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**Bedouin Livelihoods: The Role of Women in the  
Jordanian Badia**

**By  
Rula Lutfi Al-Dajani**

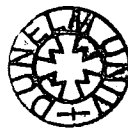
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**Department of Geography**

**University of Durham**

**2001**



**12 APR 2002**

## **Abstract**

Women's issues have been increasingly receiving more attention by development planners, scholars and practitioners in the east and west. In the Middle East more efforts have been devoted towards the inclusion of women in the labour force and the political arena. These efforts have faced some difficulties in respect to the social perceptions of Muslim women's roles and the scarcity of representative data regarding women's productive contribution in the economy and in maintaining their families' livelihoods. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of Arab and Muslim women's status at the household and societal levels is needed to conceptualise women's roles and put development efforts in the right effective gear.

This study, which investigates Bedouin livelihoods and the role of women in the Jordanian Badia, attempts to unfold the productive roles and the decision-making perspectives of a specific category of the female population in Jordan, 'Bedouin women'. It challenges the stereotyped picture of Muslim women and, more specifically, Bedouin women who have been regarded by their societies and others as less productive, subordinate and to some extent passive in respect to their contributions towards their households' survival and their decision-making power in comparison to men. The major findings of this study show that Bedouin women today provide essential inputs into maintaining their household's survival and providing vital needs for their livelihoods, in addition to acquiring an influential share of power regarding decisions related to their households.

These findings stem from the application of a qualitative research methodology that involved prolonged group discussion sessions, individual interviews and observational tools in the north-eastern Badia of Jordan. This qualitative research methodology was used for in-depth research conducted on 30 households to give substance to the research findings and provide detailed information from the local Bedouin people involved in the study.

The discussion of the research findings presented in chapters four, five and six regarding Bedouin livelihoods and the role of women in the Jordanian Badia identifies some focal points upon which further investigation and research into the status of Bedouin women can be based.

## **Declaration**

I, the author of this study, declare that this thesis results entirely from my own work, and that none of the material here has been previously submitted by me or any other candidate for a degree in this or any other university.

## **Statement of Copyright**

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## **Dedication**

To my parents...

## **Acknowledgment**

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my supervisors Dr. Elizabeth Oughton and Dr. Roderic Dutton for their continuous support and guidance throughout my work. Their patience and useful feedback during the processing of my thesis were of great benefit to me.

I would also like to thank the Jordanian Badia Research and Development programme staff in Amman and Safawi for facilitating my fieldwork and providing me with all the moral and administrative support needed for my fieldwork to be completed. I would like to acknowledge the support I received from BRDP's DFID project team, including Dr. Darius Campbell, Rubi Al-Assad, Nawras Al-Jazzi, Mohammed Al-Oun and Andrew Bisson whose company I enjoyed during our trips to the Badia.

I'm greatly indebted to the Bedouin families with whom I worked closely in Salhia, Abu Al-Farth and Dair Al-Kahf villages in the north-eastern Badia of Jordan, for their hospitality and generosity. I would also like specifically to thank all the Bedouin women for their time and inputs during our long and interesting discussions, which made this research such a pleasant learning experience.

Lastly, I would like to pay gratitude to my family; my mother who has always inspired me; and my father, God bless his soul, who encouraged me from the beginning to start this research. I owe all my friends in Durham many thanks for their moral support and the nice times we have spent together. My apologies go to all those who have helped me but which I have failed to mention here.

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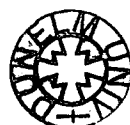
# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction and Aim of the Research

This study of 'Bedouin Livelihoods, The Roles Of Women In The Jordanian Badia, is a contribution towards understanding the role of Bedouin women in securing their household living and their involvement in related decisions at the household level.

Although many different aspects of Bedouin women's lives could be explored as there has been little serious effort devoted to the study of Bedouin livelihoods, I decided to limit my investigation primarily to two of the major roles Bedouin women perform. The domestic and productive contribution towards household survival is one aspect; the second targeted their decision-making roles and the division of power between men and women and among women themselves within the Bedouin households. In order to capture the importance of women's roles in securing Bedouin livelihoods, I will look at women's inputs regarding day-to-day activities and household related decisions from the bottom-up, trying to gain an understanding of women's political, economic and social roles at the household level. This then may form the basis for further investigation of women's roles and status at more aggregate levels.

My research focused on Bedouin women's livelihoods in the Jordanian Badia Research and Development Programme (BRDP) area in the north-eastern part of Jordan. The Department of International Development (DFID-funded) livestock project, which, operates under the umbrella of BRDP, serves a number of villages within the same area. My research and the DFID activities coincided in Salhia village which attracts a considerable amount of research and project activities. Abu Al-Farth and Dair Al-Kahf villages were also among the villages where I carried out my research. (See chapters 2 and 3 for more details.)



## **1.2 The Importance of Women's Studies in Development Literature**

The literature, which tackles women's issues within a developmental context, generally emphasises the fact that women did not, and still do not in some areas, enjoy full control over their own lives. In fact, some argue that development, specifically within the economic framework, has always marginalized women in the production sphere, either by regarding them as disadvantaged or cheap labour. (See Boserup 1970, Moghadam 1992.) It is essential here to specify what type of development we are referring to. Moghadam (1992) thought of development as a broad process of economic and social change, usually promoted by technological advancement but crucially affected by changes in social structure, property rights and social relations and cultural understandings. This definition combines both social and economic change, which serves better the analysis of women's status within the household. Although development, as the definition suggests, is linked to technology, industrialisation and modernisation, Moghadam, (1992) suggests development must be seen first and foremost as human development. Basic needs satisfaction, attention to quality of life, the creation of the possibility for autonomy and action and more importantly putting people first, are all integrated into human development. (Chambers 1997).

Similarly Henderson (1995) puts more emphasis on the human aspect of development. He sees that development is likely to occur by raising people's living standards, increasing their choices among consumer goods and services and enhancing their self-esteem by promoting human dignity through development institutions. In more practical terms, development practitioners define development as helping people to help themselves through empowerment approaches by which development might be ensured. Tinker (1990) argues that although development practitioners might be committed to human development, their efforts are normally constrained by the policies and bureaucratic behaviour of the organisations to which they belong. Although a large number of



intermediary institutions funded by UN agencies, and Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs), approach their beneficiaries with a participatory attitude, development work has never been a mere reflection of community-based need assessments. Although development agencies have always intended to incorporate community inputs in their agendas, their agendas are mostly designed to meet donors' requirements.

Despite the fact that the International Women's Movement has been active since the sixties and even before according to Midgley *et al.* (1983) the literature which tackled women's issues during the seventies accounted for 1% of the development literature, Kabeer (1994:xi). This development literature, including that after the UN declaration of the 10 year period 1976-1985 as the decade for women, coincided with three different approaches to women's issues: WID, WAD and GAD that have evolved as a result of the critique of the implications for development of each approach.

The inclusion of the WID (Women In Development) approach can be regarded as a worldwide realisation of women as major contributors towards human development. As a result of this worldwide realisation, more efforts were targeted to understanding women's roles and status within their communities. WID had approached women as mere targets though. Women then were seen as victims or disadvantaged groups that needed to be treated with special care in order to achieve human development ends. This view of women reflects the way the WID approach had dealt with women as objects rather than effective partners in development during the seventies and early eighties of the last century.

The UN and other members of the development assistance regime transformed their concern with women's issues by adding WID units into their organisational structures. Those donor agencies allocated, and still do, a considerable amount of their budgets to be spent on projects

targeting women's groups. The words of a regional UN programming officer illustrate the strength of this allocation policy by the rejection of any project proposal that did not include WID criteria, Kardam (1991). A major setback which had previously faced WID inclusion in development projects was illustrated by the extent to which any member of the development assistance regime could adhere to development criteria concerning women's integration in development projects that had been set and agreed by the most financially powerful members of the regime. The donations allocated to developing countries governments somehow dictated priorities for funding internal projects, taking into consideration the expertise of the implementing organisations. This formed a major obstacle towards the inclusion of women's issues in developmental work since most implementing organisations had limited expertise in this area when the WID concept was introduced. Therefore, the analysis of development attempts at that time reflects the fact that the work that had been done regarding women's inclusion in development had stressed concepts such as women's welfare and the facilitation of their access to resources rather than targeting women's empowerment and control over their own lives, which was emphasised later on as other developmental approaches to women's issues evolved, Kabeer (1994).

The WID approach was criticised and challenged by scholars, development workers, feminists and poor women themselves. As a result the WAD (Women And Development) approach evolved to overcome the pitfalls of the former approach. The WAD approach incorporated a more advanced understanding of women's productive roles and stressed the importance of their full visible participation in development. The WID approach, which sets women as a target for development rather than a means of achieving human development, was hardly acceptable by scholars, development practitioners and poor women themselves after development studies showed that women make up 51% of the worldwide agricultural labour force. Moreover, the Food and Agriculture Organisation findings show that women in Africa and Asia work about 13 hours more than men each week. Although women

have been negatively affected by development implications and the common social practices in developing countries regarding the division of labour, resource allocation and the decision-making patterns, still the introduction of the WAD approach to the development literature was perceived by the parties involved in the developmental process as an improvement on the WID version. This was due to the fact that WAD's introduction to the development literature had partly altered the picture of viewing women as a problematic concern in development to a rather effective and participatory consideration of their productive contribution in human development. The growing awareness of women's positive inputs in human development basically supported the idea that nothing much can be done to promote development in developing countries so long as women are mostly seen as professionally disabled.

According to Kabeer (1994) the inclusion of women in the development literature regarding the WID and WAD approaches where they were given a status that separated them from the male population was rather a threatening approach to men themselves. It suggested that men's involvement in both short and long term development strategies had been somehow put aside while women's issues and roles were highly promoted since they had been undermined for a long time. In brief, men were likely to fear that WID and WAD approaches would exclude them from the development equation. Therefore, the inclusion of both men's and women's analysis in development work regarding power relations, intra-household relations and other issues which affect men's and women's status and roles was introduced to the development literature in terms of the GAD (Gender And Development) approach.

