_ (neighbourhoods) around their head offices (in Shateela, a certain neighbourhood is still called 'Iqleem Fateh', another 'Maktab Siyasi' after the PFLP, and a third

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[60] Evidence comes from a local Shateela Fateh 'responsible': "If we wanted something we gathered the old men and told them, 'We want this', and they did it. Then we...moved our (Fateh) meetings to the _diwan_ (guest-room) of Abu Ahmad Sa'eed...The leadership of the camp and the politics of the camp were there". (Abu Ahmad was a Shateela notable who took over informal leadership after the death of the first Director, Abed Bisher.) The Fateh 'responsible' goes on to describe how Abu Ahmad Sa'eed visited all the Resistance leaders to complain of abuses.

'Iqleem Dimokratiyyeh' after the DFLP.[61] Social influence as well as political-military boundaries were mapped by these names: Resistance group members were supposed not to carry weapons outside their own group's 'territory'; Resistance offices also exercised an informal influence over, and responsibility for, households in their vicinity, extending various types of patronage. Though the political arena created by the Resistance was concentrated in specific sites such as offices and training grounds, mobilization was diffused from these throughout the camps and its environs, so that homes and streets were also transformed, becoming the sites of continual political discussion, recruitment, and conflict.

After the Civil War of 1975-6, the PLO/Resistance movement embarked on a second phase of public construction marked by its ambition and comprehensiveness, including military, medical, productive, cultural and recreational facilities. Spreading into Lebanese neighbourhoods, this public building programme expressed PLO power more concretely and visibly than in the past. Thus Palestinians were endowed with a varied and comprehensive public domain, including hospitals, a weapons production unit, factories, cadre schools, prisons, public bakeries, creches, art and handicraft exhibition centres, and sports clubs. The psycho-political importance of this domain can be gauged from the words of an UNRWA head teacher, spoken in 1991, who called it a 'bi'a thalath' ('third environment', that is, public domain), of which, as stateless refugees, Palestinians had been deprived before 1969. As illustration of

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[61] Iqleem means 'area' and has both geographic and political connotations; maktab siyasi means 'political office', referring in this case to the PFLP area headquarters.

the post-1982 return of refugee constraints, the teacher pointed to a small concrete school yard where children were doing Swedish drill.[62]

The Resistance movement and the 'family domain'

The Resistance movement penetrated the family domain in camp milieus directly in two principle ways: i) through recruitment of members; and ii) through programmes and services directed towards families. In addition, it generated an 'atmosphere' of dynamism and contestation which indirectly affected inter- and intra-family relations.

Direct mobilization: The most radical way through which the Resistance entered the family domain was through recruitment of members. In the early period of clandestinity, the major Resistance groups were formed of hierarchical levels of small cells. Each base cell was connected to other base cells, as well as to higher levels, through a cell leader, or 'responsible', who initiated and supervised new members. Designed to prevent penetration, this small cell structure and its internal relations closely resembled those of a family. The 'responsible', charged with a function known in Arabic as <u>itrabba</u> (to bring up, rear), was like a father, while the ties

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[62] Abu Othman, October 1991. Swedish drill is a minimal form of exercise for children, once widely practised in European schools, now found mainly in the Third World.

between cell and group members were modelled on those of brothers.[63]

It needs to be noted, also, that the experience of being 'organized', that is, to become a full member of a Resistance group, was originally structured so as to be regenerative and educational. Groups differed in the seriousness of their training programmes for members, but in the early days, at least in Fateh and the PFLP, candidates for membership were put through a rigorous period of probation and political education. The discipline, tasks and fraternal solidarity inculcated by group membership were explicitly designed to produce an alteration of personality and wider socio-cultural change.

During the probation period, aspirants to membership had to pass through a period of indoctrination and testing, during which they were required to learn Palestinian history as well as the ideology, history and rules of their group; in addition, they were given tasks such as organizing a demonstration, or conducting a meeting.[64] Such long initiation periods were intended to create in members a strong sense of <u>intima'</u> <u>tanzeemi</u> (organizational belonging), as well as strong bonds of solidarity. Though not explicitly directed against the family, the building of the group created in its members an alternative source of identification and fraternity. It was not incidental that, on being accepted into a Resistance group, members were given an <u>ism al-harakeh</u> (movement name). Thus, in

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[63] The family atmosphere was furthered by the Resistance practice of naming leaders '<u>abu-fulan</u>' (father of so-and-so), and fellow members <u>akh</u> (brother).

[64] The source is an early Fateh militant, responsible for the Sabra/Shateela area. Comparing early strictness with later laxity, he used an interesting metaphor, "We were the bones of the movement".

the beginning, the groups were sharply separated from the family domain by their secrecy and rules. Adhesion to a group was given an even deeper emotional significance if it was achieved in the face of paternal opposition. The strength of ties between members of the same group was often expressed as being as strong as, or stronger than, those of the family. Conversely, Resistance group members often stressed that kin ties had no special value for them.

After 1969, in conditions of 'open' struggle, the Resistance groups rapidly lost the discipline and secrecy that had made them a separate domain within camp communities. Yet we may see membership in the Resistance as implicitly threatening camp families in three analytically distinct ways: first, the possibility of death as a consequence of <u>feda'yeen</u> activity threatened household economies and the reproduction of family 'lines'; second, the loyalty and obedience demanded by the Resistance groups threatened the authority of fathers and senior kinsmen; and third, the ethos of the early Resistance movement, emphasizing 'modern' values of discipline, rationality and planned action, set it in implicit antithesis to the ethos of the peasant camp family.[65]

Reactions to these implicit threats on the part of camp families were suppressed, whether by identification with the Resistance, by hopes of return to Palestine, or by fear of criticism. Parents who tried to prevent their sons from joining the Resistance were thrust aside by the revolutionary

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[65] Though Resistance discourse praised the people of the camps for their fidelity to Palestinian peasant culture, radical intellectuals also viewed camp families as reproducing 'backwardness', and as constituting an obstacle to the mobilization of youth (B. Sirhan, interview, March 1991).

enthusiasm of the <u>shebab</u> (young men), who were proud to say that they had joined the Resistance in spite of the opposition of their parents.[66] Towards the end of the 1970s, various conservative forces came into play, containing or reversing the disruptive effects on family relations of Resistance mobilization. Some of these originated in families themselves, others in the conservative wing of the national movement, yet others in regional developments.

While young men were the primary target of early Resistance recruitment, other sectors of camp populations were also affected by direct mobilization. For example, Fateh organized its members into sections based on age and gender, with older men placed in a special <u>fassil</u> (chapter, section), with its own uniform, club, and place at the head of celebratory marches. Fateh and other groups also had separate sections for women, <u>shabeebi</u> (adolescents), and children. The leftist groups theoretically made no distinction between male and female members, but in practice they used Women's Bureaus to work among women at the camp level.

Resistance programmes directed towards children contained explicit or implicit 'reformist' intentions. Terms such as the 'new Palestinian', the 'new generation', and the 'generation of the Revolution' were part of the language of the Resistance movement. Much as the Zionist movement's concept 'the new Jew' produced a Manichean-like dissociation in historical time, between a past of passivity and defeat and a present of

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[66] This was how young men spoke in Bourj Barajneh in 1973-4 when I first did fieldwork there. After 1982, in Shateela, I heard stories of how fathers had brought back sons who had gone to military training camps without their permission. This different emphasis suggests the change in political/cultural climate between the pre- and post-1982 periods.

dynamism and victory, so the early Resistance movement wielded the 'new Palestinian' concept to build militants and revolutionaries. Such a language was a powerful mobilizing force, especially when directed towards Palestinians who had grown up in the refugee camps. It was institutionalized in the ashbal (lion cubs), a Fateh training programme for children that was later replicated by other groups, and which included paramilitary, physical, political and educational components. Though it declined in Lebanon, the ashbal movement was nonetheless interesting in its aim of providing a unifying framework for Palestinian children separated by region and class. It also included a section for girls (the zohrat, flowers). Though military training was a basic aim of the ashbal movement, it was part of a broader national drive to ameliorate social conditions for camp children. This campaign took varied forms - kindergartens, libraries, recreational clubs, music and dance courses - and was impelled by varied purposes - nationalist, social reformist, and partisan. Independent social associations took part in it as well as the Resistance movement.

The question of the effects of the Resistance movement on women and gender ideology in the camps needs to be placed at the intersection between the movement as structure and ideology, and the reactions of families in camps to crisis and Resistance mobilization. The question is complicated by complexity on both sides of the equation: by the internal diversity of the movement, as well as shifts over time in predominant strategies; and at the camp level, by social status, ideological, and family structural differences that were overlaid but not eliminated by the predominant nationalist

ethos. The way that shifts in national leadership strategy affected women and gender ideology is illustrated by comparison between the Resistance movement in Jordan and in Lebanon. In the earlier phase, the movement's strategy of 'people's war' was radical in its implications for social and familial relations, involving women in every aspect of struggle, including feda'yeen operations. In Lebanon, the leadership's growing emphasis on 'diplomatic struggle' removed women from the military sector, while its expansion of proto-state institutions and services incorporated them in multiple civilian capacities. At the same time, the hardships of life in the camps caused by continual war required from women in particular the exercise of sumood (steadfastness, staying put), a quality with religious-national connotations already associated with women (Peteet, 1991, p 153). As mobilizing concept, sumood emphasizes the preservation of existing social relations, whether of class, age, or gender, in a communal effort to survive an imbalance of forces.[67]

In general the Resistance movement held back from launching campaigns to change gender ideology, though occasionally called on to do so by 'feminist' elements within the GUPW. The conservative wing of the movement argued that women should take part in national struggle in 'traditional' ways. The centrist position was that, through participating in national struggle, women would liberate themselves. Even the leftist PFLP proposed that women's liberation should be postponed until after a socialist revolution.

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[67] S. Tamari calls attention to the conservative implications of sumood as national strategy in "The Palestinian Movement in Transition: Historical Reversals and the Uprising", Journal of Palestine Studies vol XX no 2, Winter 1991.

Thus though the impact of Resistance mobilization on women in the camps was profound and multifaceted, it worked on their subjectivities rather than through change in social attitudes, or in the objective framework of their lives. The opposition of most families to their (unmarried) daughters becoming members of Resistance groups did not fundamentally change, though weakened by continual war-crisis. The General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) provided an appropriate framework for mobilizing women in the camps, but its work was frustrated by many factors, including intra-Resistance group conflict and war disruption.[68] Change in values governing gender practice was individual rather than general. Women's many active forms of participation in national struggle (for example, in the defence of camps), did not diminish public scrutiny of their behaviour, nor pressures on them to marry and bear children, nor did it alter the domestic division of labour.[69]

On the other hand, the politicization of all space in camps - streets, workshops, schools, homes - impinged even on women constrained from active membership in an organized structure. There were social actions that became political in the context of national struggle, and that involved women as members of communities. Even women who had never joined a mass demonstration attended the funerals of shuhada' ('martyrs'),[70]

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[68] See R. Sayigh, "Palestinian Women Organize: Lebanon 1969-1982", J. Tucker ed., Women and Arab Society: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

[69] See Peteet, Gender in Crisis, p 132-141, and 183-198.

[70] The word shaheed (martyr) is etymologically linked to shahida (to witness), and has Islamic connotations. Palestinians have used it since Mandate times for those killed in the course of national struggle.

and paid condolence visits to the bereaved, social obligations prescribed by communal solidarity. Most women knitted or cooked for the fighters, and sent them gifts at the time of the religious feasts. In a process that Peteet terms the 'politicization of domesticity', women re-inscribed their domestic tasks as 'part of struggle', and spoke of themselves as 'giving sons' to the movement.[71] Deeper change also began to be manifested towards the end of the period of PLO/ Resistance autonomy: whereas in the early 1970s it was hard to find even in the Beirut camps a single woman member of a Resistance group (some may have been secret members), by 1982 there existed even in the rural camps a small corps of women cadres. After 1982, in a parallel development, a nucleus of professional women of camp origin could be found in charge of social institutions - workshops, clinics, kindergartens - a structural change denoting a real shift in power.

Family support programmes: The development of the PLO/ Resistance 'public domain' was in itself a referential and institutional support for the reproduction of Palestinian families.[72] Necessitated by conflict, and by growing restrictions on the employment of Palestinians, a high proportion of projects within the PLO/Resistance framework was directed to support of families. This is true of the whole productive sector, a network of factories and workshops in and near camps intended to generate employment. The free health

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[71] Peteet, <u>Gender in Crisis</u>, p 183-6.

[72] This became very clear after 1982, when the evacuation of the Resistance movement and subsequent decline in PLO services and subsidies shifted the cost of reproduction back upon individual families, causing severe economic hardship.

services offered by the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) included gynecological and pediatric hospital sections, and mother and child clinics in camps.[73] PLO supplementary educational services - pre-school schooling, cultural and recreational clubs for school-age children, secondary school and university scholarships - directly supported family reproduction at the camp level. A fourth kind of family support was the indemnities and pensions offered in the case of death, disablement or imprisonment of wage-earners, or for war-caused damage to homes, or productive equipment.

After 1982, in a radically changed political environment, the Resistance was accused of having corrupted the people of the camps through an over-indulgent distribution of benefits. While it is true that many corrupt practices began as a result of inter-group competition for support (for example paying members), or through lax supervision of public expenditures, yet it is difficult to see how families in the camps could have survived if national mobilization had not been accompanied by economic, social and cultural inducements. As it was, PLO provisions helped create an atmosphere of faith and optimism in the face of continual attacks, losses and displacements. The comprehensiveness of the PLO/Resistance welfare system may be gauged by the fact that, in certain cases, it provided the expenses of the pilgrimage to Mecca for parents of feda'yeen.

While the structural and ideological pluralism of the PLO/Resistance movement meant that it could not have a coherent 'family policy' as such, yet it had a more direct and forceful impact on camp families than either UNRWA or the Lebanese

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[73] Birth control, though officially discouraged, was available for 'special cases' at the discretion of doctors.

state, neither of which developed policies, whether of change or conservation, specifically directed towards the kinship and family system of the refugees. Further, in considering the Resistance movement's 'family policy', or lack of it, we need to raise the question of the signs through which a Western observer recognizes a 'family policy' and how she/he qualifies it. Campaigns calling for change in family relations or in family laws are readily recognized as signs of a 'radical' family policy, just as the absence of such campaigns lends itself to being read as a 'conservative' family policy. The problem of cultural translation arises with particular sharpness around the family-as-subject in Palestinian-Arab society, requiring from the researcher a lens wide enough to pick up what constitutes a 'family policy' from the perspective of the research milieu.

In pursuit of these points, we should note the historical depth in Palestinian society of action for the 'regeneration' of the family. A particular social and moral philosophy is implicit in such action, one that sees the family as the basis of a healthy society, and that particularly fears the effects of war and poverty on lower class families. Associations formed to support 'needy' families have been a durable feature of Arab Palestinian society, beginning before the Mandate, and continued by the national women's movement.[74] The plight of the refugees during and after the war of 1948 was a stimulus to the establishment of new social associations, as was the establishment of the PLO in 1964, and the 'Six Day' war in

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[74] See Mogannam, The Arab Woman, p 157-63. A. Touby, 'Abeer wa Majd (Beirut, 1966), also has details of turn-of-the-century Palestinian women who undertook social work.

1967. Several of these adopted the term '_in'ash_' (revival, regeneration) in their title, for example the Jam'iyat In'ash al-'Usra (Association for the Regeneration of the Family), founded in the West Bank in 1965 by Mrs Samiha al-Khalil; and the Jam'iyat In'ash al-Mukhayem (Association for the Regeneration of the Camps), founded in Beirut in 1968 by Lebanese and Palestinian women.[75]

Fateh's social institutions, created at the beginning of armed struggle, bear the imprint of the charitable tradition, and indicate a concern to protect the families of low income Palestinians from the effects of war. One of the earliest was the Mu'essessat al-Shu'oon al-Ijtima'iyyeh wa al-'User al-Shuhada'(The Institute for Social Affairs and Martyrs' Families), charged with supporting the families of prisoners and men killed in action. Another was Samed, a productive institution to provide employment for the wives and children of war victims. The Red Crescent Society, originally founded in Jerusalem in 1948, was re-founded in 1968 in Jordan as a national health service offering free medical care. Such institutionalization of support for families points not only to Palestinian statelessness, but also to the assumption that the brunt of the struggle would be born by lower income strata. Implicit also is the widespread cultural hostility to women being forced by poverty to seek potentially corrupting employment.

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[75] R. Giacaman's review of Palestinian women's social associations notes that they arise to compensate for the lack of state services to Palestinians, itself the consequence of national oppression: "Women's Voluntary Associations in the West Bank", unpublished document, nd.

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This chapter has identified three main institutional frameworks that have determined the terms of existence in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon. Of these, the two bodies that established the legal and administrative basis are the Lebanese state and UNRWA, which divided control and maintenance of the refugees between them through an initial agreement and regular consultations. Early arrangements, which included UNRWA definition and registration of the refugees, the disposition of camp sites, specialized state bodies for administration and control, and a law governing refugee status, proved a durable benchmark for official Lebanese policy. Palestinian struggle to gain recognition of national and civic rights met temporary success in the Cairo Accords of 1969, but ended in the aftermath of the war of 1982 and the evacuation of the Resistance movement.

Among the basic features regulating the existence of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon was their classification as a special category of foreigner. As a result, they were obliged to apply for work permits and excluded from certain sectors of the Lebanese economy. This constraint pressed the least skilled among the refugees into the 'informal sector', and the more skilled towards migration. The absence of a single code regulating their rights and obligations constituted an instrument of pressure, allowing change of regulations in accordance with policy of the state, or of particular departments.

Administration of refugee personal affairs was handled by a section within the Ministery of Interior, but from the time

of President Chehab (1958-62) control of the camps passed into the hands of the Intelligence Bureau of the Lebanese Army. In 1969, camp uprisings caused the withdrawal of the Army and the beginning of the period of PLO/Resistance movement autonomy based in its alliance with the Lebanese National Movement. During this period (1969-1982), the camps formed 'liberated zones' in which the Resistance groups conducted military and political mobilization and national institution-building.

As the third main framework of constraints and pressures on the refugees, the Resistance movement carried within it many, contradictory intentions of support, regeneration, and change towards refugee families. Mobilization programmes also posed implicit but forceful challenges to 'traditional' social and family relations in the camps, particularly through the arming of young men, and drawing young women into organized political activity. Identification with, and dependence on, the Resistance movement forced accommodation to the effects of national mobilization on hierarchies of status, age and gender, but not without daily tensions. It is on the level of kinship, household family, and gender ideology that the next chapter focuses, as it examines the accommodations and resistances to the three main frameworks of constraint outlined above.

CHAPTER FOUR

PALESTINIAN KINSHIP, HOUSEHOLD FAMILY, AND GENDER
IDEOLOGY IN EXILE

Even if kinship and family are not the ultimate source of gender ideology, they form the immediate framework of its realization, and therefore to examine them constitutes an indispensable preliminary to an understanding of women's lives. Change in the political and economic environment in which a particular kin 'system' reproduces itself is bound to affect it structurally and ideologically. Chapter Three laid out the objective conditions of exile in Lebanon for the mass of refugees as these have been structured by three predominant frameworks: UNRWA; the Lebanese state and economy; and the Palestinian national movement. This chapter shall examine the effects of these three interacting frameworks on kinship, household family, and gender ideology in camps. In regard to women, we need to conceptualize them dually, as both acted upon directly by the three main frameworks, and as contained within camp communities that mediate the effects of an external environment experienced as alien and oppressive. Such conceptualization should not 'passivize' women by presenting them only as objects of mobilizing or constraining pressures; the life histories show them as acting towards their situation.

Kin values and practices brought by rural refugees into Lebanon in 1948 probably resembled those portrayed in Chapter Two, based on Granqvist's ethnographies of Artas, with allowance for slight regional differences between Galilee and the Jerusalem area, and between the 1930s and 1940s. Refugee

recollections as well as other sources (Nakhleh, 1973), point to the survival of the peasant patrilineage, however weakened by erosion of commonly owned <u>masha'</u> land, strong central government, and other economic changes accelerated by the Mandate regime. That the compound household was still the predominant form in Galilean villages is suggested by the fact that it survives in camps in Lebanon until the present time, though modified in layout and internal relations. Refugee women's recollections of their lives before the exodus (or of mothers' accounts of their lives) show many similarities with those of Artas women as depicted by Granqvist: the same active roles in agricultural production, food processing, marketing, and domestic crafts; similar rights to material resources; similar subordination to, and claims upon, men by virtue of specific, kin-determined, legally-sanctioned relationships. There are also cultural similarities: as in Artas, most Galilean villages did not have schools for girls; women's role in the celebration of marriages was similarly marked, as in other village events and life transitions. These historically-formed socio-cultural configurations were carried over into exile, and partially re-constructed in the radically different material and social conditions of refugee camps. Viewing kinship, household family and gender ideology in camps against this historical background aids our understanding of continuities and ruptures.

The contradictoriness of pressures and constraints on women in camp communities in exile hark back to the theoretical analyses evoked in Chapter One. As the theoretical perspective of Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) predicts, the placing of camps in an alien, sometimes hostile, environment reinforced

attention to women, adding to the range and sensitivity of what they could be made to represent: as 'our' women; as all that remained of a lost honour; and as markers of the boundary between Palestinians and Lebanese. In line with Kandiyoti's (1991) formulation of communal politics in Muslim societies, we find that social constraints on women in camps were intensified as new avenues of education and employment were opened up. Just as Chatterjee (1989) would lead us to expect, the revival of the national movement built complex symbolizations around women (identifying them with Palestine, its fertile soil, cultural 'authenticity', and so on), while at the same time mobilizing them in active roles, as Resistance fighters, political cadres, workers and 'state' employees. These multiple and contradictory forms of mobilization created tensions between active and symbolic aspects of women's roles, as well as between women's ambitions and their familial and communal constraints.

This chapter also points forward to the next two chapters (Five and Six) in which camp women's life histories will be presented and discussed. The aim here is to provide a view of changing kin-based and local contexts within which women's lives and 'selves' are embedded. As we saw in Chapter Two, women actively construct and modify these overlapping collectivities that both protect and constrain them. Their 'positionality' within these networks of relationship is implicitly expressed in the life histories; this chapter attempts to make them concrete and explicit.

A number of problems arise with the topic as it is stated in the title that need to be dealt with briefly at the outset. First, the term 'kinship ' gives a deceptive notion of unity

to what were very varied kin forms between urban, rural and pastoral Palestinians, better conceptualized as a loose assembly of structures, values and practices given coherence through religio-nationalist ideology. Second, there is the problem of the time that has elapsed since 1948, a problem accentuated by the almost total absence of historically-oriented, family-focussed studies, as well as the difficulty for people today of recalling difference between periods. Third, there is the variety of individual experience of kinship and family in exile, given difference in size, solidarity, values and practices between specific kin units: a variety that is reflected in the way speakers perceive and represent this topic. But a problem of greater complexity and theoretical interest is the susceptibility of the family as subject to processes of 'ideologization'.

Other studies of politically subordinate groups (for example Chatterjee, 1989), point to the way that 'the family' becomes a quasi-autonomous space impenetrable to alien rulers, in which notions of cultural authenticity are constructed. Kinship may also be 'ideologized' as representing continuity with the past, particularly in cases of rupture, exile and rapid, coercive change. Two aspects of such processes are likely to affect representations of kinship and family made to strangers: one is the desire to protect 'privacy', the other a desire not to disclose internal contradictions and struggles suppressed in the interests of defence and survival. Representations of 'the family' are also necessarily affected by politicization. It is because of the interest of this question, and to avoid any pretence of 'covering' the subject announced by the title of this chapter, that it includes a

small section in which representations of kinship, family and women are analyzed in terms of the positionality of the speakers who produce them.

A. Effects of exile on kinship and household family

In a recent paper on 'the traditional Palestinian peasant family', the Palestinian sociologist B. Sirhan treats changes as the result of exile (1991). He identifies seven main forces for change: separation from landed property; dispersion of the hamula (patrilineage, clan); individual dispersion; growth in size of kin units; growing socio-economic differentiation; growing cultural heterogeneity; and the death of elders. He differentiates between early and later periods, noting that, at the beginning, the harsh conditions of refugee life reinforced kin solidarity, whereas later the interacting forces for change produced an ever greater degree of structural change. Sirhan underlines education and new work opportunities as factors that affected kin ties: "By the mid-1970s a high degree of differentiation in wealth and social status appeared between extended family members", weakening hamula solidarity. Secondary migration outside the Arab region, education in a wide variety of systems, marriage to foreigners, membership in ideologically disparate Resistance groups: all these have introduced cultural and ideological heterogeneity into 'a formerly homogenous peasant family'. Sirhan concludes by emphasizing flux in kin ties as a result of rapid change; but while the hamula has been weakened, and 'blood' ties replaced

by ties created by national crisis, family ties in general have, in Sirhan's view, remained strong.[1]

This presentation has a particular interest, coming from a researcher who grew up in Lebanon in the household of his uncle, a large land-owner from Kabri (Galilee), who continued to act in exile as leader, arbiter, and patron of refugees from his area. Sirhan's social experience was deepened in the 1970s by work with the PLO Planning Centre with young people of the camps, the 'generation of the Revolution'. Though Sirhan collapses different levels of kinship form into his concept 'the peasant family', his presentation offers a valuable starting point for the following discussion, which will focus on the effects of exile on the rural patrilineage, on ties between kin-linked households, and on intra-household relations. The presentation is biassed towards underlining the implications of these shifts for women.

The patrilineage, kinship, and class

Several discussants have noted that, in camps in Lebanon, ties of locality became more important than those of blood. This principle is already suggested by patterns of settlement in camps, where, as noted in Chapter Three, village groups tending to re-assemble, and kin groups to disperse. Ties between people from the same village seem often to have been more effective as a means of access to resources than kin ties. The development of camps into discrete communities practising

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[1] From an English version of Sirhan's paper, published in Arabic under the title "Structural Change in the Palestinian Family", <u>The Journal of the Union of Palestinian Writers</u> (Damascus), 1991.

internal solidarity was partly in reaction to an alien, sometimes hostile environment, but also largely based in pre-1948 practices of local exchange and reciprocity. A camp teacher contrasts the two sets of ties: "The burdens of everyday living that occupy the mind of the individual in 'Ain Helweh prevent him from thinking of helping someone from his hamula in Nahr al-Bared"; and adds, "This had already started in Palestine: a man's neighbour was more important to him, even if he was not from the same hamula, than a hamula man who was far away".[2]

Whereas in pre-1948 Palestinian society, ties of 'blood' (hasab) predominated structurally and ideologically over ties of affinity (nasab), in exile kin ties became less strongly patrilineal. Lebanese justice constrained some of the practices such as tha'er (revenge) through which clan solidarity in Palestine had been expressed. Poverty and the physical dispersion of hamula segments reduced the scope for common action. Though a kin group with nefs al-hamula (clan spirit), a strong leader, and resources, could be mobilized to help members in need, such groups were rarer in Lebanon than other parts of the diaspora.[3]

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[2] S. Abu Salem (teacher), interview, Sidon, May 1992. This speaker notes the popular proverb underlining the importance of relations based in shared locality: Al-jar al-(q)areeb ahsan min al-akh al-ba'eed (the neighbour who is near is better than the brother who is far).

[3] In other Arab host countries, notably Kuwait and Jordan, Palestinians have set up patrilineally-based associations and funds: S.Ghabra, "Palestinians in Kuwait: The Family and the Politics of Survival", Journal of Palestinian Studies, vol XVII no 2, Winter 1988 . Reasons for the much slighter development of such associations in Lebanon include: legal restrictions, lower income levels, and, between 1970 and 1982, welfare provisions of the PLO/Resistance movement.

One sign of decline in <u>hamula</u>-consciousness is that the word <u>hamula</u> has dropped out of common usage.[4] Another is that visits and cooperation between kin-linked households tend to follow links with wife's kin, as much as, if not more than, husband's kin. This shift can partly be traced to women's energetic role in sustaining kin ties, itself based in shifts in patterns of men's and women's labour, and to the initial separateness of their visiting (though in camps today wives and husbands make many visits together, in the past women's visiting was usually carried out in all-female groups). Re-arrangement of spatial and social relations within the compound household has meant that domestic labour is more often shared between female kin than, as in the past, between mother-in-law and sons' wives. Strong relations between sisters often draw husbands away from brothers and agnatic kin, especially if they are geographically separated, or there is friction between them. Such shifts can be summarized in structuralist terms by saying that, in exile, Palestinian kin ties have become more bilateral.

A slower kind of change has been the growing role of preference in kin interaction, with ties of <u>wajib</u> (duty), usually those of the patrilineage, becoming clearly demarcated from, and gradually superseded by, ties of affection, usually those with affinal kin. Such demarcation takes a clear form in different frequency and timing of visits, with duty visits performed on special occasions (feasts, bereavements, and so

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[4] Ahmad Haleemeh, born in 1953, remembered that his grandmother used to remind his grandfather that her <u>hamula</u> was 'better' than his. Younger Palestinians often do not recognize the word, using the more commonplace <u>a'ileh</u> for every type of family.

on), as against informal 'dropping in'. Patrilineal ties are more often clouded by disappointed expectations and accusations of neglect. Such shifts affect practice as distinct from values: values may change more slowly, as the result of observation of other people's behaviour; or, on the contrary, 'traditional' values may be re-asserted in conscious opposition to observed change in practice. The obligatory nature of patrilineal kin ties is not contested, but tends to be 'ideologized' as an element of national culture, or diffused throughout the totality of kin ties.

Such observations suggests the need to differentiate between values and practices of kinship, which seem to become dissociated in conditions of rapid change, and to develop different functions. Evidence will be produced later in this chapter suggesting that values historically rooted in the patrilineage, such <u>sharf wa 'ird</u>,[5] are reproduced in other structures (for example households, camp communities, Resistance groups), and to be 'lifted' from the kinship level to that of national identity. Observation also shows that, while 'traditional' values are affirmed in speech, on the level of practice changes may occur, without being made explicit, when conditions make the continuation of a particular custom problematic. But such shifts in practice are gradual, and seldom openly announced. Suppression of discussion of change in kin values and practices helps create the idea of non-change, doubtless a reassuring one for refugees and migrants.

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[5] Both these terms mean 'honour', but <u>'ird</u> is specifically female honour (or genitalia), associated with control of sexuality.

It is worth noting that knowledge of discrete kin networks has persisted in spite of dispersion, the passage of time, and the difficulties of communication. Knowledge of kin and connections with them do not appear linked to status: members of a relatively poor hamula-fraction living in Shateela could give details of kin in Israel, Jordan, and Syria; female members showed as much kin-awareness as the male household head. After forty years of separation, migrant Palestinians from Lebanon who have acquired European nationality have begun to visit second and third generation kin in villages in Israel. We may speculate that hamula-knowledge forms a cultural and human basis for reproduction of the patrilineage in ideological form, dissociated from the daily life practices through which it was realized in Palestine.

Social analyses of Arab societies often fail fully to articulate kinship and class, assuming one or other as dominant paradigm. For example, Sirhan, in his 1991 paper, assumes that influence between class and kinship is uni-directional, with socio-economic differentiation affecting kin solidarity. Yet there is evidence that kin ties also played a role in producing socio-economic differentiation. The status difference between members of large hamayel and small ones, though less important in determining access to resources in exile than it had been in Palestine, continued to count.[6] Ties of kinship and locality were continually invoked by refugees seeking employment, school subsidies, hospitalization, and other UNRWA rights and

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[6] K.Nakhleh notes the status distinction between awlad al-hamayel, 'children of (large) clans', and al-agaf al-mushallakh, literally 'torn hooks', ie. people belonging to isolated households: "Shifting Patterns of Conflict in Selected Palestinian Villages", PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1973.

benefits. In terms of emergent stratification the most important UNRWA benefits were opportunities for post-intermediate education. Certain kin units and villages succeeded early in penetrating UNRWA: this is evident in the formation in Shateela of a relatively stable UNRWA 'clique', the majority of whom come from a single village and from the kin of the first Director. Members of the Ma'rouf hamula, from Deir al-'Assi, a village known in Mandate Palestine for educational achievement, early reached the Inspectorate level of UNRWA's schooling system; today hamula and village are well placed in UNRWA. The currently most powerful local UNRWA employee is a man with extensive kin and village ties in the large northern camp of Nahr al-Bared.

Another sign of the contribution of kinship to class is provided by the marked status reversal between families of village and city origin evident in camps such as Shateela that contain city people. At the time of first settlement, the hierarchical boundary between ahel al-mudun and ahel al-qariya was so strongly marked that, however destitute, most refugees of city origin refused camp residence.[7] Yet households of city origin today form a substantial proportion of the lowest-income stratum, while they do not appear in the most prosperous stratum. Camp people of rural origin explain this phenomenon by saying that they invested every spare piaster in educating their children, whereas city people spent money on clothes and furniture. However it is also likely that the size and relative

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[7] Soon after Shateela's designation as an official camp site, a group of urban refugees was ordered to move there. They refused, and had to be transferred by force. They demarcated their hayy (quarter) by a path, and, for the first decade, did not give their daughters in marriage to village men.

solidarity of villagers' kin units was a crucial variable in accounting for their relative success as compared with more isolated urban households.[8]

It is true that, because of scarcity, expectations placed in kin ties were more often disappointed than rewarded, and that disappointment strained, or even ruptured, kin ties. Sirhan gives examples:

> If you expected a relative to do you a service, and he didn't, you stopped talking to him. It worked both ways. Mostly [UNRWA] employees would help their kin, especially villagers. But it often created problems between families, or fractions of a hamula, if one of them was a director, and he gave a job to one nephew rather than another, the other family would be bitter. I know of many cases like this, in my own family and other families, where they didn't talk to each other for ten years.[9]

Yet it is equally evident that such strains did not cause 'breakdown' or radical change in Palestinian kin values and practices, partly because bitterness was directed at specific kin rather than against 'the system' itself, partly because of lack of alternative resources.

Indicative of an underlying relationship between class and kinship is the response of my colleague from Shateela, Ahmad Haleemeh, to the question whether this camp contains hamayel. He said that only one kin group, dar Sarees, could claim this title, and that this was due to their affinal ties with the first Director. Without such connections, his own dar had not succeeded until much later in gaining UNRWA employment. Though

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[8] Of the 18 women whose life stories are recorded for this study, four are urban in origin (Appendix A[1], nos 5, 10, 13, 18). All four said that their parents came to Lebanon without paternal kindred. Two explicitly linked their poverty to lack of 'amoom (paternal uncles).

[9] Interview, May 1992.

it had been a leading <u>hamula</u> in the village of Beled al-Sheikh, he did not consider it a <u>hamula</u> in Lebanon.

Parenthetically, while not claiming <u>hamula</u> status, <u>dar</u> Haleemeh keep up certain practices associated with the <u>hamula</u>. During residence with a branch of the family in Sidon in May 1992, a gathering of agnatically-linked men were discussing the case of a kinsman, absent in Germany, whose wife was calling for divorce. It was agreed that one of them would intervene to prevent such an event. Commenting later, my colleague said that his paternal grandfather had told him that there had never been a divorce in the Haleemeh family. The Haleemehs also try to arrange in-clan marriages whenever possible.

In large patrilineages, socio-economic divergence between <u>hamula</u> segments has modified the practice of clan endogamy. Whereas in the past, differences of socio-economic status did not weigh against normative preference for marriage within the clan, today, while families still prefer marriage between cousins, the desire for equality between affines enters into marriage choices.[10] In camps, the continuation of in-clan marriage may have economic reasons as well as the cultural ones that are customarily expressed, since the <u>mahr</u> and other expenses required for marriages within the same family are kept low through mutual understanding. Such patterns also support the notion that kin ties and values form a resource against class as well as national oppression.

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[10] Again Sirhan gives an example from his own family: a poor kinsman living in the Beqa' proposed to richer relatives in Beirut that their sons should marry his daughters. The argument used to decline the proposal was not personal preference, but the probable incompatibility between spouses raised in a rural as against an urban milieu (interview, March 1991).