The GAD approach therefore is not only concerned with women's status, but also the interaction between both men's and women's roles regarding the dynamics and structures of gender relations which, relatively recently, have been addressed in the development literature. Whitehead had addressed the significance of this issue at the IDS

conference on "The Continuing Subordination of Women in the Development Process":

*"No study of women and development can start from the view point that the problem is women, but rather men and women and more specifically the relationship between them". (Cited in Ostergaard, 1992. pp. 6.)*

It is hard to deny the recognition that gender issues have been receiving from the development regime in recent years. A reflection of the significance of these issues is shown in the World Bank gender related projects for the fiscal year 1998 which totalled \$2,451 million for developing countries according to the World Bank Report (1998).

According to Haider (1995) gender is a matter of cultural definition as to what is considered to be masculine or feminine. Gender analysis includes the different roles performed by both sexes within a community, through changing cultural and social perception's that play a significant role in affecting the interpretation and application of both men's and women's roles. Gender relations as in any other social relations, focus on both sexes behaviour and manners within the social context and not as biological or natural attributes.

Gender relations are all about the social recognition of the different, sometimes, complementary roles of men and women. An important factor that affects gender relations, as Moghadam states, is changes in production and distribution which bring changes to the sexual division of labour, gender systems and women's status. For example, in rural areas, although the distinction is quite clear between what are considered to be either female or male related chores, waves of urbanisation have affected these concepts.

Historically, women's activities do usually involve the production of goods for household consumption as well as for market distribution. The traditional model of female housewife and a male breadwinner, which

usually marginalises women's efforts, is one of the main criticisms of how development has incorporated women in the first place and which development efforts recently try to avoid. Not only have women's efforts been considered subsidiary and auxiliary but also men have been the ones privileged with the decision-making power as a result of their positions as income earners. For example, Afshar (1998) stated that women are not housewives in a vacuum: they are housewives in a context where men and other women expect them to be wives, as does the society at large. Therefore, another developmental concern might arise here, not only that development work needs to examine the gender relation between both sexes, it also must focus on the social and cultural context within which these relations exist and are fostered.

The increasing attention given to women's issues can be assessed as follows. One should not argue against the logical development of comprehending women's participation only in domestic activities but also in agricultural and other economic tasks. From the viewpoint that women are the ones who feed the world's population, more recognition should be focused on their productive roles as food and income providers. A question arises here whether women (and men) will be able to produce sufficient food to be consumed by the world's rapidly growing population (300 million increase in the world's population by 2030 is expected) under their persisting conditions. What changes should take place regarding women's current status, especially in developing countries, to enable them to contribute towards achieving this end.

It is obvious that looking at women's status from this angle is still promoting favouritism of others over women and exploiting them as means to sustain food security. This way of looking at women's role is not much different from seeing them as the key variable to the solution of the poverty crisis. Although the latter might appear as a more positive attitude towards women by accrediting their inputs towards poverty alleviation, still it adds more to their responsibilities without allowing them

to access enough resources, Haider (1995). In this sense, women will continue to appear as being unproductive or below the satisfactory level of productivity, while the solid reason is that they are limited by having only a very small range of accessible resources that are needed to render them able to maximise this productivity.

In the most segregated societies, such as the Middle East, both men and women do interact in the social context, certainly within the household and sometimes in the political and economic sphere. (See Singerman and Hoodfar, 1996). This interaction is much clearer in urban communities than in rural and Bedouin ones. It is important to note that, the more that the research effort is directed towards household investigation, the more recognition women's issues and status receive. This increasing recognition is due to the growing awareness, based on the research, of the important role, whether consciously or unconsciously recognised by the society, women play within the household and recently outside the household within the public sphere.

Women's issues have been pushed only recently (during the last decade) into the foreground in Jordan. Ministries and non-governmental organisations put more effort into including women and gender in the planning and implementing process of development projects. In that sense, they aim to mobilise women's effective participation mainly at the household level, Payeur (1996).

This increasing concern, pushing women's and gender issues forward, is a reflection of the political will to increase participation of rural women in local economic development. This was one of the economic and social objectives indicated in the Jordanian development plan (1993-1997), that focuses on unemployment and poverty. The government's strategy was to mainstream women into the economy by enhancing self employment opportunities, providing them with adequate training and education and giving them easy access to credit, Payeur (1996). Various local and international organisations now integrate women into their projects, or

even design special projects that only target disadvantaged and rural women.

Although development projects have a significant role in Jordan, very limited work has been done so far to evaluate the direct and indirect impact of completed projects on women's conditions, whether they have been improved or have been negatively affected. This is because the development projects are still in the stage of implementing various activities in which gender issues have been incorporated. Moreover, Bedouin women in Jordan receive very limited attention, especially because there is only one body, which is the Jordan Badia Research and Development Programme, that is currently operating in and responsible for part of the northern Badia. Therefore, my research regarding Bedouin livelihoods and the role of women in the Jordanian Badia should add to understanding women's status at the household level specifically in Bedouin communities in Jordan in particular and in the Middle-East in general, and should raise more questions and open new venues for further investigation of other aspects of women's livelihoods specifically in Bedouin areas and generally in Muslim communities.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The research objectives of this particular study regarding Bedouin livelihoods and the role of women in the Jordanian Badia are:

1. To investigate the gender division of roles in agriculture, with particular respect to livestock, within a Bedouin community.
2. To capture Bedouin women's productive roles and activities in addition to their assumed reproductive duties.

3. To interpret Bedouin women's capacity in decision making, resource allocation and bargaining power within the household and the larger community.
4. To study the social relationship between Bedouin women and other members of the household and community with respect to economic roles.
5. To examine the impact of social and economic factors on Bedouin women's status in the Jordanian Badia.

## **1.4 Organisation of Thesis**

### **Chapter Two**

This chapter presents the qualitative research methodology, tools and techniques used in acquiring information and collecting data during the course of my fieldwork. The main research objectives are included in this chapter. The administrative and practical arrangements of the fieldwork such as area (village) identification, household selection criteria, logistic arrangements and time allocation of field visits are included. The limitations and restrictions faced throughout my fieldwork are presented at the end of this chapter.

### **Chapter Three**

In chapter three, a general overview of Jordan's historical role, demographic, and geographic characteristics will be presented. The chapter will highlight some economic conditions over the previous three decades. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that has been implemented since 1989 and the related Agricultural Structural Adjustment Loan (ASAL) will be discussed. The impact of these programmes on the disadvantaged people of Jordan will be discussed. Some geographical and social characteristics of the study area, a part of



the north-eastern Badia of Jordan, where my fieldwork was carried out will be presented.

#### Chapter Four

Chapter Four discusses Bedouin women's productive contributions towards the household economy. The literature on women and work in the Middle East including the persistent issue of the scarcity of information regarding Arab women's participation in various activities is reviewed in this chapter. Bedouin women's daily routine patterns and mobility patterns which are strongly linked to their productive participation are analysed and categorised in different forms depending on women's age groups and marital status. Bedouin women's collective activities are also presented comparing such activities over an extended period of time. A number of cases from my fieldwork that illustrate the current situation in the Northern Badia of Jordan are included as examples in this chapter.

#### Chapter Five

This chapter discusses concepts of power, patriarchy and women's role in decision-making within Middle-Eastern societies. Intra-household relations and the division of power between men and women and among women themselves within Bedouin households are analysed in this chapter. The major factors that affect and shape the model of decision-making and the division of power in patriarchal and conservative societies, such as religion, traditions and other factors, are discussed. The findings of my fieldwork regarding the application of a 'power game' are included in the chapter, which give a picture of how Bedouin women perceive the division of power between women and men in the Badia today. The final section of chapter five includes illustrations of different case studies drawn from my fieldwork regarding Bedouin women's decision-making power.

## Chapter Six

Included in this chapter are the major conclusions of my research study regarding Bedouin women and their livelihoods in the Badia of Jordan. These are based on the research aims and objectives identified in the previous chapters. Based on the conclusions and objectives of this research, future research recommendations and suggestions for a better analysis and understanding of women's status are proposed at the end of the chapter.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the research methodology used in data collection regarding research topics. Firstly, the chapter presents the qualitative research methodology I have used to gather my data from the field. Secondly, the chapter moves on to discussing the qualitative research methods, which included focus group discussion, individual interviews and participant observation in addition to the specific associated techniques applied with those methods. Thirdly, a presentation of the organisation of my fieldwork concerning the administrative and practical arrangements such as area (village) identification, household selection criteria, specific characteristics of selected households and the logistic arrangements that were needed to facilitate my fieldwork are discussed. Fourthly, the chapter concludes with a presentation of the limitations faced during my fieldwork.

My fieldwork was carried out within the northern Badia of Jordan, and particularly within the BRDP area. BRDP's DFID-funded livestock project is located within the same area. The administrative arrangements of my fieldwork were jointly facilitated and supported by the BRDP office in Safawi and the DFID-funded project.

### 2.2 Research Methodology

During my nine months literature-reviewing period I spent at the University of Durham in the United Kingdom, I was able to identify the research methodology I then adopted during my fieldwork in the northern Badia of Jordan. Reviewing the literature on broader issues of women in developing countries, specifically in the Middle East, regarding various issues of their livelihoods and their current status on the household level had enabled me to formulate general topics for investigation of Bedouin livelihoods and the role of women in the Jordanian Badia. Bearing in

mind the political, economic, social and cultural environment that governs Bedouin communities in the Middle-East, and more specifically in Jordan, I moved on from the broader issues of the research that has been done on Muslim women to a rather focused investigation of reviews of the livelihoods of poor rural and Bedouin women and households. During an advanced stage of my literature review period, I had begun to identify a suitable research methodology and a set of qualitative data collection tools, which I applied during my fieldwork.

The set of research tools I used to gather my research data was of a qualitative nature. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research tends to be associated with words as the unit of analysis. Whether dealing with meanings or patterns of behaviour, qualitative research relies on detailed and intricate descriptions of events or people. As qualitative research or "thick description", as it is known, is relatively focused in terms of scope of study and people involved, it is then more associated with small-scale studies. (Dooley, 1984; Denscombe, 1998).

Qualitative research accommodates this type of field investigation of small communities, such as Bedouins in Jordan and, more specifically, women and livestock conditions there. This contrasts with, for example, national surveys, which are more often associated with quantitative methods. Statistically speaking, the greater the numbers involved or the larger the sample in quantitative research, the more reliable and generalisable the results are. In general, the researcher in a qualitative study tend to be socially, physically and emotionally more involved with the investigated community, than the quantitative researcher who may be detached from the environmental and contextual setting of the research undertaken.

In qualitative research, theories and plans can be developed as parts of an ongoing process, as emphasis in qualitative research is based on discovery not proof (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Denscombe, 1998). This helps in re-assessing the tentative plan, which the research

normally has prior to embarking on fieldwork and, accordingly, re-adjust it to accommodate on-ground discoveries that require modifying the original plan.

In such relatively focused, descriptive and small-scale social research, the data generated must have richness and detail. Complexities of social situations should be holistically considered and analysis of the information must be grounded on the realities of social existence. Therefore, in the Badia this type of research is extremely valuable in order to interpret the traditional and social understanding of Bedouin communities and to grasp the meaning of people's current behaviour, attitudes and reactions. Qualitative research in particular depends strongly on the researcher's personal interpretation abilities, extracted from his or her own understanding, beliefs, social and professional background and experiences.

Another important advantage of qualitative research is that, as social existence involves uncertainty, it tolerates ambiguity and contradictions more than quantitative research does. For example, poor families in rural areas usually insist that I, as their guest, have to stay for lunch. Tribally speaking, this meal will never exclude meat or chicken from its list, although poor households rarely serve it to their members due to the fact that they cannot afford it. Logically, it is contradictory to insist on the visitor staying to lunch while the family is going through financial difficulties yet cannot but offer relatively expensive food. Still it is understandable to someone who experiences the tribal and traditional mentality of Bedouins.

One more advantage of qualitative research is that it is open to more than one answer. It stresses the validity of a number of different interpretations of the same subject from different angles. Attention should be taken not to oversimplify any explanation, de-contextualise the meanings and tackle issues from the researcher own point of view (Denscombe 1998).

I intentionally avoided using quantitative methods, such as questionnaires, throughout this research. One reason was that qualitative methods suit the type of data required for this research. In addition, as the local community of the research area had previously been approached by a number of researchers, they were not interested any more in filling other questionnaires of no tangible benefit to them. In other words, not only did qualitative methods such as participants' observation, focus group discussions and individual interviews accommodate the information required for my research but also I had reason to assume that the application of these methods would encourage a certain level of co-operation from the local community.

### **2.3 Qualitative Research Methods**

The following three qualitative methods were applied in my research:

#### **2.3.1 Focus Group Discussion**

Focus groups allow the researcher to observe people's interaction on a specific topic. They also provide direct evidence of similarities and differences among participants (Morgan 1997). According to Feldstein (1994) this method enables the researcher to identify the pattern of labour use reflecting both seasonality and gender roles. Focus group discussions also provide data that cannot be obtained using other tools. This method provides concentrated amounts of data on precisely the topic of interest. For these reasons I have adopted and used this method in my research. Another reason for using focus groups in this research was in the expectation of providing insights into participants' opinions and experiences (Morgan 1997). It was also hoped that focus groups would support the generation of ideas that would help highlight other issues of increasing interest.

For the purpose of this research, holding focus group discussions with Bedouin women near the beginning of field research, introduced me into

the Badia community. They also allowed me to explore women's generalities and social perceptions. Informal discussion within those groups also encouraged women to participate and pour in their ideas and interpretation of their current status.

Upon applying this method, I started off with a general discussion of unstructured questions that allowed participant's own interests, experiences and inquires to be spilled out. As the discussion proceeded, it generated more structured questions regarding some specific areas of interest to my research. As a result, this approach provided an opportunity to maximise the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews. In addition to this, focus group discussions held near the beginning of my research introduced me gradually to the groups participating in the discussion, by first hearing more from them then moving to discuss more specific issues of interest to both parties. This was particularly useful near the beginning of my research, when I needed to know more about Bedouin women's experiences and interests, in order to increase the relevance of my questions regarding the way they manage their lives.

A combination of more structured and less structured focus group discussion took place during my research. I applied this method to conduct discussion sessions with Bedouin women near the beginning of my research. It made it possible to hear women's own perspectives in an early stage as well as their responses to my specific interests towards the later part of the discussion. Another form of unplanned group discussions that involved various members of the household and the neighbourhood took place occasionally after individual interviews. These unplanned discussions resulted on two occasions in allowing me to identify some interesting household cases that I added to my research group later on, which would not have been possible to achieve in another setting. The textbooks, such as Krueger's (1988), recommend that each discussion group includes 4-12 participants, depending on the circumstances. This allows a fair interaction to go on, which generates

more interesting points for consideration, while allowing participants' views to be expressed. Using this method allowed me to highlight new points emerging after each discussion group, or to decide to investigate more specific topics during following individual interviews (Morgan 1997).

Towards the beginning of my fieldwork, in each of the three villages I asked one of the informants of the village (e.g. the head of the voluntary society, in the case of Dair Al-Kahf village) to invite women from around the village to a general meeting. During these meetings, semi structured discussions took place. I started with presenting myself and my research interests. The discussion then was opened for participants to inquire about information regarding my research, their role and participation in the research, the process and duration of my fieldwork and the presentation of research outputs. Out of the three meetings, women focused mainly on learning more about their anticipated participation in the research and the kind of information they will be expected to release. They paid less attention to the general process of my fieldwork, except they were interested in knowing more about how the research information would be presented and put forward to officials at the end. They also wanted to know how they would benefit, either individually or collectively, after my research was done and published. I made it clear that generally any research done on the area, particularly at the household level and on women's status within it, eventually will have a positive impact on the future plans that target the area and will help in designing beneficial development-related projects.

Women who were invited to attend these general meetings were mainly married and elderly women. Young females also participated in these meetings but in a relatively low profile manner. As I had planned to proceed with other focus group discussions and individual interviews within the households, I assumed that younger females would inevitably participate in ongoing discussion in order to capture a reasonable variation in female age.



These introductory meetings resulted in identifying some of the selected households in the three villages. Together with the recommendations of informant persons I had contacted in each village near the beginning of my research, focus group discussions contributed to the selection process of target households. This mainly was true in the Salhia and Dair Al-Kahf cases where the numbers of targeted households were considerably larger than in Abu Al-Farth case.

Another form of unplanned group discussion often took place after some individual interviews, when next-door visitors or male members of the household decided to join the discussion. In a few cases, I would start by visiting one household and holding a private discussion with one female in a particular household, then end up with around 6-8 people from relatives and some male members of the household. I noticed that the flow of discussion would immediately change upon the intervention of the new comers. I can say that generally elderly women take over the conversation and therefore minimise the input of other female participants. In other cases when the male head of the household participates in the discussion, he takes charge even with the presence of elderly women. Moreover, the case differs when young male members of the household join the group. Their participation in the discussion remained limited to specific topics, such as their roles within the household and their perception of livestock activities as a source of income to the household. While older male members of the household, who are in charge and responsible for the maintenance of their families, had more to contribute regarding almost all issues discussed with women.

Three focus group discussions were held, in the three villages, that involved the application of the 'power game', which will be presented later on. In addition, a number of unplanned informal discussion groups were held during my visits to individual households in the three villages where a number of household members regardless of their sex joined the discussion. Since these group discussions took place occasionally

and informally, involving open discussions, it is difficult to be precise in recording the number of discussions held in this sense. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that it ranged from 10-12 informal discussion groups in all the three villages, including a range of 3-10 people.

### 2.3.2 Individual Interviews

During individual interviews, normally there is less chance to observe people's interactions therefore, this method requires the interviewer to devote more attention to his or her role in this process. In comparison with focus groups, individual interviews provided more depth and details about each participant's opinion and experiences. Applying this tool provided me with more control over the discussion and consequently allowed more focused attention on specific issues of interest to me. As this tool allows a high level of privacy, the interviewees felt more at ease while discussing issues they would have normally avoided discussing among others. This method proved to be effective when discussing personal issues such as husband-wife relationships, financial matters and emotional interactions. In a conservative community such as the Badia, women appreciate not only avoiding mixed groups but also getting the chance to express their ideas discreetly.

Prior to the application of this method, I proceeded with a high impact personal bridging effort towards the women interviewed. This meant that I had to put serious effort into creating a friendly atmosphere and personal relationship with the interviewed women; asking general questions about women's health and their children's well-being and progress at school contributed positively in promoting this kind of informal relationship between the interviewees and me, which was needed to promote my acceptance and work.

According to Denscombe (1998), although this method is time consuming, it is worth using with key players that offer insights as people being in a special position "to know". Therefore, this tool was used to

gather reliable information from key persons in each of my research villages, such as the head of the voluntary society and the sheikh in Dair Al-kahf village. When specific information was required to give me a general picture of the situation in one area, it was an effective tool to get detailed and focused information from trustworthy sources. Adequate consideration has been given to the interviewee's social status, educational qualifications and professional expertise. I took into account age and gender differences between interviewees and the extent to which this affects the development of their ideas and judgements of various issues.

The individual interviews went into more details concerning women's daily activities with reference to some critical issues that could not be discussed thoroughly among a group of people. Due to the time limits and distraction caused by the presence of a number of women in discussion groups, individual interviews were more useful in providing detailed information and thus were given more weight in the discussion of results. Approximately 90 individual interviews were held in the three villages since I visited each identified household three times. In Dair Al-Kahf village I conducted 36 individual interviews, 39 in Salhia village and 15 in Abu-Al-Farth village with women of different age groups.

### 2.3.3 Participant observation

Participant observation was the third method I used in my research. It is used in sociological and anthropological work to infiltrate situations and understand cultures and investigate groups. Participant observation produces qualitative data (Denscombe, 1998.)

Out of my work experience as a field researcher in community development projects at CARE international in Jordan I can say that participant observation is an important research method. It increases the naturalism of research findings, as well as raising more questions to be investigated. I have observed practical events, interactions,

conversations and non-verbal behaviour during the course of my fieldwork. This tool is not a technique that one can use in the field and discard afterwards. It develops an observant attitude for the researcher, which encompasses different aspects of the researcher's daily life.