At the same time, evidence of the weakening effect of socio-economic differentiation on <u>hamula</u> solidarity is widespread even at the level of camps, particularly affecting <u>hamayel</u> in which disparity in income and status is large. Poor members of kin groups often avoid visiting richer relatives, especially as visits necessitate expenditure on gifts which should correspond to the status of the recipient, and to the value that the donor attaches to the relationship. Because of the contribution of intensive visiting to class formation, such shifts in kin interaction help consolidate class boundaries. Interaction between kin tends to decrease with ascending social status; conversely, kin interaction is clearly marked as value and in daily life practice among lower-income strata.[11]

At the same time, representations of kinship as unchanging are made by low income Palestinians with a frequency that suggests that kinship has been 'ideologized' as a way of resisting coercive change. At the same time, speakers may justify (or deplore) changes such as those discussed above, denoting a process whereby values and practices previously taken-for-granted are brought into debate, with slight shifts taking place. What has been most resistant to change appears to be that element of kinship that constitutes control of women as central to public morality.

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[11] Such differences can be observed even within an apparently united kin group: relations between a branch of <u>dar</u> Haleemeh that moved out of Shateela in the 1950s, acquiring business interests and Lebanese nationality, and the segment that remained in the camp are cooler than the relations that the in-camp units maintain with each other.

Kinship and households

Kinship values and practices in rural Palestine were reflected at the household level in: i) the interventions of clan elder, ii) relations between kin-linked households; iii) in the composition and authority structure of the household family; iv) in the filiation and socialization of children; and v) in the gender division of labour. This section presents a tentative summary of the effects of exile, without aiming at 'completeness', and with a bias towards noting those changes that most closely affect women's lives.

Decline in the authority of clan elders appears as a direct result of separation from Palestine. Yet this decline was neither total nor sudden. Accounts of the first two decades of exile show that clan elders still wielded considerable influence: we hear of them leading <u>tosheh</u> (battles between village quarters), and in their role of solving social problems and controlling conflict. In rare cases where large kin clusters settled in the same camp, for example the 'Arab al-Ghweir (of bedouin origin), the leader continued for some time to exercise considerable authority over all members of the <u>a'shireh</u>, and to arrange all the marriages of his lineage, sons as well as daughters.[12] Whenever peasant clan leaders were accessible, it is likely they would have been consulted before the conclusion of any marriage within the clan, though there is also evidence of increasing independence of decision of household heads, doubtless as a result of the dispersion of

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[12] Samira Salah, interview, March 1992. Herself of city origin, Samira tells the pre- and post-1948 history of her husband's <u>a'shireh</u>.

clan fragments. There was no scope in camps in Lebanon for positions of clan leadership to become a basis for local political power, as had been the case before 1948 in Palestine, and as continued to be the case in villages in Israel.[13] Members of kin units continued to show respect to their shuyyukh (old men), but it is generally agreed that the latter no longer intervened in the affairs of individual, patrilineally-linked households.

Thus a change in kin structure already visible before 1948, but speeded up in exile, was a shift of authority from clan elders to household heads. The authority and responsibility of the rabb al-a'ileh (household head) was reinforced by UNRWA registration procedures, by the scattering of hamayel between different camps, and by the gradual consolidation of camp communities, in which the household rather than kin group was the basic unit of social control and individual identity.

In Palestine, the co-residence of close agnatic kin, or compound household,[14] was one form through which the peasant patrilineage expressed itself, closely linked to joint land ownership and management. The fact that this type of household persisted in camps in Lebanon, even after separation from land,

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[13] Nakhleh ("Shifting Patterns") shows how, in conditions of competition for office in Arab village councils in Israel, candidates mobilized clan support. Clan ties are said to have been re-politicized under the PLO/Resistance movement, but the subject has not been systematically studied.

[14] I use the term 'compound' to denote households formed of more than one conjugal unit, whether of father and sons, or of brothers. Nakhleh, "Shifting Patterns", adopts a three-fold categorization of household types: 'joint', 'simple', and 'fragmentary'. In my view all such categories are problematic, since they overlook inter-household relations, as well as diachronic shifts in composition.

and even in urban camps such as Shateela, prompts us to ask whether it fulfilled new functions in exile? Did it, while appearing to remain the same, in fact change in response to new conditions? And to what extent did it continue to reproduce hamula values and practices? A theoretically interesting question is whether the separating out of the compound household is the precursor of 'nuclearization', or merely a social and spatial rearrangement of agnatic cooperation?

The history of the household to which a colleague in Shateela belongs illuminates some of these questions. Founded at the beginning of settlement by a mature conjugal pair, it rapidly grew to include four out of five of their married sons, and their families, forming a classic compound household. Born in 1952, Ahmad Haleemah did not know if income and expenditures were pooled in the period of his childhood; but he said that food was eaten together from a single tray. Indeed, it was this sharing of food that had helped his own unit to survive when his father was unemployed for six months as the result of a work accident. In 1983, at the time of the first visit to dar Haleemeh, the household was composed of five distinct units, one for each married son of the original couple, and a room of her own for Imm Mahmoud, the surviving widow. Each conjugal unit had two small rooms, a kitchen and washing closet; they shared a courtyard, water supply and outer wall. My colleague said that when the household family and close kin gathered together for a feast or a wedding, there might be as many as 60 people present in the dar. After the removal of Lebanese Army control in February 1984, my colleague and another married brother built their own units over that of their parents, while a cousin prepared to do the same. This example suggests that

while agnatic kin no longer share a single living space or pool resources, there is still a strong inclination towards residential proximity.

Though agnatic clusters are not the rule in Shateela, other examples show that where there is space and financial means, men with adult sons try to keep them near by building homes for them over, or next to, their own. Eldest sons in particular are still expected to contribute to parental household expenditures. Such observations suggest that change in the composition of households in camps has come about through slight adaptive shifts that have preserved essential agnatic values such as proximity and cooperation. A classification of households in terms of their composition alone is distorting because it overlooks patterns of connection and exchange with other households.

Further, a classification of households based on one moment in time ignores diachronic variation that may reveal deeper structures. This point is particularly relevant to migrant or refugee groups, among whom household composition is subject to continual fluctuation. A high proportion of camp households have absent members; a high proportion contain collateral kin permanently or temporarily resident. Such household composition reflects kin values as well as crisis and poverty. Likely to be found, in addition to parents and children, are: an elderly parent of either spouse; a widowed or unmarried sister of the household head; orphans; widowed daughters or daughters-in-law with their children; or

temporarily resident kin.[15] There are also households formed of orphaned siblings, without any conjugal unit. Lack of household surveys makes greater precision impossible, but the incidence of such 'extended' or 'fragmented' households may well be higher, after two decades of war, than that of households containing only parents and children. Material conditions (war casualties, destruction of housing, poverty, constraints on camp space) have contributed to such 'extended' households, but they also embody kin values that resist 'nuclearization'.

Again, lack of survey data makes it impossible to give exact figures for the incidence of female-headed households, but all intense episodes of fighting - the Civil War of 1975-6, the 1982 Israeli invasion, the 'Battles of the Camps' - have left widows in their wake. Product of years of crisis and displacement, the phenomenon of the woman-headed household points to a radical rupture with values of kin responsibility and control. The struggle of widows to avoid re-marriage so as to stay with their children is often cited by Palestinian women as an historical one that has been largely won. This was a trend that the PLO/Resistance movement furthered by providing an ideological and economic framework (through employment, pensions, and social honour), for the independence of war widows. With the loss of this framework after 1982, however, contradictory tendencies can be observed: on the one hand there

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[15] Imm Khaled (Appendix A[1], no 8) tells how two of her husband's unmarried brothers, both work migrants, shared their single-room hut in Shateela in the 1960s.

is evidence of a re-assertion of social norms of control.[16] On the other, increasing economic hardship makes kin responsibility for widows harder to assume.

The gender-based division of labour within the rural household persisted in exile, in spite of the loss of joint land management and agricultural production to which it was linked. Both men and women's work changed radically in type and in the conditions in which it was undertaken, but whereas men were transformed into individual workers for whom kin ties had little economic importance, women's domestic labour continued to be carried out in mainly kin-based groups. At the same time there were changes: dispersion of the patrilineage, and the gradual decomposition of the compound household into separate units, meant more autonomy and responsibility for individual housewives. The basic domestic work group became smaller, and was composed mainly, as noted earlier, of women linked directly to each other, for example mothers and daughters, rather than through men as in the original peasant household. This contributed to an increase in interaction between households linked through women rather than through men.

Households are also places where children are socialized into kinship. Parents and others place strong emphasis on this aspect of socialization, linking it to religious values, proper behaviour, and community respect. From earliest infancy,

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[16] Samira Salah, a veteran PFLP and Women's Union leader, explains why widows and divorcees face severer family control than do banat(girls): "They consider that a widow or a divorcee is a woman. A girl preserves her innocence because she has to remain a virgin. This forbids her from thinking of forming sexual relations. But a woman knows how to take contraceptive pills, and how to arrange meetings. So her family try to re-marry her, so that people won't gossip about her" (interview, March 1992).

children are taught to recognize, name, and relate to every member of a large circle of kin. As soon as they can walk they begin to visit kin who live nearby. Stories of the ajdad (grandparents, ancestors), are transmitted to them, along with stories of their village. In considering households in relation to kinship, we need to note, too, that children in camps (as in most low-income Arab milieus) are not as contained within the parental household as is the case in the 'nuclear family' in Western industrial and post-industrial societies. In camp families it is common for a grandmother to raise her children's children, not only in the event of their becoming orphans, but often because the mother works, or the grandmother needs companionship.[17] Children brought up in these conditions acquire a sense of kinship quite different from that of children in societies where kin interaction is a less important part of everyday life.

Overall, it is evident that exile has reinforced the social and economic independence of households, making them less subject to the intervention of clan elders. Households have been forced to become economically self-dependent, since, whatever their obligations, the support that kin-linked households can give each other is slight. The trend towards household independence is especially evident in camps near Beirut, target since the 1950s of migrants from rural areas in

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[17] For example, Imm 'Imad (Appendix A[1],no 10) sent her first child at the age of one year to be brought up by her mother in 'Ain Helweh camp. The mother of my colleague, Ahmad Haleemeh, brought up his first child from the age of a few months; the boy (aged four at my first visit) still ate and slept in his grandparents' home rather than with his own family. In another Shateela household, the young children of a trainee-teacher are looked after during the working week by her unmarried sister in the grandparents' home in Bourj Barajneh camp.

search of employment. In Shateela, for example, an unusually high proportion of households are 'isolates', with no close kin in the camp, or in some cases in Lebanon. Yet this trend is counterbalanced by others, for example the continued clustering of father's and sons' households, and a continued high level of interaction between kin-linked households through both women and men. For women such shifts have been on the whole positive. Decline of the role of clan elders in marriage ended one source of coercion. The growing independence of household units, while it increased the work-load of individual housewives, also made them more autonomous. Even if attenuated by poverty, the social and economic obligations of women's brothers towards them have remained culturally stressed. This also is a direction in which inter-household relations move, with special ties developing between maternal uncles and sister's children.

Intra-household relations

Changes in intra-household family relations need to be viewed within the framework outlined above, one in which larger kin values and practices were sustained (with whatever adaptive shifts), but in which household units have become more autonomous and self-dependent. The analysis will focus on the role and authority of the household head, and the following sets of intra-household relations: between parents and children; between fathers and sons; between siblings; between and mother- and daughter-in-law; and between husbands and wives.

The changes in kinship described above - the scattering of _hamula_ fractions, dwindling of the influence of _hamula_

leaders, the economic self-dependence of households - all tended to increase the responsibility and authority of the individual household head. Evidence of this shift comes from women who married in the 1950s, all of whom underline the absoluteness of paternal decision. Fathers in those days often did not even consult their wives before announcing the engagement of their daughters, which might take place on the same day.[18]

The authority of the household head was reinforced by the relative stability of internal household family relations, on which age and gender hierarchy were stamped. Women and young men were expected to be silent in the presence of household heads.[19] As already noted, fathers made arbitrary decisions about their daughters' marriages, seemingly with less consultation or interference than had been the case in villages in Palestine. However, there were other factors that worked against the consolidation of the authority of the <u>rabb al-a'ileh</u>. Among these was the loss of status that affected all men equally as stateless, landless refugees. Another factor was the generally higher earnings of sons as they entered relatively skilled employment, in contrast to older men who often remained manual workers, or unemployed. Such was the

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[18] Suhayr (Appendix A[1], no 14) ironizes about the way men in Shateela arranged their daughters' marriages in the 1950s: "If someone from another village wanted to marry a girl from Majd al-Kroom, her father would assemble all Majd al-Kroom people, and say, 'So-and-so has asked for my daughter. If there is anyone whose son wants her, let him take her'."

[19] Men already adult in the 1950s report being silenced as if they were 'boys' by older men during political discussions. Young men in Bourj Barajneh in the 1970s said they could not smoke in their father's presence. Another man remembered his father addressing him as '<u>willa</u> !', a word used to reprimand children, when he himself was already a father.

cultural force of respect for parents that the higher
occupational status and earnings of sons did not have immediate
effect. One hears of muted challenges: for example, young men
began to rebel against their father's choice of their wives;
sons sometimes supported their sisters in escaping an unwanted
marriage, or, later, in going to political meetings. But the
full effect of father/son status reversal did not become
apparent until much later, as younger men attained professional
employment.[20]

Processes through which the father/son relationship has
been modified in exile without losing its centrality to
household and broader kin relations is instructive for our
understanding of Palestinian kinship generally. Its centrality
is strongly suggested by the mediators and cultural values
brought into play to damp down father/son conflict. We hear of
the mediation of kin (usually a father's brother) to prevent
young men being alienated by over-severe punishment.[21] A
popular proverb, khaawi ibnek ('make a brother of your son'),
points to the way the authoritarian element in the father/son
relationship may be softened as sons reach maturity. When sons
succeed, for example through reaching professional status, the

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[20] Status reversal is exemplified in the case of my
colleague Ahmad Haleemeh. He is a university-educated science
teacher; his father first worked as a tile-layer, later as a
male nurse. Though fond of his father, Ahmad often adopts a
teasing/chiding tone towards him.

[21] Two cases may be cited in illustration: when a Shateela
boy shot himself in the leg while handling a gun, his father
angrily refused to visit him in hospital; eventually a kinsman
reconciled them. More recently, an adolescent boy in Mar Elias
camp accidentally shot and killed his sister; the same day his
paternal uncle took him under his protection until his father's
anger cooled. Telling me of father/son conflicts in Shateela,
Ahmad Haleemeh said he could remember no case of permanent
rupture; he could not imagine such a thing happening.

status of their fathers is enhanced, forming another element in the latter's concern to build a solid, reciprocal relationship. Though camp conditions are said to have reinforced paternal strictness with boys in early childhood,[22] as they grew older a contrary tendency prevailed. Abu Isma'eel Hamed recalled how, when Isma'eel reached age 14, he bought him a proper two-piece suit ("He was the first young man in Shateela to have a suit!"), and began taking him to men's gatherings: "I wanted him to listen, and understand the ways of the world".

Perhaps what did most to alter parent/child relations in camps was parents' realization that the only way to ameliorate their situation was through the schooling of their children. This was especially true of rural Palestinians, forced by exile into low-paid manual labour. Hence what one Shateela man termed the 'educational revolution', whereby whole families worked and saved so as to invest in the professional or technical training of their youth. The unanimity of oral testimony on this 'lesson of history' is striking. For example, Hajji Badriyya: "(Husband) wanted his children to be educated. He used to tell them, 'You see me! I can't do anything except manual labour. You have to be educated, for the sake of your future, so as to get better jobs'". Such a concerted focus on children as the hope of the future must have produced shifts in parenting, in mothering, and perhaps also in the conjugal relationship.

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[22] Hajji Badriyya (Appendix A[1], no 3) says that her husband used to punish his sons severely: "They were frightened of their father. They used to play in the Hursh (woods), and climb trees, but as soon as he called their names they would come running to the tent."

Such shifts seem not, however, to have taken the form of a weakening of respect and love for parents, a value strongly prescribed by religion and culture.[23] On the contrary, Palestinians today often recall how deeply they were affected by seeing the sufferings of their parents. But there are some signs that the strictness of authority that had characterized the rural Palestinian household family before 1948 was relaxed; for example, the custom of children kissing the hands of their parents or of older relatives was gradually reduced to special occasions. Fayrooz (Appendix A[1], no 11) recalls that it was the parental generation that ended this custom:

> When we were small, we used to kiss our parents' hands, our uncles', our aunts', grandfathers', grandmothers', even old people who weren't related to us...When we were about 18 or 20, my father would withdraw his hand when I came to kiss it, my mother also...I felt that if I stopped kissing their hand, they'd feel that I didn't respect them any more. But it was they who stopped it.

The importance of children's success in school can be seen retrospectively as re-aligning the internal relations of household families so as to invest material and emotional resources in youth. This could have unexpected side-effects. For example, a girl who worked to pay her brother's school fees became so independent that she later successfully resisted her father's pressures to marry.[24] Children's progress in school became a constant topic of conversation, their success in

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[23] Imm Nayef (Appendix A[1], no 2) impressed on me several popular/religious injunctions regarding parents: "God said, 'Don't worship except me and your parents'"; "Never say oof! (exclamation of impatience) to your parents"; "The blessing of a parent is like the blessing of God"; and "Religion says, Your mother, your mother, your mother, then your father". It is possible that family virtues are being re-emphasized today in reaction to the challenges of the Resistance movement period.

[24] Zohra (Appendix A[1], no 15), speaking of her oldest sister.

examinations celebrated and rewarded. Girls also were encouraged to study, and excel: we hear of Fayrooz's father proudly taking her to visit relatives after she graduated from a higher training institute; Suhayr (Appendix A[1], no 14) recalls her parents registering her in university in Egypt, and urging her to train as a laboratory assistant. The contribution made to parental households by professionally employed young women must certainly have altered their status in the household family, giving them a stronger 'voice' in family affairs, and enabling them to resist, or postpone, marriage pressures.[25]

Change in aims for children's future occupation necessarily affected their upbringing, and elaborated the task of mothering. In rural Palestine, with high rates of infant mortality, the main preoccupation of childrearing had been physical survival (Granqvist, 1947). Though infant mortality rates declined in exile, children's sicknesses increased, especially in the 1950s, before income levels improved. UNRWA did not provide specialized or hospital services: Hajji Badriyya recalls walking miles, pregnant, to take a sick child to hospital, and of being turned away three times for lack of space. Poorer women such as Imm Ghassan (Appendix A[1], no 4) used home remedies to nurse sick children. Mothering became more complex in camps in Lebanon, expanding to include helping children with home-work, and monitoring their progress in school; children's clothing and deportment acquired an importance they had not had in villages, calling for training

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[25] This hypothesis is strengthened by the marriage experiences of the life story tellers. All those who contributed economically to their parents' households (nos 10, 11, 13, perhaps 14, and 15) exercised choice in marriage; two cases avoided marriage altogether.

and additional domestic labour. The importance women attached to their children's schooling can be gauged by stories of them selling their wedding gold to pay private school fees. People's recollections of their mothers indicate how maternal effort and sacrifices enhanced and idealized this bond.

Relations between siblings may also have been affected by scarcity in the camps. Though such stories are probably muted by cultural ideals of sibling solidarity, some of the life history givers tell of parental discrimination, and of their jealousy. Dalal (Appendix A[1], no 18) resented the way her mother favoured Dalal's older brother by giving him extra food and better clothes. Fayrooz's success in school created problems between her and her older brother. Though most such tensions were absorbed, the special status of older sons may have contributed to the tendency noted later in the PLO/Resistance period for brothers to join different Resistance groups; rivalry between sisters was probably minimized by the absence of differentiation between them. The brother/sister bond, so emphasized in pre-1948 peasant family culture, may have undergone strains. Politicized young men are said to have supported sisters in their struggles to get involved in national politics, but there were also cases of brothers who used force to prevent this.[26]

Perhaps the most radical change in intra-household family relationships in exile was the distancing between the mother- and daughter-in-law that came about as a result of the break-up of the compound household. In Palestine, as shown in Chapter

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[26] Peteet reports a case of a young man who burned his sister's clothes because she had been seen selling calendars for one of the Resistance groups (Gender in Crisis, p 199).

Two, this relationship was the backbone of domestic labour and subsistence production; Palestinian folk tales point to its stressful nature, which extended to that between 'daughters of the house' and in-marrying wives, and frequently weighed upon the conjugal relationship.[27] What had been taken-for-granted in villages in Palestine, in exile became a subject of open debate, mainly among women.[28] Already in the early 1960s in Shateela, we find newly married couples assigned a room to themselves next to the husband's father's household. The degree to which young housewives were liberated by separation from their in-laws is illustrated by Imm Mustafa Mi'ari. Married in 1965, she first went to live in her father-in-law's household in the rural camp of Nahr al-Bared. There she could not even go to the neighbourhood shop unaccompanied. Escape from continual supervision only came with her husband's transfer to Shateela in 1970; here she was free to embark on an outstanding role as a politically active housewife.[29]

It is more difficult to make statements about change in conjugal than parent/child relations, though we could speculate that the shifts outlined above - the weakening of agnatic solidarity, the decomposition of the compound household, the

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[27] For an excellent commentary on Palestinian rural family relations, see Muhawi and Kenaana,"Introduction", Speak, Bird.

[28] During this researcher's first fieldwork (Dbeyeh and Bourj Barajneh camps, 1973-75), this topic was frequently discussed in women's gatherings. As debate it did not automatically oppose younger to older women. Some young wives defended co-residence as a way of coping with heavy domestic labour, while some older women swore that they would never impose themselves on a son's wife.

[29] A profile is given under the name 'Umm Khalid' in R. Sayigh and J. Peteet, "Between Two Fires: Palestinian Women in Lebanon", in R. Ridd and H. Callaway eds., Caught Up in Conflict: Women's Responses to Political Strife (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1986).

decline in the mother-in-law's influence over sons' wives - must have had effects. The 'rebellion' of sons against marriages imposed on them by their fathers was an early consequence of exile, and indicates a growth in scope for personal choice, at least for men, in making marriages. Greater readiness to consult prospective spouses before making marriage contracts may have contributed something to conjugal stability, though probably less than social pressures against divorce.[30] One of the most serious threats to marriage stability arose from work migration, especially when this was to Europe rather than to the oil-producing Arab countries. One of the life history-givers, Imm Leila (Appendix A[1], no 12), married at age 16, and mother of two daughters, had spent most of her married life in Shateela, much of it keeping house for her father, while her husband worked in Norway.

Though sexual references are rare in spontaneous speech, indirect evidence suggests that exile widened the scope for the expression of sexuality, generating counter reactions to suppress or contain them. There are stories of romantic attachment, and of the exchange of love letters. Modern media - radio, cinema, television - were potent carriers of an 'ideology of love' that threatened parental control over marriage. Dalal's (Appendix A[1], no 18) father banned radio and music cassettes from the home.

A critical change in the conjugal relationship in exile, linked to the splitting up of communal household economies, was

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[30] Divorce rates are said to be very low in camps, as they are in Palestinian society generally. No figures are available. One of the reasons why people prefer their daughters to marry men from families they know is so as to be able to exercise pressure to prevent the break-up of marriages.

the importance of husband/wife cooperation to family viability. Whereas in Palestine, rural household economies had been based on cooperation between agnatic kinsmen, and between their spouses, in camps in Lebanon the basic productive unit was the conjugal pair. Wives helped with shops, or supplemented household income with the varied types of economic activity noted earlier, and through stretching meagre earnings. Yet such contributions brought about no change in the division of labour between men and women in the home. Observations carried out in the late PLO/Resistance period show that women still carried the entire burden of housework and child-care, even when engaged in paid labour or voluntary political activity. Rather than being shared with husbands, domestic labour was re-allocated between women.[31] Husbands are also reported to be indifferent to questions such as family size, or care of children. Imm Ghassan (Appendix A[1], no 4), said of her husband: "He never had time to hold a baby, he never had time to speak to a child. Everything was on me". A younger housewife whose husband is a full-time Resistance cadre made the same complaint.

One other change in intra-household relations is worth noting. In Palestine, the marriage of girls at puberty, or before, meant that they spent little time in their natal home; it was their mother-in-law rather than their mother who 'formed' them. Similarly, for housewives, it was their sons' wives not their daughters on whom they depended for help in the

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[31] A few husbands helped. Imm 'Imad (Appendix A[1], no 10) said that when she had political work at night, her husband stayed with the children. For a discussion of change and non-change in women's domestic labour in camps in Lebanon, see Sayigh and Peteet,"Between Two Fires".

home. In exile, with schooling and later marriage, we may speculate that the mother/daughter relationship became socially and emotionally more important to both. Recollections of their mothers by the study sample are, with one exception, warm and sympathetic.[32] In the middle of the war of 1982, Imm Mustafa Mi'ari, an early friend in Shateela, crossed the Israeli lines between Beirut and Sidon to see her mother whom she had heard was ill.

Such evidence as has been presented of shifts in household family composition and relations suggests that there is: i) greater autonomy for junior wives; ii) a conjugal partnership less affected by husband's family, and more central to the economic viability of households; iii) a growing centrality of children as hope of improvement in household economies, hence an elaboration of mothering. The single housewife helped by her daughters becomes the predominant form of domestic labour force, rather than mother-in-law and daughters-in-law as in the past; the detachment of men from the 'domestic domain' has on the whole been accentuated first by wage labour, then by Resistance movement mobilization.

B. Representations of kinship and family

To underline the point made in the introduction on the importance of ideology in shaping representations of kinship, the following section offers brief quotes from views given by Palestinians from different social and ideological positions,

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[32] The only exception is Imm Marwan (Appendix A[1], no 7), whose mother forced her into an early marriage with a man she did not want.

with notes on how these positions affect their presentations of 'social reality'.

1) **B. Sirhan:** This author's paper on 'the traditional Palestinian peasant family' was cited earlier in this chapter, as well as the author's unusual vantage point for writing about the people of the camps. His boyhood observations in his uncle's <u>mudafeh</u> (guest room), his work in the camps, his later research among Palestinian families in Kuwait, and his personal experience of a large kin network, offer him a rich empirical basis for generalizations. Valuable as an overview, Sirhan's paper also offers an example of the effect of experience and history on representations of 'reality'. Among the aims of the group of radical PLO intellectuals with whom he worked in the 1970s was to loosen the grip of the 'traditional' peasant family over youth:

> We planned to destroy the traditionalism, the strong control of the family over the individual, especially when families tried to prevent their children from joining the Revolution...We were really hoping to create the 'new man'...a complete break with the past.[33]

By 1991, Sirhan's viewpoint towards 'the traditional peasant family' has become coloured with nostalgia. In particular he underlines the irreplaceability of clan elders, the last living link with Palestine and peasant culture. In a moving passage, he notes that whenever old people (female or male) visited Kuwait, <u>hamula</u> fractions that had given up visiting each other would regroup around the visitor: "They resume intensive interaction, (and) a feeling of warmth flows

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[33] Interview, March 1991.

among the relatives once again as they cling to the emotionally unifying historical figures".[34]

2) A senior UNRWA official, recently retired, of city origin: When asked if practices based in the hamula were sustained in Lebanon, he replied (in English): "Unfortunately until now they continue to exist. It is true that the camps in Beirut are more civilized than those in the South. Living near the capital, they became part of the nation (state?) there. But this doesn't mean that cases of revenge don't exist". He added that British law had a stronger effect in curbing practices such as revenge, or 'honour' executions, than Lebanese law.

For this official, the term hamula is associated with uncivilized practices such as revenge and 'honour' killings, rather than with its positive aspects such as sharing and solidarity. He takes it for granted that I, as a Westerner, take a critical stand towards rural kinship, a position he seems to share. Yet, later in the same interview, in seeming self-contradiction, this speaker deplores the dwindling influence and deaths of the clan elders.[35]

3) A younger man, of rural/camp origin, educated, a teacher and intellectual, local leader in the Arab Nationalist Movement-PFLP: Asked the same question this man answered (in Arabic): "To answer your question, we need to have an idea of Palestinian social structure. As part of Arab society, the tribal order (al-nizam al-qabiliyya) used to be the dominant

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[34] From an English version of Sirhan's 1991 paper.

[35] M. Faris, interview, Sidon, May 1992.

one, but after (1948) the tribe was scattered. As a result, the influence of the tribe over the individual became less... Tribalism in Palestine was more present in villages than in the city. But after the hijra, people settled in camps next to others from their village, and the village took the place of the tribe...In Palestine, villages were divided into families; here, in 'Ain Helweh for example, each village has become like a single family...Now there are new relations that tie individuals to others, political, social and economic ties, not tribal ones".[36]

Asked whether camp culture does not reinforce kinship, he replied: "On the contrary, culture creates a new understanding of belonging. Instead of the individual belonging to the tribe, he becomes someone who belongs to the nation and the people. The Palestinian citizen today feels that he belongs to the Palestinian people, not to the family or the hamula. The cultured person thinks of himself as a part of the people, and not a part of the tribe".

This speaker's insistent use of the classical term qabila (tribe) emphasizes the archaic, residual nature of kinship (which he defines as 'ties of blood'), destined to disappear in the construction of the nation. His understanding of 'culture' based in literacy, learning, and rationality, carries a sense of opposition to the values and practices of rural people that suggests the urban mind-set of a national elite.

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[36] S. Abu Salem, Sidon, May 1992.

4) An UNRWA teacher, of rural origin, in his later fifties, an early member of Fateh: Asked to speak about 'daily life' during the PLO/Resistance movement period this teacher said: "I think that none of the organizations understood the psychology of the people as Fateh did. It gave people what they wanted. For example, Fateh gave a lot of importance to family relations. By 'family relations' I mean that the girl must keep moral rules. Fateh preserved our Palestinian rules of morality. It wasn't permitted inside Fateh for girls to go out in the evening, unless it was in a large group...I'm not shy to say I'm a reactionary. The measure of progressive thinking in that period was for girls to drink wine, smoke Gitanes cigarettes, cross their legs, and say impolite words".[37]

The interest of this passage lies in the way that, free to choose any aspect of daily life, the speaker selects 'family relations'; and then proceeds to identify 'family relations' as meaning "the girl must keep moral rules". The association cannot be explained by my research concern with gender, since the interview in which it occurred was part of a project of recording histories of Shateela. Possibly my identity as a Western woman helped produce this statement, but cannot be taken as accounting for it completely. A colleague from Shateela who accompanied me to the meeting described this teacher as well-known for the conservativism of his views on gender.

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[37] Abu Othman, July 1991.

5) **A woman leader (member of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian General Women's Union,and of the PFLP's Central Committee) of urban origin, aged in her fifties, mother of two student daughters:** In answer to a question about women and honour, she said: "Look, as to 'ird wa sharaf, I say that if our Palestinian society has managed to preserve its unity, it was on this basis. Migration and refugee status usually lead to unemployment, and to girls going out to seek work, whatever it may be. As for us - and I consider this something to be proud of - the Palestinian family has preserved its traditions in spite of social liberation...When there's moral breakdown and promiscuity, values are lost...then every family thinks of itself, and every family member thinks of himself. When there's distancing within the family, they will be distanced from society. And when there's distancing from society, a man won't think about Palestine. When he doesn't care about his sister or his mother or his family, he won't care about his country. It's all connected together"[38].

As a set, these quotations point to the absence of organized knowledge about Palestinian society such as is produced by hegemonic national institutions. Speakers' representations of kinship and the family emerge from social and personal factors (urban/rural origin, age, occupation), and are strongly influenced by their political and ideological position. The interest of the last speaker's statement lies in the way it 'translates' traditional gender ideology into modern, nationalist terms, linking control of women's sexuality

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[38] Samira Salah, interview, March 1992.

to central values of family cohesion, national unity, and commitment to national struggle.

C. Gender ideology and practice in camps

Referring back to Chapter Two, we may summarize the gender ideology and practices of rural Palestinians as founded on the symbolic and material centrality of women to the reproduction of household, patrilineage, and local community. The ordered transfer of women's productive and procreative capacities between these units was enabled by, and created the necessity for, control of women's sexuality and fertility. This in turn was ideologically prescribed by religion and custom, backed by the possibility of violence. Women had clearly defined rights within this system, but only through fulfilling duties to specific males. Women's subordination to men was made more critical by the way that their proper behaviour (including clothing, deportment, speech, and so on) was taken as gauge of the honour of the collectivities to which they belonged.

The rest of this section will discuss and illustrate through specific cases the effects on gender ideology and women of two major changes brought about by exile: camps as material and social habitat; and expansion in women's economic activity. This will include a brief look at some kinds of women's struggle with their families.

Camps as mediating frameworks of gender ideology and practice

The re-assembling of village fragments in camps appears to have assured a large measure of socio-cultural continuity, with

social leadership provided by regional networks of rural notables formed in Palestine. Conflicts were curbed by customary practices of arbitration and reconciliation, informally exercised by clan and village leaders. Relations between kin units and within households continued in the customary way. Marriages were arranged as they had been, with the same criteria of spouse selection.[39] Though the reproduction of culture was jeopardized by exile and poverty, descriptions of marriage celebrations suggest that, by the early 1960s, many traditional practices had been restored.

Male unemployment and low wage levels meant a poverty that had gender-specific consequences. Need for income forced women into wage labour, in seasonal agriculture, construction, and even domestic service.[40] At the same time, compared with rural Palestine, domestic labour became more onerous and complex, including new tasks such as carrying heavy food rations, and bringing water from distant taps. Instead of being carried out in open spaces, by neighbourhood or village groups, domestic labour in camps also became more restricted to the individual household. Poor habitat, malnutrition, and lack of protection

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[39] Parental compulsion may even have increased in the first years of exile. A man from Kweikat married soon after the exodus at age 16 to a 14-year old girl from his village, said that the marriage was arranged by his parents for two reasons: her family had land in Palestine; and they did not want him to marry a Lebanese. Land ownership continued to be a consideration for many years: a woman married in 1970 said that her parents had forced her to marry an uneducated man because his family had land in Palestine.

[40] Such kinds of labour for women, especially domestic service, tend to be repressed in popular memory as shameful. For example, Hajji Badriyya, daughter of the first UNRWA Director of Shateela (Appendix A[1], no 3) said: "Women may have worked in other camps, but not in Shateela". Yet in the early period Shateela women had indeed worked in agriculture, construction, and even domestic service.

against rain and cold caused deterioration in health standards
that weighed on women as care-takers.[41] This description by
Imm Nayef (Appendix A[1], no 2) of her life in Ba'lbek in the
1950s can be generalized to other women:

> I went to work in the fields in the day, and returned in
> the evening to wash, make bread, and cook. We slept a
> little, and went back to work. We brought our children up
> with hard labour, not like today when there are cookers
> and washing machines.

Child-rearing changed radically from what it had been in
rural Palestine. Added to health were new anxieties: children's
schooling, environmental dangers, and, by the 1960s, political
activism. Maternal encouragement was a critical factor in
constraining children to study in difficult conditions, without
privacy or proper lighting: some mothers learnt to read and
write better to help with homework.[42] A 'proper upbringing'
was increasingly viewed as a basic element in children's future
success in finding employment. Elaboration of maternal tasks
was a factor that, compared with life in Palestine, tended to
confine camp women to home and neighbourhood. After 1969,
anxiety created by war conditions intensified women's
'centering' on their homes, at the same time as violence

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[41] Older women's recollections show the frequency in the
early years of miscarriage, infant deaths, child sickness, and
disablement of husbands (commonly through tuberculosis or work
accidents). Many themselves are now suffering the belated
consequences of harsh conditions and anxiety, for example
enlarged heart, arterial tension, diabetes and rheumatism.

[42] For example, Imm Marwan (Appendix A[1], no 7).
Consciousness of having been deprived of schooling is
characteristic of mothers of Imm Marwan's generation (born in
1938), and is the reason why many particularly encouraged their
daughters to study.

increasingly penetrated homes, abnormalizing and disrupting them.[43]

Camps not only mediated a different external world, they brought together people who were 'strangers'. This heterogeneity of population composition was another kind of difference from Palestinian villages, which were composed of families that changed little over time.[44] The close proximity of 'strangers', constraints on public and private space, the reduction of domestic privacy (lavatories were public in the early period; the building of enclosing walls was forbidden): all these led to what people term 'mixing' (ikhtilat), a condition that compromises a historically-formed preference for co-residence and interaction with 'familiars'. Even though later, perhaps under Resistance influence, camp people looked back at 'mixing' as a necessary stage on the road to peoplehood, yet the less politicized often express contrary ideas. For example, people who have lived in Shateela since the beginning sometimes regret the period before the influx of 'strangers', when "we all knew each other, and were like one family". Social and moral standards are felt to be jeopardized if co-resident households are not closely interlinked by exchange and reciprocity. As noted earlier, in Arab-Muslim milieus concern for morality tends to focus around women.

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[43] Peteet describes a day of shelling in Shateela in 1981: a cadre is forced by the closure of a creche to take her baby with her on duty visits, while 'Imm Khalid' hesitates between giving her literacy class, or staying at home with her children: Gender in Crisis, p 130/31.

[44] Nakhleh, "Patterns of Conflict", gives accounts of the histories of clans in Rameh and Beit Jann (Galilee) going back several centuries. Artas clans showed similar historical depth (Granqvist, 1935, Preface).

Thus for women, the consequences of the proximity of 'strangers' in camps were many, and mainly negative. It is true that most girls went to school, which Palestinians saw as a positive development; but many stories show that family supervision of adolescent girls intensified: although the levels to which girls were allowed to study rose, conservative families tended to remove their daughters from school at the end of the primary cycle, at around age 12 (up to the present time girls are likely to be removed from school for reasons that include father's conservatism, rumours of misconduct, or general insecurity). The walk to school might expose girls to the remarks of unknown young men. Zohra (Appendix A[1], no 15) said that her mother was unusual in letting her play in the street, and telling her to pay no attention if youths made sexual innuendoes as she passed them on the way home from school. Fayrooz (Appendix A[1}, no 11) recalls that her older brother used to follow her to and from school to make sure she spoke to no one. Even in Shateela, with its small size, girls in the 1950s and 1960s were severely restricted. Suhayr (Appendix A[1], no 14), whose parents untypically allowed her to visit school friends in the camp, said, "As girls we never went out at night. My grandmother's house wasn't far from ours, yet I couldn't go to see her. It was forbidden".

In case of need of extra income, it was generally mothers who went out to work for wages, while adolescent daughters were kept at home. Before younger women began to acquire professional training, by the mid-1960s, it was very rare to find an unmarried camp woman working. Dressmaking was one of the few exceptions because it could be practised at home: when Imm Ahmad 'Issa Khalaf's step-father became disabled, in 1955,

her mother sent her, aged eleven, to be apprenticed to a
dressmaker. Even when women did have qualifications, it was
more likely that they would seek employment outside Lebanon,
in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, or Libya. This was not only because
salaries in these countries were higher, but also because,
abroad, women were freed from neighbourhood scrutiny and
gossip.

It is probable, also, that violence against women
increased in early exile. The continued use of abortifacients
in camps suggests that rapes and seductions occurred. The
notable Faris Sarhan is remembered as giving sanctuary to a
young girl from a southern camp who had been seduced, and whose
parents wanted to kill her.[45] In Shateela, an 'honour' killing
remembered by several of the study subjects took place in the
early 1960s, when a girl variously reported to have been seen
in bed, or to have gone to the cinema, with a man was killed
by her father, but whom the subsequent postmortem proved to be
a virgin. The sympathies of Shateela people were with the
parents, sentenced to long prison terms.[46] Women from Bourj
Barajneh camp say that the concealment of 'honour' killings was
relatively easy: a doctor's certificate of 'death by natural
causes' could easily be bought. There is no way of estimating
the actual incidence of violence against women, but a leader
of the pre-1948 national women's movement who moved to Lebanon,
Ruqeyya Huri, believed that 'honour' crimes increased in exile,

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[45] B. Sirhan, interview, March 1991.

[46] Fayrooz (no 11), who was in the same school class as the
victim, describes how Shateela women collecting contributions
for the parents' legal defence told her that the incident
should be a warning to other girls.

result of men's loss of status, and the tensions of camp life.[47] It is said that after 1969, with weapons in the camps, violence against women again increased, even though the Resistance movement took steps to prevent this.

A more positive aspect of camp life for women was their role in integrating camp communities. This involved an extension of visiting patterns established in Palestinian villages, based on the openness of village homes, itself the result of overlapping ties of consanguinity and affinity. Though my observations of women's visiting do not go back earlier than 1973, informants say that it was primarily women who crossed pre-1948 social and regional boundaries reproduced in the ahyya (quarters) of large urban camps such as 'Ain Helweh and Tell al-Za'ter. For example, Tell al-Za'ter contained distinct quarters inhabited by people from specific villages, by city people, and by ghawarneh.[48] Before PLO/Resistance movement autonomy there was no mechanism integrating these socially and spatially disparate groups. Women are said to have established new relationships with one another, often through children's school friendships that led

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[47] Quoted in S.Antonius, "Fighting on Two Fronts: Palestinian Women in Lebanon", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol 8, no 3, 1979. Mrs Huri's hypothesis is supported by Granqvist's data on decline in 'honour' killings in Artas in the 1920s.

[48] Camp populations were initially formed from three distinct social categories: ahel al-qariya (villagers, the majority), ahel al-mudun (city people, present in small numbers in urban camps), and bedu (pastoralists, a very small minority). In addition were ghawarneh, a large group from Huleh (northeast Palestine), of bedu origin but practising settled agriculture.

to reciprocal visiting that eventually involved men.[49] The visiting network of Imm Mustafa in Shateela, observed in the early 1980s, crossed boundaries of every kind: national (between Palestinians and Lebanese), between sects (Sunnis and Shi'ites), between higher and lower social statuses, and between Resistance group affiliations.

The force that did most to shake familial and community constraints on women was war and displacement. With camps increasingly becoming the targets of Israeli and Lebanese attack, women were mobilized in collective and household defensive tasks: as carriers of water, foodstuffs and ammunition, as First Aid workers and nurses, and occasionally as fighters. Though such emergency mobilization lapsed during lulls, it enhanced women's idea of their capacities, as well as community attitudes towards them. Women also were made the targets of attack and rape during the Civil War of 1975-6 and again in the massacres of 1982, because they were procreators of Palestinians and fighters, and also as a means to instigate mass terror and flight. The accumulation of experiences demonstrating men's incapacity to protect women (as well as women's capacities to defend camps) has surely done more to modify gender ideology than the Resistance movement itself. Though the Resistance includes groups with radical positions on gender, the movement as a whole has been cautious in its slogans and practices. As Peteet notes, "...the Resistance

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[49] Qassem 'Aina, director of the orphanage Beit Atfal al-Sumood, former resident of Tell al-Za'ter camp: interview, April 1985.

strove to awaken women to national domination and their role in struggle, not gender domination".[50]

Women's economic contribution

Household need for women's earnings has fluctuated widely between periods. A period of great need was the first decade. In the 1960s, with migrant remittances, most women stopped doing work deemed harsh or humiliating. The PLO/Resistance period had contradictory effects, reducing men's employment in the Lebanese economy, opening training and employment possibilities for women, and supporting household income through welfare spending. Decline in PLO employment and services after 1982 again created need for women's earnings.

The only waged work available to women during the early years of exile, apart from domestic service, was manual, in agriculture and construction, and was paid at lower rates than to Palestinian men or to Lebanese; this was the reason why, whenever a household's income level improved, women were withdrawn from the labour force. As for younger women, only a small minority progressed beyond the elementary school level to obtain the professional qualifications without which their families would not allow them to work.[51] Nonetheless, women's

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[50] Peteet points to the complex relationship between national struggle and gender ideology, and to the failure of the Resistance movement's attempt to keep the two apart:"...in activating national consciousness and a spirit of revolution, the manifestations of internalized domination obstructed women's activism and thus revealed the nature and extent of gender subordination..." (Gender in Crisis, p 165).

[51] This minority is represented in the study sample by Fayrooz, who graduated in 1967 from al-Tireh (an UNRWA professional training institute in Ramallah), found employment in Libya, and became the main source of income for her parents'

recollections of the first decade underline the degree to which they contributed to household economies. We hear numerous cases of women working when husbands were sick or unemployed, or to pay for their brothers' schooling. Imm Ghassan (Appendix A[1], no 4) sold her gold bracelets to buy coffee-making equipment for her husband to make a living with; Imm Nayef bought their Shateela home with her wedding jewelry. When a child was sick, Imm Muhammad Farmawi pawned the watch her husband had given her at their engagement to pay for a private doctor. The oldest of the life story tellers recorded for this study, Imm Muhammad, already a widow in 1948, recalls being reprimanded by a <u>sheikh</u> for 'working like a man', and answering him, "I <u>am</u> the man!" Women also supplemented household incomes through occasional, in-camp work such as midwifery, trade or piece-work. The accolade of 'heroic mothers' given later to women of the 'generation of the Disaster'[52] is largely based in their contribution to economic survival. It is for this reason, also, that, in contrast to their material conditions, the status accorded to women in camps remained high.[53]

With the development of Palestinian social associations in the late 1960s, various kinds of training programmes began

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household. She recalls three or four other young Shateela women from her generation (born just before 1948), who also worked, in dress-making, nursing, and as secretaries.

[52] See Appendix A[1] for the division of the sample along generational lines, and an explanation of the terms used by Palestinians for naming generations.

[53] Peteet notes that Palestinian rural women did not lose status after separation from Palestine, unlike the case of most Third World women undergoing migration. Their traditional roles as household managers and socializers of children continued to be valued, while new sources of status (education, employment, political activism) became available to them (<u>Gender in Crisis</u>, p 34/5).

to be offered to girls and women in camps: besides basic literacy, there were classes in dress-making, nursing, embroidery, and typing. A network of workshops and factories was set up by the PLO and Resistance groups in or near camps, to provide income to the families of men killed in action, and to constitute the embryo of a national economy. Women worked in all sectors of the PLO/Resistance movement's structure, which expanded after the Civil War of 1975-6 to employ an estimated 65 percent of the Palestinian workforce. An increasingly large proportion of this was formed by women from the camps, reflecting a shift in attitudes towards women working, and 'normalizing' it as an integral part of national struggle.

A strong but not untypical statement of the importance to women of their contribution to refugee household economies is this one given by Samira Salah:

> With all the negative aspects of the <u>hijra</u>...we benefitted from two fundamental things: first education, limited before 1948 to daughters of rich families; second, economic dependence on women led to a strengthening of their personality, hence their entry into the midst of politics.[54]

The interest of this statement lies first in the way it values economic activity as leading to political (national) activity; but even more in the way it underlines the dependence of household economies on women's work. Samira adds, "After 1948, Palestinians had to work; they were responsible for feeding their children, or for educating brothers and sisters".

Later, explaining the decline in exile of wives returning to their father's household, Samira points to a vital aspect of women's new economic role:

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[54] Interview, March 1992.

Today a woman works, she's part of the founding [takween] of the home. She's the one who buys things, she makes the home, she participates...It's her home. So she stays, and lets her husband leave if he wants to. Whereas in the past, it was the man who owned everything.[55]

This statement reflects PFLP ideology, which gives central importance to women's participation in society and economy; but it also reflects Palestinian attitudes in underlining the importance of women's at-home contribution to household economies rather than through their 'labour force participation' alone.

Fluctuation in rates of women's labour force participation is thus also due to the ideology of al-sitt fil-beit ('the lady in the house'), or, put differently, social recognition of the value to household economies of women's domestic labour. This recognition is explicit among camp Palestinians, and gives housewives a status they do not have in industrial or post-industrial societies. Basic contributions capable housewives are seen as making to household economies are: management of income;[56] cutting down expenditure through careful purchasing, conserving foodstuffs, making clothes at home; and proper child-raising. Exile conditions added new tasks to the housewife's role. It was/is generally housewives who 'interface' with the labyrinth of institutions that control resources, a consequence of belief in women's special ability for eliciting sympathy.[57] As noted earlier, in periods of

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[55] Ibid.

[56] In camps it is generally housewives who dispose of men's earnings. Imm 'Imad (no 10) recalls her father emptying his daily earnings on the kitchen table, to be appropriated by her mother. A man who does not do this is considered a bad husband.

[57] International agencies other than UNRWA are involved with Palestinians, as well as some foreign national agencies. In addition there are the Resistance groups and local social

economic hardship, camp housewives may take up income-earning activities in the home such as dressmaking, embroidery, sale of goods, hairdressing and the decoration of brides. Housewives also have the main responsibility for the social integration of the household into the community, through keeping it clean, ensuring its respectability, and welcoming neighbours and visitors. Fulfilling this task has economic as well as social importance; people perceive individual household survival as dependent on that of the community as a whole.[58]

All the Resistance groups mobilized women not only politically and militarily, but also as workers and employees. All acted as if the economic mobilization of women was also a form of political mobilization; and leftist groups such as the PFLP announced ideological positions according to which women's economic mobilization was a necessary stage on the way to their social liberation. It is important to note that women's paid and unpaid labour contributed to the economies of specific Resistance groups (for example through the sale of embroidery), as well as to the national economy as a whole. It needs to be noted, too, that much of what women contributed was domestic labour. Camp housewives were frequently mobilized by the Resistance to cook for the fighters. They also visited the bases in the South, taking gifts, and substituting for absent mothers. During the Civil War of 1975-6, in periods of shortage

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associations.

[58] A sense of mutual interdependence underlines many values and customs, for example hospitality and zikkat (alms), and the way that, during sieges, camp housewives give food to fighters and neighbours. Such actions are represented as religiously sanctioned, and as part of a cycle of social reciprocity.

of flour, the Resistance distributed bread baked by women in the camps in low-income Lebanese areas.

In spite of the spread of paid employment to women in camps, oral testimony points to justification of such moves in terms of contributing to society, or building a national economy, or family crisis. Purely economic or personal motives are not admissible. This is clear from the comment made by a husband during the recording of his wife's work history. He said that he had at first opposed her proposal to take salaried work to help with growing household expenses. Economic need was not a sufficient reason in his view: "Only when she became convinced that women must have an active role in society did I agree".

The following two cases illustrate the complex interaction between women's subjectivities, economic activity, family background and Resistance movement mobilization.

1) **Sana' Hassan:** From a poor family in Tell al-Za'ter, Sana' began working at an early age when her elderly father became sick, encouraged by her mother who is from Huleh, an area where women had a strong role in agriculture and craft production. Later she joined the PFLP and read radical feminist writers such as Kollantai. After the fall of Tell al-Za'ter, she moved to Damour, and worked in a factory run by the Women's Union. At the time of the first meeting with her, in 1984, she was a social worker with a Palestinian orphanage. She has remained unmarried. Unlike most Palestinian women, she argues that economic independence has intrinsic value for women. Her job working with widows has made her aware of the difficulties such

women face if they have no training, and must depend on their husband's or their own family.

This case points to the importance of family background factors in facilitating or preventing women's move into employment: household poverty combined with her father's sickness, no older brothers, and a local cultural tradition of women's productive activity, gave Sana' scope for autonomy that women of village origin do not have.

2) **Imm Muhammad Farmawi**: Before presenting the second case a word of historical explanation is needed. During the 1970s, the PLO expanded, building the social institutions of an embryonic state, while Resistance groups competing for popular support similarly consolidated their structures. One of the consequences of this development was a shift from dependence on voluntary to paid political work. At the level of the camps this shift sometimes caused tension between mutabara'een (volunteers) and mutafarragheen (full-time salaried cadres). As the wife of an Arab National movement militant, Imm Muhammad Farmawi had been active in politics for years before the beginning of PLO/Resistance autonomy. Among her activities was standing guard over clandestine meetings; distributing pamphlets; helping transfer weapons; collecting donations; and producing embroideries for the Resistance. These activities were carried out through twelve pregnancies and the bringing up of eight children, with her husband often absent on political missions, or in prison.

In the early Resistance period, still as a volunteer, Imm Muhammad organized a PFLP embroidery workshop in Shateela. However, as the result of two 'incidents' she later shifted to

a salaried position with Samed, the PLO's main productive
institution. The first incident involved a middle class PFLP
cadre who criticized Imm Muhammad publicly in the workshop; the
second was the PFLP's replacement of Imm Muhammad as workshop
head by another woman, who was made <u>mutafarragha</u> (that is, paid
a salary). It was in response to this provocation that Imm
Muhammad made her move to Samed.

The move demonstrated both political and conjugal
independence: Samed 'belonged' to Fateh, whereas Abu Muhammad
was a leading cadre of the PFLP, Fateh's main rival. Imm
Muhammad also underlined her local status and influence by
taking with her to Samed several of the PFLP workshop's
embroiderers. This was an action propelled by pride in her
history as a militant combined with pride in the status of her
family of origin (her father had been a prosperous village
landowner); and was reflected in the style with which she
recounted the story to me more than ten years after the event.
The story points to possibilities opened up to women by paid
employment with the PLO/Resistance, and also to the way
economic pressures interacted with social and family structures
at the camp level to decide whether or not women worked outside
the home, and in what capacity. Conjugal, ideological, social
status, and experiential factors worked together in Imm
Muhammad's case to enable a decisive move into professional
employment rare for women of her age, marital status, and of
village origin.

Women's struggles with their families

Most commonly told stories of women's struggle with their families are located in the PLO/Resistance period, and revolve around the attempts of banat (young unmarried women) to 'join the Revolution'. However, interesting evidence of earlier struggles of banat against coercive marriage comes from one of the life history-givers, Suhayr (Appendix A[1], no 14). In a discussion of shifts in marriage practice in the 1960s, whereby the custom of constrained marriage was gradually abandoned,[59] Suhayr and her mother, Hajji Badriyya, said that the frequent failure of conjugal units produced by constraint, with the consequence of divorce, inter-family quarrels and abandoned wives and children, created a climate in which parents gradually reduced pressures on their children to enter unwanted marriages. The passage is valuable for the way it points to local level processes through which marriage practices were changed, as well as for what it shows about stratagems used by banat to avoid unwanted marriages. When asked if the shift came about through debate, Suhayr answered: "No. It was done silently, through the intervention of friends, through rebellions, and through threats of suicide".

The struggles of young women against marriages imposed on them by their parents will be further discussed in Chapter Six, using data from the life stories. Following is a case only of a young woman's rebellion against her father over out-of-home

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[59] As shown in the presentation of Granqvist's marriage data in Chapter Two, girls in Palestinian villages, as in most other Arab milieus at the time, were married at puberty or before through paternal decision, and without consulting them. The element of coercion was recognized in the term used for such marriage: jabr (to force, constrain).

activities, valuable for its psycho-cultural depth, and insights into intra-household family relationships.

Nadia was about 24 years old at the time of recording her work experience, in March 1987. Unmarried, resident in her parents' household in Shateela, she was employed in the local branch of a Palestinian social association. She was fourth in a family of eight, with an older brother who had migrated; two older sisters and one younger one were married. At age twelve, while still in school, Nadia began producing knit-wear at home to increase household income, after her father was cut off by Civil War fighting from his job in East Beirut. Soon she gave up school to spend all her time in production. Her ultra-conservative father did not encourage her to go back to school, though her mother and her older brother did. As an adolescent, her only life outside the home was accompanying an older sister, whom Nadia described as 'my closest friend and ally', on visits. When the sister married, Nadia felt 'abandoned and isolated'. She continued:

> I felt that if I didn't escape from home restrictions, I'd sink for ever. I had given up the struggle over education too easily, out of a feeling of being obliged to help the family. I got good marks in school, I felt I could have been a doctor or a teacher. One day there was an adult literacy teacher training course run by the Women's Union. I decided to confront my father over this issue, and threatened suicide if he wouldn't let me join it. Finally, he relented.

After 1982, Nadia's father allowed her to work for a salary with a social association, but only because its local centre was close to the family home. He adamantly refused to allow her to join the Resistance group linked to it, though membership would have enhanced her chances of promotion. Nadia said that her father had never accepted any kind of financial support from the PLO/Resistance movement. Though loyal to her

close-knit family, Nadia felt blocked by its closure, which had
prevented her full involvement in, and benefit from, the
activities generated by the national movement.

* * *

Consideration of changes in kinship and household family
relations outlined in Section A of this chapter suggests that
these structures (like camps themselves) have attenuated the
impact of change in the environment on gender ideology and
women. Decline in the patrilineage reduced the intervention of
clan elders in women's lives; but weakening of the patrilineage
was accompanied by a shift in the locus of control of women to
household family, camp, and the national movement itself,
rather than by radical change in the 'ideology of honour'.
Ideas about women were embodied in social structure, inscribed
in the ethos and status of the clan and village elders who made
up the social leadership of camp communities, and in the
authority structure of households. Priorities of defence and
survival against an alien, sometimes hostile environment, had
the effect of repressing contestation of age and gender
hierarchy at community and household levels. The economic,
social, and moral importance of the household family in camps,
as unit of economic survival, building block of the 'moral
community', and source of identity and control of individuals,
formed a context for women that re-affirms their symbolic and
material centrality. Marriage has remained until now a key
institution of control of women, before it through the
importance attached to virginity, after it by the burdens of
childbearing and domestic labour. Women, identified with 'the
family', are placed at the centre of what has not changed, or
what must not be allowed to change (or not too much).

The relationship between the PLO/Resistance movement and camp families was made complex by the degree of identification between the two, with the national movement penetrating the 'family domain' through multiple kinds of mobilization: recruitment, indoctrination, inter-Resistance group conflict, family support programmes, and so on. However, women remain an element that was partially withheld, becoming the subject and object of a three-way struggle: between the Resistance movement as a whole and families; between rightist and leftist current within the Resistance movement; and between women and their families. The Resistance movement supported women's struggles with their families (particularly those directed towards 'joining the Revolution', but also those over marriage); but it also 'contained' them, for example by politicizing women's domestic labour and procreative role, while the conservative wing of the movement, represented here by the local Fateh leader quoted on p 195, reproduced a 'traditional' gender ideology.

A simple Orientalist or feminist approach would construe women as 'victims' of this interlocking framework between external constraints and internal community relations. Class and gender hierarchy have combined to load them with a heavy share of Palestinian hardship and suffering in Lebanon. But such a construction would ignore women's subjectivities, an arena that must be taken into account if we are to understand more about the reproduction and modification of gender ideology. As the following two chapters will indicate, Palestinian women' representations of their reality are otherwise. It is to elucidate this problem that the rest of this dissertation will be devoted.

Chapter Five

WOMEN'S LIFE STORIES AND NATIONAL CRISIS

In spite of the number of studies of women's active participation in Third World national liberation movements,[1] and a growing interest, both theoretical and empirical, in symbolic constructions of women in both colonialist and nationalist discourses,[2] little work has been carried out so far on the way women express and relate to the predominantly nationalist or religious ideologies of the collectivities in which they are engendered members.[3] Feminist theory would predict a tension between women's nationalism and their consciousness of gender subordination, a dualism similar to that described by Rowbottham between "the self as culturally defined and the self as different from cultural prescription".[4] Autobiographies written by Third World women suggest that this is indeed the case.[5] Part of the interest in reading

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[1] See K. Jayawardena, _Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World_ (London: Zed Books, 1986), and its Bibliography.

[2] Yuval-Davis and Anthias have been pioneers in this field, especially in _Woman-Nation-State_; see also N. Yuval-Davis, "Nationalism, Racism and Gender Relations", Institute of Social Studies, Working Paper Series no 130, July 1992.

[3] But see the contributors to Kandiyoti, _Women, Islam and the State_, who include women both as active participants and as objects of constraint in nationalist movements and state formation in selected Muslim societies.

[4] Quoted in Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves".

[5] For example, the Palestinian poet Fadwa Tuqan reflects on the irony of her father's request that she should write nationalist poetry after he had prevented her from taking any part in life outside the home: _Mountainous Journey_, p 109. A similar twist appears in the title of R. Tawil's autobiography, _My Home, My Prison_ (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1980).

Palestinian camp women's life stories will be to discover how they relate themselves as women to nationalist themes. In the discussion of women's self-representations (in section B of this chapter), examination will be focussed on the social commonality and transhistoricity of 'selves' embodied in the life stories, not on 'selves' as individual narrative constructions, nor on social personae constructed through daily life interaction.

The view of life stories taken here is that of Passerini (1987), that they are set in referential frames of time and history, even if history is differently stressed and related to by different narrators. National struggle forms a strong frame of historical reference that imposes itself on the narration of lives almost without the narrators' intention, because of the way it mobilizes collectivities and affects personal lives; as noted in Chapter One, several studies point to a link between movements of national or social liberation and the writing of participants' autobiographies. In addition, the heightened awareness bred by national struggle tends to produce 'themes' through which individual lives are linked to, and reflect, the struggle, both in the sense of influencing the production of 'selves', and in their oral or written representation.

An introduction to the life stories of Palestinian women

In introduction to the life stories, we need to note disconnections between Palestinian national historiography, the Palestinian people, and popular experience. Swedenberg (1985-6) notes the absence of a hegemonic version of Palestinian

national history, the result of dispersion, separation from their historic environment, and lack of institutions of diffusion. Even after the establishment of the PLO in 1964, its lack of a secure centre and institutions of diffusion of national history (for example, an educational system), placed the main burden of historical transmission on individual scholars and informal networks. Moreover PLO access to scattered refugee communities was limited by the 'host' authorities. For these reasons, as well as cultural and ideological ones, popular experience was not a focus of national history writing revived after 1948 in exile. Women in particular found little place in national history.[6] Thus knowledge of popular historical experience, including women's, has remained outside national history writing, while written national history has had little impact on popular memory.

The set of Palestinian women who gave their life stories for this study are structured in terms of: i) age; ii) marital status; iii) place of origin in Palestine (village or city); and iv) educational level. There are also slight differences between them as regards employment histories, and degree of nationalist activism (see Appendix A [1,2,3] for details). Differences of socio-economic status exist but are overshadowed by a common precariousness of situation as refugee. All have at some time been residents of Shateela camp or its periphery, a common local reference that has its place in the life stories. These were almost all recorded in natural settings,

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[6] Some symptoms of neglect: the omission of women from a recent study of the pre-1948 Palestinian political elite; the absence of mention of women's movement leaders from an official Palestinian encyclopedia; and the unconcern of national institutions of research and publishing in recording the recollections of women's movement leaders.

with family and neighbours present; their questions to the life story narrators revealed predominant themes of exiled Palestinian experience, and what they felt outsiders should be told.

Of the axes of differentiation within the sample the most important for historical cultural analysis is that of age. The life story givers are divided into three generations colloquially designated as: i) 'the generation of Palestine' (those born and married in Palestine, cases 1 to 5); ii) 'the generation of the Disaster' (those born in Palestine who grew up in exile, cases 6 to 13); and iii) 'the generation of the Revolution' (those born in Lebanon who grew up after the liberation of the camps in 1969, cases 14 to 18). Each of these generations was formed by radically different political and cultural conditions which are reflected in the life stories in contents, form, and mode of relating to the national movement.

Lebanon needs to be understood as historical context for the life stories in two main, contradictory phases: the period of PLO/Resistance autonomy (1969-1982); and the post-1982 period of renewed repression, insecurity, and economic hardship. Between 1969 and 1989, camps became 'liberated zones', where military training, politicization, national-institution building, and the creation of a popular 'revolutionary' culture could be carried on. The people of the camps participated in this moment of national cultural revival in ways that remain to be researched; but it is legitimate to assume that the telling of stories of Palestine, exodus, and early exile increased during the period of Resistance movement autonomy, becoming a fixed element in popular resistance culture.

PLO/Resistance movement programmes for women in the camps were also influenced by a particular phase of national movement strategy, one marked by a shift from mass mobilization for armed struggle to one of predominantly diplomatic and political activity. But escalation of Israeli attacks, combined with attacks by the Lebanese Army and anti-Palestinian Maronite militias, caused heavy human and material losses to camp populations. Such a situation emphasized the critical importance of <u>sumood</u> (steadfastness, standing firm), a form of struggle emphasized in nationalist discourse throughout this period. As noted in Chapter Three, <u>sumood</u> is a concept that preserves existing social relations. Its strong (though implicit) gender and class connotations were evident in Lebanon, since it was the inhabitants of populous, low-income areas who bore the brunt of Israeli and Lebanese attack. Women in camps suffered attack equally with men (and were often its specific targets);[7] war also affected them in gender-specific ways, through the destruction of homes, displacement, widowhood and loss of children. Yet morale remained high, as recorded in Peteet's pre-1982 field interviews (1991).

The period during which the life stories of this study were recorded (from September 1990 to January 1993) was far bleaker, with multiple causes for despondency: on the national level, the Gulf War and subsequent opening of Israeli-Arab peace negotiations deflated hopes kindled by the <u>Intifada</u> (the uprising in the Occupied Territories), and threatened Palestinians in Lebanon with the probability of <u>towteen</u>

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[7] During Lebanese Army and militia attacks against camps women have been specifically aimed at by snipers, whether as mothers of Palestinian 'terrorists', or as a means of creating panic.

(resettlement in exile).[8] On the local level, there was Syrian Army control of West Beirut, accompanied by extensive arrests of Palestinians accused of being 'Arafatists'.[9] The Beirut camps were still under Syrian 'siege' and had not been fully rebuilt after the battles of 1985-8. The future of the Palestinians in Lebanon looked increasingly insecure as the Cairo Accords were abrogated,[10] the camps de-militarized, and state pressures forcing Palestinians to migrate intensified.[11] Decline in UNRWA services and PLO support combined with the closure of the Lebanese and Gulf economies to Palestinian workers further reduced already low income levels. Such conditions formed a dark framework in which to narrate lives.

In section A I shall discuss the stories that mainly older women tell as a gender- and class-specific form of national history. The main section (B) presents three forms of historical national representations of the 'self' into which most of the life stories collected for this study fit. The

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[8] <u>Towteen</u>, literally 'implantation', has been used since 1948 to mean the permanent settlement of Palestinian exiles outside Palestine. Rejection of <u>towteen</u> was a basic element in the original aims of the Resistance movement.

[9] The Syrian Army took control of West Beirut in February 1987, setting up checkpoints around the camps that have remained until the present. Syrian surveillance intensified during the Gulf crisis and war (August 1990 to February 1991), when Palestinians were suspected of siding with Iraq.

[10] As noted in Chapter 3, the Cairo Accords of November 1969 recognized Palestinian national and civic rights in Lebanon. They were annulled in June 1988, since when Palestinian status has been under suspended Lebanese-PLO negotiation.

[11] For example, through threats of eviction in conjunction with the absence of re-housing plans for the war-displaced; cancellation of residence rights of Palestinians working abroad who have obtained second nationalities; and (most seriously) the tightening of labour laws.

final section attempts a social analysis of inter-generational change in mode of relating to national struggle.

A. Women's stories as national history

Women in Palestinian camps have a rich stock of historical experience in the form of qussass (stories),[12] orally transmitted in women's gatherings and household family settings. Such knowledge is fragmentary and particularistic, limited to what the speaker has witnessed, or heard from people known to him/her (truthfulness is essential to the qissa). Camp women's stories about the past seldom include references to nationally known figures, or political parties. Not set in a broader chronological or political framework, they are not recognized as history, either by themselves or others.[13]

Yet the life stories collected for this study offer a source of national history rich in detail on local politics, on specific incidents of repression and resistance, and on daily life socio-cultural practices. As a first example, let us take the oldest member of the sample, Imm Muhammad (no 1,

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[12] Arabic differentiates between different types of story. In Palestinian Arabic, there is hikayyeh (fable, folk tale), and qissa, an account of a real happening, either in history or in the speaker's experience. The telling of hikayyeh (defined by men as kizb, lies) is traditionally the speciality of women, the qissa of men (see Muhawi and Kenaana, Speak, Bird, p 2-3).

[13] This point was illustrated for me when I asked a teacher in Bourj Barajneh camp in 1974 to suggest people who could tell me about the experience of being Palestinian. His first list of twenty speakers did not contain a single woman.

born c. 1900).[14] This is her account of a British Army raid on the village of al-Birweh:

> Someone told the Inkleez (British) that there were revolutionaries hiding in al-Birweh. So they came and captured them and took them to an open space where there were cactus bushes. It was July. They told the young men to cut the cactus branches, and then they threw them on top of the young men and stepped on them.

Another group of men were ordered to carry heavy stones; Imm Muhammad's son was among the latter group. The British soldiers stopped the women from taking water to the men:

> The Inkleez stood in my way. The soldier said, "I'll shoot you". I took his rifle and threw it on the ground, and I went on with the water to my son and the other shebab under the olive trees. They were black, black, black, you couldn't recognize them. I poured water in my son's mouth and said, "Share it among you".

Imm Muhammad accompanied her story with energetic arm and foot movements to show how she had pushed aside the British soldier.[15] Her life story revealed an unexpected degree of mobility and urbanization. Born in Sohmata, she had married a man from al-Birweh during the first World War, at a time when the Ottoman Army was taking conscripts from villages. On the night of their marriage, they were forced to escape to Hawran (in Syria), and stayed there until the war was finished. Before marriage, she had lived in Haifa, where her father had worked in a tobacco factory. Later, when her son opened a shop there, she lived in Acre.

Another member of 'the generation of Palestine', Hajji Badriyya (no 3, born in 1926), tells how her uncle and cousin

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[14] Numbers in brackets refer to the list of life story givers in Appendix A. The case number is not repeated after the first reference to a specific life story giver.

[15] Tall and impressive-looking even in old age (more than 90 years at the time of recording), Imm Muhammad wore a black band like a man's argal wound around a special head-covering, called an amta, sign of special piety.

were killed in a British Army ambush near Yarqa; how her
father, a guerilla leader, was betrayed and captured in Maroun
al-Ras, and condemned to death; and how, with the help of a
friend who bribed a British officer, he was eventually
released. Hajji Badriyya's commentary conveys the hard life of
the families of the <u>thuwar</u> (revolutionaries):

> From (the time of the ambush) we tasted sorrow. We were
> frightened for my father, always afraid that someone would
> inform against him. We used to go and see him in the
> mountains...

Because the fighters were seldom paid, Hajji Badriyya's
mother made cheese which a neighbour used to sell for her in
Acre. Within the story of her father's imprisonment nest
several smaller stories. One of them is about her mother:

> They told my mother that she should go to '<u>al-mandoub
> Sami</u>' (High Commissioner Herbert Samuel) in Jerusalem.[16]
> She wrote a letter saying that he's responsible for four
> or five children, and there's another wife as well: 'We
> have only God and this man. We call on you to have mercy
> on him'. My aunts signed their names. She took Jihad in
> her arms and went.

A story of a raid on a British ammunition store near Haifa
given by Imm Marwan (no 7), points to the way local victories
were re-told in exile, becoming a cultural basis for continued
struggle. Imm Marwan's story celebrates Palestinian ingenuity:
the raiders stuck candles to the backs of land turtles to
divert British fire while they escaped with the ammunition.

The exodus from Palestine forms a starting point of many
of the life stories, even of speakers too young to remember it.
Highly detailed descriptions of the <u>hijra</u> were given by Imm
Nayef (no 2, born c. 1912), as well as by other older women

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[16] A slip: Samuel was first British High Commissioner, at
the beginning of the Mandate, and could not have been in office
when Hajji Badriyya's father was imprisoned, probably towards
the end of the Great Rebellion.

whom I recorded outside the study sample.[17] Imm Nayef told how she arrived in Rmeish (Lebanon) with four children, drenched in rain, to seek shelter with a woman she only knew as 'Imm Elias', and how they eventually found her, and were re-united with her husband.[18] Too long to be quoted, this story has several points of interest, particularly its similarity in form and style to a folk-tale, with typical narrative style and verbal flourishes. It is significant that in a second recording session, Imm Nayef repeated the story of her arrival in Rmeish, using exactly the same sequencing of episodes, quotations of her own and others' speech, set phrases, injections of humour, and tones of voice. It was clear that this story had been 'crafted' through repetitions in family and neighbourhood settings into the form in which I heard it.

The dramatic, audience-attracting, and didactic quality of these women's stories is again illustrated in Imm Nayef's story of her mother's death (probably from cholera) when she was still only an baby, told her by an aunt. The infant crawled to the dying women to try to suckle; grieving and angry, the aunt 'threw' her into a corner, but her mother begged for the baby to be brought to her breast as she lay dying. The story is embellished and engraved by the aunt's phrase about her

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[17] One of these was the mother of Fayrooz (no 11), Imm Yusif. It illustrates how independent rural women could be. When fighting escalated in Haifa, Imm Yusif left her husband there, and took her two small children by bus to her husband's village of Farradi. From there she went to see her own people in Sufsaf. Still alone, she left Sufsaf for 'Ainata (Lebanon) where she had maternal uncles.

[18] Women's stories are often accurate about local details of the war, even though the speaker has little idea of the overall military situation. Sha'b, Imm Nayef's village, was one of the last to fall, on October 30, so that her description of cold, drenching rain in the mountainous border zone rings true.

mother, which Imm Nayef repeats: "Immik kanat aseeleh bi hal dar" ('Your mother was [considered] noble in this house'). In his study of orality, W. Ong (1982) notes the use of set phrases as a mnemonic device, a point born out by Imm Nayef's narrative style. In the story of her own marriage, again highly stylized, with set-piece quotations from a variety of actors, she repeated in two separate recordings her own (rhymed) words to the village elders who, since she was an orphan, had taken the parent's role in trying to persuade her to marry Abu Nayef. First, in a gesture simulating a sheikh (religious or local leader), she wrapped a sheet around her head, and then went out to address the villagers who had brought the bridegroom to the doorstep of her brother's home:

> Don't envy me, o neighbours, for the wedding they are
> preparing for me/I brought my brother up, and he brought
> me up/I stayed as I was, and bridegrooms didn't wait.