An important advantage of this tool over other research tools is that it allows the incorporation non-verbal interaction to complete the whole picture along with verbal and behavioural actions. Begley (1996) emphasises the importance of non-verbal cues by describing them as the most important communication skills. Although this method facilitates observing behaviour in its natural context, it was of ultimate importance to me to act as a member of the group. A major drawback would have occurred if the researched group had felt that their actions are being put under the microscope. This could have led people to fake their behaviour or at least to think twice before acting or reacting.

Focus groups help with the selection of a site for participant observation. It opens channels to approach individual households and build bridges with key players in the community, thus resulting in applying valuable observation of people's behaviour during individual interviews or even when observing people's natural interaction with each other from a distance.

It is important to note that this method is highly affected by the researcher's own perception of situations that might be influenced by personal factors, current priorities and physical states. For example, physiological states such as hunger and thirst can influence the way we interpret what we "see" (Denscombe, 1998).

It was to my advantage to be considered as an insider, being a Jordanian female researcher, who is familiar with the culture and rural women communities in general. This had enabled me to perceive things in the proper context. Yet it might be of a disadvantage that I was at some points considered as an outsider to the Bedouin community. In

general it was an asset to the research that the community studied did not face difficulty dealing with a foreign researcher, regarding cultural, social and language barriers. I found out that the best way to develop observational skills is to spend a long time chatting with women regarding various aspects of life. During my interviews, I learned to give around ten minutes either at the beginning or the end of interviews to answer people's questions regarding my personal life. By this, women felt that it was a two way communication process and not a single-sided interview where I ask questions and they answer. They also asked me questions and I had to answer observing their reactions towards what I said and the way I said it. This alleviated the rigid atmosphere that might have governed our interviews if the interviewees and I were not relaxed enough.

This method is very demanding in terms of the commitment needed from the researcher's side. It invades the researcher's life routine and requires long hours of fieldwork, in order to build trust, develop rapport and allow detailed and in-depth understanding of the situations. Therefore, participant observation is not considered as a soft option (Denscombe, 1998).

The application of the above three methods in a qualitative research methodology insured the triangulation approach. Triangulation involves locating a true position by referring to two or more other co-ordinates when investigating a topic. Campell and Fiske first used triangulation in 1959. It was drawn from the field of surveying, where measurements are usually taken from three or more different angles to identify a certain area. Triangulation gives the opportunity to corroborate the research findings and to increase the validity of data collected through the previously discussed methods. Triangulation examines the accuracy and credibility of collected data using more than two qualitative methods. This approach does not only serve as means of comparing the settings or demonstrating differences between data gathered, but also as means of understanding more fully the world of people studied (Begely, 1998).

Moreover, this approach allows a deeper level of data analysis using different methods. The application of multi-methods produces different kinds of data on the same topic, thus is likely to improve the quality of research. According to Begley (1996), triangulation results in increasing the quality and quantity of data obtained. It also allows one to tackle a particular topic from different perspectives and to understand the topic in more rounded and complete fashion than would be the case if the data stemmed from just one method (Denscombe, 1998). It provides a holistic view of the issues researched. A clearer understanding of women's status in respect to livestock in the Badia was ensured by applying this approach. Triangulation has the potential to form the basis of a framework for understanding situations, highlighting the key elements or a set of standards for comparing different views (Silverman, 1997 pp. 25).

Careful consideration was given to ensure that collected data achieve credibility and accuracy. Taking social realities into account should have provided an adequate level of credibility. As Silverman suggests social realities are built from the "bottom up", from ordinary interaction to general social process. Such realities can never be separated from objects, persons or circumstances that they describe or the language used to describe them. Community involvement, which was ensured by the usage of these methods, forms a participatory interaction which is considered as one effective way to create knowledge and awareness, and to produce necessary action or change (Lindsey, 1998). It should be noted though that the kind of qualitative data acquired is initially influenced by the researcher's own assumptions.

The application of focus group discussions, individual interviews and participant observation was carried out in a Rural Rapid Appraisal (RRA) manner. The objective of applying RRA in qualitative research is to ensure data collection with high levels of involvement of the researched group. It encompasses both the outsider's (researcher's) expertise in problem identification and research design together with the insider's

(local people's) knowledge regarding the topics being investigated (Chambers, 1997; and Kumar, 1993). The reason behind integrating RRA methods in my research was not to exert change or identify actions needed to alter Bedouin people's lives, it was meant to involve people in assessing their current situation and identifying core issues and patterns of their livelihoods.

Therefore, since this particular research is about investigating Bedouin women's status, using RRA on one hand ensured women's participation starting from problem identification through to discussion and analysis of the tackled issues. On the other hand, RRA methods facilitated the provision of more control and guidance by women regarding the issues investigated in this research. Being able to address specific social issues of interest and to partake in discussing these issues and reflecting back on them, was a promising way of interpreting more clearly the implications of women's current status.

## **2.4 Techniques Associated with Qualitative Research Methods**

### **2.4.1 Techniques Associated with Focus Group Discussions:**

#### **Power Game<sup>1</sup>**

This game was used during focus group discussions to illustrate the division of power and control between men and women. It analysed women's perception of current division of power within the household. Not only did this game give me an idea of power relations in the Badia, it also encouraged women to think for themselves whether they accept or deny this situation.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Power Game' technique was experimented by CARE International office in Jordan, where I had worked between January 1996-September 1998, as part of community development projects and the training sessions related to these projects.

Interviewees, during a focus group meeting, were divided into groups depending on the total number of the bigger group. A set of pictures, that illustrates the division of power between women and men in the form of either of them being tied to strings like puppets, was given to each group. After ten minutes of the small group analysis, each group had put the pictures in a form of a story. All groups were asked to present to the rest their own analysis of the story. An open discussion took place afterwards, commenting on how each group filled the one or two blank cards that they were given together with all the pictures, in order to allow them to suggest a favourable image of power and authority relationships.<sup>2</sup>

This exercise helped me understand how women perceive their current relationships with men and whether they would like to introduce change to it. Out of my empirical experiences of this game, I noted that some groups refused to draw a new arrangement of power relations with men. They justified this by saying that they felt contented with it the way it was. This exercise took place after breaking the ice with participants in group discussions, which made them feel at ease with discussing the power relationships and suggesting new arrangements.

### Wealth Ranking

As Feldstein (1994) suggests, local terms for wealth, community and household should be defined. This technique allowed me to know the ways in which poor and rich households differ from one to another in the Badia in terms of wealth. It also gave me a general idea of the wealth status in a specific area, which made me clear on the economic condition of each of the three villages where I carried out my fieldwork.

As wealth affects numbers and species of animals owned, and consumption patterns and management strategies within households, it

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<sup>2</sup> Detailed description and discussion of the 'power game' technique are provided in Chapter 5.



was important that I understood the nature of wealth within the community. This came at an early stage of the research so as to benefit from understanding the economic structure of the community affected by people's wealth conditions.

I applied this tool after I made sure that interviewees were happy with talking openly about their financial conditions. If I had sensed that this technique would cause discomfort of any type, I would have denied its application and gather similar information through other forms of discussion within the group.

#### 2.4.2 Techniques Associated with Individual Interviews:

##### Direct Matrix Ranking

Interviewees were asked to prioritise a number of topics, elements or whatever came out during our discussion. This ranking process indicated the relative importance of the highly ranked element. For example, women were asked to rank livestock processed products that they produce and consume within the household. This gave me an idea of the pattern of consumption within Bedouin households. It also led to another area of investigation regarding seasons of animal production and changing patterns of women's individual and joint activities. Another example was the ranking of household expenditure during the month of Ramadan (fasting month). This gave me a clear idea of how Bedouin households prioritise their expenses during this month and to what extent they differ from their expenditure patterns during other months. The ranking technique is illustrated in several case studies that were used in the discussion of results of my fieldwork.

During individual interviews, interviewees were also asked to rank certain issues; for example, sources of income for the household. The results were exchanged among groups and individuals for feedback on

validity and accuracy and a pattern (trend) was developed which illustrates Bedouin survival needs and how they secure their livelihoods.

### Daily Routine and Mobility Patterns

For the purpose of acquiring detailed information from the women interviewed regarding their daily activities of a domestic and agricultural nature, I used to ask each woman during individual interviews to provide me with her daily routine pattern. I obtained different patterns for women from different age groups. I was able to verify this information later in an advanced stage of my research by participant observation whenever I visited households in the three villages and witnessed women's involvement in certain household chores or by learning about it from other members of the household when some women were not available on my visits to their houses.

Drawing mobility patterns for women from different age groups was another technique by which I acquired detailed information about women's permitted or non-permitted journeys and destinations within or outside their villages and the Badia area in general. A discussion of the control over women's mobility and the cases when women needed to take permission, and from whom, usually followed the creation of the pattern.

Both the daily routine and mobility patterns were useful techniques to examine women's responsibilities and rights within a Bedouin context. These techniques served as horizon-broadening tools, by which women identified their current status and position within their households and the community they live in. They made women realise the gaps in their relationships with men, whether being their fathers, husbands, brothers and relatives, and initiated further discussion of relevant issues regarding the division of labour, resource and time allocation, power relations and contributions towards household survival.

## **2.5 Organisation of Fieldwork**

This section presents the administrative procedures of carrying out my fieldwork and gathering information from the target groups. In this section, procedures for selecting researched villages and target groups are presented.

### **2.5.1 Preparatory Set Up**

The administrative arrangements of my fieldwork took some considerable time until I was able to start actual field visits. I arrived in Amman on July 15<sup>th</sup> 1999, but my fieldwork did not start until early September 1999. I went through negotiations with BRDP regarding my commitment to the programme. In actual terms, it was not possible for me to commute with the DFID team from Amman to the northern Badia until this issue was resolved. Not long after this issue had been resolved, my fieldwork started.

During the visit of my supervisor Dr. Elizabeth Oughton to Jordan in September 1999, an exploratory visit was arranged with Rubi Assad from the DFID team to get a sense of the Badia and be introduced to some Bedouin people with whom the DFID project had established contact. During this visit, we moved around Salhia and Al-Mukayfita villages where the DFID project activities were mainly located. Also, during my supervisor's visit to Jordan, a set of criteria for village and household selection of my research study was discussed and agreed. This will be presented later on in this chapter.