Story telling artistry is equally demonstrated by Imm Ghassan (no 4, born c. 1930), also skilled in the art of oral poetry, who turned each episode in a long, self-sustained life story into a sub-story, with its own narrative structure and denouement. This example set in the immediate post-exodus period shows several features of the traditional hikayyeh, but at the same time graphically conveys the new reality of exile:

> He (husband) needed to work, we had spent the money we had
> brought with us. I had my jewelry. According to our
> custom, when a girl gets married she takes her mahr and
> buys gold jewelry with it. I had with me two bracelets,
> four rings, and ear-rings. I gave him the bracelets and
> told him to sell them. He sold them for 15 Lebanese
> pounds. Ah! It was too cheap, they were gold, real gold.
> He sold them and we spent it. I gave him the rings. He
> took them and went to Beirut, and worked selling coffee
> in the city centre. He stayed a week, he spent the money,
> maybe he rented a hut, or maybe he didn't succeed in
> buying and selling. He came back and told me, "I spent the
> money". I took my ear-rings and gave them to him, and
> said, "Sell them. Try again, be patient!" He took the ear-
> rings, and went back to Beirut, he worked, he persevered.

He was away for ten days, then he came and gave me five pounds. <u>Hamdillah</u>! [Thank God!]

A formal characteristic of the <u>hikayyeh</u> used by Imm Ghassan in this example is the three-fold narrative structure (Abu Ghassan takes his wife's gold three times, and only succeeds the third time in making a profit). An additional <u>hikayyeh</u> feature is the way the woman takes the initiative, and uses an attribute of gender (her gold) to save the situation.[19] The husband appears lost and foolish by contrast, unable to cope with the need to earn a living. In fact, Imm Ghassan quotes him as saying, "I'm not used to this work". As we shall see in the next section, women's ability to cope with harsh conditions is a basic element in their self-representations.

Another of Imm Muhammad's stories exhibits the same tri-partite structure:

> We were in Acre. We heard the sound of breaking glass. They (the British Army) were taking men, and putting them in rows, and arresting the ones that people had informed about. One room where we were staying had a large lock. I took Muhammad and my relative brought her son, and we put them in the room and locked it. The British came and asked what was in the room. We told them we didn't have the key. A first patrol came and left. A second patrol came and left. Then came a third, and the officer looked through a crack. He saw something, and kicked the door open, and took both of them. I said the <u>ayeh</u> of the <u>kursi</u>.[20] The officer brought them back the same night.

To what extent do camp women's stories of episodes of national history express a specifically gendered and peasant-class point of view? A comparison between fragments of self-histories collected from women cadres by Peteet (1991), and those collected from camp women for this study, suggests that

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[19] See Muhawi and Kenaana, <u>Speak, Bird</u>, p 36, on women as initiators and heroines in folk-tales.

[20] A verse from the Quran invoking God's protection.

the process of politicization undergone by the women cadres, who were mainly young, urban and educated, tends to suppress a sense of gender and 'self'.[21] Not having undergone such a learning process leaves camp women freer to express women's and personal experiences. Imm Muhammad, for example, vividly described trying to find a midwife for her daughter as the British cordoned off al-Birweh before dynamiting houses. Imm Mahmoud (no 5, born in 1933,) tells how a woman gave birth on the boat in which they left Jaffa in 1948, with nothing to cut the umbilical cord or wrap the baby in. Imm Nayef recounts trying to find a doctor during the war of 1948 for her baby "whose skin was sticking to the bone".

Camp women's stories are not limited to women's experiences, however, but rather by local and kin circles. Zohra (no 15, born c. 1949) learnt about the British occupation of Palestine through her mother's stories about her father's escapes and eventual capture by the British. It was generally from their mothers, that Palestinians born in Lebanon learnt the names of the families of their village, its setting, lands, products, the agricultural cycle, patterns of labour, food.[22]

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[21] Strict norms of control of sexuality meant that women who wanted to be part of 'mixed' political formations had to suppress their gender attributes. The ideal for women in the Resistance was the term ukht al-rijal ('sister of men', that is, forbidden to him sexually, in effect 'like a man'). See Peteet on suppression of femininity in the Resistance: Gender in Crisis, p 154-6.

[22] Palestinians who grew up in Lebanon underlined the specific qualities of their mothers as 'tellers' about Palestine, for example: "My mother always talked about Palestine, but she didn't know the plots"; and "She told us about the natural products of Palestine, and how the land provided them with everything they needed": R. Sayigh, "Sources of Palestinian Nationalism", Journal of Palestine Studies vol Vl no 4, 1977.

Though lack of men's stories of exile makes this point hard to substantiate, it is likely that women's stories are engendered in narrative form and style as well as content. The political realism of women's stories of Palestine days is also striking: for example, the mention of informers as fact of national struggle would probably be censored out of 'official' national histories.

It is significant that younger, more educated women in the study sample do not tell stories in the same way. Their life stories are more chronologically-structured and more closely connected to personal life transitions. In most cases their descriptions of events or conditions are more detailed and 'realistic' than older women's are. Narrators like Imm 'Imad (no 10, who reached the end of the Preparatory cycle), or Rihab (no 17, enrolled in university) produce a life story that somewhat resembles a school composition. Their anecdotes are more 'informational' in style, and more integrated into the overall life narrative. It is as if the life story, by imposing from the beginning a sequential 'format', with each episode linked closely either to national history or the speaker's life, eliminates the space for a self-contained qissa-type story.

B. National frames of women's self-representation

In a general sense the rupture of 1948 forms a thematic sub-structure of all the life stories, even of those speakers who did not personally experience the hijra, but heard about it from others. But I shall ignore the paradigm of the 'Fall', with its sharp emphasis on 'before' and 'after', to focus on

three main stereotypes, or thematic frames, through which the women of the study sample related their lives and 'selves' to national struggle.

The 'struggle personality'

This frame of reference for the representation of the self undoubtedly antedates the modern Resistance movement, going back to peasant resistance to land sales to Jewish colonizers in the late Ottoman period.[23] In the atmosphere of national revivalism generated by the Resistance movement, the 'generation of Palestine' recalled its heroes and heroines.[24] Qualities associated with the 'struggle personality' as represented by women are strength, resourcefulness, and courage.

The oldest woman in the sample, Imm Muhammad offers an early example in the story of the British Army raid against al-Birweh already quoted. The strength of her action in pushing aside the British soldier who tried to stop her taking water to her son is emphasized by her vigorous gestures while re-telling the story. We notice in her story a characteristic pattern of women's acts of resistance before 1948: are embedded in their roles as wives and mothers, and are directed first

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[23] See Khalidi, "Palestinian Peasant Resistance". The first Zionist (Jewish nationalist movement) colony was established in 1878.

[24] Researching recollections of the Great Rebellion of 1936-9 in the West Bank, Swedenberg found the idea that women had taken no part in it:"Problems of Oral History: The 1939 Revolt in Palestine", <u>Birzeit Research Review</u> no 2, Winter 1985/6. Whether women in Galilee villages were more active, or because national revivalism under the Resistance movement in Lebanon encouraged remembering, Palestinians there readily recall women's actions.

towards family. Yet their actions have a larger social aspect:
Imm Muhammad sees tears in her son's eyes for the men under the
cactus branches whom he thinks are dead; she reassures him,
"No, my dear, they are alive". She pours water first into her
son's mouth, but tells him, "Share it among you!".

Imm Ghassan gives a sustained and 'artful' narrative in
which the theme of the 'struggle personality' is interwoven
with a chronicle of hardship and loss. More graphically than
any of the other life story givers, Imm Ghassan narrates
refugee poverty:

> UNRWA gave us tents...and when winter came snow covered
> the tents. The children - I was pregnant too - were
> jumping from the cold. We had nothing. I took paper bags,
> one had rice, the other had sugar, and I poured (the rice
> and sugar) into plates, and lit the bags so the children
> could get warm.

More children are born:

> Thirteen children!... And he was the only one working.
> What could he bring, what could he give? You need milk,
> you need vegetables, you need meat. Because you've got
> children, you've got to nourish them. We had nothing! As
> for schools, their father had a problem and was taken to
> prison. I took them (that is, the older children) from
> school and I said, 'Yallah! You have to earn money to feed
> these little ones'. And I made dough, and baked, and
> cooked, and sold.

Coping during her husband's three-year imprisonment is
only one episode in which Imm Ghassan displays strength and
resourcefulness as qualities of the narrating self. In another,
she confronts the Maktab Thani (Lebanese Army Intelligence) who
came after the 1982 invasion to ask about one of her sons:

> I told them, 'They slaughtered my son in the massacre, I
> have no other son but him, he's the father of these
> children'. They told me, 'He'll come back, hajji'. I knew
> it was a lie. I told them, 'I don't trust you'. I didn't
> let them take him.

Strength and courage are displayed again in the story of
the sieges of Shateela, when Imm Ghassan's house is hit by a

tank missile, and she runs barefoot carrying her grandchildren to the interior of the camp. A prominent theme in Imm Ghassan's narrative is bringing up a large family of children and grandchildren without help from her husband:

> He came home at night tired and slept. In the morning he escaped the noise of the children by going to the Hursh [woods]...he'd sleep there until 2 o'clock...Everything was on me.

Bringing up several grandchildren, orphaned or left with her by migrant sons, is another traditional rural women's way that Imm Ghassan demonstrates strength.

Khawla (no 16, born in 1960), recollects her childhood in Tell al-Za'ter camp in the early days of the Resistance:

> We children used to take food and drink to the feda'yeen. In 1973 there was fighting with the Lebanese Army. The Resistance fighters were spread in the mountain. We made sandwiches and went out to the mountain with them, we took them blankets and jerseys. And on the way back, we filled water gallons and took them to them. I was only six or seven at the time, but I was brave and enthusiastic. Of course my parents were conservative, so I had to go secretly, with other women. I used to tell my parents that I'd been hiding in the shelters. My brother was a military leader, (and so) when I went with the women I didn't let him see me.[25]

During the final siege of 1976, Khawla, like other Tell al-Za'ter women, undertook the dangerous task of carrying water from a well exposed to sniper fire:

> I was young, I was thirteen, I used to go out to fill water, from the top of Tell al-Za'ter to Dikwaneh, more than a kilometer. There was sniping and shelling. We used to come up carrying the tins full of water, in the night, running. I swear by God, that once I carried a whole barrel. I'm thin but I used to carry cans of water as big as this (gestures with hand), and go back up running. If

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[25] After the fall of Tell al-Za'ter in August 1976, those who survived were trucked into West Beirut, and re-settled. Khawla's family is one of several who settled in or around Shateela.

you go to my father, he'll tell you, 'This girl is like a monkey.'[26]

The spontaneous, unorganized form often taken by women's nationalism is exemplified in an arresting anecdote from the life story of Imm 'Imad (no 10). She was perhaps thirteen years old when Ahmed Shukairy, first Chairman of the PLO, was invited to speak in Sidon, in the Municipal Stadium. She went to the meeting with her mother and father, who were from Acre, Shukairy's home town:

> We went there. It was full of people. He entered and people stood up and began to clap... Suddenly, in the middle of that crowd, I jumped up and shouted, 'O Shukairy, we want arms!' And all the people shouted with me, 'We want arms!'

The meeting broke up in commotion, Shukairy was taken away without making a speech, and the Lebanese Army dispersed the crowd with batons. I asked Imm 'Imad what made her do this? She replied: "Up to now I don't understand. There was no plan, no one had spoken to me. Maybe it was in my blood."

The phrase 'It's in our blood' well describes a type of nationalism that emerges in the midst of unorganized situations, propelling women in particular into unplanned political acts. Imm 'Imad also exemplifies another aspect of the traditional women's 'struggle personality', that of acting in dangerous situations, when men are absent. After the war and massacre of 1982, with a few other members of the Women's Union, she distributed supplies to people in Shateela who had

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[26] The monkey as metaphor in Arabic indicates intelligence and agility, and is usually used of children. Said by a father of an adolescent daughter is unusual, and could only be praise in time of crisis.

lost their homes.[27] It was a dangerous time to act, since the Lebanese Army had just re-established control over the Beirut camps, and was carrying out a campaign of arrests:

> People were afraid. They didn't want to get involved in this kind of work after the Resistance had left Beirut, even though it benefitted our people. (But) we began again, bit by bit, with struggle, from the beginning. We re-opened the Women's Union. The Maktab Thani came after us, but in the end we managed to get a license from the Government allowing us to work.

A story told by Imm Sobhi (no 9, born in 1941), belonging to the same period of Army arrests after the 1982 invasion, shows the readiness of some camp women to confront the authorities:

> People came and said that the Lebanese Army were hitting one of the sisters (that is, a cadre). It was the time of the Army. I was washing clothes. When I got outside, I found it was true. One of the soldiers had got her in an alley, and was pressing his baton against her stomach. No one in the camp dared to approach except me.

Imm Sobhi shouted at the soldier for hitting a woman, was arrested along with the cadre, and taken before the Army district commander.[28] In another episode Imm Sobhi was arrested on the way to visit Palestinians in Syrian prison, and faced a week of interrogation by Syrian mukhabarat (Army Intelligence agents).[29]

The 'struggle personality' may be construed on two levels: as 'reality', that is, as a format produced and reproduced in

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[27] I first saw Imm 'Imad soon after the war of 1982, in a half-destroyed Women's Union office in Shateela, distributing primus stoves to a throng of women. It was a value of prolonged fieldwork that I got to know, and observed in action, more than half the sample before recording their life stories.

[28] During early fieldwork in Shateela I constantly heard stories of, and sometimes saw, women confronting the Army. The Army used to taunt Palestinian men as 'ridden' by their wives: see Sayigh and Peteet, "Between Two Fires".

[29] See Appendix B, entry for February 29, 1992 (tenth meeting).

the course of a long national struggle that shapes women's personality and actions; and on the level of representation, as a theme that influences what women remember and narrate about themselves. We should not expect a perfect 'fit' between actual behaviour and representations of it: actions and typifying the 'struggle personality' are selected out of a stream of events and actions, and represented so as to conform to the stereotype, with an element of self-praise vis-a-vis others (explicit in the case just quoted, implicit in others). Representing the self through anecdotes that illustrate the 'struggle personality' is based in women's forms of socio-communication, and is strongly influenced by the sense of 'self-worth' that characterizes the speech of women in camps.

The 'challenge personality'

This might appear to be only a variation, or historical development, of the 'struggle personality'. But examination of the life stories of Imm Marwan (no 3), and Rihab (no 17), the subjects who most clearly represent themselves in this mode, suggests significant differences. Whereas the traditional practice of national struggle is easily incorporated into women's domestic routines, and may even become a metonym for them, the logic of the 'challenge personality', initially formed in opposition to an external enemy, becomes the fulcrum for a questioning of social constraints on women. I shall postpone discussion of this aspect of the 'challenge personality' to the next chapter, and consider it here only in the national context of its formation.

Rihab's life story is highly coherent and self-directed, unfolding in a clear chronological sequence that frames the development of a will to personal independence. Of the two exponents of the 'challenge personality' in the sample, I choose Rihab because she so clearly depicts its exercise in nationalist struggle. Rihab's life demonstrates the 'challenge personality' both existentially, as a theme that directs her life and her representation of it, and in narrative form in a series of confrontational episodes. It is no accident that she begins her life story with the liberation of Shateela camp in 1969, and the arrival of the feda'yeen:

> What I remember first and most, the scene that sticks in my memory, is... when the Resistance entered the camp, and threw out the Maktab Thani...This is the picture that I shall never forget, and which for sure influenced the course of my life.

Rihab re-enacts this scene, which occurred when she was about six years old, several times during her life story, most strikingly in a story of confrontation with the Kata'eb in the period just after the 1982 Israeli invasion.[30] She went with some of her family to a house they owned in the mountains south of Beirut:

> We went to the house, and there were Kata'eb in it...They used the pretext, "Your days are gone, Palestinians, this house is ours". I am a fanatic Palestinian. This is my character, I couldn't tolerate such a situation...We had a hunting rifle. I loaded it with a cartridge. I told them, "Now get out, or I'll demolish the house over your heads..." They left the house, and we stayed in the house until schools opened.[31]

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[30] The Lebanese Kata'eb Party (or Phalanges) supported the Israeli invasion of 1982, a policy that helped their return to areas controlled between 1970 and 1982 by the Joint Forces of the PLO/LNM.

[31] It was at this point in our joint translation of Leila's life story that a young Palestinian colleague expressed her admiration for Rihab by using the phrase 'challenge personality'. She knew Rihab personally and vouched for the

There are other stories that display Rihab's 'challenge personality'. When the Israeli Army surrounded the Sabra/ Shateela area on September 15, 1982, Rihab refused to join her father and brother outside the camp, staying on until the final day of the massacre, and returning two days later. Later, after the expulsion of the Lebanese Army from West Beirut, in the period leading up to the 'Battle of the Camps', there was an incident of Amal-Palestinian tension. Rihab's account describes a specifically women's kind of action with a specific military effect. Angry Amal militiamen stormed into Shateela after the killing of one of their commanders:

> They were armed with B7s, and they ordered people not to go out on the streets or move about the camp. So we agreed to make a meeting of women in front of Shateela Mosque. We decided to go out, and if they wanted to shoot us, let them. We gathered there, the women, and they were standing at the top of the street with their B7s, but they didn't dare to do anything. We walked, and by doing this we broke their order, their will to dominate us was deflated.

National struggle appears to have dominated Rihab's life story to a degree not paralleled by the rest of the sample, from earliest recollections to intentions for the future. Episodes of conflict mark every stage in her personal life; but rather than disrupting it, crisis is ground for the development of a personal will and direction. In her narrative the two threads - national crisis and personal development - are interwoven without any sense of dilemma or contradiction. National struggle provides her with the frame for a logic that can then be applied to the multiple dilemmas of daily life (for example, conflicts with her family, how to live after divorce,

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truth of her self-representations. Later, when I asked Rihab how it was possible to frighten a group of Kata'eb with a hunting rifle that could not 'demolish the house over their heads', she replied, "But it can kill".

choice between a well-paid UNRWA job and work with the Resistance). Rather than a cataclysmic event that comes from outside, shattering normal life (as with the older life story givers), national struggle in Rihab's story has become a core element of her self-concept, a mode of perceiving the world, and of acting towards it.

'All our life has been tragedy'

As a dominant frame for life stories, this contains both generational and regional specificity. Palestinians in Lebanon have suffered a higher degree of conflict and loss than in other parts of the diaspora; losses have particularly afflicted women of the 'generation of the Disaster', with son or brothers of an age to join the Resistance. Four of the five women who narrate their lives in this mode were children in 1948, and married in the 1950s.

Imm Sobhi is the prime exemplifier of tragedy in this sample, with three sons killed in the 'Battle of the Camps', another abroad, a daughter in Khiyam prison, and two other daughters widowed.[32] At our first meeting, she burst into tears when I mentioned her son Sobhi as reference. She began her life story thus:

> We suffered tragedies, it was very hard. We were made homeless, we faced difficulties in homelessness. We were the victims of a catastrophe. Our children went, our homes went. We were displaced, and we didn't find people to look after us.

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[32] A complete transcript of Imm Sobhi's life story is given in Appendix B as part of field notes on meetings with her and her family over a period of eighteen months.

She likened Palestinians to 'people who spend the summer in the Ghor', that is, wandering nomads, without settled homes. Early in her narrative she evoked her own death: "I had an operation about three months ago. I wept not because I was ill, but because if I died there was no son beside me". Later she says, "I pray daily for death".

Because of the painfulness of Imm Sobhi's life story, I did not continue recordings. Instead I visited her periodically, and recorded what other people - her daughters, her surviving son, neighbours - said about her. I became involved in attempts to help her imprisoned daughter, and to prevent the appropriation of their son's home by Fateh Dissidents. At one of our last meetings she let me record her reciting one of her own <u>a'taba</u> (a chanted poem, or dirge, traditionally composed by unschooled rural women). I asked her whether she leant to compose <u>a'taba</u> from her mother. She said, "It came from our ancestors, it's part of our Palestinian tradition. We do it because of our separation, and from the many tragedies we have suffered". One of her daughters told me that Imm Sobhi used to say of herself the proverb: "The sad one came to enjoy herself, (but) she didn't find a place". Imm Ghassan, also an oral poet, used this phrase in an <u>'ataba</u>: "I looked in the mirror and I saw a raven's wing."[33]

Another woman of 'the generation of the Disaster', Imm Noman (no 6, born in 1937) gave a life story that was hardly more than a chronicle of displacements and losses. It began, "All our life has been lost", and then, as if for an official record, she gave the full names of two sons killed, and one

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[33] The raven in Palestinian folk-lore is an omen of bad fortune, separation, or death.

imprisoned, and listed all the homes she had been displaced from: Kabri (Palestine), South Lebanon, the Beqa', Nahr al-Bared camp, Bourj Barajneh camp, Tell al-Za'ter camp, Shateela camp in 1982, and again in 1985. I recorded her life story in the ruined American Embassy, where she had been living since the first 'Battle of the Camps' (1985). Part of it runs:

> We stayed steadfast in Tell al-Za'ter camp for three months under bombardment. We were living death (repeats). There was no more food. No more water. No more medicine. They treated people who got wounded with salt. Za'ter fell. People went down and surrendered themselves in Dikwaneh. From Tell al-Za'ter to Dikwaneh we were walking on Palestinian corpses thrown on the ground.

Her story, like Imm Sobhi's, deepened the dilemma at the heart of my study, that is, whether the suffering caused to individual women by asking them to tell their lives was compensated for by recording them for history.

All six of Nozira's brothers have been killed. She is a Red Crescent employee (no 13, born in 1948), whom I first met in Gaza Hospital in 1983. Interviewed just after the feast of 'Ashoura (July 1992), she remarked that she had spent the day of the feast alone, though in the past Resistance group delegations always visited the families of martyrs on national or religious occasions:

> I'm alone in the house, all my family are gone (i.e. dead). If I stop working, no one will offer me a bite. I've got nobody but God. Our <u>dar</u> had eight men, but now it's ended, like a house sealed with wax.

Nozira sums up the Palestinian experience in Lebanon:

> We suffered, we Palestinians who came to Lebanon in 1948. We sacrificed our children, our homes, our money, and at the end of it all we are is widows and orphans.

Though loss and destruction was not the predominant theme of Imm Khaled's (no 8, born in 1938) life story, she expressed it as collective Palestinian experience:

Men and women worked to improve their situation, little by little. Every time we worked, we bought something. That's how it's been for forty years, since we left Palestine. Forty years, and we're still in the same situation! Whenever we collect a bit of money, or build a house, everything goes, nothing is left for us.

However, it needs to be remarked that even the women whose narratives are framed by the theme of tragedy also enact and narrate the 'struggle personality'. Nozira expresses pride in being Palestinian:

During the invasion with all the shelling we stayed at home (near Shateela). We came and went, we weren't afraid. Palestinians are tough, we aren't afraid of death.

My record of visits to Imm Sobhi over a year and a half revealed her engaged in continuous confrontational activity: petitioning local Resistance leaders and Syrian military personnel to try to protect her son's home from occupation by Fateh Dissidents; visits to Palestinian prisoners in Lebanon and Syria; efforts to liberate a daughter's fiance arrested by the Dissidents; and efforts on behalf of her imprisoned daughter.

Khawla, a young woman who had lost her husband and two brothers, was at first reluctant to record because she feared breaking down, but then gave a narrative that illustrates the 'challenge personality' as emphatically as it does loss and tragedy.[34] Imm Ghassan's narrative balances tragedy with tales of strength, resourcefulness, and courage throughout.

Though nationalist struggle frames all the life histories more or less explicitly, if we compare them to recordings made

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[34] This was one of two recordings carried out in a Resistance office. There were two widows present, and I decided to record with the older one (not from Shateela) first. Her story had a bracing effect on Khawla, who recovered enough to record a spirited story of 'carrying on' in spite of tragedy. Realization that there are others even more unfortunate than oneself is an important restorer of morale for camp people.

before 1982, some cracks are perceptible in attitudes to the national movement. Recordings made before 1982 show that people in the camps, whatever their age, status, gender or Resistance group affiliations, generally expressed total support for the Resistance movement, and pride in their Palestinian identity (Sayigh, 1979; Peteet, 1991). After it, expressions of patriotism are interspersed with criticism. One of the life story givers well reflects such mixed feelings: at one point in her narrative she expresses loyalty to PLO Chairman Arafat with a traditional popular slogan, "He raised our heads". But elsewhere she tells how she attacked a Lebanese soldier with the words, "Curses on Abu Ammar who left us and gave you a chance to oppress us!".

Before concluding this section on national themes of self-representation, I want to note the rupture marked by the youngest, Dalal (no 18, born in 1965). Uniquely among the narrators, she records an introspective, self-analytical life story marked by inner conflict between a 'nationalist' and a 'feminine' self. The gender aspects of her case will be discussed in Chapter Seven; here I will only present her story as a Resistance cadre, which I had become aware of through earlier contacts.[35] Like many girls of her generation and class, Dalal had been incorporated into the youth section of a Resistance group, read party literature, and struggled with her parents to be allowed to join as a full member. After their death in 1981, she was rapidly promoted to be head of the

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[35] I first knew Dalal as the local leader of the Women's Bureau of a small Marxist Resistance group, recording with her in 1986 on the 'stand' of her group towards women, and again in 1987 on her experiences in the third siege of Shateela. Without this long acquaintance, it is doubtful if she would have talked so frankly about her inner conflicts.

group's Women's Bureau. By May 1992 when I recorded with her
the group she had belonged to had broken up, and she was
training to be a kindergarten teacher. She spoke of herself
somewhat self-critically as an over-partisan but hardworking
cadre:

> I became fanatically pro-Front. As much as I loved
> Palestine, I loved the Front...I'd go to the Students'
> Union determined to achieve something for the Front, as
> if the other organizations were not also struggling for
> Palestine.

Her work as a cadre satisfied her longing to 'be somebody'
("Sometimes before I felt that I was nothing. When I became a
'responsible' I felt I was somebody'.) In an earlier interview
Dalal had noted that women worked harder in the Resistance
movement than men. Though resident just outside Shateela camp,
she had entered it before the third Amal siege in order to take
part in defending it. But by 1992, disillusioned with the
Front, exhausted by years of working, studying, and running a
household of younger siblings, Dalal was grappling with her
sense of lost youth, and an inability to express 'femininity'
in relation to men, problems she partly attributed to her
Resistance group commitment.

In conclusion, it must be said that there are six life
stories that do not fit clearly into this three-fold typology
of predominant modes of self-representation. In two cases, this
is due to a degree of introspection that makes for thematic
complexity, in the others to the fragmentary quality of life
story narration due to audience participation.

C. 'Self worth' as attribute of women's self-representations

The sense of 'self worth' that infuses almost all the life stories recorded for this study calls for socio-cultural analysis, particularly as it forms a point of cultural misunderstanding, often translated in eurocentric terms as 'boastfulness', or 'exaggeration'. At the same time, the researcher needs to avoid the pitfalls pointed out in relation to life histories by Crapanzano (1984) of sentimentalization, patronage, or literalism.

In respect to its expression, a sense of 'self worth' is manifested by this set of life story givers in different contexts and forms, but is always based in a selective representation of the speaker's actions that makes them exemplify cultural norms. Among the predominant cultural ideals for women is that of mothering, and it is not surprising that many of the respondents express their sense of 'self worth' in this mode, notably Imm Marwan (no 7), whose entire life story revolves around her children, and her struggle to bring them up without family interference, and give her daughters a full education. Women in the sample who had no life outside the home narrate themselves mainly as mothers, using the births of their children to date events, priding themselves on their children's achievements, remembering the effort of nurturing them, lamenting their absence as migrants, mourning their deaths. Another quotation from Imm Ghassan's _'ataba_ sets the tone: "I shall weep for them all my life / For those who never in my life made me sad".

Nationalist feelings and activism are another basis of 'self worth', sufficiently commented on in Section B of this

chapter not to need repetition here. Women who emphasized their maternal role spoke less about their nationalist feelings and actions (this may have been due to caution). But at least three of those who seemed to base their sense of 'self worth' in their maternal role also exemplified the 'struggle personality'. National politics and mothering appear closely intertwined as a cultural configuration whose accomplishment gives camp women a sense of achievement.

Religion does not appear as a dominant source of motivation in any member of this study sample, though several showed signs of piety.[36] But that religious faith may be the basis of the expression of 'self worth' is suggested by Nozira's account of her care of her mother:

> I felt myself the closest, because I'm the oldest and lived with her the longest. When my brothers died I felt that she was my responsibility. I couldn't leave my mother on the street, or let them put her in an old people's home. That would be <u>haram</u> (sinful). In Islam we don't 'throw' our old people.

'Self worth' can be quite subtly expressed in anecdotes that portray the narrator as having made the right choice in a dilemma. Imm Khaled (no 8, born in 1938), stayed eight years married without bringing a pregnancy to term. Then, a month into another pregnancy, her mother died in Ba'lbek:

> People told me not to go to the cemetery, I wasn't supposed to go in a car. But I went to the cemetery, and the baby remained. After another month, my father died. The <u>sheikh</u> told me, "It's forbidden to go among the dead". I don't believe in these things, I had faith in God, I went, Khaled remained, and, <u>hamdillah</u>! I gave birth to him in Shateela.

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[36] Among such signs are: praying at the required times; invoking the name of God frequently in conversation; keeping the fast of Ramadan; wearing the Muslim head-covering. According to these signs, half the study sample were devout Muslims, the rest conventionally pious, or non-practising.

Often pride in one's family of origin is a basis of 'self worth' in women of the camps, but this was not strongly expressed in the life stories collected for this study, except in the case of Imm Nayef, to be discussed in the following section.

It needs to be noted that a sense of 'self worth' is variable; not all camp women express it, and it is precisely with those who lack it that it is most difficult to record. Someone who persistently avoided talking about herself was Imm Fady, a friend from the beginning of my visits to Shateela in 1983. She worked as a cleaner with a local social institution to supplement her husband's low wages. Abu Fady had the reputation of being a <u>niswanji</u> (womanizer), and finally left her with the five children, to marry another woman. The misery of living in a <u>muhajjareen</u> (war-displaced) building was another cause for depression. Some women are nervous about recording, but this was not the reason for Imm Fady's reserve, since even during ordinary visits she avoided conventional questions about her family. She was friendly and sociable, and had several regular visitors with whom she drank tea and joked as other women do. She told me about her neighbours, she cooked me <u>kibbeh</u>, she invited me to her daughter's wedding, but I never succeeded in learning anything substantial about her life before our first meeting. She had been through the siege of Tell al-Za'ter, and in Rashidiyyeh camp when Israel invaded in 1982, before coming to Shateela. Her silence tells as much in its own way as other women's stories.

In conclusion, women's expressions of 'self worth' in life story narration are best understood as an extension of daily life interaction in camp communities, and as a manifestation

of the power of normative models over women's lives. The need to express oneself as exemplifying social models of 'woman' is formed from early childhood through family and same-sex neighbourhood communication. Though the models are more varied than this brief presentation suggests, their authority practically excludes 'individualistic' bases for self-affirmation. A careful 'listening' to life stories can, however, detect dissent (though this too must be phrased so as to affirm a culturally-formed sense of 'self worth').

D. Historic change in women's representations of the 'self'

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the conceptualization of 'self' adopted here is not based in a self/society dichotomy, nor assumptions of uniqueness, boundedness or coherence. From this perspective, analysis of Palestinian camp women's representations of the 'self' in life stories needs to focus on historical, political and socio-cultural factors that have shaped them. The main factors to be examined as producing difference in the way women express 'selves' are age, education, national strategy and mode of involvement in the national movement. But first I shall discuss how 'self' is expressed in the life story narratives. struggle. The division of the sample between three almost equally represented generational groups (see Appendix A[1]) offers a reasonably strong basis for generational comparison.

A difference between older and younger members of the study sample is the degree of differentiation of the 'self', and the form in which the 'self' is expressed. In the case of older respondents, the 'self' is not described, though it is

usually located in a place of origin. Compared with others of the sample, the 'generation of Palestine' had difficulty responding to a request for their 'life story'; the concept itself was unfamiliar (suggesting its non-universality), and they needed 'prompts' from myself and others present to move from one fragment of their life story to another. Their hesitation in narrating a 'life' contrasted sharply with their skill in telling stories of particular episodes.

As a consequence of the unfamiliarity of the 'life story' as concept, and because of the multi-vocality of the recordings, the 'self' of older speakers is relatively slightly expressed in their narrations. Another characteristic is their embeddedness in family and local relationships. Members of this generation tend to talk of themselves as part of a group, using the pronoun 'we' rather than 'I'. For example, Imm Nayef began:

> Our life in Palestine was prosperous. The Jews came and threw people out of their villages. We came to Lebanon, we stayed here. At the beginning, people here respected us, now everyone is against us.

Hajji Badriyya began in the same way: "We were staying in our village, nothing was happening. They were fighting with Israel, we were staying...We walked from Majd al-Kroom..." Asked about her recollections of life in Palestine, she talked about her father and mother, but said nothing about herself. When someone asked Imm Nayef what she remembered about the <u>hijra</u>, she answered, "At the time of the <u>hijra</u>, I had five children..."

In contrast, a younger woman (Imm 'Imad, no 10) started out with, "I am Maysa' al-Khooli.[37] I came to Lebanon when I

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[37] This fictive name signals Imm 'Imad's membership in a Resistance group. All members were given an <u>ism al-harakeh</u> ('movement name'), partly as protection, partly as a means of

was about one and a half years old..". Or Nozira (no 13): "I'm a Palestinian girl,[38] born in Palestine. I came with my family in 1948. I was about seven days old." Another (Suhayr, no 14), begins: "I remember playing in the street with my friends..." Khawla (no 16) also starts on a self-definitive note: "I'm a Palestinian girl, daughter of a poor family"; and Dalal (no 18): "I lived a not very happy childhood..." Younger women seem to find telling a life story more 'natural', and to begin from a personal rather than collective location.

Since the older respondents relied on prompts, their life stories cannot be examined in terms of autonomous representation of a 'self', nor for the way a subject's self-concept can be seen as retrospectively shaping the story of a life.[39] But provisionally it can be said that when they talk about themselves it is always in connection with significant others (fellow villagers, family of origin, husband, children). Further, older speakers' 'selves' are conveyed through an accumulation of 'stories' which display the narrators in action (speaking, working, nurturing children), or through allusions to the way others respect them, rather than through continuous self-description as is the case with younger women. Such 'referencing' of the self is most clearly expressed by Imm Nayef who responded to a request to speak about her life:

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re-identification similar to the giving of a new name at religious conversion.

[38] The word <u>bint</u> (girl) continues to be used for an unmarried woman regardless of her age. The correct form <u>'anas</u> (spinster) is not used colloquially.

[39] One way that life stories can be analyzed is as explanatory reconstructions of the past from the point of view of current individual situation: A. Hankiss, " Ontologies of the Self: On the Mythological Rearranging of One's life History", in Bertaux, <u>Biography and Society</u>.

My life as a girl was excellent. I had two brothers, their status was high, and they treated me with great respect. And when I married, I came to a good man, he also respected me.

Later, she said how much her sons respected her, and followed her advice; and how all her neighbours loved her. The respect of others is central to her self-representation; in contrast, she only tells about her specials skills as a healer because I asked her about them.[40]

One member of the 'generation of Palestine', Imm Ghassan is an exception. She began firmly in the first person: "My age is 60 years old. I had a son Ghassan and a daughter Zahira. Israeli planes and cannons were shelling us, we left and came to Lebanon, just me and the children. The man refused to leave..." From this beginning, she narrated a lengthy and self-sustained life story from which a strongly articulated 'self' emerges. This seems to be the result of several factors: a special degree of poverty and hardship;[41] a somewhat antagonistic relationship to her husband; and special powers of speech and story telling.

It is not surprising that a woman like Imm Ghassan, forced by poverty and Abu Ghassan's three-year imprisonment to take full responsibility for a large family, should give a more forceful self-representation than women of slightly higher socio-economic status. But one can also detect a difference in

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[40] Imm Nayef was well known in Shateela for her ability to practice bone-setting and also tirqa (a form of healing through the laying on of hands, and reciting of semi-religious formulas).