I accompanied the DFID team, whose office was in Amman where I lived, on two of their field training sessions in Salhia and Al-Mukayfita villages in the northern Badia. The two training sessions targeted separate groups of men and women demonstrating the usefulness of tomato waste as substitute animal feed. One of the villages, Salhia, was later on identified as a research village for my fieldwork. Establishing

good contacts with people from Al-Mukayfita village led to the selection of my second village of research through their contacts. In brief, these preliminary visits to the Badia laid the ground for my actual fieldwork to start.

The BRDP base in Amman and the field centre in Safawi provided me with administrative support throughout my fieldwork period. At the beginning of my research, when I needed to spend some nights in the field, the Centre accommodated me and provided full course meals according to the generous Bedouin traditions. During my field visits, the Centre provided me with transportation since working there involved moving around from one village to another. It was my advantage to be accompanied by a local Bedouin driver who knows the area and the people very well. It meant that, in some cases the driver was my research assistant especially when I needed to be introduced to the people there. Transportation was a vital issue since it was difficult to travel between villages or even within the same village on my own. Socially, it would have been unacceptable and less credible for a Jordanian female researcher to go around visiting unknown households on her own.

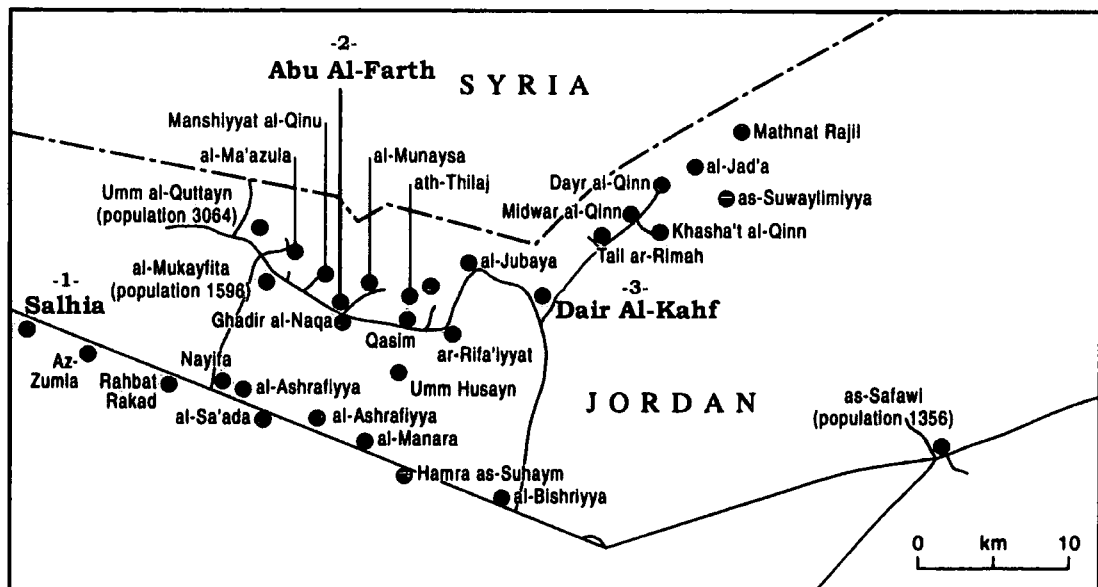
On the other hand, travelling with a male driver was not perfectly acceptable by the society either as they would never allow a Bedouin female researcher to do the same on her own unless accompanied by other females. It would be easily acceptable if I were a foreigner but not the same when I am Jordanian but not Bedouin. The credible logo of the BRBP on the vehicles used in our transportation resolved the issue. During my meetings with Bedouin women the driver used to stay in the vehicle or find other men to spend time with outside the house until I finished my visit. In some cases he was invited to come into the house but would sit in a different area either on his own or with any male member of the household. In some cases when male members of household joined the discussion, the driver was always invited to join the group.

It was important at the beginning to make my research topic and objectives clear to the people. I made it clear to everyone I spoke to whether during my preliminary visits with the DFID project team or during my introductory visits to Bedouin households that I was not employed by BRDP and that I was a research student who needs to talk to people and learn more about the Badia and specific issues related to my research, directly from them. Sometimes it was a relief when people realised that I was not engaged in any governmental study or activities so that they could speak freely about their ideas without reservations. Nevertheless, the fact that I was not part of any official study did not stop some of the people I visited immediately expressing their poverty in an attempt to extort my help if possible.

#### 2.5.2 Area and Village Identification

The research area was predetermined as BRDP is located in Mafraq governorate covering part of what is called the Northern Badia. The BRDP area covers some 11,210 sq. km. and 35 villages inhabited by about 16,000 persons (BRDP, 1996). The villages covered by BRDP are illustrated in figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1: Villages covered by BRDP in the north-eastern Badia of Jordan<sup>3</sup>



Source: Findlay *et al.* in Dutton *et al.* (1998), 'Demographic change and Population projections, 1976-2013'.

The process of village selection was done taking into consideration the following points:

1. Selected villages must not have fewer than 300 inhabitants.
2. Selected villages should vary in location relative to the main Mafraq -Safawi (Baghdad) road.
3. Selected villages must have different tribes for purposes of comparison.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Salhia and Az-Zumla villages located on the Main Mafraq-Safawi road are not covered by the JBRDP but Salhia was included as one of my research villages as illustrated on the map. Recently, two villages have been added to the programme area, Manshyat Al-Khaleefa and Shwayer, which increases the number of villages covered by BRDP to 37.

<sup>4</sup> Since a number of tribes including various clans inhabit the northern Badia, I had to ensure that the selection of my villages includes different tribes and clans.

4. Selected villages must be among the ones covered by BRDP. A maximum of one village could be selected from DFID targeted villages in the area.<sup>5</sup>

5. Selected villages must not share a major common features and variation among villages must be ensured.

During my first few visits to the area, I went on a tour accompanied by a Bedouin driver, around a number of villages. We started first with Al-Bishriyya village, which was the nearest to Safawi Centre, where we visited a few houses. The driver insisted that I should visit his house to introduce me to his second wife and children. These social encounters could not be escaped in the context of my research. Depending on the situation, some people might have been offended if I did not accept their invitations especially at the early stage of my research. On one hand, it was a good opportunity to break the ice with local people and to gather relevant information about the area in general. On the other hand, it was a time consuming obligation that I tended to politely reject after I had become a familiar face in the neighbourhood. Al-Bishriyya village was discarded because it was a relatively small village with a big majority of people who had sold all their livestock during the previous few years. The selection of the following three villages was done after a two-day tour was made to 10 different villages. The selection criteria were observed in identifying those villages.

#### Dair Al-Kahf Village

Dair Al-Kahf village was the first selected area for my research study. According to a BRDP survey, Dair Al-Kahf was inhabited by 820 people

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<sup>5</sup> BRDP covers only one part of the northern Badia including 35 villages. My selected villages were among these villages except for Salhia village which was closely located to but not included in JBRDP area. DFID project which runs under the umbrella of JBRDP included Salhia village in its activities and therefore I was able to select it as one of my research areas. I ensured that the other two selected villages were not covered by DFID activities.

(BRDP, 1996). It has 134 households and is located 13 km off the main Mafrq-Safawi road.

It fits my criteria of village selection, because it is inhabited by more than 300 people. It is located away from the main Mafrq-Safawi road but with good transportation access. The main tribe which inhabits the village is Al-Massa'eed which is the same tribe of Abu Al-Farth village and different from the one in Salhia village. It is not among the DFID project villages. This village is served by the Dair Al-Kahf voluntary society whose services cover nearby villages as well. The society organises workshops and seminars for public awareness and training. It has literacy classes for adult male and female members of the villages and has a kindergarten for children of 3 - 5 years.

#### Abu Al-Farth Village

This village is smaller than Dair Al-Kahf. It is located 15 minutes drive from Dair Al-Kahf and is inhabited by the same Al-Massa'eed tribe. Its population was around 530 people according to the (BRDP, 1996). Abu Al-Farth's location at 2 km. from the Syrian borders enables its people to commute easily between the two countries and facilitates smuggling activities. Transportation coverage is relatively poor in this area due to the fact that it is located near the frontier, but still buses pass through the village at different hours during the day, as it is only 7 km off the main Mafrq - Safawi road. Abu Al-Farth is not part of the DFID project area.

#### Salhia Village

This village differs in one way from the previously selected villages in my research study regarding village selection criteria. Salhia is not officially covered by the BRDP research area but is still one of the DFID project demonstration sites. By selecting this village, personal relationships with local people were already established through the DFID project team. I did not need to put much effort into gaining credibility as I were



introduced by the DFID team who had already been working with the local people for more than a year.

Salhia village is located on the main Mafrag-Safawi road and has a very good coverage of transportation. The destination between this village and Abu Al-Farth could be covered in 30 minutes drive and in 45 minutes from Salhia to Dair Al-Kahf. More than 300 people live in this village, which is inhabited by a different tribe, Al-Sharafat, from the one in the other two villages.

Initially I intended to identify two villages to be included in my research, but to enable diversification and comparison to occur I modified my plan to encompass a third village. Although all northern Badia villages have common features, still, variations can be traced among far distant villages. For example, when compared with Abu Al-Farth and Dair Al-Kahf, Salhia village has more access to market and transport, facilities because of its location on the main road. Villages that are located far deeper inside the Badia are generally restricted by the poor coverage of transport and therefore access to the market and public interaction is weaker. Such factors cause different practices and attitudes in people's daily life that cannot easily be identified.

### 2.5.3 Household Identification

#### 2.5.3.1 Household Selection Technique

In a small-scale qualitative research project, it is not possible to adhere to the principles of probability and randomness in selecting people and events.

As qualitative research follows the approach of discovery rather than testing a particular hypothesis, the selection process of people and events comes as a consequence of decisions based on the outcomes of earlier stages of research. This approach, which was popularised by

Glaser and Strass in 1967, leaves the size and composition of the sample unpredictable at the outset (Denscombe, 1998).

In qualitative research, people, events and texts are not statistically representative or 'normal' instances. Special instances, ones that are extreme, unusual, best or worse might be included. This results in a wide spectrum rather than a narrowly focused source of information (Denscombe, 1998).

Non-probability sampling strategies are best suited to qualitative research. In this research, a 'snowballing sampling' strategy of sample selection was adopted. Using this methodology, the sample was built up through reference from one person to the next. I asked the interviewees to nominate two more persons to be contacted. Since I appeared to be sponsored by the nominators, accordingly, my credibility was enhanced (Denscombe, 1998).

'Snowballing sampling' strategy provided "hand picked" people and information for the research. The reason for applying this strategy here was that I wanted deliberately to select particular persons and events that I knew something about and therefore wanted to investigate. These are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most relevant and valuable data that would enrich my research. Probability sampling strategies related to quantitative research, such as random, systematic stratified and quota sampling were not applied in this small-scale research.

#### 2.5.3.2 Household selection criteria

In the process of selecting the households of my research study the following criteria were observed:

1. At least half of the selected households must include different female generation members, e.g. daughter, mother and grandmother.

2. The total sample of 30 households must insure a diversified source of income among the total number, e.g. livestock production, employment, income generating activities and seasonal work.

3. The selected households must differ in their familial organisational structure, e.g. a number of the selected households would represent nuclear families while others might be extended or single parent headed households.

Thirty households were originally identified as my target group in three villages; 12 in Dair Al-Kahf, seven in Abu Al-Farth and 11 in Salhia. Extra five households were visited and interviewed irregularly. The selection of these extra households emerged from group discussions held in a particular household in the presence of neighbours and relatives from other households. By the end of a discussion group, I was normally invited and urged to visit other households not belonging to my research group. I accepted a few invitations when I felt that it would add relevant information to my research or when I anticipated exploring different case studies. In cases when I saw that there would be no potential benefit from expanding my researched group of households, I had to politely deny some other invitations. Most of these denied invitations would have been a mere repetition of similar cases investigated in my original study. A modification of the number of selected households in the three villages was done due to minor logistic and administrative reasons. Before I started my field visits for the first phase of my research, I had 12 households in Dair Al-Kahf, 5 in Abu Al-Farth and 13 in Salhia, a total of 29 households.

### 2.5.3.3 Procedural Aspects of Household Selection

#### Dair Al-Kahf Village

Households in Dair Al-Kahf village were approached by the head of the voluntary society and myself. In an early stage of my research, I visited the voluntary society explaining the objectives of my research and asked for the society's co-operation. The head of the society, Soud Al-Lwayn, listed a number of potential households to be visited. Accompanied by him, I went on a tour to check the listed household expressing my interest in talking to women regarding my research issues. My first visits to the list of households were for introductory purposes in order to continue visiting them with their permission. The initial visits paid to the listed households were facilitated by the presence of the head of the voluntary society. Only one household rejected my research proposal, expressing lack of information to contribute to my research. In this particular case, the female head of the household did not want to release information about her livestock ownership. She was the head of the household, as her husband had died ten years previously. I was told that what this lady had been through in her life had left her with a negative attitude towards people and particularly strangers. In her attempt to protect her family after her husband's death, she somehow isolated herself and children and did not maintain a good relationship with her neighbours. She was satisfied by her good relationship with her natal family and did not need someone else. Therefore, this household was discarded from my list.

By the end of our two-day tour in Dair Al-Kahf, I had a group of 15 households. Later on, three households were removed from my list as I proceeded with my fieldwork due to several reasons. One household had moved temporarily to Al-Azraq for the olive-picking season. The female head of the second household had managed to find a job as a school maid (cleaner) and was not available during my visits. The third household suffered the loss of one child in a car accident, making it

inappropriate to continue my research with this household because the mother was in extreme grief. Nevertheless, I kept in touch with her for moral support on a personal basis.

The specific characteristics of Dair Al-Kahf's selected households are presented in the table below:

Table 2.1: Characteristics of Dair Al-Kahf's selected households

<b>Household Number</b>	<b>Number of Female Generations</b>	<b>Main Income Source(s)</b>	<b>Household Structure</b>
1	2	Army Pension	Nuclear Family
2	2	Army Salary	Extended Family
3	2	Army Pension + Store	Extended Family
4	3	Army Salary	Extended Family
5	2	Army Pension	Nuclear Family
6	3	Livestock Trading + Store + School Salary	Extended Family (Two Wives)
7	2	Livestock Trading + Store	Nuclear Family
8	2	School Salary + Livestock Trading	Nuclear Family
9	3	Livestock Trading	Extended Family (Two Wives)
10	3	Army Salary	Extended Family
11	3	Army Salary + Army Pension	Extended Family
12	2	Army Salary + Seasonal Work	Nuclear Family

In Dair Al-Kahf five households (households no. 4, 6, 9, 10, 11) had three female generations living in the same households. They included a grandmother, a wife or a daughter and a third generation of young or

adolescent female children. The remaining seven households (households no. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 12) were composed of two generations regarding the female members of the household. These households included a mother and her daughter(s).

The number of income sources varied from single to multiple sources. Six households depended on a single source of income demonstrated in (households no. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10). Four out of the five households depended on army income either in a form of a monthly salary or pension. In the case of household no. 9 the single source of income was earned through livestock trading activities. Households no. 3, 7, 8, 11, 12 had a double source of income where the army income was the most common source in addition to livestock trading or an income generating activity. The case of household no. 8 was the only exception among this group. It did not depend on army income. This household had a double income source, one from government employment and the other from livestock trading. Household number 6 was the only exceptional case where a multi-income source was available. The sources of income regarding this particular household were livestock trading, a village store and a son's government school employment.

The household organisational structure in Dair Al-Kahf's group of households was in the form of a nuclear or extended family, with one or two wives. Households no. 1, 5, 7, 8, 12 were regarded as nuclear households composed of a husband, wife and their children. The other remaining seven households (no. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11) were extended families with either or both of the grandparents living with their married children's families or the sons/daughters living with their parents after marriage. Households no. 6, 9 were cases of extended polygamous families living in separate houses and including three generations.

## Abu Al-Farth Village

A group of seven households was selected in Abu Al-Farth village through a relative from Al-Mukayfita village. During my preliminary visits to the Badia area with the DFID team, I was introduced to local people in Salhia and Al-Mukayfita villages where the DFID activities took place. One active member of Al-Mukayfita village had suggested to me that Abu Al-Farth people are very cooperative and could be a useful source of information for my research. Accompanied by this person from Al-Mukayfita, Abu Sujood, whose relatives live in Abu Al-Farth, I went on a similar introductory tour as the one done earlier in Dair Al-Kahf village. During this tour, I presented my research interests and asked for the permission at each house visited to pay regular visits to them in the future.

An extended family of a mother and her two married sons living in separate nearby households were identified as potential research households in my group. This type of extended household, where members have joint activities but different sources of income is a rich research case in the Bedouin context. Another two households were female headed. One is a relatively young female, 35 years old, whose husband died seven years ago leaving her to raise six children. The other household is comprised of an older mother living with her mother and three unmarried daughters. She has three married daughters who live in the same village. Her husband and only son died several years ago. One nuclear household was selected among Abu Al-Farth's group of households to insure a range of cases.

Towards the end of my fieldwork in this village, I added one extra household due to the uniqueness of its situation. This household was considerably different from those so far interviewed in this village. An 80-year-old male head was married for the second time to a 35-year-old Bedouin female and has seven children apart from his own children from his first marriage. They were living on a monthly pension of 80 JD. Six

of their children are already enrolled in school, the other being an infant. This was an interesting case to explore. How could this particular household make their living in such a situation where the head of the household is not employed because he is elderly.

It was true that Abu Al-Farth's households were among the most cooperative households I interviewed during my fieldwork. People in this village, like many other Bedouin, were welcoming and willing to openly discuss various issues regarding their lives. Moreover, Abu Al-Farth's people were relatively less conservative than other Bedouin in other villages. They did not mind mixed group discussions when the males are close relatives of the family. In other cases in Salhia village, some women were not allowed to participate in group discussions when even their brother-in-law attended the discussion. I developed a strong personal relationship with three out of the seven households which I visited regularly during my fieldwork. After I had covered my research questions in Abu Al-Farth village, I continued visiting those three households on a personal level and they kept in touch with me by phone. The specific characteristics of Abu Al-Farth's selected households are presented in the table below:

Table 2.2: Characteristics of Abu Al-Farth selected households

<b>Household Number</b>	<b>Number of Female Generations</b>	<b>Main Income Source(s)</b>	<b>Household Structure</b>
1	2	Army Pension	Nuclear Family
2	3	Army Pension + Livestock Trading	Extended Family (Female Headed)
3	2	Army Pension	Nuclear Family
4	2	Army Pension	Nuclear Family (Female Headed)
5	2	Social Security Pension + Income Generating Activity (clothes selling)	Nuclear Family



Abu Al-Farth's household sample included four households no. (1, 3, 4, 5) which had two female generations, a mother (wife) and her daughters. Household no. 2 had three female generation members, a grandmother, mother and her daughters.

The sources of income in the Abu Al-Farth sample of households included a single source of income for households no. 1, 3, 4, which was always an army pension. Household no. 2 had a double source of income, one as an army pension and another as livestock trading. Household no. 5 did not depend on army income but on 80 JDs from a social security pension and another income generating activity (clothes selling).

The household organisational structure for Abu Al-Farth's sample was divided into four nuclear families with the exception of household no. 4 which was a female-headed nuclear family. Household no. 2 was an extended version of a female-headed household, she living with her mother and daughters.

### Salhia Village

I carried out my fieldwork in Salhia in the second phase of my research. The first phase included Dair Al-Kahf and Abu Al-Farth village, at the same time. After my research was completed in those two villages I moved to Salhia village. The reason behind conducting my research in two phases was to overcome hardships that would inevitably have been encountered during the first phase, especially that repeating the same procedures and question would be less time consuming in the second round. Another reason was to avoid distraction that might occur when I work with 30 households at the same time.

Thirteen households were originally identified in Salhia village through my personal contact with an active local female member of the DFID households. Um Ali is the wife of Hussien Qumazi who is a local

participant in the DFID project where a livestock demonstration site is built outside his house.