[41] Imm Ghassan's village, Menshiyyet-Akka, was not represented in the informal council of 'notables' formed by the first Director, probably a sign of lower status. Imm Ghassan seems to have had no help from kin: "Nobody could help others, everyone worked to feed his own children."

self-affirmation between Imm Nayef, from a village, who lived
a life of frequent interaction with neighbours, and a city
woman like Imm Mahmoud, whose social life and mobility were
severely restricted. Though she was uncertain how to narrate
a 'life', Imm Nayef had no hesitation in telling stories about
herself, whereas Imm Mahmoud was at a loss, and would not have
been able to speak at all if it had not been for the prompting
of a friend and a daughter.[42] Her difficulty in speaking about
herself is surely linked to her lack of a social world. Asked
to describe her home town of Jaffa she said:

> When I wanted to go somewhere, he (husband) wouldn't let
> me...He didn't let anyone enter the house, not even his
> relatives. He was very jealous. He even pinned the
> curtains so that I couldn't open them.

Her seclusion continued in Shateela:

> He was very conservative, he didn't allow me to go out.
> If I wanted to visit my brother, it was difficult. I went
> by force (that is, without permission). He brought
> everything to the house. I didn't know how to buy a
> tomato...If you ask me about the families (of the camp),
> I wouldn't be able to   tell you anything.

Imm Mahmoud's 'self' emerged gradually and indirectly
through conversation, for example, through her accounts of how
city women in Shateela entertained each other, and of an escape
from the house to be photographed with her children. Her
ambiguity about her jealous husband is also revealing: he kept
her at home, but he also brought her gold. Although of village
not city origin, Hajji Badriyya also had difficulty in speaking
about herself without the support of questions: from a 'known

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[42]   On the day agreed on for recording with Imm Mahmoud,
I found her in the bedroom instead of the 'salon', dressed in
nightwear, and looking as if she was about to say she was not
feeling well enough to record. Luckily, the presence of a
younger woman friend, a Red Crescent doctor, helped to give her
courage. Though this was eventually a rich recording, at the
beginning, after each snippet of information, Imm Mahmoud would
say helplessly, "What more can I tell you ?"

family', she was restricted in mobility and social contacts by her father and her husband. When I asked her about weddings in Palestine, she said she never saw one before her own: "My father didn't let me look out of the window!".

Besides a slight differentiation of 'self', the life stories of the older women display episodic rather than linear narrative form; episodes within the life are fashioned into self-contained sub-stories, loosely strung together, not necessarily in chronological order. Older respondents do not necessarily begin 'at the beginning'; several start with the hijra of 1948, returning later to describe life in Palestine under the prompting of questions. One starts with the recent past, and her loss of home and sons. Only one older woman adopts a strict chronological format for narrating her life, possibly because events in national history have formed landmarks of loss and displacement in her life.

In contrast, members of 'the generation of the Disaster' and 'the generation of the Revolution' seemed to have less difficulty narrating a 'life'; most adhered to chronological order; and in most cases a more coherent, more differentiated representation of the 'self' emerges from their life stories. Exceptions to this generalization appear due to a low level of education. Such coherence is particularly emphatic in the case of Rihab, but another 'young' life story, that of Dalal (no 18), though it reflects extreme inner conflict, is also clearly personal in its beginning and narrative development. She starts, "I lived a not very happy childhood. In addition to poverty, there was discrimination between the boys and the girls...", and goes on to give the most introspective and complex self-representation of any of the sample. The more

differentiated 'self' of younger respondents is expressed in varying ways: in an early perceptual separation of the 'self' from parents and siblings; in an equally early perception of hardship and poverty as separating Palestinians from other people; in reflection on the situation of the collectivity and oneself in relation to it; and in early participation in nationalist activities.

Perception of themselves as 'different', a difference experienced through Maktab Thani oppression, or through quarrels with Lebanese neighbours, or because of refugee poverty, is characteristic of Palestinians who grew up in the years immediately after the exodus, the 'generation of the Disaster'.[43] An early sense of separation from parents and siblings expressed in several life stories may be linked to intra-household tension based in poverty: for example Dalal began with an allusion to her mother's discrimination between sons and daughters, expressed in giving the boys more food and better clothes; and Fayrooz recalled persecution by her older brother, envious of her achievement in school; two older women, Imm Noman and Imm Marwan, expressed bitterness against their mothers for having married them off at young ages (14 and 17 years respectively), essentially because of poverty.[44]

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[43] Boundaries between Lebanese and Palestinians are not based in ethnicity but rather in difference of status (citizens/non-citizens). The slum-like conditions of the camps also formed a barrier. See Sayigh on Palestinian experiences of marginality in Lebanon, "Palestinian Nationalism", p 35-40; also Peteet, Gender in Crisis, p 72-80.

[44] Imm Marwan puts this very explicitly: "Life was difficult for us. Some could educate their children, some couldn't. I was married at seventeen. When someone marries, her husband takes responsibility for her, and lightens the burden on her parents."

It is evident also that school formed a new and important milieu where processes of psychological and intellectual separation of girls from their families began, and where they were introduced to nationalist politics. Among the kinds of political action respondents from 'the generation of the Disaster' remember as children in school in the late 1950s and 1960s are taking part in national commemoration days, and going out from school in demonstrations. Other childhood and adolescent nationalist activities were recollected: forming a secret 'children's cell'; training in First Aid and Civil Defence; voluntary work with the PLO; writing nationalist poetry; and joining Resistance group youth sections. Of all nine respondents born in or after 1946, only two (both left school before reaching the 6th elementary class) did not mention such activities. Where girls were concerned, it is clear that their political actions were carried on outside the home, if not against parents' wishes.[45]

School was only part of a gradual process of separation between young unmarried women and their families brought about by exile. For example, Imm 'Imad went to Saudi Arabia to work as a seamstress before getting married; Fayrooz went to work in Libya; Suhayr studied briefly in Egypt; others worked and took training courses while living at home. One should not exaggerate: a certain degree of separation did not constitute rupture, since the parental home remained the essential

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[45] Fear for their daughters made many parents try to prevent them from taking part in nationalist politics. A woman who was fifteen in 1967 remembers putting on her Civil Defence uniform at a neighbour's house so that her family would not be able to stop her attending the training course.

reference for an unmarried woman; but it could be a basis for a more differentiated self-perception.

The emergence of a differentiated 'self' can best be demonstrated through examination of a median case. Imm 'Imad was born in 1946, and grew up in the first decades of exile, completing the full UNRWA cycle, and working for a year before getting engaged at a relatively late age (22 years). Elements in her life story that point to differentiation of the 'self' are its emphatic personal beginning ("I am Maysa' al-Khooli"); a spontaneous, self-sustained narration; an unconventional marriage that necessitated managing her parents' opposition; and nationalist activities that her husband tolerated without sharing. Outside the first life story recording, in extensive 'follow-up' sessions, Imm 'Imad showed other signs of a differentiated 'self': she fantasized about living as a nomad or 'hippy',[46] away from other people; in answer to a question whether marriage created a rupture in her life, she replied that she felt the same person now as when she first married, like a 'sister to my daughters rather than a mother'. Yet at the same time, she expressed many traditional values, for example, attachment to her parents and children (of whom she said, "They are my entire life"). A close reading of her life story suggests that self-differentiation and attachment to others are not incompatible, but are worked out within an 'economy of the self' that allocates a limited arena for self-expression while maintaining the moral and social priority of duties to others.

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[46] A word that has been adopted into everyday urban Arabic, like many European fashions, eg 'mini-jupe','jeans'.

Response to national crisis and struggle also appears differentiated by generation. Older members of the sample narrate national crisis as an external force, a disaster whose consequences they were forced by fate to live with. When they acted towards it (as in the case of Imm Muhammad defying the British soldiers to take water to her son), it was from their position in a particular family and local milieu. For younger ones, in contrast, national crisis forms part of their earliest memories, and of their perception of 'self' and situation. When they relate themselves to the national movement they do so with their age group, or as individuals, rarely from a family context. With the youngest (nos 15, 16, 17 and 18) relating meant joining a Resistance group. The process of separation from the family involved in joining a 'mixed' political party is reflected in the life stories not only by differentiation of the 'self' and a sustained autobiographic narrative, but also in affirmations of individual autonomy.

As an example, Zohra (no 15, born around 1949) chose both the moment of her marriage, and the man, a Resistance group comrade, a match her father opposed. Such autonomy was achieved for the sake of, and thanks to, Zohra's involvement in organized as opposed to spontaneous political activity. Even if we allow for the tendency to exaggerate personal autonomy inherent in autobiography, contrast between older and younger women in terms of representing the 'self' as exercising autonomy is still marked. The relationship between joining a Resistance group and the exercise of personal autonomy vis-a-vis the family is theorized by Rihab when she notes that having a job does not liberate women from _wajibat_ (family and social duties) to the same extent as 'national work' does.

Socio-cultural change in terms of access to schooling is one the chief factors differentiating between older and younger women. Nine of the 18 women who told their life stories for this study had never been to school (see Appendix A[2]), though one had taught herself to read and write. They are the oldest members of the sample. All nine born after 1945 attended school, though two left before the end of the elementary cycle. Five of the nine who went to school continued through secondary school; of these, two obtained professional training, and three reached university as external students. This even division of the sample between those who never attended school, and those who did, enables the inference that ease and coherence in narrating a life history have a connection with schooling.

The relationship between degree of self-differentiation and educational level is reflected rather sensitively in this set of life histories by differences between women who left school early and those who continued their education. Two respondents from the 'generation of the Disaster' left school without finishing the elementary cycle, one to marry, the other to work. One (Imm Leila, no 12, born in 1947) showed hesitancy and embarrassment in speaking about herself, though eager to describe her father, mother and husband. Living near her 'notable' father, and keeping house for him after her mother's death, constituted the main part of her story.[47]

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[47] Knowing Imm Leila from the Women's Union made me realize how little her life story represented her real 'self'. One reason could be embarrassment over a lower educational level than most of her age-group. Her sketchy life history points to a crucial problem in oral research with women, ie. the need to find ways to make them feel at ease in speaking about themselves. See Minister, "A Feminist Frame", in Women's Words.

Born within a year of Imm Leila, of a poor city family, Nozira, left school too early to acquire literacy, to help with housework. Like Imm Leila, she depicted herself through family relationships (primarily with her mother, to whom she remained a companion, hence unmarried, until her mother's death). The narrative of her life is mainly framed by family deaths. Yet in contrast to Imm Leila, and in spite of her attachment to her family, Nozira's life story contains a 'strong' self-representation, conveyed through a sustained narrative that includes autonomous decisions (working with the Red Crescent to help her family), individual actions (cursing a soldier), and assertions of personal and cultural values ("In Islam we don't 'throw' our old people on the streets"). A basis for her stronger self-affirmation may well be her status as employee in the 'public domain'; her brothers' widows depend on her for dealing with the official world:

> If one of them needs a paper, an identity card, an operation, I'm the one who runs. The mothers don't know. If they need anything they come immediately to me. I'm like the man for them.

The three-generational span of the sample provides a view of the effect on women's self-representation of change in nationalist discourse and strategy. This is reflected in older women's life histories by the absence of nationalist reference. They describe local battles and leaders, not national parties, unions, or leaderships. Such restriction of women's knowledge to local politics may be explained through reference to socio-cultural conditions. Yet it also reflects a gender ideology implicit in a national strategy that aimed as much at conserving indigenous social structure as challenging British rule. As noted in Chapter Three, the armed struggle and mass

mobilization strategy of the early Resistance movement, arising in exile and aimed at reversing it, implicitly challenged existing gender ideology. The dual effects of this radical rupture (through separation from Palestine, and through Resistance mobilization) are evident in the life histories. Older women's different relationship to the post-1948 national movement appears to be associated with qualities of their life histories that differentiate these as a set from those of younger women. Women already mature in 1969, at the beginning of the Resistance period, were integrated into the movement in ways that preserved the priority of their domestic roles and routines, occasionally, in response to particular events or emergencies, and often in tasks similar to those performed in homes. That their support for the Resistance movement was essential is evident from the attention directed towards them by each Resistance faction. Yet complete integration as members was subjectively as well as socially problematic for older women. Even those known for their patriotism and readiness to undertake political actions, generally emphasized their non-membership in Resistance factions. With one exception, none had occupied a salaried position in the PLO/Resistance movement.

In spite of caution, most of the women of the generations of the 'Disaster' and the 'Revolution' related themselves clearly to the Resistance movement.[48] The life stories of two of them give detailed descriptions of early political activities, and of Resistance group involvement. Two younger women are still Resistance movement cadres, while a third has

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[48] See Appendix A (3) for type of nationalist activity.

only recently stopped being one.[49] Change in the manner in which women of the camps are incorporated into the national movement is reflected in the life histories as a gradual shift from spontaneous to organized action. Effects on women's self-representation of their incorporation into organized frameworks is hard to dissociate from the effects of schooling, since both kinds of change are roughly contemporaneous. But if we may judge from the cases of Nozira (no 13) and Khawla (no 16), who both got little schooling and yet gave spontaneous, sustained narratives in which their own actions and decisions were foregrounded, it is legitimate to infer that being part of an organized structure (one is a PLO employee, the other a Resistance group member) strengthens representation of the 'self'. Both show attachment to their families, but represent themselves as capable of secrecy or independent action. Khawla hid from her family the fact that she went out with older women to take food to the feda'yeen; Nozira took the decision to work so as to contribute to family income.

All the younger women (nos 10 to 18) have been, or are, participants in a national structure, whether as Resistance group members, PLO employees, Union members, or trainees in social programmes. Incorporation may not have been of long duration, but its imprint on self-representation is evident, however mutedly, through the degree that autobiographies are related to the national movement. Self-differentiation, psychological separation from the family, and degree of incorporation into the national movement appear to be closely

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[49] A member of the sample recollects having worked as a Red Crescent volunteer and joining Fateh while still a student, in the late 1960s: "Perhaps we were the first group of girls in Shateela camp to work with the Resistance".

linked: the four respondents with the longest history of Resistance group membership (nos 15 to 18), all display a will for personal autonomy.

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The main purpose of this chapter has been to draw out from the set of women's life stories collected for this study ways in which the Palestinian national crisis and struggle is reflected in their contents and form. Whatever the degree of nationalism expressed, all the life stories are dominated by national crisis as origin of the situation of exile. Most of the stories begin with the hijra, even of those speakers too young in 1948 to remember it. Even in the case of the youngest set, 'the generation of the Revolution', born in Lebanon, the exodus is present through the recollections of parents, and in national mobilization for return. While political conditions at the time of recording were not such as to encourage the reporting of nationalist activities, national crisis is always implicitly present in the life stories, whether in descriptions of refugee conditions, or as a permanent sense of loss and insecurity, or in stories of attacks and displacements. To quote one succinct summary: "Since I was born I have seen nothing in my life but wars. In 16 years I lost four homes" (Imm Noman, no 6).

Quotations of sub-stories within the life stories of older women were used to underline two points: their value as national history; and their aesthetic narrative qualities, embodying a form between the qissa (true story) and the hikayyeh (folk-tale) specific to mainly older, illiterate women of peasant origin. Younger women's life stories tend to be

chronologically structured, and more coherent, but do not have embedded in them self-contained sub-stories as the older women's do.

Stereotypes of self-representation in relation to national struggle emerge from the life stories in three main configurations: the 'struggle personality'; the 'challenge personality'; and 'all our life is tragedy'. Almost all the life stories are narrated in one of these predominant modes, mainly the first and last. These modes are transhistorical and socially constructed. They are differently located in regard to generation, in that, though all three generations manifest the configuration 'struggle personality', 'all our life is tragedy' is concentrated mainly in 'the generation of the Disaster'.

The three configurations are not mutually exclusive, but, rather, alternative emphases within a continuous historical experience. If there is any one clear dividing line, then it is generational. This determines educational level, formative conditions (social, economic, and political), and mode of integration into national politics and organization. What unifies all the narratives explicitly is their predominant focus on the national struggle and its displacements. The question that remains to be addressed is how, given the predominance of the nationalist discourse, are gendered experience and subjectivity narrated?

CHAPTER SIX

GENDER AND SEXUALITY: SUPPRESSION, OBLIQUENESS, EXPRESSION

Nationalism and gender are alike in that both are universal attributes, parts of 'systems of differences', and both are shaped by 'opposition' or alterity (Parker et al. 1992). All nationalist ideologies contain within them culturally specific prescriptions for gender and sexuality that include constructions of 'woman'. These prescriptions form part of self-attributed collective identities, and of identities attributed to 'others': internal national, racial, or ethnic 'minorities', colonizers, historic enemies, and so. They are thus inscribed in all systems of domination, and in all movements of national liberation.

Gender ideology within the Palestinian national movement has varied with historic conjuncture and national leadership strategy, but, except for brief periods of mass mobilization, has tended to stress 'Arab traditions' with sub-tones of religious orthodoxy. The Palestinian women's movement has placed 'women's liberation' as a goal contained within, and subordinate to, national liberation; the integrality of woman in society, and the women's movement in the national movement have been stressed throughout the history of the movement, as have women's equality with men 'in struggle', and the impossibility of demanding 'women's rights' from men deprived of national rights. Women in the camps have been exposed to, and reflect, these themes in varying degrees depending on their mode of integration into the national movement.

Women's experience of gender ideology in a given society varies by class, as do their forms of accommodation and resistance. The question of class in Palestinian camps is complicated by the diverse class origins of camp populations, and by the subordinate position of Palestinian refugees as a group in Lebanon's economic and class system, in addition to a slight socio-economic stratification within camp communities. The part played by constructions of women in the boundary differentiating Palestinians from Lebanese has had the effect of 'nationalizing' gender ideology, minimizing original class differences. The people of the camps cannot be described as 'working class' in occupation or consciousness, and, as noted in Chapter Four, women were withdrawn from manual and unskilled labour as income levels improved, with only the professionally qualified allowed to work outside the home. Direct experience of gender exploitation at work has thus been limited, while restriction to home and camp has been viewed as 'protection', and the harshness of their women's lives attributed to national oppression rather than to class or gender relations. The predominance of nationalist consciousness in the camps has meant that women as much as men enforce strictness of gender rules, minimizing differences that might otherwise have arisen from different positions within or outside the home.

The context must also make a difference to the ways that gender and sexuality are expressed or repressed in the telling of life stories. Recording them in public helped to 'naturalize' them but also eliminated (or reduced) intimacy. As foreigner and potential channel to the outside world my identity was likely to bring out nationalist statements and repress certain kinds of expression of gender and sexuality,

for example reports of violence against women. Conversely my outsider/insider status, combined with my gender and age, may have encouraged frankness in those respondents who raised problems of gender and sexuality.

This chapter will first examine the repression and expression of sexuality in the life stories. In the second section one particular life story will be presented in detail, demonstrating internal conflict between a 'nationalist' and a lost 'feminine' self, and as a means of understanding dilemmas of nationalism and gender ideology as they are manifested in individual lives and subjectivities. In the third section, the life stories illustrate women's support for the 'sex-gender system', and different forms in which they show 'female consciousness' and 'gender struggle'.

A. The life histories as medium of expressing gender and sexuality

It is to be expected that telling life stories should be subject to the same values of expression/suppression of sexuality as everyday speech. While all the life stories collected for this study express engendered experience, direct allusions to sexuality are few. Yet, in spite of conventional cultural constraints, and contextual inhibitions (my foreignness, the recorder, the usual presence of other people), some of the life story tellers talked about sexuality. The rest demonstrated more conventional tendencies to exclude this topic, or to refer to it obliquely, or to transform it into social comment. We turn to the conventional treatments first.

The exclusion of references to sexuality went so far in the case of some older women, that it led to the omission of their marriages from their narratives, as if even this was 'ayb (shameful). One older woman whose life story I recorded in the presence of several of her daughters, when she reached the point of her marriage, stopped in embarrassment, half covered her face, and said to herself, "How shall I say this?". Other older women jumped over their marriages, beginning their stories with the exodus of 1948, or the birth of children, or (as in the case of Imm Sobhi) with a recent back operation she had had. This type of 'editing out' ends with Imm 'Imad (born in 1946, married in 1968); from this time on, speakers adopt a linear life-transition format for their stories, interwoven with national events. Only one younger woman, a PLO cadre, did not mention her marriage in her first account; when I asked her why not, she said that she had assumed that I was interested in politics, not personal matters.

When women talk about their husbands, it is usually in one of two ways: as the fathers of their children, or as providers of income. For example, Imm Sobhi, who talked a great deal about her children hardly mentioned her husband, and when she did it was to 'place' him in relation to household finances: "[He] was wounded, he can't work", having already referred to his inability to earn money in the context of the destruction of her home: "As the proverb says, 'Property goes, but men bring more'. But when there's no man you can't get money to build". In a subsequent recording, Imm Sobhi mentioned her marriage in passing: "When I married I also bought a house [in Shateela] and stayed there". It was with difficulty that I succeeded in eliciting marriage details from all but one of the

nine oldest women in the sample; even about wedding celebrations there was little response, probably because of poverty.[1]

Exclusion of husbands as topic of conversation between women may also be observed in everyday life. When reference is necessary, women do not usually use 'my husband' or first name (implying intimacy), but rather 'father of so-and-so'; in the life stories, women tend to use 'the man' or simply 'he').[2] 'De-sexualization' of the conjugal relationship was underlined for me by an older woman who, during a conversation marked by disagreement with her husband, turned to me saying, "Well, thank God, at least he gave me these children". Of course women are said to entertain themselves with bawdy conversation (za'rani): this is evident from norms excluding banat (girls) from women's gatherings.[3]. When a Shateela woman greeted friends celebrating their wedding anniversary with the hope that the husband would keep his wife awake all night, the remark was cited by other women as an example of gross bad taste.

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[1] The best descriptions I have of weddings recorded come not from women of their own weddings, but from parents, perhaps a sign of the trauma involved for the bride. None of the women recorded for this study offered any description of their wedding celebrations. One old lady expressed her irritation at being asked what she wore at her wedding by answering, "A white dress, of course ! What else would I wear ?"

[2] In Shateela, women from the village of Majd al-Kroom use zalmati ('my man'), but this is considered too rural by most other people.

[3] Imm Ghassan, asked how girls should be brought up, replied: "If there are women sitting together, it's 'ayb for a girl to sit with them because they may start up unusual subjects" (note the euphemism 'unusual'). Imm 'Imad recalled: " If there was a (women's) gathering at our neighbour's and her daughter entered, she would jerk her head, meaning 'Get out !'."

Unspontaneous though they were, the accounts cited in Chapter Five of the marriages of the two oldest life story tellers (Imm Muhammad and Imm Nayef) have historic and cultural interest. But the point I wish to underline here is that at no point in her narrative does Imm Muhammad mention her husband's death (she came as a widow to Lebanon). A possible explanation of this 'absence' was given me by a young kinsman of Imm Muhammad's, who said that her husband had treated her very badly, beating her and bringing younger women to the home.[4]

Imm Nayef's story of her wedding is built around three pivotal points: her attachment to her brother which makes her refuse to marry except in exchange for a wife for him; her brother's status (and by reflection her own); and the pressures brought to bear on her by the village elders to marry Abu Nayef. Her public recitation of a three-line poem in which she seems to be comparing her fidelity to her brother with the fickleness of bridegrooms has already been quoted in Chapter Five. What is perplexing about her narrative is the way it jumps from her apparent refusal to take Abu Nayef, to the procession to the bridegroom's house, made remarkable by her carrying her brother's pistol in her right hand instead of the usual <u>mandeel</u> (head-scarf). The hiatus at the heart of the story (her public refusal to marry Abu Nayef, followed without any intervening explanation by her marriage) was still there in a second recording made a year after the first; all my

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[4] Such stories point to a gap between representations of severe sex norms given by members of Middle Eastern communities, and 'reality'. Nakhleh's data also shows that extra-marital liaisons occurred in Palestinian villages, during and before the Mandate ("Patterns of Conflict").

attempts to elucidate it through questioning failed. Her son was as puzzled as I was.[5]

A general practice of exclusion of direct sexual references sensitizes listeners to oblique references, often marked by tone of voice or facial expression. For example, Imm Khaled narrated her marriage thus: "I was 21 when I married. And Abu Khaled was 22. Yes!" With the 'Yes!' she paused, smiled, and glanced at me to see if I had caught the point: that she had been fortunate in marrying a young, hence virile, man.[6] Later in her narrative Imm Khaled describes early married life in Shateela, in one room, with kitchen and bathroom, adding that this space had to be shared with two unmarried worker brothers-in-law. Again a pause and a glance indicated a sexual allusion, that is, to the difficulty of conjugal relations in a crowded single room.[7]

An Arab woman would undoubtedly been able to elicit more open references to sexuality, and would have picked up coded references more quickly than I. A non-Arab researcher like myself tends to be inhibited by awareness of the strictness of

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[5] The recording sessions with Imm Nayef were carried out in the presence of one of her sons, his wife, grandchildren, and visitors. This was the only occasion when I regretted the 'open' nature of the recordings. Tense relations between Imm Nayef and her daughter-in-law affected the contents and sequence of the narrative; audience intervention was not always helpful.

[6] Such closeness in age was not always the case. Imm Mahmoud (born in 1933) married at age 14 a man of 55. Imm Nayef's husband was a widower about 20 years older than she was.

[7] A nuqta (joking anecdote) from the 'days of tents' underlines this bitter aspect of refugeedom: families used to hire an extra tent for one or two nights to give newly married couples privacy to consummate the marriage. A Shateela man is still remembered for his inability to do this in the requisite time.

gender norms, as well as by ignorance of 'formulas of entry' (that is, culturally permissible ways of raising sexual issues).

Women's personal experience of 'bad sexuality' may be suppressed from narrative or daily speech, to be re-worked in the form of criticism of conventional social practice. This possibility is illustrated by the life story of Rihab, discussed in Chapter Six in relation to national crisis and struggle. I knew from a party comrade that Rihab had been married and divorced: in her story she reduces this episode, reportedly long and painful, to a single sentence: "After finishing first secondary [school], I got engaged, then married, then divorced". The only other mention of her marriage occurs in the context of visiting her father (in hiding from the Lebanese Army), to tell him she wanted to divorce. Personal detail is overwhelmed in Rihab's narrative by the weight of national events, and by the priority she gives to her political and intellectual evolution.

But other reasons besides the suppression of 'personal' issues by national politics account for 'editing out' the details of this episode. As told by a woman comrade, Rihab's marriage to a cousin was forced on her by her parents; her mother, described as 'strong', and 'completely without feeling', had dominated the arrangements.[8] The divorce had caused rupture between two branches of the <u>hamula</u>, spoiling the marriage hopes of Rihab's younger sister, whom she calls 'my

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[8] Rihab expressed no hostility to her mother in her story, but a careful reading reveals ambiguity, and greater closeness to her father. In arguments with him, she uses his example in working with the Resistance as reason that he should allow her to do so.

sister and friend, my loved one'. Though Rihab's suit for divorce on grounds of violence succeeded,[9] the struggle with her family is said to have been protracted and severe, affecting her health. The painfulness of this episode, as well as the way that it reveals in-family conflict, is an evident reason for its exclusion.

Yet the omitted 'story' of marriage and divorce forms another hiatus obscuring what was evidently a critical juncture in Rihab's life, the moment when the capacity for challenge she had learnt in a national struggle context was turned towards conventional gender ideology and practice. From comments she makes in her narrative about the need for Palestinian women to struggle with their families, we may infer that it was at this point in her own life that her 'challenge personality' crystallized. Of conventions that still restrict Palestinian women, she says:

> This matter [independence] will need a long struggle, struggle in the sense of conflict - with parents, with society, and with the whole environment...It wasn't easy for a girl [that is, young woman] in our camp society to divorce...But sometimes things oblige you to struggle. A woman has to fight opinions - I won't say 'traditions' because we are Arabs, I mean restrictions. Whether she succeeds or fails depends on a woman's 'long breath', and on her belief in what she's struggling for.

Rihab's narrative underlines the way involvement in national struggle sharpens women's analysis of gender ideology, and gives them weapons to challenge it:

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[9] Most schools of Islamic law allow women the right to sue for divorce in case of violence, abandonment, failure of maintenance, impotence, and certain kinds of illness. However, women's use of this right is restricted in Palestinian Arab society by strong social disapproval. Women determined to divorce sometimes ask male kin to persuade their husband to divorce them, but recourse to the courts is rare, unlike, for example, Egypt or Tunisia.

I will choose my life according to what suits me. And there's no way that anyone can impose things on me. I have this revolutionary logic not only in my national work but also in my personal life. Of course they are linked.

Resistance gender ideology draws a clear line between sexual liberation of women (associated negatively with Western feminism), and social liberation, proposed as legitimate goal for Palestinian Arab women.[10] This distinction was reiterated by Dalal,[11] and by my colleague Riham during translation sessions. Rihab also reflected this position in her definition of independence for a woman as "build[ing] an independent personality as regards opinion, culture and social relations." But she notes how Palestinian interpretations of women's independence as 'free movement', and as 'loosening and spreading', have had the negative effect of reinforcing constraints. Her responsibilities as a cadre and her embeddedment in camp social relations rule out more than a limited liberation of women. Yet, however contained, personal experience has given her views more edge than those of the younger, unmarried cadres cited above.

The most sexually explicit of the life stories was that of Imm Marwan. For a full appreciation of the story, I need to clarify its context. The recording was carried out in a sister's home, partly in the presence of the sister and their mother, who was convalescing after a leg amputation. It became

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[10] Samira Salah, a Women's Union leader, says: "We (Palestinians) didn't take liberation in its Western meaning, we took it as meaning social, economic and political liberation...There are some families that allow their daughters to live with men, but they are few...I'm ready to let my daughter be close to a man but I wouldn't allow her to have sexual relations with him. Why ? Because the Eastern man doesn't understand such things." (Interview, March 1992).

[11] In an interview on women's roles and status in the Resistance movement, March 1986.

apparent soon after beginning recording that Imm Marwan's main theme was marriage to a man she didn't want, forced on her by her mother. At Imm Marwan's request, we moved to another room. Later it transpired that this was Imm Marwan's first visit to her mother after years of estrangement, a reconciliation brought about by the old lady's operation. In spite of reconciliation, anger was still uppermost in Imm Marwan's narrative:

> As for our daily life I was married to a sick man. From the beginning. Because she wanted this. I married him and he was sick, he had a heart problem. She wanted him because he was a relative. I wanted someone else.

Explicitness of sexual reference characterizes Imm Marwan's presentation throughout; she underlines the long wait (four years) before she became pregnant, and the dreariness of her life ("...love, fun, life - these I didn't have. Days passed, feeling died...."). She contrasts her own fertility with her husband's impotence: "We had children with difficulty. But I am fertile. When you have good land anything you plant will grow. I'd get pregnant, and he'd go to hospital". Her husband's incapacity for sex is 'embroidered' in the joke of the hospital staff: "What Mahmoud, you did it!? Straight to Emergency!"

Imm Marwan's unhappiness in marriage is contrasted with her happiness as a mother:

> When I gave birth I began to have a life. This child came to me - he was beautiful! I started to work for him. Afterwards the girls came...I wanted children...they would compensate for other things, money, a man, everything.

Motherhood is elaborated as giving 'hope and a goal'; in a poetic image, Imm Marwan likens children to a flower garden - "you see them make shoots, and grow". Unschooled, Imm Marwan taught herself to read to be able to supervise her children's

studies. Her children are her companions: "When I came home from work...[w]e would sit together and recount what had happened to each of us during the day", adding, "My children carry my flag, my self-respect". The image is a striking one, suggesting the profoundly social nature of the maternal role as it is lived in Arab culture.

Left a widow when the youngest was three years old, the oldest twelve, Imm Marwan worked as cook in a Beirut hospital to provide for them. Her whole narrative revolves around her attachment to her children, how this determined the way she raised them, in conscious opposition to her own upbringing; and how she quarrelled with her family on their account.

It is in this story of conflict with her family that Imm Marwan is most revealing about family relations, and most fully demonstrates her will to challenge gender norms. Her family pressed her to put the children in an orphanage and return to the parental household; she insisted on working and maintaining her independence. The passage deserves to be quoted in full because of the explicitness with which Imm Marwan links rejection of her family's 'interference' after her husband's death to her forced marriage:

> According to our traditions, the family of the father dominates, but in our case they didn't want the children. My family were near me [but]...I didn't allow them to share my children with me. They came, they tried to dominate, I didn't want it...I wanted to raise my children myself, so that we would become friends. I separated myself from people for fifteen years, I was outside my family. They had forced me to get married, khalas, that was it! When they wanted me to come back into the family, I refused. I didn't let them impose anything on me, nor on my children. I stood against them.[12]

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[12] Elsewhere Imm Marwan asserted, "I wouldn't put my children as slaves to anyone". Asked to elucidate, she explained that orphaned children are often expected to provide domestic labour in the households of paternal or materna-

Imm Marwan strongly advocates women having professional training so as to be economically independent:

> Work is not shameful. I encourage women to work and to struggle...A woman shouldn't depend completely on a man...Maybe her husband will come and tell her. 'You are divorced. Goodbye!' He will give her the mu'akhar, and throw her out. The money won't feed her two days.[13]

Yet the cultural limits set to rebellion against gender norms through maternal responsibility are well illustrated by Imm Marwan. In her remarks about work - her own and other women's - Imm Marwan emphasizes cultural values that forbid promiscuity: "I did any job except what would hurt my dignity, for the sake of my children". A woman who works must have the strength to resist sexual pressures; a woman unhappily married, like herself, must not take a lover -"this is refused". At the time I recorded with her, her youngest daughter was about to be married, and Imm Marwan was looking forward to dressing her in the traditional bedli baidha (white dress), symbolic of virginity.

Imm Marwan's life story shows the way rebellion against gender norms is both justified and limited by responsibility for daughters. Rebellion is not carried to abstract logical extremes, but contained by the 'social reality' in which she and her children are embedded. Her life history is suggestive in other ways as well: it throws light on links between women's 'maternalism' and marital disharmony; on problems of widowhood in Palestinian communities; and on 'mothering' as vehicle of socio-cultural change.

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grandparents.

[13] Mu'akhar is the part of the mahr held back in case of divorce.

Whatever the degree of their explicitness about sexuality, women's life histories are bound to express both gender and class. Women's lives are more circumscribed by gender than those of men (Personal Narratives Group, 1989); women in the same society live different lives depending on class. The way that women express gender and class inequality in recounting their lives is necessarily shaped by culture, the historical moment and situation of the collectivity, class and personal position. In conclusion to this section I shall examine one of the life histories, that of Imm Ghassan as an example of 'complaint', a traditional form for expressing grievance, and one that may legitimately be viewed as expressing class or women's consciousness. While the dominant theme in her presentation of grievance is national crisis - expulsion from Palestine, exile, statelessness, oppression, poverty - enfolded in her story are the themes of class and gender oppression. Examination of the way these themes are muted by, yet expressed in, a nationalist presentation helps us to 'hear' cultural frames for the expression of class and gender consciousness.

More than any other of the life histories, Imm Ghassan's revolves around the theme of poverty. Her descriptions of camp life are designed to make the listener feel the materiality of poverty - leaking roofs, the hunger of young children, sickness, police attacks. She dwells on the insufficiency of her husband's earnings as an itinerant coffee-seller:

> He was the only one working. And what was his work? What could he bring, what could he give?...What he earned today, we spent today. Barely enough to buy milk for the children.

She asks me, "Do you think you can take a child to the doctor, and buy food, when you only have one person earning in

the house?" Later she lists the attacks Shateela has been subjected to: the war of 1975-6; the Israeli invasion and massacre of 1982; the Amal sieges. She has lost two sons, and is bringing up four orphaned grandchildren. Such experiences are specific to camp Palestinians, and her dramatic narration of them underlines the relative immunity of middle class Palestinian community to which, by marriage, I belong; in recounting them to me Imm Ghassan implicitly points to the difference between her life and mine.

Imm Ghassan is an exception to the point I made earlier, that the older women never mention their husbands. Her husband figures centrally in her life story: as a low earner; as getting himself imprisoned; as sexually excessive; and as leaving all the burden of child-raising to her. The passage in which she complains of the burden of repeated childbearing, placing the responsibility on her husband, is worth quoting as an example of 'female consciousness':

> By the end he got thirteen children...After forty days [from delivery] I'd get pregnant again, and after nine months I'd give birth. And so it went on. I suckled them and I got pregnant, that's how it was. Thirteen children! ...I'd just be sitting, and <u>yallah</u>! I went on having babies...[14]

Cultural constraints impose on Imm Ghassan the phrase, "I'd just be sitting, and <u>yallah</u>!" as way of suggesting a sexual approach. Later, in answer to a question whether Abu Ghassan knew of her use of abortifacients, she said, "No, he wasn't concerned. Many things happened and he didn't care". When I asked if he helped with the children, she said, "Him?

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[14] Imm Ghassan is the first Palestinian woman I have heard use the masculine pronoun in relation to 'getting children'. This unusual usage is probably a way of underlining her husband's excessive sexuality.

No, no, no, no. In his whole life he never touched a child".
Such complaints against Abu Ghassan as husband are, I would
argue, a form of 'women's consciousness', that operate to
remind men of their domestic responsibilities.[15] More will be
said about them in Section C on gender struggle.

B. A case of inner conflict between a nationalist and a
feminine 'self'

I need to preface discussion of Dalal's life story by
underlining the strength of social pressures towards marriage
in almost all Arab milieus; celibacy is rare for both men and
women, and though women in Palestinian camps marry at later
ages than in the past, marriage is still practically
obligatory.[16] In the study sample of 18 women, only three are
single, and this high a proportion is closely linked to war
disruption. Dalal was twenty six years old at the time of
recording, and still unmarried. Two other elements in her
situation at the time of recording put marriage in the
forefront of her preoccupations: one was the break-up of the
Resistance group in which she was <u>mutafarriqha</u> (a full-time
cadre); the second was the gradual break-up through marriage
of the sibling household she had managed since her parents'
death in 1981.

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[15] The useful distinction between 'feminist' and 'female'
(or 'women's') consciousness is proposed by T. Kaplan, "Female
Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona,
1910-1918" in N. Keohane, M. Rosaldo and B. Gelpi eds.,
<u>Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology</u> (Chicago: Chicago
University Press, 1981).

[16] See Sayigh and Peteet, "Between Two Fires".

It should be noted that the severing of Resistance group affiliation means much more than loss of a job. Dalal had been attached to her group since the age of nine. For her as for most other young women, especially those from conservative backgrounds, full membership was the fruit of struggle with her parents, and represented an assertion of maturity, and of an independent 'self'. Achieving a position of responsibility within the group had satisfied her ambition to 'be somebody', and had compensated her for a childhood which she describes as 'not very happy'. Resistance groups have been likened by many observers to families, in that they provide a 'total' framework of activity, companionship, protection, and 'belonging'.

In addition to loss of Resistance group 'family', other situational factors may have helped make Dalal's the most self-analytic of the life stories. Recently enrolled in a teacher training course, Dalal was experiencing learning difficulties, result of interrupted schooling. Her family and economic situation was painfully insecure.[17] A marriage project was in the air. Some idea of the troubled atmosphere of her life is given by the fact that the first recording session was terminated by a fit of vomiting. I attributed this to the pain of narrating her parents' death, but Dalal stoically denied it - Resistance cadres are taught to accept death and bereavement as a consequence of national struggle - and insisted that I return for a second session.

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[17] Within the limited socioeconomic range of the study sample, Dalal represents the lowest level. The family's home had been lost during the 'Battle of the Camps', and all their possessions looted. At the time of recording, Dalal had no steady salary, and was living in a one-room shack with two younger unmarried siblings, and an orphaned nephew.

Alternating between recollections and self-analysis, Dalal's narrative revolves around a 'self' experienced as always having been problematic. Alone among the life story tellers, she gives a detailed description of her childhood, emphasizing its poverty:

> We were deprived - no toys, no clothes. I used to feel the difference between me and my friends...My mother favoured the boys. She loved us [girls] but she gave them better food and clothing. What I liked best was to get sick so as to feel loved.

She describes their family life as 'closed', result of poverty reinforced by the conservatism of her father, who was much older than her mother, and had been a <u>sheikh</u> in Palestine:

> My father was very strict with us. Everything was forbidden - dancing, singing, visiting friends. We were very isolated. When I started working [at age 13, part-time in a sweet factory], the thing I most wanted to buy was a transistor. All my friends had cassettes. But my father didn't allow me to. This incident is still stamped on my mind.

Relations with friends are marked by consciousness of 'something lacking' and of 'difference':

> My friends wore pretty clothes, they listened to music and talked about the latest hits. I couldn't join in their conversation. Sometimes I pretended I'd heard these songs when in fact I hadn't.

This memory launches Dalal on her first bout of self-analysis:

> I feel that deprivation and inferiority are deep inside me. Perhaps this is what made me try to be superior. I like to succeed in everything I do.

Coming from a 'miserable environment', Dalal 'grabs with passion' the public role opened up for her at age 16 by membership in the Struggle Front. Yet now she regrets her total absorption in politics:

> I paid a price, I didn't live the stage I ought to have lived. If someone said to me, 'You're pretty', I'd think, 'Who does he think he is! I'm above that sort of thing'. I acted as if he was committing a crime against me.

As described by Dalal in an earlier interview (March 1986), struggle with her parents to be allowed to join a Resistance group involved carrying their principles into her behaviour outside the home, a process of self-monitoring that, in the light of her later complaints about emotional and sexual blockage, appears problematic for Resistance women:

> My mother completely refused that I should work with young men. She wanted me to marry, so that she could relax. Every day she kept telling me, 'You've got to marry. As soon as someone comes along, khalas! That's it!' As for my father, he was very fanatical, he kept after me to wear a head-scarf. I was forbidden to wear jeans, I was forbidden to cut my hair. Though I was still at school at the time, I confronted my parents. I told them, 'I don't want to marry, I want to do national work. But if ever anyone tells you that I'm not behaving correctly, you have the right to do what you want'. So I worked, and stayed far from anything that could cause gossip.

The death of her parents in 1981 in an Israeli air-raid pushed an adolescent Dalal into responsibility for a household of siblings:[18]

> From sixteen years old I ran the house, while my sisters and younger brother went to school. I liked to cook and sweep the house, and make it the most beautiful, without anything lacking. I bought all the things we hadn't had before.

But their parents' moral regime is maintained:

> We lived according to the rules. Staying out at night was forbidden, by five or six everyone had to be home. No strange man entered...My mother's way of raising us influenced all of us. Deep inside we knew what is sinful, what is shameful, what is allowed, and what is not.

I note, parenthetically, that Dalal identified her gentle mother, not her stern father, as primary transmitter of rules of control of sexuality. Yet she also linked the difficulties she was currently experiencing in being 'feminine' to her

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[18] When I expressed surprise that her older brother didn't take over this responsibility, Dalal explained, "After my parents' death, I became a full-time cadre with the Front. (My brother) didn't work or spend on us...Power is economic. I had the power, and this is what kills me now".

'puritan' Islamic upbringing on the one hand, and to her Resistance group commitment on the other.

A story of a broken engagement, framed by regret for a lost opportunity, offers both social commentary and rich psychological and cultural insights. Dalal admitted that her main motive for getting engaged was a need for protection due to living outside Shateela camp among Lebanese Shi'ite neighbours:

> It was at the time of the 'Battle of the Camps'. I felt afraid and insecure. He was Lebanese, and a neighbour. I felt he could protect me, especially because his brothers were with Amal movement. We used to ask him to come over to our place at night if there was fighting.

They get engaged:

> He gave me money to buy the <u>'alameh</u>...The same day he said, 'I don't want you to sleep in Shateela, and I don't want you to work in the Front'. This was the cause of our disagreement.[19]

Dalal adds to the story of her failed engagement a long self-critical commentary on her treatment of her fiance: imposing her opinions on him, and forcing him to join the Resistance movement; making appointments to meet him, and failing to keep them; refusing to allow him even to hold hands. Now she regretted her behaviour towards him, attributing it partly to her Resistance status, partly to her family background: "Maybe an Arab girl tries to impose her opinions on a man as a reaction to years of oppression in her parents' home". Her strongest motive in rejecting him, however, was fear that he would jeopardize her 'role in the Front'. A twist is added to the story by the fact that the Front put pressure on her to break the engagement by telling her that her fiance

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[19] The <u>'alameh</u> is the gold 'set' composed of necklace and earrings which marks a formal engagement.

worked for the <u>Maktab Thani,</u> an accusation that turned out to be untrue.

In retrospect Dalal doubly regretted the 'strong personality' that her Resistance and household responsibilities prematurely gave her. On one level, it complicated gender relations: "A man won't accept to be led by a woman. Socially this can't happen". On a deeper level, Dalal regretted this 'strong personality' as a fiction, an appearance that masked inner contradictions and weakness. The fragmentation of her narrative reflects a painful search for self-understanding, a digging into the 'self' and the past that suggest, through the metaphor of a 'missing stage', irreparable damage. The contradictions she discovers inside herself proliferate: between a 'strong' outer self and inner weakness; between an outer self that appears 'liberated', and inner self that is 'closed';[20] between a desire to 'be somebody' and a desire to be 'feminine'; between her need for others' admiration and respect as a 'good girl', and her need for 'self-expression'; between desire for love, and inability to feel it. Her self-analysis seems to focus, in the end, on emotional and sexual blockage:

> If someone holds my hand, I feel it's a sin. I feel as if
> something inside is locked, there's an obstacle between
> me and a man. I hold society responsible for this basic
> failure. It oppressed something deep inside me. I suffer,
> it hurts. I want to live my life and I can't.

The unusual degree of introspection displayed in Dalal's life history needs to be set in context: though interrupted by

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[20] The full text here is: "Everyone who sees me coming and going, wearing normal clothes, would think I'm liberated and coquettish, whereas deep inside I'm more closed than I appear". Dalal uses the same word <u>munghalaq</u> (closed, locked) to describe her home in childhood, and her inner personality.

war, her education includes university-level study; she has read socialist and feminist literature, and mentions Freud; membership in a Marxist group has given her a vocabulary for the articulation of her class and gender consciousness; disillusion with the Resistance group she used to believe in, but which has now split up, sharpens her regret for an adolescence devoted to political activity.[21] We notice the radical difference between Rihab's and Dalal's experience of 'self' in relation to national politics: the first represents herself as built up through work with a Resistance group, whereas Dalal, on the contrary, expresses a sense of 'lost self'.

This marked difference between two 'Resistance women' underlines a problem that has theoretical, ethical and methodological implications. I was aware that more senior Resistance women would have criticized my selection of Dalal to record and present, on the grounds, probably, of 'feminist tendencies' and 'non-representativity'.[22] But caution against dismissing her life story as idiosyncratic came from my translator and colleague Riham, herself an ex-cadre, who commented while we were translating Dalal's text: "The Resistance movement did something to girls".[23] Here again the

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[21] In the interview with Dalal in March 1986, she said of herself, "I've been in the Front nearly twelve years, a long experience. I feel now that I can't leave, I have tied my future to this march".

[22] A veteran woman leader expressed muted criticism about my selecting her for an earlier recording. In spite of her nationalist enthusiasm, Dalal appeared not highly regarded in Women's Union circles. This could have been because of her rapid rise to the status of 'responsible'.

[23] Stimulated by the life stories, Riham began to give me incidents from her own life that corroborated, modified, or contradicted what respondents said. This provided a 'third

'politics of representation' appeared forcefully in the form of a dilemma: should community desires to be represented by its most prominent, hence most nationalist members be respected, even if this means suppressing dissident or subordinate voices? In highlighting Dalal's life history I respond, first, to what I feel to be its truthfulness to experience; and second, to the point made by Marks (1989) that research focussed only on the articulate or 'normal' individual will miss the way that gender, class, and national or racial oppression interact.[24]

Whether or not Dalal is 'representative' of other Resistance cadres, or other Palestinian women (the question itself ignores the theoretical and political problems of the concept 'representativity'), the introspection and frankness of her life story mean that it explores problems of gender and sexuality that are certainly not hers alone. Examination of the experience of Palestinian women in the Resistance movement suggests that full integration (that is, as fighters or cadres) could only be achieved if women de-feminized and de-sexualized themselves. Peteet (1991) describes Majidah, a woman militant in a base in South Lebanon:

> [S]he kept her exchanges with men on the level of politics and military affairs... her clothing was strictly military...She had joined the ranks of men...and was assigned a gender neutral role, akin to a sister with whom sexual relations are forbidden. (p 155)

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angle' from a slightly different class position that gave depth to my understanding of the texts. From Riham I learnt more of what may be called the 'sexual politics' of the Resistance movement, how for example leaders tried to prevent members from marrying outside the group.

[24] This writer comments that most researchers feel more comfortable in dealing with the lives of 'normal' or 'successful' people, whereas it would tell more about the gendered realities of any particular social order to search for victims: S.Marks, " The Context of Personal Narrative", in Interpreting Women's Lives.

Such women are indeed admiringly described in the Resistance as <u>ukht al-rijal</u> ('sister of men'), a phrase that implies, in addition to a-sexuality, 'man-like' qualities of courage and resourcefulness.[25] But Dalal's life story usefully points to some of the difficulties and costs of women's sacrifice of 'femininity' in the process of induction into the Resistance movement. She speaks of "not having lived a stage I ought to have lived" as a result of her political activities, and regrets having lost a man who "really loved me and gave me everything I asked for" for the sake of her 'role' in the movement. On a more general level, a problem faced by many Resistance women who 'de-feminize' themselves in order to be accepted in the Resistance movement is that they cannot easily return to 'gender normality'. If they want to marry, they face the problem that non-politicized Palestinian men avoid marrying political women, and even men in the Resistance generally look outside when it comes to marriage. Dalal points to both aspects of this problem in the 1986 interview, when she said that she couldn't marry a man outside the Resistance: he "mustn't be an ordinary person", he must be "in the movement, preferably in the Front"; and he must "understand the role of woman" (that is, not insist that she gives up her political activities). But defining such a man instantly provokes her scepticism:

> Where is this person?... Besides, when you come down to reality, [Resistance men] usually marry women who are completely outside the Revolution.

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[25] The gender stereotype attributing courage to men is often privately questioned by Resistance movement women; they also sometimes claim to be more nationalistic than men. Peteet quotes a guerilla leader saying, "(Women) are better for long missions, for there is no patience and stamina like that of a woman" (<u>Gender in Crisis</u>, p 154).

C. The question of 'women's consciousness' and 'gender struggle'

The concept 'women's consciousness' (or 'female consciousness') first proposed by Kaplan (1981) is a valuable one through which to explore how women in pre-industrialized societies envisage their situation and act towards it. It directs attention to different phenomena: the possibility of gender-specific 'social models', traditional forms of women's action ('indigenous feminism'), and to gender issues that women who participate in anti-colonial struggles suppress, or partially express, within nationalist movements. 'Gender struggle' has a more restricted usefulness, pointing to specific, often individual resistance to particular aspects of a gender system. Both need to be applied with reservations, since, like other quasi-analytical concepts, they carry the danger of a predetermined search for confirmation, hence of misinterpretation of 'data'. If women of a research milieu do not define specific actions as 'gender struggle' what grounds has the researcher for doing so? Yet while indigenous explanations must be respected, the researchers's reflective engagement with these explanations via her/his own understandings can be hermeneutically fruitful. Thus the presentation of cases of 'gender struggle' in this section is tentative, a first step to be used in future discussion with the research community.

A second preliminary question (to be further discussed in the concluding chapter), is the appropriateness of life stories as method for discovering kinds of 'women's consciousness' and 'gender struggle'. Focussed interviews would certainly produce more focussed data, but the degree of control of the teller of

a life story over its contents and sequencing should allow stronger inferences about the importance of specific episodes or issues in subjects' lives. Life stories as used in this study also offered a bridge to further discussion in which 'women's consciousness' was more often expressed than in the recording of life stories. In this section I shall discuss different kinds of 'female consciousness' and 'gender struggle' expressed by camp women, prefaced by a section on their support for the 'sex-gender system'.

Gender orthodoxy

The first point to be underlined is that explicit criticisms of conventional gender ideology were not voiced by any of the sample. Even those women who represent themselves as rebelling against it, such as Imm Marwan, rebel against specific aspects, not the whole system. A second point about their rebellion is that it is targeted against specific persons (in Imm Marwan's case her mother, in Imm Ghassan's her husband) who have abused their position vis-a-vis the narrator; it is they who are accused, not the 'system' itself. This phenomenon is most striking in the case of Rihab, victim of a constrained marriage that ended in violence and divorce: not only does she <u>not</u> explicitly blame her parents for forcing her to marry a man she did not want, but, through a discrimination between 'opinion' (to be corrected) and 'Arab tradition' (to be preserved), she refrains from critique of a 'system' in which experiences like hers are likely. Finally, we notice that even those women who complain against particular instances of gender oppression explicitly uphold sex and gender norms.

Examples of the way women support conventional Arab gender ideology suggests that (except in the case of Rihab, whose orthodoxy is part of her political position) such support is strongly connected to their maternal role, or, rather, that aspect of it that hinges on their moral and social responsibility for their daughters. Social science writing has perhaps over-emphasized the identification of Arab mothers with the oldest son, ignoring the dependence of women's status in most milieus on the correct upbringing of daughters. One of the findings of this study is the multivalent and critical nature of mother/daughter relations, particularly in the transmission of gender norms. Though Imm Marwan denounces her mother's upbringing of daughters, comparing it to Africa (often a measure of 'backwardness' for Arab speakers), yet she at the same time she mounts a sustained attack on promiscuity:

> The woman who works must have personality, she must be controlled, because eyes are fixed on women. She mustn't play around. Even if she doesn't like her husband, she must forbid herself [from having sexual relations with other men], so as to protect her house and children.

Women can only solve the problem of gender asymmetry ("eyes are fixed on women") by being stronger than men. Imm Marwan has treated her daughters differently from the way her mother treated her, encouraging them to study, and refusing to let them marry before the age of 20. But the emphasis she gives to the 'white dress' (twice repeated) that she will soon dress her daughter in, symbol of the completion of an important phase of maternal responsibility, suggests the depth of women's identification with their daughters' pre-marital virginity.

That unhappiness in marriage has little effect on women's support for gender ideology is suggested by the way women like Imm Ghassan and Imm Noman speak about the upbringing of

daughters. Imm Ghassan underlines religion and the home as the
two sources of a proper upbringing. The parents are important
as models of correct behaviour. The mother should teach her
daughter what is 'ayb (shameful), and what is lawful. She makes
a point in relation to the moral upbringing of girls that
reveals the importance of silence about sexuality as a basic
method of instilling proper behaviour:

> [A girl] as she grows up gets to know what is haram
> [sinful] and what is halal [permitted]. She should know
> without anyone telling her.

My understanding of this remark was strengthened by a
discussion with Samira Salah, a Women's Union leader. Speaking
of her parents, Samira said:

> My mother was embarrassed to tell me anything [about sex],
> she considered it 'ayb [shameful]. Even when I married she
> didn't tell me. There was ignorance on one side, and
> embarrassment on the other. Our father was more educated.
> But a father is never frank [about sexual matters] with
> his children.

At this point in translation, my translator-colleague
(aged perhaps 25 years younger than Samira) corroborated her
remarks, saying that in her family, too, the topic of sex was
never raised. Once when she and her sisters were watching a
television programme for school children with some sex-
education content, her father turned it off. She described the
sense of awe and fear created around it by keeping sexuality
unspoken.

I first met Imm Noman in a Resistance office, and became
aware while visiting her of the strength of her nationalist
feelings. She was a veteran political volunteer with the
Women's Union, and a Resistance group supporter. She said that
she had 'encouraged' her children to 'struggle'; several of her
sons were with the Resistance (one had been in prison since

1977, two had been killed). Yet in spite of this, Imm Noman had refused any kind of non-domestic activity for her daughters:

> I'm against a girl working outside [the home], unless she has a really good job [wazheefi kabiri)...We are Arabs, we have principles. But what is going on around us today is not in line with our traditions. When a girl goes out, it can happen that a man not worth a franc deceives her, and she becomes exposed.[26] This may change the whole course of her life.

Here Imm Noman recalled 'immorality cases' in the camp of Tell al-Za'ter:

> There were some girls who were 'loose'.[27] In the time of the Lebanese government, one could not talk to one's daughter, but when the Resistance came, half of them were killed by their families.

Knowing that I, as a foreigner, must disapprove of 'honour' killings, she added:

> Look, we Palestinians don't own anything any more. We don't have land or property. What can we still own? Only a little dignity. We mustn't let go of this easily.

The assimilation of land, property, honour, and women in this remark is a configuration with deep cultural roots, especially among camp Palestinians of rural origin, and characterizes the thinking of women as much as men. It is doubtful if nationalist ideology has done anything to weaken it in spite of the early Resistance slogan al-ard qabl al-'ird ('land before honour').[28]

There is a close association between the way certain mothers in the sample express the imperative of control of

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[26] The word Imm Noman uses here is mashmoosi, which means 'sunned'.

[27] The Arabic is feltaneen, a word that can be used of merchandise that is not packed, but which is often applied to women.

[28] 'Ird denotes specifically women's honour, identified with the protection of the female genitalia.

daughters, and their perceptions of a breakdown in morality. This theme is voiced strongly by Imm Marwan who balanced her advocacy of women working with warnings against sexual harassment in the work-place similar to those Imm Noman advanced to explain why should would not let her daughters work. A persistent theme voiced by Imm 'Imad is the contrast between the society she grew up in (Sidon in the 1960s), and Beirut today, symptomatized for her by 'girls going out alone'.

Mothers are more concerned, but the positions of younger women, not yet mothers, are scarcely different: a western listener might expect Rihab to complain of not having an independent home (as a divorced woman, she still lives most of the time with her parents); instead she gives importance to the question of where, and with whom, she stays while moving around Lebanon for her Resistance work. The autonomy she struggles for with such determination is balanced by a political sense of limits. Consistency between the personal and ideological levels is achieved through the idea of Arab authenticity.

Dalal expresses ambivalence towards gender ideology: on the one hand she speaks like someone seeking a way to liberate herself from the cultural inhibitions her upbringing has implanted in her. Yet in other parts of her narrative she praises her mother's conventional upbringing:

> Of course my mother taught us the values that have to be taught. And this has accompanied us all our life. She taught us that if a girl is unclean, her family will kill her. When we were small she told us these stories, that so-and-so's daughter loved somebody, and her parents killed her. She used such stories to teach us.

In telling about how she managed her siblings after her parents' death, she emphasizes rule-keeping:

Staying out was forbidden. Even I had to be home by five o'clock. If I stayed out, they would all want to stay out, here and there, and they'd become 'loose'.

Researchers have noted the pressures on Resistance women cadres to censor their own behaviour when engaged in 'mass work', in order to preserve their acceptance by camp families.[29] The negotiations that Dalal reported with her parents as condition for being allowed to join the Front ("If ever anyone tells you that I'm not behaving correctly, you have the right to do what you want"), points to the many-angled scrutiny focussed on women, from family, Resistance group, and the camp community. As Imm Marwan observes, "All eyes are fixed on women", an observation given cultural depth by another mother who quotes the proverb saying that girls should not show even the tip of a tooth (that is, not laugh or speak). The many kinds of active mobilization of women in the camps under the PLO/Resistance movement possibly masked the underlying survival of such gender configurations, a supposition born out by many kinds of reversal in the period following the war of 1982. These are not attributable to 'innate conservatism' but have occurred in a specific political and economic context. Removal of the PLO/Resistance movement has sharply reduced the material basis for women's independence. National and class exploitation coupled with high levels of Palestinian unemployment has reduced women's former access to paid work, while perceptions of Lebanese urban society as corrupting further reinforces family constraints on daughters.

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[29] See Sayigh and Peteet, "Between Two Fires".

Traditional forms of 'gender struggle'

In this section, I shall use the life histories along with earlier studies, Granqvist (1931, 1935), and Peteet (1991), to discuss apparent traditions of 'gender struggle' practised by Palestinian women.

Those that appear institutionalized at the time of Granqvist's fieldwork are: i) widows' struggles to avoid re-marriage; ii) young wives' struggles to improve their status vis-a-vis husband and his household family; iii) struggles to own or manage property. Granqvist's data reveals no cases of struggle against an unwanted marriage; at most women could protest at a bridegroom's deformity, or delay marriage on grounds of insufficient gifts (women exercised more autonomy in second marriages). Other, more individual kinds of non-conformity to gender norms are also indicated: a woman derweesh (follower of a religious order); a city woman who chooses a village husband, and sets him up in a shop; and a woman-hermaphrodite. Traces of these struggles remain, but exile in Lebanon has removed some bases for their practice, changed others.

Fifty years later, in Lebanon, Palestinian women tell Peteet: "Women have their rights [huquq] now - they choose their husbands; they go to school, work, and fight in the national struggle".[30] Peteet underlines her own reservations about such claims, and notes the national crisis context as influencing the way Palestinian women speak to foreigners about

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[30] Peteet, Gender in Crisis, p 88.

their lives.[31] The cadres' stories she quotes make it clear that nationalist ideology was not enough to induce families to loosen constraints on daughters; it required their struggle as well.[32] Peteet's references to the issue of marriage underline the way that participation in national struggle increased women's scope for choice, but without real change in social compulsion to marry, or in broader gender ideology.[33]

The observations collected for this study more than ten years later point to continuing struggles over all the issues - education, employment, joining the Resistance, marriage - that the women quoted above claimed as recognized rights. Although the life stories should not be taken as pure reflections of 'reality', we may assume that they reflect personal experience more precisely than statements made from within an ongoing national struggle. The relative optimism of the women quoted by Peteet reflects a specific historical period, one experienced by Palestinians in Lebanon as 'nationalist' and 'progressive'.

While the women quoted by Peteet bracketed together social rights such as education and employment, and rights vis-a-vis the 'sex-gender' system (for example, to 'choose a husband'), it is not clear that the two sets move together in the same

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[31] "The women I worked with viewed me as a foreigner to whom by telling their story they would be conveying it to the West...Women used to tell me, 'We're all liberated now because of the Resistance'": Peteet, <u>Gender in Crisis</u>, p 16/17.

[32] See for example Peteet, 'Obstacles to Mobilization', <u>Gender in Crisis</u>, p 134 - 139.

[33] Peteet emphasizes decline in family control over marriage: <u>Gender in Crisis</u>, p 179-183. Yet here and elsewhere she notes: i) continuing family pressures on women to marry; and ii) the way that most women's political activities ended with marriage.

direction. It is for this reason that, in a less favourable political and economic situation, women's traditional forms of struggle against coercive marriage become important. I shall examine this question in the light of the life stories collected for this study.

It was to be expected that the life stories would not describe the negotiations and arrangements around the narrators' marriages. Often daughters knew nothing of these until confronted with a parental decision. A typical response to their choice was given by one of the older women (born in 1937, married in 1951): "[My mother] asked my opinion. I said, 'Whatever you wish.' I put the responsibility on my mother." With younger women, however, it was possible to gain a more detailed view of the negotiations that were carried on between young women and their families throughout adolescence until they finally married. These included relationships that did not lead to engagement, broken engagements, and arguments with parents over marriage proposals. Information given sometimes covered mothers' and sisters' experiences as well.

Imm 'Imad's (born in 1946) recollections of her childhood and adolescence in 'Ain Helweh in the 1950s and 1960s are remarkable for their frankness and detail.[34] She told of playground flirtations; of her love and fear of her father; and of an attempted seduction by her ibn 'amm (paternal cousin). Most interesting from a 'gender struggle' perspective is the way she used the story of her cousin's misbehaviour, not

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[34] Imm 'Imad's was the longest life story I recorded, totalling about eight hours. Her enthusiasm possibly arose from a history of voluntary political work, a relatively small family, and loss of her home just outside Shateela. At the time of recording she was living in a muhajjareen (war-displaced) building far from camp and friends.

revealed to her father at the time, to counter her father's moves to marry her to her _ibn 'amm_ (his kinsman), rather than to Abu 'Imad, whom she had met outside the family circle, and to whom she had persuaded her parents to sanction her engagement. This is how she tells the story:

> As soon as I was engaged to Abu 'Imad, my cousin was filled with jealousy. He sent a friend to my father, 'Tell Abu Mustafa that I want to marry Nadira'. My parents weren't completely willing that I should marry Abu 'Imad, because he was a 'stranger', a 'peasant', and I don't know what else. My father told me, 'Your cousin Muhammad has asked for you". I said, 'What if he has? I'm engaged already'. My father said, 'You can break your engagement'. I said, 'But I don't want to'. My father said that my cousin was ready to pay back all the expenses that Abu 'Imad had paid. I said, 'Do you know what he did that I never told you?' And I told him. He said, 'It isn't true!'. I said, 'Yes it is. Ask my mother'.

Imm 'Imad's mother corroborates her story, an important point since otherwise her father would have suspected her of inventing or exaggerating the incident to discredit her cousin. In telling this story Imm 'Imad did not take credit for having outmanoeuvered her parents, only for acting correctly, first in repulsing her cousin's attempt to kiss her; then in telling her mother; and, finally, in _not_ telling her father, thus avoiding a family quarrel. This story demonstrates that, in spite of her junior and female status, Imm 'Imad had a subtle grasp of sex-gender 'rules', and of the psychology of household and larger family relations. Such awareness clearly forms a basis for a kind of 'gender struggle' in which the rules are manipulated for personal ends rather than challenged.

Zohra (born c. 1949) told about her sisters' marriages as well as her own, showing how her relative autonomy of marriage choice was based in demographic luck as well as 'national work'. She was the youngest of three sisters and several

brothers. The middle sister was married 'by force' while still
in school:

> She was only 15 when she married. They didn't take her
> opinion. I remember we saw her crying, we heard her say,
> 'Why are you in such a hurry with me? Let me finish
> school. I don't want to marry'. They said, 'He's very
> good. You have to marry him'...My oldest sister refused
> absolutely the story of marriage, and my father was unable
> to compel her. She was extremely independent. She had
> worked from the time she was young, and earned money. She
> married much later. As for me, when people began to ask
> for me, he [father] would ask me my opinion. He had learnt
> from my sister's experience.

Nonetheless, before her eventual marriage, her parents put
pressure on her to get engaged to a man she doesn't like:

> At the beginning, they gave me to a young man from Nablus,
> a relative who came with the 'Revolution'. He was a
> pharmacist. Because they liked him very much they engaged
> me to him against my will. They said, 'You have to accept
> him'. I agreed on condition that we don't write the
> contract.[35] My mother used to tell me, 'He's good, he's
> a relative, his financial situation is sound. Just try.
> If you don't like him, leave him'.

The Nablus cousin tried to restrict her:

> He wanted to take away all my <u>salahiyat</u> ['authorities',
> that is, her political activities]. When I went to teach
> in the kindergarten, he wanted to take and bring me. If
> there was a meeting of young men and women - 'It's
> forbidden!' He wanted to restrict me. We fought a lot.
> Look how I managed to paralyze him: I asked him for
> diamonds!

Zohra's eventual marriage to a neighbour's son, a
Resistance comrade, was precipitated by her father's decision
to marry again, after her mother's death. She explained her
reasons:

> If a woman comes to the house, she'll limit my activities.
> Because of my work, I had relationships with many people -
> she'll try to end them. She'll say to my father, 'Your
> daughter left, your daughter came. Why?' Even if I'm old,
> I'm still a girl. I'll be blocked. And I couldn't accept
> that someone should take my mother's place. At that moment

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[35] Zohra alludes here to a form of engagement that only
involves wearing a ring, not the 'writing of the book',
equivalent in Islamic family law to marriage, hence very hard
to break.

Jamal was thinking of marriage, he'd talked several times with my brother. When my father brought a woman to the house, I told my brother, 'I agree'.

Discussing her marriage with her father, who opposed Jamal on the grounds of he was still studying and did not have a proper job, Zohra told him, "Okay, you want me to marry, I'll marry. But I'll marry according to my own taste, not yours." She said that the one who helped her most was her oldest brother, indicating women's ability sometimes to pit one man of the family against another.

Dalal's first engagement took place when she was still in school, when a neighbour 'asked' for her for her son:

> My mother agreed, they brought the <u>alameh</u> and put it on me. I couldn't say No, they would think that I'm in love with someone else. I kept quiet. Whenever they visited, I'd leave the house and go to the neighbours. Afterwards I'd be beaten, but that's okay, I did what I wanted. Once they brought me a gift for the <u>'eed</u> [feast] and I left the house. I made them feel that there's no way from my side. In the end they understood, and withdrew.

She commented, "Now I'm surprised that I knew what to do, instinctively".

These stories are interesting in showing women manoeuvering within their subaltern position to avoid undesired engagements, and, in two cases, making marriages based on compatibility and personal choice. Three women of the sample have avoided marriage altogether: the rarity of unmarried women in camp communities suggests that exile conditions have increased pressures towards marriage; but consideration of the life stories show that, in individual cases, exile loosened family marriage pressures. For example, Fayrooz (born in 1947) obtained professional qualifications, which, combined with her family's need for income, led to migration to Libya, separating her from the environment where pressures on her to marry would

have remained strong.[36] Nozira (born in 1948) said that she had refused many marriage offers so as to stay with her mother, and because her earnings were needed by a poor household. There are several large households in Shateela with spinster daughters, often taken out of school to help with housework. What is unusual about Nozira's case is the way she represents herself as taking the decision:

> I looked around and realized that my family needed money. There was no one to help. I felt obliged to work. I and my sister worked in the Red Crescent. I was the supervisor of the women workers, telling them to take this and put this - from the beginning, in 1972. Afterwards they added the sheets and cleaning materials to my responsibilities.

Other ways that women have used to avoid or postpone marriage are reported by women speakers of others, and have been observed by the researcher. These include: invoking the support of the oldest brother against the parents; threats of suicide; continuing to study; becoming politically active; becoming a professional worker. Women cannot easily confess any but nationalist motives for 'national work', but in some cases this would have offered a temporary escape from domesticity or marriage. Even domestic work such as cooking and cleaning was more interesting when done in a Resistance context. How else can one explain the assumption of voluntary political work by women with large families? In this sense an element of 'gender struggle' is implicit in all forms of women's involvement.

In conclusion, the importance of historical conjuncture in influencing the degree of constraint or autonomy in women's marriages is suggested by comparing the marriage histories of the sample across generations. There is no clear indication of

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[36] Another reason given by this narrator was that her mother never put pressure on any of her daughters to marry, because she had twice been compelled to marry against her will.

change away from kin-endogamous marriage towards marriage to 'strangers'.[37] Out of the whole sample, only two (or possibly three) women married 'strangers'; three married men from the same village (or camp); and eight married from within their kin group. The two women who enjoyed a certain autonomy of marriage choice (indicated in marrying a 'stranger') were born around 1948, and married during the PLO/Resistance period. But the eight cases of in-family marriage are scattered evenly across all generations. Two of the youngest life story tellers, both married after 1982, were married to cousins, and, at least in one case, family constraint was exercised. This suggests that post-1982 politico-economic insecurity has reinforced parental pressures on their daughters to marry, a supposition supported by fieldwork observations.[38]

Gender reversal

The life stories contain several allusions to woman-as-man, not in relation to sexuality, but in terms of status and power. The clearest illustration is that of Rihab, the cadre who assumed male status through mastery of weapons and by demonstrating more-than-male courage in situations of conflict. Through translating this confrontational stance ('the challenge

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[37] One should not assume too readily that women are against 'cousin marriage'. Nevertheless it continues to express parental preference and to indicate their control of marriage; marriage to a 'stranger' on the other hand always indicates women's rather than parents' choice.

[38] Reversal of pre-1982 progressive trends in regard to gender has been particularly marked (and painful) in the case of adolescent girls, for whom camp families can no longer afford secondary and professional training fees. In these conditions, marriage of girls at early ages, and under parental pressure, has reappeared.

personality') into relations with her family, she succeeds in gaining an autonomy almost like that of a son. This 'Amazonian' pattern is an established one in the Palestinian Resistance movement, with historic roots in Palestinian peasant and Arab tribal warfare.[39] Mothers explicitly suppress it in daughters by using the term <u>hassan sobbee</u> (similar to tomboy) to scold them for unfeminine behaviour.

But other illustrations suggest that, at this class level, the 'woman-as-man' metaphor does not express access to man's power so much as assumption of man's responsibility as household provider. This is clear from Imm Muhammad's reply to the <u>sheikh</u> who reprimanded her for doing man's work ("I <u>am</u> the man!"), and from Nozira's comment on her widowed sisters-in-law ("I am like the man for them"). In conditions of poverty, gender reversal adds to women's burdens, and cannot be understood as a means to empowerment. While women described as <u>misterjali</u> (like a man) achieve a not-negligible degree of autonomy, yet the cost may be a high one in terms of further poverty for them and their children.