During my preliminary visit to Salhia with the DFID project staff, I was introduced to Abu Ali's household. I remained in touch with this family even after my first phase fieldwork had started, as their house was the meeting point where I arrived at and departed from when visited the village. During these short visits when I had to wait for a BRDP vehicle to pick me up for my fieldwork tours I listed a number of 13 potential households to be visited. In the last stage of my first phase fieldwork in Dair Al-Kahf and Abu Al-Farth villages, I made a third introductory tour to the 13 listed households accompanied by Um Ali and her little daughter Maryam. As Um Ali was known to all the households we visited, my mission was simplified. I had to add an explanation of my research aims after she had introduced me to household members. By the end of our introductory visits, I managed to identify 11 households in Salhia village. Two households were excluded from the list of 13 households that were originally selected.

The exclusion of those two households was due to the conservativeness in dealing with strangers for one household. The second household went through serious problems when the husband decided to divorce his second wife because of the problem between his two wives who were living together. Going through family problems and divorce meant that the women were not interested in co-operation in research interviews. They made clear in the second interview that due to the social problems they were then confronting they would rather not to be involved in the research. The specific characteristics of Salhia's selected households are presented in Table 2.3:

Table 2.3: Characteristics of Salhia selected households

Household Number	Number of Female Generations	Main Income Source(s)	Household Structure
1	2	Army Pension + DFID Salary + Seasonal Work	Nuclear Family
2	2	Livestock Trading	Nuclear Family (Two Wives)
3	2	Car Driver	Nuclear Family (Two Wives)
4	2	Livestock Trading	Nuclear Family (Two Wives)
5	2	Army Salary	Nuclear Family
6	2	Car Driver	Nuclear Family
7	3	Livestock Trading	Extended Family (Two Wives)
8	2	Army Pension + Seasonal Work	Nuclear Family
9	3	Savings Group income + Seasonal Work	Extended Family
10	2	Army Pension + Car Driver	Nuclear Family
11	3	Army Salary + Army Pension	Extended Family
12	3	Livestock Trading	Extended Family (Two Wives)
13	3	Army Pension + School Salary	Extended Family

Salhia village five households out of 13 had three female generations. They included a grandmother, mother (wife) and daughters for households no. 7, 9, 11, 12, 13. The remaining households (1, 2, 3, 4, 5,

6, 8, 10) had two female generations composed of a mother (wife) and daughters.

In Salhia village the sources of income were different from the ones of the previous two villages. Army pension and salary were not as evident as in the other villages. Households no. 1, 5, 8, 10, 11 included an army salary as either a single source of income, as in household no. 5, or as one of a double source of income (army salary and pension) as in household no. 11. Households no. 1, 8, 10 had the army pension as one source of income in addition to other sources of income, such as seasonal work in households no. 1, 8 and car (pick-up) driving in household no. 10. Livestock trading, as a single source of income, was evident in the cases of households no. 2, 4, 7, 12. These households were considered the richest among the group of Salhia households, and were able to depend solely on livestock trading income during the five years of a deteriorating situation for livestock. Households no. 3, 6, 13 were solely dependent on a single source of income other than army income, car driving in households no. 3, 6 and government school salary for household no. 13 which had an additional army pension income for the grandfather but did not contribute to the household maintenance. Household no. 1, which was involved in the DFID project, had a third monthly income from the project. Household no. 9 was an exceptional case depending on savings group income and seasonal farm work. Seasonal farm work was widely spread as an additional source of income for a number of households as in households no. 1, 8, 9. These households were among the poorest in the Salhia village group of households that needed the contribution of female earnings through seasonal work. This was evident among the less conservative group of households in Salhia village that did not have any livestock income.

Polygamy was evident in Salhia village more than in Dair Al-Kahf and Abu Al-Farth villages. Five polygamy cases were related to households no. 2, 3, 4, 7, 12. None of these households shared the same house. Eight households (no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10) were categorised as nuclear

families. In households no. 2, 3, 4, the husband shared two houses with two wives. While in household no. 4, the husband was permanently living with the second wife but was financially supporting the two households. Households no. 7, 9, 11, 12, 13 were categorised as extended families where either one or both grandparents shared the household with their married children and their sons and daughters. Household no. 7 was a mixture of an extended and polygamous household. In this particular household, the husband was rotating between two houses with two wives and the first wife was living with her mother and children.

## **2.6 Limitations of Fieldwork**

It is essential to list the limitations faced during my fieldwork in order to give a complete picture of how the fieldwork was carried out and to explain why certain matters were dealt with in a certain way that was necessary at the time when fieldwork was being undertaken. It also provides useful guidance to other researchers who wish to carry out their fieldwork in the same area or another setting with a similar social environment. Some of the important limitations I faced during my fieldwork are the following:

1. My acceptance as a female researcher working within a conservative environment was tied to how I had conducted myself and how much I managed to identify myself within the Bedouin people, observing and considering carefully their traditions and norms.
2. Although my original plan was to spend some time living with a Bedouin family and learn more about their lifestyle by daily observation and interaction, I could not fulfil this plan. Due to family reasons I could not spend a long time away from home. My presence was essential at that time. Therefore, I tried to spend all day in the field, talking to people and observing their behaviour to overcome the disadvantage of not being able live with them for sometime. I believe that it would have

added more significance to my findings to be able to act as a member of a Bedouin household, yet the seven months I spent carrying out my fieldwork in the Badia allowed me to gather good quality data.

3. Although it is easier for a female researcher to approach men's groups while a male researcher would find it impossible to approach women in such a conservative society, still, being a Jordanian female, put some restrictions on my access to male gatherings. It would have been easier for a foreign female researcher to find her way through to male gatherings as she would be a complete outsider who does not need to be judged by a certain cultural set of codes. In my case, this issue was overcome by the fact that I was always accompanied by a Bedouin male driver from BRDP who attended and participated in discussions that included male members of the village.

4. A few households could not accept that my sole interest was to learn about Bedouin livelihoods and particularly women's status within the household. These households always seemed to think that there was a hidden reason behind my concerns and questions, such as to learn more about their financial and personal matters which they would not present to the authorities. Although I managed to interview these households and maintain a good relationship with them, the atmosphere in our meetings was not as relaxed as the one I had with the households that fully accepted me and my research interests. Particularly men could not understand how I was a 25-year-old Jordanian female out on my own in the field and not married yet. In one incident, an elderly male head of a household in Dair Al-Kahf told me in a friendly way: "leave this research and go find yourself a husband."

5. There was no room for spontaneous ideas and field visits as transportation was not a flexible matter. A weekly plan had to be forwarded to the operation department at the Safawi Centre in order for me to be fitted into their schedule. It was difficult sometimes, especially

during Ramadan, to carry out work for long hours as the driver and interviewees were keen on having short visits due to fasting.

6. As part of my documentation methods, I had planned to use a cassette recorder to record important discussions and interviews in order to be able to document everything mentioned and not to lose any information. I had to discard the usage of the recorder because I found out when I first tried this with one of the households with which I considered I had a good relationship, that the naturalism of people's answers was negatively affected. The members of the households were very conservative regarding their interaction and contribution towards the discussion due to the fact that they felt that their answers were recorded and could be used against them. Although I had explained prior to recording our interview that this would help in facilitating the documentation of our discussion, still the flow of the discussion was not as good as I wanted it to be. Therefore, I had to discard recording my interviews and discussions. Ethically, I was not able not to mention that I would use a recorder to document the discussion because I believed that the interviewees deserved to be aware of what I was doing.

The above are the most evident limitations I encountered during my fieldwork. They did not make my fieldwork impossible, yet they placed some barriers across my access to target groups. These limitations challenged my research and needed to be dealt with in order to facilitate my work.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The overt major objective of this research is to understand Bedouin women's livelihood and survival strategies within the household with respect to livestock. To fulfil this objective, the qualitative methodology chosen for this study, associated with relevant methods and techniques, facilitated my access to the Bedouin community and the acquisition of high quality data through ensuring enough practicality to deal with real-

world issues and concerns of Bedouin women in Jordan. Throughout my field research, I maintained a cyclical process to assess continuously the information I collected and to obtain feedback from different sources.

In such qualitative small-scale research, it is essential to have an elastic preliminary schedule to accommodate changes and amendments as required, while adhering to the general context of the research outline. The changes I made in the number of households included in each village, field visits timetable and logistic arrangements are all examples of amending and adapting the tentative research plan I had developed prior to embarking on my fieldwork. I adopted a contingency plan always when needed in order to facilitate my work, serve specific purposes and resolve emerging difficulties. I ensured a systematic documentation of field visits and interviews day by day in order to avoid confusing the gathered data and information, especially because I used the personal observation method, which needs on-the-spot documentation in order not to lose little details involved. After collecting my data and sorting out my results, the research findings required suitable interpretation and analysis, which strongly depended on my own analytical abilities and understanding of the real situation which I witnessed.



## **Chapter Three: Jordan; Historical Role, Population, Geography and Economy**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter commences with a general overview of Jordan's historical role and demographic and geographical characteristics. The chapter then highlights the developments in the Jordanian economy over the past three decades. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that has been implemented in Jordan since 1989 and the related Agricultural Structural Adjustment Loan (ASAL) are presented. The impacts of SAP and ASAL on the poor people of Jordan are then discussed. Finally, the chapter introduces the concept of Bedouin society and lifestyle in that part of the north-eastern Badia of Jordan which is covered by BRDP.

### **3.2 Jordan's Profile**

#### **3.2.1 Historical Role**

In 1921, The Emirate of Trans-Jordan, under King Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein of the Hashemite family, was established as a settlement measure by the Allied Powers after World War I. Jordan gained its independence under the Treaty of London in 1946. In April 1949, the country was named the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan under King Abdullah. He was assassinated in Jerusalem in 1952. King Hussein Bin Talal was crowned when he was eighteen in 1953 and continued to rule Jordan until February 1999 when he died. His son, King Abdullah II, was crowned King of Jordan after his father's death.

Jordan was, therefore, artificially created. On its northern border are people who came to be known as Syrians. The south-eastern border between Jordan and the Arabian Peninsula was also artificially created

as the border with Saudi Arabia. Similarly, to the west are Palestinians on the West Bank of the Jordan River.