The cases of the two youngest members of the sample also underlines problematic aspects of membership in the Resistance movement in relation to gender: while Rihab has successfully re-negotiated her engendered status vis-a-vis her family, yet her political role places clear limits on her autonomy. In the case of Dalal, the problem is different: the gender-reversal she practised as a Resistance cadre has made her incapable of expressing societal norms of femininity, in which the woman's

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[39] See Nelson, "Women and Power".

subordination is inscribed ("A man won't accept to be led by a woman. Socially this can't happen").

Elision of men, ironizing, minimization

In the first section of this chapter, I attributed the tendency of life story tellers not to mention marriage or husband as due to cultural repression of sexual references, and also as possibly linked to absence of conjugal harmony. But there is another possible interpretation based in women's socio-communication, in which men-as-subject may be 'edited out' to focus on subjects of interest to women; in my experience such elision is characteristic of women's gatherings, but it is clear that an alternative socio-communicative model exists, in which scurrilous stories are told, and men ridiculed.[40] The fact that conservative parents bar their daughters' from attending women's gatherings underlines their potentialities for subversion of gender norms.

Instances of ironizing about men occurred in some women's accounts of the exodus from Palestine. It seems that many husbands swore they would not leave "even if not a stone of the house is left standing" (to quote Imm Mahmoud's husband), only to follow their wives and children into exile a few weeks later. One woman told an anecdote of a man from her village ordering his daughters to be killed rather than risk having them raped by the attackers; her tone underlined the irony that men's weapons should be turned against women. It would be

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[40] For ridicule of men in women's gatherings in an Arab milieu, see C. Makhlouf-Obermeyer, <u>Changing Veils: Women and Modernization in North Yemen</u> (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

exaggerated to infer that Palestinian women blamed their menfolk for the 'Disaster', but it is likely that stories like these tapped into a traditional women's genre of mocking male claims to courage and leadership. It is also evident that exile subtly eroded male authority. A story told by Imm Nayef of the early years of exile illustrates this erosion. She begins by telling how she bought a house in Shateela from a neighbour:

> I had two pairs of <u>mabareem</u> [gold bracelets]. I pawned them without telling Abu Nayef, and bought the house. When he knew that I'd bought the house he got mad, he refused to eat. When we'd finished plastering the house his appetite came back [laughs]. He was angry because he wanted to go on renting. But for me it was an insult to rent.

The ironic tone in speaking of her husband, the demonstration of independent action and 'self worth' (in the literal form of gold), the proof of having won her way: all these are characteristic of a traditional format for minimizing male superiority. Another example of irony at men's expense from a younger woman, a Resistance cadre, suggests the persistence of this mode. Joking with a crowd of camp women gathering to demonstrate, this cadre said:

> Come on! What are you all waiting for? Are you afraid you'll get killed and leave your husbands widowers? Don't worry! What Palestinian man ever hesitated a minute before taking a younger wife?[41]

Another way originally rural women have of minimizing men is by reducing them to fertilizers of women. When the husband of an older woman I was recording with interrupted her recitation of a traditional wedding song, she turned to me with the words, "Well, at least he gave me these children!" Among the life story tellers, only one, Imm Marwan, explicitly

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[41] Overheard in Mar Elias camp in March 1987, just before a women's march to Syrian headquarters to protest against the continuing siege of the camps by Amal movement.

expressed this idea, which further research would probably show to be rooted in peasant culture, and only still current among older, unschooled camp women.

Complaints against men

Except in one case (Imm Ghassan, presented in Section A of this chapter) complaints against husbands were minimally expressed by the life story tellers. Given the heaviness of women's domestic labour, and the inequality of the male/female division of labour, this may be considered surprising. Possibly an effect of the recorder and my outsider identity, it could also be due to women's responsibility for the public reputation of the home. In three years of frequent visits to 'Imm Khalid', a housewife whose husband did nothing to help her, though she worked to supplement his salary in addition to doing the housework and caring for nine children, I only once heard her criticize him. The fact that he was a Resistance cadre offered another possible explanation of repression of criticism; Palestinian nationalist discourse strongly emphasizes male-female unity, while national struggle has also tended to reaffirm male primacy, for example through weapons, uniforms, political rank and activities (making speeches, receiving foreign delegations, issuing statements). That schooling, urban forms of Islam, and modern media have also tended to repress women's traditional critiques of, and complaints against, men is also suggested by the fact that their expression in the life stories is restricted to the older women.

'Women's consciousness' may take other forms, for example in pride. As noted in Chapter Five, a sense of 'self-worth' is

vigorously expressed in many of the life stories, and is based mainly in labour and sacrifices as 'heroic mothers', or in political activism; often both roles are undertaken, sometimes mothering is re-phrased as a form of national contribution. Women may take pride in the fact (noted above) that whereas they help their husbands with their work, for example taking turns at minding shops, husbands almost never help with housework or child-rearing. That such forms of 'women's consciousness' are expressed in terms of pride rather than complaint does not deny their implicit critique of gender hierarchy.

Another basis for positive expressions of 'women's consciousness' is pride in Palestinian identity, which women feel includes their own specific contribution (as mothers, as expressing and transmitting Palestinian authenticity, as a vanguard among Arab women). However, this is less emphasized in 1990-2 than it was during the period of PLO/Resistance autonomy. Pride in 'giving sons to the Revolution' is also less marked, overwhelmed by the heavy losses of the last decade, and by decline in PLO support for the families of men killed in action. Willingness to participate in recording 'women's history' is in itself evidence of change: before 1982, this would have been ruled out by the ideology of integrality referred to at the beginning of this chapter. One life story teller said that Palestinian women had gone through a 'special experience'. Another told her story in a way that underlined the contrast between her hard life and her husband's easier one. Expressions of 'women's consciousness' arise spontaneously when there is no recorder present. One woman explained her cigarette addiction by saying, " Women have more burdens than

men, their minds are always turning."[42] Others told of cases
of violence against women (telling can be a form of protest).

'Subversive detail'

The Popular Memory Group (1985) point to the indirectness with
which subordinate groups may express protest or criticism. This
is particularly likely to be the case with women in situations
of national crisis and struggle, which makes complaints about
gender oppression appear selfish and 'sectarian'. Set in a
context of the primacy of national struggle, camp women have
few legitimate means of expressing protest other than giving
detailed accounts of their lives. Listeners are expected to
draw the correct conclusions.

Imm Ghassan's life story is the only example in this set
of a sustained account in which national, class and gender
oppression are combined. But because of the length of her
transcript, and because it has already been extensively quoted,
I shall present here a different illustration of 'subversive
detail'. This is a description of mothering given by Imm Nayef:

> The mother gets pregnant, and gives birth, and raises
> them, and stays up all night, and cleans them, and washes
> their dirt [far be it from you!]: this is what the mother
> does...We were ten, a large family. And in those days
> there weren't washing machines, there weren't stoves. We
> cooked on primuses. I went to work in the fields in the
> day, and returned at night to wash, make bread, and cook.
> We slept a little and went back to work.

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[42] Yet the same woman said that she helped her husband in
his shop, in the evenings, so that he could sleep. Her reason
points to mothering as basis of women's accommodation to gender
hierarchy: "We are both working to raise our children." The
same woman, when I asked if her husband objected to her
political activities, said, "Because I'm satisfying the duties
of the home, he has nothing against me."

Two contextual points are interesting in relation to this itemizing of women's work at the beginning of exile. First, the description of mothering was given by Imm Nayef in response to a question of mine aimed at discovering how this had changed as a result of living in camps. In its banality ('telling the obvious'), it can be understood as resistance to questions judged as stupid, an inference supported by the reference to 'dirt' (even accompanied by the polite formula always used when speaking of anything disagreeable or disturbing, this is a sign of anger). Second, the description of women's double work day is given as part of a comparison between her work and that of Abu Nayef, about whom she said that he worked less because he was a 'lot older than me'. This simple cataloguing of women's work cannot be entered in the register of complaint. Yet, listening to it, the audience grasps women's lives in their concreteness.

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Compared with the expressions of nationalism contained in the life stories - as framework of lives, as core of experience, as formative of the 'self' - their expression of sexuality and gender is limited. In some cases, repression reached the point of omission of marriage, though marriage forms an inescapable turning point in the lives of most women in camps, colloquially referred to as <u>naseeb</u> (fate, luck). Such omission is significant, pointing to cultural, class, generational and personal specifics. The concept of <u>'ayb</u> (shame) which represses all expression of sexuality from speech, appearance, and behaviour, is even stronger in camps than in other Palestinian

strata. The norm of excluding husbands as a topic prevails in most women's gatherings, depending on the social status of those who attend, though women of the sample born before 1948 were more likely to 'edit out' references to marriage and husbands than younger women. The only women who spoke freely on these topics were those who had been unusually happy in their marriage (such as Imm 'Imad), or unusually unhappy (such as Imm Marwan). Discussants outside the study sample confirmed the importance of repression of sexuality from speech as mode of inculcating fear and self-control in adolescent girls. Mothers were described as telling their daughters stories of girls killed by their families because they were 'unclean'.

In addition to the significance of repression of sexuality, oblique expressions, and the occasional outbursts of frankness, the life stories contain rich reflections of the ways that gender ideology and practice is played out in camp women's lives. From the researcher's perspective, the primary institution of control of women's sexuality and fertility is marriage, practically obligatory for women in camp society, and always regulated by parents even when not initiated by them. As the Women's Union leader made clear in her interview quoted in Chapter Four, marriage controls women before it takes place through the importance attached to virginity, and controls them afterwards through the responsibilities of childbearing and rearing, and the many kinds of social labour attached to the housewife role (controlling household members, maintaining kin and community relationships, and so on). The inequality of the gender division of labour is an aspect of gender ideology that camp women's life stories illustrate with 'subversive detail': except for unmarried women and widows, many of the sample have

had yearly pregnancies (one case had twenty between marriage and menopause), and brought up families of seven or more children. Some, in addition, had worked to earn income, undertaken voluntary political work, and/or helped husbands in shops. Engendered and class experience was also manifested in the anxieties of raising children in conditions of warfare; the hardship of being left to bring up children alone; social and economic pressure to return to the parental household in case of widowhood, abandonment, or divorce; and separation from adult children through work migration, or in some cases death. Loss of family raises fears of destitution.

In the case of sexuality and gender, cultural values produce a tension between women's 'reality' and their 'representations'. While this entails repression of reference to sexuality, and limits the degree to which gender ideology and practices are revealed (only the frankest speaker mentioned the threat of divorce that forms a central element in gender hierarchy), the life stories can be read for expressions of 'women's consciousness', revealing forms of 'gender struggle' (for example, escape from undesired engagements, acting independently of husbands, getting a divorce), as well as speech modes marginalizing men, or ironizing about them.

The life stories also suggest that women in camp milieus gain and express a sense of worth-as-women, almost of female superiority, as able to work harder and give more than men. Pride in their capacities may be one reason for not criticizing the 'sex-gender system' more forcefully; nationalist discourse and the way it has incorporated gender ideology as a part of 'authenticity' is another. In this respect, women's 'representations' created a 'reality' different from the one

perceived by myself as feminist researcher. The final question, then, is how has nationalist discourse affected the narration of gender?

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter will attempt to draw the connections between those parts of the dissertation that outline objective frameworks (historical and contemporary) on the one hand, and the representations of women's experience and subjectivities as expressed through their life stories, on the other. In so doing, it aims to draw out what the life stories reveal about the relationship between nationalism and gender at the class level of women in the Palestinian refugee camps. Various methods have been used to bring the multi-layered and interlocking structures that contain women into juxtaposition with women's representations: historical readings, oral histories, participant observation, and discussions with relief workers and political cadres. But first, as main data source and still relatively untried method of research in Arab milieus, the camp women's life stories require evaluation, especially in relation to their value and shortcomings as a method of approach to women's subjectivities.

A. Critique of Methods: Life Stories, Sampling, Interpretation

Life stories as method of reaching subjectivity: Life stories theoretically have value in enabling understanding of interaction between social structure and culture at the level of individual subjectivities, without which processes through which people engage in history cannot be explored. Yet, used among women of low-income subordinate groups, they also raise theoretical, moral, and political problems that need to be

confronted whatever the value of life stories as 'qualitative data', or for political advocacy. The main questions to be put to subordinate women's life histories revolve around their autonomy, naturalness, and representativity (whom or what do they represent?). These questions are interlinked, since all arise from the narrators' situation of national, class, and gender subordination.

The status of life stories as autonomous narratives is put in question by their usual mode of production, in which the researcher rather than the life story-tellers initiate research. The absence of women's personal or collective initiation deprives their life stories of self-directed search for focus and meaning, with negative implications for interpretation. In the case of the recordings carried out for this study, political conditions at the time of research ruled out moves to collectivize the project. Other means were essayed to involve respondents. One was through unrecorded 'follow-up' discussions; another was to ask them why they had agreed to participate. A frequent response to this question was, "So that our grandchildren will know how we lived." Others expressed the hope that the world would read their stories, and support the Palestinian struggle for justice. The most enthusiastic of the participants said that Palestinian women should learn from one another about how to cope with hardship.

Such appeals to broader audiences pointed to the tension between the researcher's purposes and those of the life story tellers, between their desire to add to the public record of the Palestinian situation, and the researcher's desire to explore 'private' issues, and the relationship between

nationalism and gender.[1] They also suggest how the national story gave the life story-tellers a motive for participating. This was positive in so far as it helped to give the project meaning for the participants, and to push the relationship between the researcher and the research community towards collaboration; but it also added to the pressures subordinating the 'personal' story to the national one.

In addition to the researcher's initiative and interests, the autonomy of the life stories was somewhat compromised by the presence of audiences. The researcher's decision to record in subjects' homes in the presence of family and neighbours was taken in an attempt to 'naturalize' the telling of life stories by reproducing settings in which they might occur. Although audience comments and questions yielded valuable insights on family interaction in relation to remembering the past, and predominant themes of exile, they also tended to push life stories in a nationalist direction. Problems arising from audience participation are illustrated in the recording of Imm Nayef (born in 1912): this old lady's story of her wedding was disrupted by a visitor who said, "Tell her (the researcher) how much land you owned". Later, her daughter-in-law commented caustically, as Imm Nayef recited formulas used in tirqa (a form of healing), "This isn't history!"

The choice that the researcher must make between natural settings or privacy also reveals the contingency of life stories, liable to take different form and contents according to spatial and temporal setting. In unrecorded, informal

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[1] Gluck reflects on this problem in relation to interviewing Palestinian women in the 'Occupied Territories': "Advocacy Oral History", in Gluck and Patai, Women's Words.

discussions several respondents gave more intimate views of their lives or more openly expressed 'women's consciousness' than when recording life stories. The permanence of the recorded statement forces upon it an official character, inhibiting the speaker's personal experiences and feelings. A consciousness of a hierarchy of subjects not present in everyday speech comes to the fore when speech is recorded, depreciating women's lives as topic. The more 'ordinary' women feel their lives to have been, the harder it is for them to find words to recount them.[2]

Assumptions of the 'naturalness' of the life story need to be put to the test of their actual occurrence in the research milieu. Though we know that Palestinian women in camps told their children about their lives, these focussed on particular topics and episodes, for example the exodus of 1948, and were interspersed as fragments in daily life rather than told in a single sitting. Requests for a life story puts pressure on speakers to produce a single, coherent, completed composition. The artificiality of the life story for most women in this milieu is underlined by the difficulty of older, unschooled women in responding. Their difficulties were understandable, ranging from fear,[3] uncertainty as to the purpose of the project, the problem of choosing what to say and

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[2] The need for modifying oral history interview methods with housewives is discussed by K. Anderson and C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses", in Gluck and Patai, Women's Words.

[3] Specific fears about recording can tell much about culture. Imm Nayef stopped in the middle of describing a traditional custom to say, "Maybe people who listen will laugh at us ?" Besides fear of ridicule, members of politically oppressed groups (particularly women) may be inhibited by fear of saying too much, or the wrong thing, or of revealing what should be concealed.

where to start, to lack of practice in continuous, self-sustained speech. As monologue, the life story contravenes norms of women's socio-communication in camps, among which is that no one should dominate the conversation, and that interventions should be brief, anecdotal, informative, or entertaining. In this researcher's experience, women's groups are not a setting for complaints or confessions. Whereas most of the older women needed questions as a prop to move from one episode or topic to another, depriving their narratives of self-direction, younger women had little difficulty in 'composing' a life story. This greater facility, based in the similarity between 'composing' a life story and writing a school composition, should not be allowed to disguise the artificiality of the life story as genre. Questions may still be raised as to the reality of 'lives' and 'selves' composed in this way.

In the only case where it was possible to record with the same respondent at widely different times, this demonstrated the vulnerability of representations to change in personal circumstances and in the overall political situation. A young woman (no 18) recorded in 1986 as well as in 1992 spoke very differently of herself in relation to the Resistance movement. In the first recording she viewed the Resistance as a permanent 'life course', whereas in the second, after the break-up of the political formation to which she belonged, questions of marriage and social models of 'woman' are uppermost. The life story format contains implications of a coherent 'self', stable over time, which may be at variance with real life experience of instability. Recordings made over time, for example before and after historically or personally significant events,

would be more valuable than single period recordings in revealing dilemmas, processes of decision, and changes of direction.

The question of the representativity of a woman's life story revolves around the institutions that shape it. In the case of this study, the life stories abundantly reflected the national crisis, and national movement ideology, but, except in two cases, they did not give equal narrative weight to family and conjugal relations, personal feelings, and (except indirectly) gender issues. The overshadowing of the personal by the national story is well illustrated by the case (no 17) whose conflict with her family over marriage constituted a critical turning point in her life, and starting point of a 'logic' of personal independence. Yet cultural and national values such as respect for parents, protection of the family 'interior', and the primacy of the national over the personal, inhibited narration of this critical episode 'for the record'.

Life stories are clearly multi-representational: the degree to which a given life story represents the individual teller, women as a social category, family, social stratum, local community, political party, employer, religious or national collectivity, is a critical question that needs to be worked on through 'follow-up' discussions, and analyzed in every case. In the case of the life stories recorded for this study, as well as representing themselves and the Palestinian collectivity, some women at times also 'spoke for' Shateela camp, particular political formations, Islam, and employing institutions.

A different problem arose from implicit connotations of the term 'life', reminding potential respondents of 'lost

lives', and evoking anger and sadness. People who feel humiliated by their lives may be less ready to tell them than others. Some older women refused to tell their lives in the same way that, earlier, camp Palestinians used to refuse to be photographed. The Resistance movement changed this stance by restoring Palestinian pride and identity, and re-defining the people of the camps as 'strugglers', making them ready to 'expose' themselves as a way of witnessing to the 'cause'. But as Patai notes: "A person telling her life story is...offering up her self for her own and her listener's scrutiny".[4] It was not only as exposure of 'self', but also as reminder of lives of suffering that made telling their lives problematic for the women of the sample. Bereavement and trauma cast several life stories into chronicles of losses and displacements.

There are several possible solutions to such difficulties with the life story as form of data: i) life stories could be used as a first stage towards further exploration of issues mutually defined as in need of further discussion, thus shifting the research relationship towards collaboration; ii) life stories might be recorded over a series of meetings during which life story givers would listen to, revise and develop their previous version; or iii) life stories could be accumulated from fragments, collected over time, as these arise through natural interactions in work-places or homes. A second stage that this (or any other) collection of life stories might take is writing them up so as to disguise their authorship while retaining essential themes, and present them for discussion in national or local women's forums such as adult

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[4] "Ethical Problems".

literacy classes, women's unions and publications.[5] Another
development would be to begin a national archive of Palestinian
women's lives. A collective, indigenous project of recording
of women's life stories would also have a stronger potential
than single researcher inquiry for exploring complex
interactions of nationalism, class, religion and gender at the
level of women's subjectivities.

Problems of sampling: The selection of a sample is an issue
with theoretical, political and methodological implications.In
the case of this study, the relatively large sample sacrificed
real intimacy and profound understandings to other aims:[6] i)
to reveal the diversity of women's situation and
representations in a small Arab social milieu; ii) to obtain
sufficient generational span to enable analysis of historic
change in relation to nationalism and gender; and iii) to use
the establishment of a sample to discover local ways of
categorizing women, and what such categories mean in terms of

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[5] Two women's magazines are currently (in 1992/3) being
published in the West Bank as part of the Intifada. Others are
published by women's associations linked to Resistance groups
in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

[6] It has been argued that the quality of life story data
is enhanced by limiting the size of the sample so as to
encourage intimacy and understanding. Some of the theoretically
most valuable discussions of women's life stories have been
based on a single case. See particularly R.Behar, "Rage and
Redemption: Reading the Life Story of a Mexican Marketing
Woman", <u>Feminist Studies</u> vol 16, no 2, Summer 1990; also
D.Patai, "Constructing a Self: A Brazilian Life Story",
<u>Feminist Studies</u> vol 14 no 1, Spring 1988; and Mbilinyi "'I'd
Have Been a Man", in <u>Interpreting Women's Lives</u>.

social models. Another consideration was an interest in developing the project into a national archive.[7]

The sample's evenly distributed age structure, with birth dates ranging between 1901 and 1965, gave grounds for intergenerational comparisons and analysis of historic shifts and continuities. Variation of marital status is not quite so well covered; there are married women, widows, single women, and a divorcee, but no women in a polygynous marriage and none in process of divorce or abandonment. Young widows (a special social category, more constrained than older ones) are possibly under-represented, only one case. In terms of socio-economic status, all except one belong to the middle or better off strata of camp populations; none belongs to the mehtajeen (needy) category, completely dependent on external financial support.

The question of the sample's representativity in terms of social 'types' is both more problematic and more revealing of indigenous constructions of women. Preliminary inquiries about how women are categorized in this milieu pointed to a revealing absence of variety, or, put differently, the predominance of one ideal type: al-mar'a beitiyyeh ('the housewifely woman'), further described as ma btitlah walla btinzal ('she doesn't go and come'), or al-beit wa bess ('the home and nothing more'). Further inquiry revealed a category of woman denoted as qawiyyeh (strong, powerful), a bi-valent term because it is positive in political discourse, negative in ordinary social

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[7] The passing away of the generation that reached maturity in Palestine makes such recording ever more urgent. I continually regretted that my age-structured sample forced me to reduce recordings with older women, whose memory for socio-cultural detail is often extraordinary.

discourse. A third, rarely used term emerged: <u>mistarjaleh</u> (like a man, from <u>rajul</u>, man), used to describe independent women who dominate their husbands, or cut themselves off from male kin. There are also categories harder for people to name or discuss because they 'blacken' the reputation of the community: <u>sharmoota</u> (prostitute) is the most commonly used term for a woman of bad reputation; an often used descriptive is <u>saybeh</u> ('loose', a metaphor from farming denoting an untethered animal).[8]

Failure to find deviant or unconventional women to record with was useful in denoting the boundaries of my social network, as well as implicit conditions underlying researcher-informant 'rapport'. <u>Mistarjaleh</u> women are few in a small community like Shateela. Such a woman, celebrated for her nationalist militancy, had lived there until 1982, but she had left with the Resistance fighters. Attempts to locate other exemplars of this type failed, suggesting the degree to which women's economic independence cuts them off from normal kin and community relations. Colleagues told me of other cases in other camps, saying that the children of women of this type were often called after their mother rather than their father. Such women are not approved of because they transgress conventional gender hierarchy. The term <u>mistarjaleh</u> denotes an inversion of conventional gender relations, whereby the woman earns the household income, and/or rules the man. But it does not imply immorality.

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[8] Other categories for women have been brought into usage by modern conditions, such as <u>'amala</u>: working woman; <u>mwazhifi</u>: woman employee; <u>fida'iyya</u>: woman fighter; but these describe roles or occupations rather than types.

Attempts to expand my sample to include women accused of immorality would have met greater difficulties, and might have jeopardized my project. Earlier fieldwork observations suggested that though colleagues and friends might talk about prostitution in general terms, they would not help me meet specific cases. Palestinian camps do not tolerate the residence of women rumoured to be 'loose', so that the task of locating such women would have been even harder than in the case of mistarjaleh women.[9] It was only after I had formed solid relationships through recordings of experience of the Amal sieges that colleagues told me about prostitution after the 1982 war.[10]

The moral importance of the boundary between controlled and uncontrolled sexuality meant it could not be transgressed simply for the sake of 'scientific' sampling; too much curiosity about deviance would have appeared intrusive and suspect to my Shateela interlocutors. Even if I had been able to meet a morally deviant women it is doubtful if she would have agreed to record, or if she had, that she would have spoken frankly about dilemmas of sexuality and gender. The dilemma raised by conflict between researcher and community values is not only a methodological one but also has moral, political and gender implications, involving a choice between

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[9] An incident during early fieldwork indicated the exclusionary pressures brought to bear against women of bad reputation. Dynamite placed against a wall damaged the home and wounded a child of a divorced woman living with two unmarried daughters, one of whom was reputed to be 'loose'. A friend warned me against visiting this family.

[10] Conditions in which some prostitution may have occurred after the 1982 invasion were the imprisonment of men, unemployment, suspension of PLO subsidies, and the presence of the Lebanese Army round the Beirut camps.

respecting community values, and supporting the right of all persons, even deviant women, to be heard.

A category difficult to record with, for opposite reasons, was that of the ordinary housewife, women who fulfilled the cultural ideal of 'not going and coming'. Resistance cadres and outside observers have noticed the association between articulateness in women and political activism or employment outside the home. Asked by the researcher to suggest candidates for life story recordings, community members invariably proposed political activists, martyrs' mothers and widows, directors of local social institutions, and professional workers: these were women who could speak. By implication, the mar'a beitiyyeh (housewifely woman) has nothing to say. Although my intention of including this category in the sample was partly achieved (four had not worked outside the home, six appeared to have had no political activities), experience showed that recording the life stories of housewives calls for the development of special techniques such as those suggested by Anderson and Jack (1991). Measures that encouraged inarticulate women to speak in regard to this study were: the presence of an audience (family members, neighbours); discovering and following up personal interests; and introducing reassuring subjects such as children, food preparation, or craft skills.

Problems of interpretation: A third set of issues which life stories as method raise in a particularly insistent fashion is their re-presentation in writing for various discursive purposes and types of analysis (historical, anthropological, feminist). The problem of translation from one language to

another is compounded by the problem of rendering speech as text, involving an often unconscious elimination by the transcriber of pauses and repetitions, a completion of unfinished sentences, elision of 'nonsense' words, and so on. How much editing is permissable to 'make sense' for western (or any) readerships? If the aim of life story recording is a narrative 'whole', what distortions are involved in lifting passages out to illustrate particular points? In regard to this study, the solution of including a selection of complete transcripts was ruled out by space limitations.

The question of meaning, whether of whole life stories or of particular passages, is also a crucial one: meanings attributed to oral testimony by researchers may be at variance with those of speakers. Discussions of methods in anthropology hardly deal with this problem, but feminist practitioners of oral history have advanced theoretical and ethical reasons for including respondents in processes of 'writing up'. Mbilinyi's demonstration of the value of discussion between researcher and life story-giver to correct misrepresentations has already been referred to in Chapter One.[11] Another value of discussing research 'results' with respondents prior to final 'writing up' is the contribution such discussion could make to the creation of inter-subjectivity (Popular Memory Group, 1985; Gluck and Patai, 1991).

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[11] "'I'd have been a Man'" in Interpreting Women's Lives. The issue of control over 'meaning', and specifically of conflict between feminist and non-feminist interpretations of women's accounts is taken up by J. Acker, K. Barry and J. Esseveld, "Objectivity and Truth: Problems in Doing Feminist Research", Women's Studies International Forum, vol 6 no 4, 1983; and K. Borland, "That's Not What I Said": Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research", in Gluck and Patai, Women's Words.

The only method of testing interpretation that could be used in this study was careful discussion of the life story texts with translator-colleagues, all themselves Palestinian women from not too dissimilar class backgrounds. During translation sessions, it was possible to explore hidden meanings, alternative class and regional realities, and variant interpretations and explanations. The personal stories told by the translator-colleagues as comments on the texts were a valuable source of elucidation.

B. Knowledge, Objective Frameworks, and Women's Reality

The critique of Orientalism with which this dissertation began is justified by its survival as a paradigm with cultural and political weight in world system imbalances. Orientalist constructions of women have portrayed them as similar to each other - silent, submissive, and excluded from politics, economy, and culture - and as 'different' from western women. Two points about this image of 'eastern' women need to be underlined: first, it has helped the classification of certain geo-cultural areas, and migrant minorities in 'advanced' societies, as 'backward'; and second, it was constructed through the elision of indigenous women's voices and subjectivities. This study has attempted to demonstrate the ideological nature of such Orientalist constructions, first, through a direct approach to the subjectivities of women in an Arab collectivity; second through a sampling strategy that primarily demonstrates diversity of women's 'reality' and 'representations' in a small, low-income milieu. Additional aims are to project Palestinian women's oppositional voices

into international politics, and to encourage the practice of recording subaltern histories in Arab societies.

While Said criticizes Orientalism as a closed system of knowledge that deforms the 'reality' of the non-western world, he does not concern himself with this reality, nor offer prescriptions for more valid representations. Robbins (1992) points to a certain similarity between 'Orientalism' and Said's critique of it, based in his professional concern as literary critic with texts.[12] Fox in the same volume suggests that Said over-dichotomizes between East and West,[13] and Chatterjee makes an important critical point when he says that Said's representation of western imperialist discourse as omnipotent leaves no space for indigenous resistance.[14] Said's original critique needs to be developed through research moves to 'fill in' specific histories and realities. It is such 'filling in', aimed at elucidating the 'reality' of a particular set of women in an Arab milieu as represented primarily by themselves, that this study aspires to achieve.

While the recording of Palestinian camp women's representations of their reality was the primary research objective, yet recording (like photography) necessarily includes a third angle of vision, the researcher's own feminist

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[12] "If Disraeli and Orientalism treated the East as a 'career' so does Said's Orientalism which analyzes (and refuses to go beyond) 'internal' and 'created consistency', 'regular constellation', in short, formal coherence in isolation from the reality of the Orient": B. Robbins, "The East is a Career: Edward Said and the Logics of Professionalism", in M.Sprinkler ed., Edward Said: A Critical Reader (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p 53.

[13] R. Fox, "East of Said", in Sprinkler, Edward Said.

[14] P. Chatterjee, "Their Own Words? An Essay for Edward Said" in Sprinkler, Edward Said.

perspective and life experience, which necessarily affect recording and interpretation. For the research project to be carried out self-critically, it required: i) an explicit theoretical rupture with Orientalist approaches to Middle Eastern, Arab, and Muslim women, found in Mohanty (1984) and Inscriptions (1988); ii) theoretical and methodological guides to 'representations of reality' that have incorporated critiques of eurocentrism and androcentrism in the social sciences; here the work of the Popular Memory Group (1985) offered a groundplan; iii) a theory of gender that relates it to other social relations as centrally and universally involved in systems of authority and hierarchy, found in Scott (1988); and iv) a theory and methodology relating individual subjectivities to society and history, offered pre-eminently by Passerini (1987). In line with Passerini, life stories were chosen as the method most likely to enable autonomy of representation, by leaving choice of contents and form to the narrator (problematic aspects of this method were discussed in the first section of this chapter).

More space than is usual in anthropology has been devoted in this study to historical background. This was justified on two grounds. First, the continuity in camps of social relations and culture formed in rural Palestine makes a detailed presentation of the lives of peasant women before 1948 necessary. Given in Chapter Two, this points to characteristics that were reproduced in camps in Lebanon: women's strong role as contributors to household economies, their embeddedness in household, kin and community relations, and control, mainly through marriage, of their sexuality and fertility. The presentation also underlines women's material rights, social

claims, and strategies of defence against gender subordination that were carried over into exile.

Second, the sharpness of change in political, legal, and economic conditions caused by the war of 1948 for that sector of the population transformed into refugees requires a laying out of the exile environment. This was structured by three main sources of constraints and pressures, the United Nations, the Lebanese state, and, after 1970, the PLO/Resistance movement. The need to attend to both the pre- and post-1948 periods is compounded by the complex interaction between an oppressive external environment and camp communities; these mediated external pressures through a 'shell' of social relations and culture formed in Palestine. Hence Chapter Four undertakes a review of the effects of exile on Palestinian kinship and household relations, with a dual focus on local camp communities: first as constituting a space for the assertion of a minimal national and socio-cultural autonomy, and second as preserving pre-existent hierarchies of status, age and gender.

Material based in oral histories and participant observation are focussed towards showing changes in exile that, though masked by an ideology of non-change in 'our customs and traditions', produced small shifts in camp women's lives. Examples are the gradual de-composition of the compound peasant household, the availability of free schooling, and the entry of a minority of women into professional labour. Empirical observations in Chapter Four are intended to provide a changing material and social relational context to women's representations of their lives. For example, women's double labour in the first period of exile, productive and domestic,

is reflected in the life stories of the older women. So is the spatial containment of women within camp communities, and the poverty-sharpened practice of early and coercive marriage. Beginning in the 1960s, women became less bound by camp boundaries, moving outside them for a variety of purposes. The younger women's life stories point to new possibilities: professional training, work migration, university education, national movement mobilization, and marriage to men met outside the family circle. All these changes were accelerated during the period of PLO/Resistance movement autonomy. At the same time, escalating conflict brought ever heavier losses and more frequent displacement.

Before the analyses of the life stories presented in Chapters Five and Six are drawn together, the reader needs to be reminded of the context of their recording. The Popular Memory Group (1985) stresses the importance of current political and material conditions in influencing what is remembered about the past, connections made between past and present, and overall affective tone. Another aspect of context that must affect recollections is the immediate setting of recording, including place, the identity and purpose of the researcher as perceived by respondents, and other persons present.

The situation at the time of recording, given in detail in the introduction to Chapter Five, needs briefly to be recalled here. Insecurity, Syrian control of Beirut, losses suffered during the conflict with Amal movement, fears for the Palestinian cause in general as well as for the future of Palestinians in Lebanon, unemployment, decline in income and living standards: all these factors formed a dark and difficult

context for the narrators of the life stories. It was expected
that political and economic conditions would affect people's
readiness to participate in the study, as well as their
spontaneity of speech, and the contents of life stories. In the
event, there were only three refusals to record, and only one
of these was on political grounds. Such a high rate of
acceptance may be due to familiarity with the researcher
through the long period spent visiting Shateela people before
beginning life story recordings.

Yet participation in the study was probably less than
whole-hearted, and may have manifested itself in hesitations
and self-censorship rather than in outright refusal. Given the
difficult political situation, it was to be expected that
respondents would be cautious, avoid politics, and be reticent
about certain aspects of the past. It was also likely that
views of the Resistance movement would have undergone revisions
in the light of everything that had happened since the
evacuation of August 1982.[15] But though conditions were the
reverse of ideal, they did not completely prevent women from
participating nor from expressing nationalist views and
experiences. Pre-recording participant/observation gave the
researcher some grounds for assessing situational effects on
representations. Some respondents appeared hardly affected by
the prevailing atmosphere, while others merely exercised
caution. Accounts of nationalist activities were sufficient to

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[15] To some extent these expectations were confirmed: in
comparison with the field interviews collected by myself in the
mid-1970s, and Peteet before the Israeli invasion of 1982, the
life stories recorded for this study are more tragic in
contents (nine of the respondents had lost close family members
since August 1982, several more than one), and less infused
with faith in an ultimate return to Palestine; they also
express less identification with the Resistance movement.

suggest that fear of the Syrians was only a mildly repressive factor. It is camp women's gender- and class-specific fear of speaking about themselves in public that constitutes the problem. Such distortions as there are should not be attributed to situational fear but rather to the problems discussed earlier of political purpose and method in oral history recordings carried out among women in subordinate groups.

If not collaborative, the relationship between researcher and life story tellers was one of complicity, involving parallel dilemmas. For the respondents, the researcher's desire to record stories of their lives must have been burdensome, painful, even threatening, yet it also offered a channel of communication with the outside world. For the researcher, the moral and political legitimacy gained with the research milieu through advocacy research had to be balanced against the more neutral demands of theorization. Similarly, the respondents' predominantly nationalist presentations had to be accorded their weight without obliterating the problem of gender.[16] The researcher's identity - foreigner yet Palestinian through marriage, female, and post-menopausal - was an ambivalent element: as foreigner, hence messenger to the outside world, my identity encouraged nationalist representations, and possibly discouraged expression of gender issues; on the other hand, my non-membership in the community as well as my gender and age may have made it easier for some respondents to speak about husbands, sexuality, violence against women, and other 'sensitive' issues.

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[16] See Gluck's discussion of conflict between the roles of advocate and scholar in "Advocacy Oral History", in Women's Words.

C. Nationalism and Gender in Camp Women's Life Stories

Gender is always part of national identity and boundaries, as a cultural pattern of male-female relations, sexuality, and constructions of 'woman'; and as associated with other internal hierarchies. Women are more 'subjected' by nationalist (or other collectivist) ideology than men, as both symbolically and practically the objects of collective, hence 'homosocial' representations. Women's centrality in the reproduction of national collectivities (as procreators, transmitters of culture, markers of boundaries) is linked to their subordination. Women as members of national communities share subjectively in nationalist sentiments, identity, attachments, and hostilities, yet their nationalism is necessarily different from men's, arising from and expressing their 'engendered' situation, yet often simultaneously reacting against it. Such contradictions may give rise to 'dual consciousness' in women as they react against limitations on their autonomy imposed by predominant gender ideology, depending on the degree of their subordination, the situation of the collectivity, and socio-cultural conditions.

Feminist theory has noted a primary division in forms of women's consciousness between established nation-states, and collectivities engaged in anti-colonial struggles. In 'strong state' societies, women have become aware of their marginality within homo-social collectivities as a primary contradiction. In colonized societies, on the contrary, women's consciousness has been dominated by nationalist commitment, their struggles have been contained within nationalist movements, and their aspirations for change in gender relations have been made

conditional on achieving national independence. It is in anti-colonial struggles that women have been most intensely mobilized, both subjectively as nationalists, and objectively as gendered members of collectivities in the process of establishing their nationhood. In such situations (of which the Palestinian struggle is a paradigmatic example), multiple contradictions tend to arise around women and gender. They arise within the national movement between different styles of mobilization and constructions of women: for example between active mobilization in new roles (as fighters and workers), or in traditional roles (as 'givers of sons to the struggle'), or as symbols of cultural authenticity and the 'homeland', mobilizing men in its defence; or between different cultural models for 'woman' (for example, secular Arab nationalist versus Islamic). They also arise within women's consciousness between their nationalist feelings and their experience of gender constraints, and the critiques of gender ideology these provoke.

The Palestinian case illustrates further points to be made about the relationship between nationalism and gender: continuity of gender ideology as element in national identity is intensified in conditions of protracted national struggle. Yet at the same time, pragmatically, change in the conditions of national struggle gives rise to changes in forms of women's mobilization: gender conservatism co-exists (or intensifies) as women join the workforce or political organizations. Third, for many Palestinian women, joining the national struggle as active participants is an implicit revolt against their engendered situation. Their problem then becomes how to

'stretch' gender ideology as incorporated into nationalist ideology to accept revisions introduced 'on the ground'.

Briefly to recapitulate gender ideology as part of Palestinian nationalism, and as expressed in camp women's life stories: it is consciously rooted in 'Arab authenticity' (or, more recently, in Islam); it is oppositional to Israeli Jewish society, to the West in general, and to western feminism; it constructs male-female relations as both complementary and hierarchical; female sexuality is feared as a threat to social order unless controlled, primarily through marriage (adults of both sexes should be married); controlled female sexuality is a sign of the honour of the collectivity, a national resource, means of committing men to national struggle, and national value not to be relinquished.

Before re-introducing camp women's representations into this discussion, we need to consider the effect of women's class position on the way they express both nationalism and gender. Nationalism has been intensified among men and women of the camps through exposure to attack, political oppression and economic exploitation. Gender ideology in camps is rooted in peasant culture, intensified by a refugee experience that transformed it into sign of collective honour, boundary marker between Palestinians and Lebanese, and link with the 'homeland'. At the same time, camp conditions have developed rural women's original economic, political and defensive activism. Camp populations are simultaneously more conservative and more radical in relation to gender than other sector of Palestinian society. In these small face-to-face communities women have been integrated into national struggle in ways that have reasserted and challenged traditional gender norms, and

are still closely scrutinized in terms of rules of gender and sexuality. This accounts for 'unevenness' in stands towards gender ideology in camps, both over time and between individual men and women.

The Palestinian national struggle offers a valuable vantage point from which to study the relationship between nationalism, gender ideology, and women's subjectivities precisely because the priority of national struggle has been so tenaciously sustained by both the national and women's leaderships. Documentary and oral sources on the pre-1948 women's movement suggest that 'feminist' motives interacted with nationalist ones among members of the movement. Existing sources also suggest that 'feminist' issues were consciously and effectively repressed by the women's leadership, either as irrelevant before obtaining national independence, or as an external ideology dangerous to national unity, or as likely to shock 'the masses'. The desire to keep within limits set by 'Arab authenticity', even when interpreted as including a strong public role for women, as by Mogannam(1937), meant inclusion of the idea that women embody collective honour, implying collective rights over their sexuality and fertility.

Predominance of the national crisis and struggle frames all the life stories collected for this study, permeating them even in the absence of specifically nationalist statements: as original cause of lives of war, loss, poverty, displacement, and hardship; as chronological structure to personal lives; and in a few cases (those of cadres) as central theme of representations of the 'self'. Quotations were presented to support the idea that camp women's stories offer a valuable source of national history, both on account of their aesthetic

and narrative qualities, and for the realistic descriptions they contain of localities, social relations, and cultural practices. Though most of the quoted material comes from older women, and is about pre-1948 Palestine, some of the younger women gave detailed descriptions of camp and family life. The difference is not one of descriptive ability, but rather of the form in which the past is recollected and represented: the stories of the 'generation of Palestine' resemble the traditional <u>hikayyeh</u>, whereas women of later generations generally give continuous 'informational' accounts, organized chronologically.

The national struggle paradigm can also be 'read' from the life stories in the form of representations of the 'self'. As narrative genre, life stories tend to impose on narrators a representation of the 'self', if only as the 'I' who experiences and narrates. Following Passerini's method (1987), the life stories collected for this study were examined to discern representations of the 'self' containing historical and collective elements. These were present in all but six of the life stories, and were found to be strongly related to national struggle, in three main configurations: the 'struggle personality'; the 'challenge personality'; and 'all our life has been tragedy' (or 'lost'). Similarities in their expression between persons and across generations underline their collective and historical character. The first configuration shows the strongest transhistoricity, reappearing in each successive generation. The second appears more limited, depending on a combination of circumstances - family conflict, availability of national or other work, and a will for autonomy - possibly specific to Lebanon. The third type may also be

linked to Lebanon, scene of continuous conflict in which Palestinian camp populations have suffered heavy losses. The three configurations are not mutually exclusive, but overlap and mingle with other stereotyped expressions of historical experience. All appear to form part of a specifically women's nationalist discourse.

Differences between generations in terms of 'self' differentiation (that is, the degree to which the narrating self is embedded in, or separated from, family), and other features of the life histories (structure and sequencing, coherence, descriptions of 'reality'), give grounds for viewing historic change in women's lives. Factors seen as most determining are socio-cultural conditions (such as absence or presence of schools), national movement strategies, and mode of integration of women into the national movement, whether spontaneous or organized. Rising educational levels after 1948 appear to be one factor accounting for change in narrative form and growing articulation of a separate 'self'; schools provided a first step to separation, and could lead to study or employment abroad. National crisis as experienced in camps influences the life stories of women who became adult after 1948 towards realistic descriptions of material conditions, and a closer connection with historic events.

The life stories also reflect the presence of the Resistance movement between 1970 and 1982 as the mobilizing force that penetrated household families, incorporating women in different capacities: as supporters, members, fighters, workers, employees, and beneficiaries of services; and in ways that varied in degree of change it produced in their lives. Change in the form of women's participation in national

struggle as consequence of change in national movement strategy, is also reflected in the life stories. Women of 'the generation of Palestine' carried out spontaneous political actions from their embedded position in local- and kin-based groups. In exile, women continued to participate in demonstrations and strikes, but also began to be involved in clandestine organizing, eventually joining the PLO/Resistance movement as members, cadres, workers and employees. These transitions are reflected in several of the life stories, even if not as clearly as would have been the case in unrecorded conversations, or if recorded in more politically favourable conditions. A comparison of the life stories of 'organized' women with those of women mobilized occasionally from the basis of their housewife role suggests that the former represent the 'self' more forcefully, with clearer articulation of personal character, and a stronger will for autonomy. This is so regardless of level of education.

Gender ideology is found embedded in Palestinian camp women life stories in several forms: support for predominant moral and social norms, and rejection of sexual deviance and promiscuity; a concept of gender ideology as integral to Arab 'authenticity'; and acceptance (except in a few cases) of the 'givenness' of women's lives as involving gender-specific labour (mothering, management of homes, responsibility for daughters' proper behaviour, and so on). Occasional complaints against men underline the condition that they should fulfil their obligations as economic providers, and point to a basic element of traditional gender ideology, that of complementarity between women's and men's roles.

Women's life stories also expressed a positive evaluation of the female gender, with women setting themselves in implicit and occasionally explicit contrast to men as more hardworking, responsible, capable, or nationalistic. Their expressions of 'self worth' were suggested as an emergent concept that helps to explain their capacity for bearing hardship and loss. Women's sense of 'self worth' appears to derive from many sources (mothering, piety, nationalist activities, family status, Resistance membership), and to form a central element in their 'gendered subjectivity'. This may account for the absence of representations of themselves as victims of gender subordination. Nationalism has a similar effect, especially when speaking to a foreigner.

In spite of the way that dominant nationalist discourse represses critiques of gender ideology through incorporation as an element in national culture, and in spite of the nationalism of women in camps, yet certain kinds of 'women's consciousness' and 'gender struggle' are evident in the life stories. Women find ways to evade or postpone marriage, and argue their way through parental opposition to their involvement in politics; in certain cases they assume men's power (but also their responsibilities). Though critiques of men tend to be repressed by nationalist ideology (since men lead and represent 'the nation'), several camp women's stories contained ironic (or 'realistic') views of Palestinian men, possibly rooted in a rural tradition similar to that expressed in folk-tales of women as initiators of action, often outwitting men. From her position within a Resistance group, one of the younger respondents criticizes 'opinions' that restrict women, while supporting 'Arab traditions', a position

that could endow further gender struggle with legitimacy at the popular level.

The complexity of the relationship between the national movement and traditional gender ideology in camps (discussed in Chapter Four) is partially illuminated by the life stories of the two young Resistance women cadres, Rihab and Dalal. Rihab has succeeded in carrying her nationalist militancy into her relations with her family, using confrontation to re-negotiate her gender status, producing a satisfying coherence between her Resistance role and her personal life. But she notes the difficulty of such struggles for most Palestinian women, and implicitly recognizes the way her political responsibilities both authenticate and set limits to her independence (only 'national work' warrants it). The second cadre confronts a different aspect of the non-transformation of gender ideology in Palestinian society: deprived of her Resistance role by the break-up of the group she belonged to, she finds that 'national work' has produced a loss of 'feminine self' without which re-integration into conventional society is difficult, given that male/female hierarchy has remained unchanged. These two cases offer contrasting perspectives from which to explore the complex relationship between the national movement and gender.

* * *

Whatever questions may be put to the life stories as autonomous representations, they do point to certain realities of camp women's lives. The dominance of nationalist discourse is one clear finding, but also the ways that women themselves express nationalist feelings and assume nationalist activities, sometimes achieving through such action change in their

engendered situation. They suggest the existence of a larger women's discourse in which traditions of both national and gender struggle are preserved. Yet, though one of the respondents expresses inner conflict, this does not take the form that feminist theorizing would predict, between sense of 'real self' and collective models of 'woman', but rather between a 'national self' and a (lost) feminine one. Is this absence of 'dualism' in camp women's life stories due to the researcher's failure to create conditions conducive to profound reflection? Or to the inappropriateness of the life story recorded in public as register of non-conformist attitudes? Or is it evidence of a subjectivity so firmly 'engendered' that it does not question its condition? This question merits further exploration.

The fact that camp women's representations of their reality, though influenced and limited by predominant nationalist discourse, reflect engendered experience in occasionally critical mode is an important finding. Prematurely to 'read' this as consciousness of gender oppression would be to allow analytical focus to shift from women's own interpretations of reality to those of the researcher. But forms of 'women's consciousness' in the life stories points to the forms these may take, and ways they can be expressed 'for the record'. The fragmentary state of these reflections is evidence of their latency, still not crystallized into a coherent critical discourse. But the changes in women's lives and consciousness indicated by the sample's generational span point to a continually changing relationship between Palestinian nationalism and gender ideology, underneath an appearance of continuity.

APPENDIX A(1): LIFE STORY TELLERS

Name, date of birth, marriage, current marital status, and place of origin. (Names are fictional.)

1. Imm Muhammad (b.1901, m.1916)   W   al-Birweh*

2. Imm Nayef (b. 1912, m. 1930)   W   Sha'b

3. Hajji Badriyya (b. 1926, m.1943)   W   Majd al-Kroom*

4. Imm Ghassan (b. 1930, m. c.1945)   M   Menshiyyet-Akka

5. Imm Mahmoud (b.1933, m.1947)   W   Yaffa

----

6. Imm Noman (b.1937, m.1951)   M   Kabri

7. Imm Marwan (b. 1938, m. 1956)   M   Menshiyyet-Akka

8. Imm Khaled (b.1938, m. 1957)   M   Yajoor

9. Imm Sobhi (b. 1941, m. 1958)   M   Yajoor

10. Imm 'Imad (b. 1946, m. 1968)   M   Akka

11. Fayrooz (b. 1947)   S   Farradi*

12. Imm Leila (b. 1947, m. 1963)   M   Majd al-Kroom

13. Nozira (b. 1948)   S   Haifa

----

14. Suhayr (b. 1949, m. 1973)   W   Majd al-Kroom

15. Zohra (b. 1949(?), m 1974)   M   al-Bi'neh

16. Khawla (b. 1960, m 1981)   W   Sa'sa'

17. Rihab (b. 1964, m. 1983)   D   Farradi

18. Dalal (b. 1965)   S   Akka

Code

(M = married; W = widowed; S = single; D = divorced)

*Though of rural origin, these were living in cities in 1948.

Lines between 5 and 6 and between 13 and 14 denote different generations. The first five life story tellers were born and married in Palestine. The second seven were born in Palestine and reached marriage age in Lebanon. The last five were born in Lebanon and reached marriage age there.

APPENDIX A(2): LIFE STORY TELLERS

Name, type of marriage, educational level, and employment.

	Marriage type	Education	Employment
1. Imm Muhammad	3	I	XC
2. Imm Nayef	2	I	XC
3. Hajji Badriyya	1	I	Y
4. Imm Ghassan	2	I	XC
5. Imm Mahmoud	3	I	XF
6. Imm Noman	1	I	XP
7. Imm Marwan	1	R/W	X
8. Imm Khaled	1	I	Y
9. Imm Sobhi	1	I	Y
10. Imm 'Imad	3	B	XV
11. Fayrooz	-	U	X
12. Imm Leila	1	E	Y
13. Nozira	-	R/W	X
14. Suhayr	3	Sec/P	X
15. Zohra	2	Sec/P	X
16. Khawla	1	E (?)	XP
17. Rihab	1	U	XP
18. Dalal	-	U/P	XP

Code

(Type of marriage: 1 = kin-endogamous; 2 = village (or camp)-endogamous; 3 = married to 'stranger'.)

(Education: I = illiterate; R/W = barely literate; E = finished elementary; B = finished preparatory; Sec = finished secondary; P = took professional training; U = university)

(Employment status: X = works/ed for money; XC = does/did casual waged labour; XF = works/ed in family business; XP = does/has done paid work in politics; XV = does/has done voluntary work in politics; Y = has never done any kind of work outside the home.)

APPENDIX A(3): LIFE STORY TELLERS

Name, close family killed/imprisoned/missing, and type of political activity.

	Family member/loss	Political activity
1. Imm Muhammad	-	N
2. Imm Nayef	daughter killed son assassinated	N
3. Hajji Badriyya	-	N
4. Imm Ghassan	son killed son arrested/missing	S
5. Imm Mahmoud	-	N
6. Imm Noman	son 15 yrs in prison two sons killed	M
7. Imm Marwan	son arrested/missing	S/M
8. Imm Khaled	-	N
9. Imm Sobhi	three sons killed daughter in prison	S
10. Imm 'Imad	father and mother killed	M
11. Fayrooz	-	N
12. Imm Leila	father killed	S/M
13. Nozira	six brothers killed	S/E
14. Suhayr	husband killed	?
15. Zohra	mother killed	M/E
16. Khawla	husband killed two brothers killed	M
17. Rihab	sister amputee	C
18. Dalal	mother and father killed	ex-C

Code

(Type of political activity: N = no known activity; S = supporter of a Resistance group; M = member of a Resistance group; E = PLO employee; C = Resistance cadre.)

APPENDIX B: NOTES ON MEETINGS WITH A LIFE STORY TELLER

I originally intended to include complete transcripts of six life histories, two from each of the three generations noted in Appendix A[1]. Since space constraints make this impossible, I have selected only one, that of Imm Sobhi (no 9), and include here a record from field-notes of interactions with Imm Sobhi to give an idea of the conditions in which Palestinians in West Beirut were living during the period of recording, as well as of methodology.

Imm Sobhi, a record of interactions

First meeting, January 26, 1991: A social worker with Beit Atfal al-Sumood (a Palestinian orphanage) takes me to the flat where Imm Sobhi is living. Her oldest son, Sobhi, whom I met in Tunis in the summer of 1990, recommended that I should meet her. When I mention his name, she bursts into tears. She points to the photos of three sons killed in the 'Battle of the Camps'(1985-87). Two married daughters are widowed, with small children. One of her daughters is in prison in Khiyam, in Israel's 'Security Zone', after being captured on a commando operation in November 1988, when she was 17 years old. No visits or letters to Khiyam prison are allowed. The International Red Cross does not have access to it.

This family's home and small store in Shateela has been destroyed. They are currently living in an apartment belonging to a PLO institution with which Sobhi is an employee . When I first visit, the household is composed of Imm and Abu Sobhi (who is disabled and unemployed); the two widowed daughters, each with two small children; an unmarried daughter still in school, and two other school-age children. There is also a grandson aged 7 years.

On this first visit, I explain my project to Imm Sobhi,and ask if I may record her life story. She does not refuse, but comments,"All our life has been tragedy".

At this first meeting, Imm Sobhi tells me two stories: i) How in 1985 the Syrian Army broke into the apartment, slashed the chairs with bayonets, took money, and messed up her food stocks. Up to this moment Sobhi was still working with the PLO in Beirut. Worried for his safety with the Syrians arresting 'Arafatists', Imm Sobhi took a plane to Cyprus, phoned the director of a PLO institution in Tunis, and implored him to give Sobhi a job there. Then she had to find a way to smuggle him out of Beirut since the Syrians controlled the Airport. She managed this through bribing a 'good' Syrian, so that Sobhi was able to pass safely through the Airport, using a dead cousin's passport. ii) How she was arrested by the Lebanese Army, during the period when it had restored its control over the Beirut camps (from October 1982). (She tells this story again later, in her life history.) During the scuffle, a soldier hit Imm Sobhi in the back with his gun butt. Six months later she had severe pain and paralysis, and had to be operated on.

Second meeting, January 29, 1991: I record Imm Sobhi's life story:

> We suffered tragedies, it was very hard. We were made homeless, we faced difficulties in homelessness. We were the victims of a catastrophe. Our children went, our home went. We were displaced, and we didn't find people to look after us. Even so, we thank God, because this is what God wants. And I ask God to release my daughter in health and safety. And I ask God to unite the Muslim word, and the Arab word, because this would be a victory for the Arabs. Insh'allah!
>
> What is our destiny? I had a house in the camp with three floors. The house went. In the first battle in 1982, when Israel invaded it went. We built it again. As the proverb says,"Property goes but men bring more". But when there's no man, you can't get money to build.I am like those who spend the summer in the Ghor (ie. like nomads), my home went, my children went. I praise God. Three of my sons went, and four of my brother-in-laws' sons and brothers' sons. They are all buried in one grave in Shateela. So my daughter despaired of this situation, no brothers left to her, no house, she reached a stage...And I also, if I had a way to get rid of this life (I would take it), because my situation is one of despair. Daily I hope for death. Because our life isn't life. There's no one (here) to knock on the door and say, "Who are you? Where are you from?" Even if we are starving, no one comes to say, "Take this loaf of bread".
>
> I ask God to let all migrants return to their countries and homes. Because if we die here we find no one to bury us. I had an operation about three months ago. I wept not because I was sick, but because if I died there was no son beside me. My daughters are scattered, and my son, you can regard him as the only one - except for this child - among six daughters. Here are the pictures of the ones who went. I have no one (here). I praise God. Apart from this, what can I say?
>
> My husband was wounded, he can't work. And Sobhi whom you saw, he was wounded too. Did you see his neck? It happened when Anwar Sadat went to the Occupied Land. He was in his office, it was the day before the feast. They came and told Sobhi that there was going to be a demonstration, he had to join it. So Sobhi went out on the demonstration. There was a battle between the Lebanese Army and the demonstrators. Who got wounded? My son Sobhi. He fell on the ground bleeding, and there was no one to pick him up. His blood covered the ground, and he would have died, but God sent him a girl who stopped a car, by shooting (in the air), because no one would have stopped just for Sobhi, they would have run away. This girl stopped a car with a bullet, and they took him to the Beirut Hospital. The doctor there told me that there was only two hundred grams of blood left in his whole body. Straightaway the surgeon did the operation, and thank God it succeeded. This is why Sobhi never looks healthy now. His blood is borrowed. His

friends gave him blood so he could get better. I ask from God that the situation in Lebanon will improve, so that my son can come home. This is the only thing I ask from God.

I have these two widowed daughters. One has two children, this boy and a young girl who is staying with her other grandmother. And this one has two daughters. What can I say? Daily tragedies! The things I faced, no one else faced. And you never find anyone who asks what you need. Look at them, they are sitting here without jobs, they depend on God.

See what we suffered for the sake of our Revolution! I told you the other day about the pain in my back. It's not just a pain, it was caused by a blow from a Lebanese soldier. There was one of the comrades, I don't want to mention her name. One day people came and said that the Lebanese Army were hitting a woman - it was the period of the Army. I was washing clothes. When I got out there I found it was true. One of the Army had got her in an alley and was pressing a his baton against her stomach. No one in the camp dared to approach except me. It was the Army - who would get involved? They all escaped. I got near, I said to him, "Why are you doing that to her ? She's a girl not a man. You shouldn't treat her like that". He said, "What's it to do with you ?" I said, "I'm a daughter of the camp, like those children you're arresting". He said, "Are your children among them ?" I said, "All of them are my children". "And this girl, how is she related to you ?" "She is my daughter too. And every Palestinian boy is my son". Then he took me and the one who was with me - this was in 1982, after the invasion - to Michel Aoun. He was (Army) commander at that time. They put us in a building near the Arab University.

Aoun looked at us. The girl who was with me is well spoken and educated, she knew how to speak. Whenever he said a word, she answered him. When he asked me what was my role, I said, "I'm a Palestinian woman, don't I have a right to defend my children ? Suppose it was your daughter or your sister that was being treated like that, what would you do?" When the girl spoke with him, he said, "Do all Palestinians know how to speak and think like you ?" She answered, "In comparison with others, I'm nothing special". Michel Aoun gazed at her. The girl asked him, "Why are you gazing at us? If you want to imprison us, go ahead. If you want to release us, release us". After she said this we saw the Red Cross coming. They took us away from there and we returned to the camp.

It happened that while I was speaking to the soldier, the one who was pressing his baton against the girl's stomach, another soldier came and hit me on the back with his rifle butt. It didn't hurt much at the time. But after five or six months the pain began to bother me. I couldn't move, I couldn't walk. I suffered. My sisters-in-law, and my mother, who was still alive, used to come and do my washing and cleaning. I was lying on the ground. They took me from one doctor to another. One day a foreign

journalist came, a Japanese. He wanted to find a big family so as to see how they live, how they behave, what is the atmosphere of their house. We always say thank God.

This is our life and this is our destiny. This is what the Lord of heaven wrote for us. May God help us.

During this session, I obtained basic demographic data: Imm Sobhi was born in the village of Yajoor, close to Haifa; aged six or seven in 1948, she came with her family, first to Wavell Camp (Beqa'), then to Shateela; married a cousin in 1958; has had ten children, five sons and five daughters.

Third meeting, February 27, 1991: Imm Sobhi has 'flu. She sits cross-legged on floor with a charcoal brazier in front of her. Yusra (oldest daughter) has back pain, isn't working in the sewing factory today, lies on a sofa; friends have come to visit her. All except Imm Sobhi sit on chairs. The conversation is mainly about religion, partly for my benefit as representative of Christianity: Muslims regard Jesus as a prophet, Mary is mentioned in the Quran, etc. Abu Sobhi is present today, tells me how many prophets are buried in Palestine. We discuss what can be done for the daughter in prison. She is in solidary confinement, but Lebanese women prisoners released from Khiyam give the family news of her from time to time.

(During the summer of 1991, in Tunis, I see Sobhi. He says his mother has been to Palestine, and organized a sit-in for the imprisoned daughter that was reported in the Israeli press. He says his mother has always been the guiding spirit of the family.)

Fourth meeting, September 12, 1991: I find Imm Sobhi very agitated. They have just received notice to leave the flat, and go back to Shateela. The order was delivered by Fateh Dissidents who have taken over PLO institutions, and all their assets. The Dissidents have taken Abu Sobhi with them; Imm Sobhi is worried about him. She says, "He's an old man, they will humiliate him". She curses the Revolution. I go to Mar Elias camp to see if a Dissident leader I know there will intervene. Later Imm Sobhi arrives too. She intends to go round to all the Resistance group leaders, starting with the Dissidents, to prevent the eviction. She says she will also go to Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah (spiritual guide of Hizbollah). The Dissident leader's wife tells me that Imm Sobhi is demanding that all three floors of her home in Shateela should be rebuilt before they move back. (Later Imm Sobhi defends this claim: her widowed daughters each has the right to a floor, they are three families not one. She says that rather than give up her son flat, she will pour petrol over herself and the children, set fire to everything.)

Fifth meeting, October 21, 1991: I visit the family with someone who is doing a report for Amnesty about Khiyam prison, where their daughter is being held. Imm Sobhi has requested that the meeting should be at night because there are neighbours who are 'with' the Fateh Dissidents, and she feels

that her household is under observation. With us there is a Lebanese young man, chairman of a prisoners' committee, and connected with a Lebanese broadcasting station. The family tell the reporter the story, how their daughter volunteered to go on a commando operation while in a state of despair over the loss of brothers and home. Then all of them record brief messages that will be broadcast by Sawt al-Sha'b radio. They hope that the messages will reach her through internal prisoner communication ('solitary' prisoners in Khiyam are not allowed radio sets). The most articulate recorder is Imm Sobhi, who recites a poem of her own composition.

Sixth meeting, November 5, 1991: I find Imm Sobhi alone with one daughter and the younger children, who are on the shift system (ie. alternating between morning and afternoon school). She is more relaxed about the apartment because the PLO representative in Lebanon has been put in charge of all PLO property. She repeats that if the Dissidents try to appropriate the flat she will set fire to herself and the children. The (pro-Syrian) Salvation Front (in control of the Beirut camps), has refused to rebuild all three floors of their Shateela home – this requires waasta (connections). She says that the camp Popular Committee does not want them back because they are 'Arafatists'. The Committee is claiming (falsely) that her sons were killed in the intra-Fateh fighting of May/June 1988.

I ask Imm Sobhi about the poem she recited for her daughter. She recites some more. Her daughter praises Imm Sobhi's skill in a'taba (a kind of dirge, from the root 'to complain'). Imm Sobhi explains that it wasn't a'taba that she was reciting, it was her own poetry. Oral poetry is recited in a chanting voice not unlike dirges. I ask her if I may record some of her poems. She asks, "How will you understand them ?" I say that a Palestinian friend helps me translate recordings.

Seventh meeting, December 12, 1991: Imm Sobhi sends a message that she needs me urgently. I find her fasting, although it is not Ramadan. Lebanese women recently released from Khiyam have told her that her daughter is now in solitary confinement (before she shared a cell with Suha Bishara, attempted assassin of Colonel Lahd). They say that she is suffering from a skin disease, probably eczema, and that she is not being given treatment. Her mother is desperate to find a way to send her the ointment she needs.

(I visit Samira Salah, a member of the Executive Committee of the General Union of Palestinian Women. She describes Imm Sobhi as 'tayooba', from 'tayeb' (good), indicating extreme good-heartedness. She has been going with other women to visit Palestinians held prisoner in the Lebanese General Security office at Badaro. On one of my visits around this time, Imm Sobhi tells me that another daughter's fiance, released from Syrian prison in February 1991, has been re-arrested and handed over to the Lebanese General Security.)

Eighth meeting, December 20, 1991: I visit the family to tell them that the ointment they sent their daughter has reached her. I find only Suad, the second widowed daughter. She says that her mother has gone to Shtoora (in the Beqa'), to try and

see a Dissident leader about the flat. It seems that the Dissidents have returned, and are demanding that the flat be empty by the end of the month. Suad points to a jeep standing in the alley: "That's them !" It is a freezing, wet day. I pass by again in the evening to see what has happened. Imm Sobhi has returned, disconsolate; she waited all day without being able to see the man she hoped would help her. She repeats her threat to set herself and the children on fire if they try to evict her.

Ninth meeting, January 15, 1992: I pass by the family the day before leaving on a visit to Tunis to see if they want me to take anything to Sobhi. I find Imm Sobhi sitting propped up on a mattress on the floor of the sitting room. She looks exhausted. There are several visitors, but none of her older daughters are present, only Abu Sobhi and the younger children. Abu Sobhi tells me that Imm Sobhi's illness started ten days ago. He took her to the Red Crescent clinic in Mar Elias camp, where they had to wait a long time for the doctor to examine her. He shows me a medical certificate saying that she has a pulmonary infection and an enlarged heart. The older daughters are all elsewhere (one has recently re-married). They cannot take her to hospital because UNRWA subsidies for hospital beds have been reduced, and the Red Crescent no longer has hospitals in Beirut.

When Imm Sobhi hears that I am going to Tunis, she cries, and asks me to tell her son to come to Beirut. A month earlier, after hearing that he was planning to visit the family, she asked me to send him a message warning him not to come, fearing he might be arrested by the Syrians. This change of mind is a sign that she wants to see him in case she is dying. Abu Sobhi and the visitors all agree: whatever the risks, Sobhi must visit his mother. I am entrusted with this message.

(I reach Tunis to find that Sobhi has already left. He travelled to Beirut via Damascus, was arrested there for several days, interrogated, and 'fined', before eventually being allowed to proceed to Beirut. He found his mother in hospital in Sidon, where she had been transferred through the intervention of a Resistance leader. She was discharged a week later.)

(I meet one of Imm Sobhi's daughters two or three times while in Tunis, with the aim of constructing a representation of Imm Sobhi using different sources. She describes her mother as jabara (courageous). She tells how once they were arrested together by the Syrians, and Imm Sobhi pretended not to know her. When the Syrian Army sealed the door of their apartment, Imm Sobhi managed to get it unsealed. This daughter says that her mother can't speak about herself, others have to tell her story. Her essential quality is that she hides her suffering.)

Tenth meeting, February 29, 1992: I pass by to see if Imm Sobhi has left for Tunis, where it has been arranged for her to have a medical check-up at PLO expense. One of her daughters will accompany her. She is unhappy about leaving the children. Who will look after them ? The apartment is also on her mind, even though, by now, an important Resistance leader has taken up her

case with the Dissident leadership in Damascus. Her daughter Suad is back home, having left her second husband because he has no job and noweher to live. She is looking for work.

On this visit, Imm Sobhi consents to record a poem she has composed for the daughter in prison, and for her three dead sons. I ask her if she learnt this art from her mother. She says no, it came from the tragedies she has experienced. She is not one of those women who are invited specially to sing at funerals or weddings, her a'taba are private.

The next day (March 1), I pass by again early, before they leave for the Airport. Imm Sobhi narrates the story of her arrest by the Syrians in detail. After her back operation, when she was semi-paralysed, the Red Crescent sent her for treatment to Rumania. Because of the revolution against Ceaucescu, she had had to return to Cyprus. From there, her son invited her to Tunis, a trip she made on Iraqi Airways. Later, after returning to Lebanon, she went with other women to visit Palestinian prisoners in Damascus. At the Syrian border post they stopped her, and told her that there was an arrest warrant out in her name. She must go immediately to the nearest police station. She went on alone to Damascus, where she reported to the police. She said she was held for nine days, and interrogated daily. They asked her to tell her whole life from 1948 to the present day, without leaving out anything. The interrogator accused her of going to Iraq to collect money (this was based on the Iraqi Airways plane ticket she had used to go to Tunis). She was not allowed to contact anyone.

(This was my last meeting with Imm Sobhi, though not the end of my tracing her life through other people. She spent four months in Tunis, undergoing medical tests and treatment. During her absence, I visited the family occasionally. On one of these visits, I asked Abu Sobhi to recount some of the episodes in their family life. He told again; i) the story of their oldest son's near-death in the demonstration against Sadat's visit to Jerusalem; ii) the story of the Syrian break-in in 1987 (he said that the Syrian soldiers took all the gold he was collecting for his daughters' marriages, and all the family passports and ID cards); iii) he told a new story, how in 1985 Sobhi had been taken prisoner by the Israelis at sea, while trying to return from Cyprus to Lebanon by boat after a PLO meeting in Amman. He was held in prison in Israel for a year.)

(On another visit, Yusra introduces me to a tall young man who she says is her brother. I express surprise. She says he is her father's son by another marriage. Later I discover that this is another sister's fiance, already treated by the family as a 'son'. In fact, to help him stay in Lebanon, where he does not have residence rights, they have somehow managed to register him on their malaff (family file). Neighbours discuss how this will create obstacles to the marriage, since legally the two are now siblings.)

(On June 26, 1992, I passed by to get news of Imm Sobhi's return, said to be imminent. Only Suad and younger children are at home. Suad tells me a number of sha'beh (popular) proverbs

that her mother often uses. I record them because they express Imm Sobhi, and her feelings about life:

1) <u>Ijjat al-hazeeneh li tifrah, ma la'ayt matrah</u>: The sad one came to enjoy herself, (but) she didn't find a place.

2) <u>Iskafi hafi wa al-khayat 'ariyan</u>: The shoe-maker is barefooted and the dress-maker has no clothes.

3) <u>Min barra halla halla, wa min jewa y'alam Allah</u>: From outside all is clean, but only God knows what is inside (mothers use this with their daughters to inculcate zeal for house-cleaning, but it also applies to people, and the discrepancy between appearance and reality).

4) <u>Al-'izz lil ruz wa al-burqhul shana' halu</u>: The rice is honoured, the <u>burqhul</u> can go hang itself (rice and <u>burqhul</u> stand here for the two different classes that eat them, city people and peasants. <u>Burqhul</u> is crushed wheat.)

5) <u>Helli y'amaru i(q)soor, helli buhfuru (q)uboor</u>: There are those who build palaces and those who dig graves.)

(June 30, 1992: I find Suad at home. She says that Imm Sobhi arrived yesterday from Tunis. She is better, but had to have oxygen on the plane. As soon as she arrived, she heard that Jamal, her daughter's fiance, had been arrested again, this time by the Dissidents. Even though it is still early (9 am), she has already left home to try to get Jamal released. A day later, amid rumours that Jamal has been removed to the Beqa', Imm Sobhi is still working on his case. Suad says that her mother has decided to return to their half-repaired home in Shateela to <u>it-thabit wowjoodha</u>, ('to affirm her existence)', ie. to stake out shelter rights. Later still, I hear that she has been hospitalized again.

(Another view of Imm Sobhi was expressed by a neighbour, who knew that I had been visiting her, and asked me if it was true that the fourth daughter had been arrested by the Syrians. She went on to criticize Imm Sobhi for allowing her daughters too much freedom: they had 'thrown themselves' at Fateh – why ? Girls should not join fighting groups, there are plenty of young men to fight. Girls should struggle in a different way, through working in social institutions such as the Red Crescent. This neighbour contrasts the Imm Sobhi's daughters with her own daughter Fareedeh. Fareedeh never goes anywhere without her mother's knowledge. She is studying in the 1st Baccalaureate class, whereas only one of Imm Sobhi's daughters has finished school, or obtained job training. This speaker says that responsibility for daughters' behaviour lies squarely on the mother, whatever her circumstances.

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