The land known as Jordan has always served as a buffer zone between tribes who were divided along the two sides of the Jordan River, towards the Mediterranean Sea in the west and the huge desert to the east and south (Bailey, 1984). King Hussein relied heavily on the political support of Bedouin tribes in Jordan (Layne, 1994). He assumed the role of the Sheykh of the Bedouin, as his ancestors come from the Arabian Peninsula. Although the Bedouin in Jordan are now considered a minority of all Jordanians, their political support to the system has had a significant importance for restoring peace in the country. King Abdullah II follows his father's steps in gaining support from Bedouin groups (Library of Congress, 1999).

During the 1920s and 1930s, Bedouin and tribal groups led raids in the vast desert, which the Arab Legion was unable to handle. The Arab Legion<sup>1</sup>, which was formed in October 1920 and set up with 100 men, increased its strength to 1000 in 1921. The Bedouin of Trans-Jordan at that time regarded the extension of the Arab Legion's control over their villages as a threat as they had not been subjected to any governmental authority for many centuries even during the Ottoman colonial period. The Bedouin whose independence was threatened by the government's authority had rebelled against the Arab Legion (Glubb, 1948).

Glubb Pasha, or General Sir John B. Glubb, who was recalled from Iraq to deal with the situation, knew the Bedouin and had a strategy and tactics for gaining their vital support rather than going through disputes with them (Lunt, 1999). He organised a camel-mounted desert mobile

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<sup>1</sup> The Arab Legion was established under Captain F.G.Peake in October 1920 with a strength of 100 men. The force was firstly called the Arab Army and was renamed shortly after to the Arab Legion by British Government. "...it was organised as a self contained miniature army, with two companies of infantry, two squadrons of cavalry, a troop of artillery and a singals section." Glubb (1948) pp. 59.

force, which attracted mostly the Bedouin and led them to identify themselves with the monarchy of Jordan afterwards.

Throughout Jordan's history, although the Bedouin population has comprised a small percentage of the whole Jordanian population, they have always played an important political role. Therefore, Jordan's policy regarding the country's internal affairs has always supported the Bedouin and ensured the provision of their basic needs in order to gain their support for the government.

### 3.2.2 Population

The Arab-Israeli War in 1948 added to the population of Jordan, which was then roughly around 340,000 people, another 450,000 Palestinian refugees as well as around 450,000 West Bank Arabs (LOC, 1999). The most recent population census was done in December 1994 to establish an accurate demographic picture of the kingdom. Census figures showed that Jordan's population was around 4.1 million inhabitants (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2000). The Department of General Statistics (1999) estimated that Jordan's population would reach 2.7 million men and 2.4 million women, which totals to about 5.1 million inhabitants, in 2000.<sup>2</sup>

Some 62% of the total Jordanian population lives in 17% of the total area of the country, in Amman and the highlands east of the Jordan Valley, while 10% lives in half of the total area in the east of Jordan. The remaining percentage of Jordan's population is scattered between the northern and southern parts of the country. Ethnically, Jordan is divided into 98% Arabs, 1% Circassians and 1% Armenians (LOC, 1999). The religious division of Jordan's population is estimated as 92% Muslim and

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<sup>2</sup> There is a discrepancy in data and figures provided by different sources. For example, according to the UN estimates, the Jordanian population was around 6.5 million in 1999 (EIU, 2001).

8% Christian. The overwhelming majority of Jordan's Muslim population is Sunni Muslims.

Jordan has the characteristics of youthful societies. According to the World Development Report (WDR, 1999-2000), while Jordan's population almost doubled 1980-1998, the labour force aged 15-64 years increased from 1 million in 1980 to 3 millions in 1998. The percentage of Jordanians under the age of 15 was around 50% in 1979, and decreased to 41% in 1994. The decrease is due to a drop in the birth rates caused by the increasing awareness of family planning methods, mainly in urban areas (DGS, 1999).

The Badia area is more youthful than Jordan as a whole (Findlay *et al.*, 1998). In 1993, the age ratio of the Badia was 47.3% of the population less than 15 years compared with 44% for the Jordanian population in 1990. Regarding the age group 15-65, the percentage of the Jordanian's population exceeded that of the Badia population by 1.5% (Badia 50.1%, Jordan 51.6% in 1990). The age group above 65 years recorded 2.6% for the Bedouin population in 1993 compared with 4.6% for the Jordanian population in 1990 (Findlay *et al.*, 1998). The high percentage of the Bedouin population of the age group under 15 years leads to increases in the dependency ratio on the working members of the households. The relatively low percentage of the Bedouin population compared with the Jordanian as a whole regarding the age group above 65 years can be attributed to the differences in the health services provided to the two groups.

Winckler (1997) in describing the natural increase in the Jordanian population states:

*"...The crude birth rates of Jordan's population have been considered as among the highest in the Arab world: 47.4 per 1,000 in 1960 decreasing somewhat to 46.9 in 1975 and 37 in 1993. Similarly, the total fertility rate has also been very high over the last three and a half decades: 7.2 in 1960 and*

*7.0 in 1975, then dropping to 5.1 in 1993. The direct causes of the high fertility rates in Jordan include short intervals between births, modest levels of breast-feeding, moderate levels of contraceptive use, and husbands' attitudes towards family size." (pp.14)*

Winckler argues that the last factor is very important in this respect. The concept of having as many children as one can has been always perceived to add more power to the family. Moreover, this attitude is backed up by people's religious beliefs that God gives them children and God provides them with the financial ability to maintain them. This attitude is more evident among rural and Bedouin people than urban families.

According to the DGS (1999), the total fertility rate in Jordan has been following a decreasing curve since the seventies, but still differences in fertility rates are evident between rural and urban areas. In 1976, the total fertility rate in urban areas was 6.5, while in rural areas a 9.1 fertility rate was recorded. In 1990, the fertility rate dropped in both rural and urban areas, but still recorded higher rates in rural areas (6.8 in rural, 4.7 in urban). The records of 1997 showed that the fertility rate in rural areas dropped to 5 and to 4.2 in urban areas (DGS, 1999). Findlay *et al.*, (1998) pointed out that the fertility rate in Bedouin areas in 1993 was 7.5 compared with 5.6 of Jordan's total fertility rate in 1990. The high fertility rate illustrated in the figures related to rural and Bedouin areas compared with that of urban areas, is partly due to social attitudes (Winckler, 1997), which stem from religion and traditions, regarding family sizes.

This decline in fertility rates has had an impact on reducing the dependency ratio on the working members of the households. It also leads to increasing the percentage of the population participating in the labour force. According to the (United Nations Development Programme) Human Development Report (2000) the dependency ratio will drop from 82.4% in 1998 to 67% in the year 2015 in Jordan. This

figure still remains high compared to all other Middle Eastern countries except for Oman (which was rated at 90.1% in 1998 and is anticipated to drop to 80.7% in 2015) and Syria (which is projected to decrease from 83.6% to 58% for the same period). According to Findlay *et al.*, (1998) the dependency ratio in the Badia is higher than that of Jordan as a whole (129 in the Badia compared with 120 in Jordan). In 1993, the dependency ratio was 0.944 and had increased to 0.998 by 1998. Findlay estimated that the dependency ratio in the Badia will drop to 0.905 in 2008 and to 0.726 in 2013, if the Bedouin population follow similar curves of declining fertility and increasing working age as the whole Jordanian population.

Another element of the population characteristics is life expectancy. According to the DGS (1999), average life expectancy increased from 57 years in 1976 to 67 years in 1994 for men, and from 62 to 69 years, for the same period for women. The life expectancy differs between the Jordanian population as a whole and the Bedouin population due to provision of health services and related factors such as financial abilities, and helps in reducing dependency ratios. Although the life expectancy increased for both sexes in the Badia, 1976-1993, as indicated in Table 3.1, it remains lower than that of the Jordanian population as a whole.

“Table 3.1: Bedouin life expectancy 1976-1993”

<b>Life Expectancy</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Both sexes</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
1976	41.1	40.3	42.1
1993	54.7	51.1	58.8

Source: Findlay *et al.* (1998).

Age at first marriage has increased for both sexes, 1979-1994. For men, the increase was around 6% (first marriage at age 27.4 in 1994 increasing from 25.9 in 1979). For women, the increase was around

11%, rising from 21.5 years in 1979 to 23.8 in 1994. Due to women's increased participation in the labour force and their serious attempts to pursue their education, the number of children per woman dropped from 7.3 in 1976 to 4.5 in 1994 (DGS, 1999). The gap between the numbers of children per woman in rural and urban areas in Jordan is shrinking (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Number of children per woman in urban and rural areas

<b>Year</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
1976	6.7	9.1
1983	6.1	7.9
1990	5.2	6.8
1997	4.2	5.0

Source: DGS, 1998.

Although the number of children per woman has always been higher in rural areas compared with urban areas, there has been an evident decrease in the number of children per women from 9.1 in 1976 to 5.0 in 1997 in rural areas compared with 6.7 in 1976 to 4.2 in 1997 in urban areas. This is due to the increasing awareness of family planning methods in rural areas and women's increased participation mainly in the informal sector in response to their difficult living conditions.

### 3.2.3 Geography

Jordan, a Middle-Eastern small country, shares boundaries with Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Occupied Palestine (Israel), see Figure 3.1. Its boundaries do not follow well-defined natural features of the terrain, except for that with Israel, which has a special significance due to political reasons (Piro, 1998).

According to the EIU (2000), the total area of Jordan is around 89,200 k.m. The terrain of Jordan can be divided to three main areas. The desert plateau in the east, which has similar land and climatic features to those in the south-west of Iraq, southern parts of Syria and northern parts of Saudi Arabia. This area is called the Badia and administratively is divided into three parts (see Figure 3.1). The north-eastern Badia lies in Mafraq governorate and extends from north and east of the town of Mafraq to the Iraqi border. BRDP serves part of this area and covers 12.5% of the total area of Jordan and 15.4% of the north-eastern Badia. The middle Badia extends over 85 km from south of the city of Amman east to the Saudi border. The southern Badia is centred in Ma'an governorate and extends from west of Wadi Araba south to the Saudi border (Abu Jaber *et al.*, 1987). The second part of Jordan's terrain can be characterised as a high land area which ranges between 500 m in the north to 200 m in the south, and lies immediately east of the Jordan valley, which includes the east and west banks of the Jordan River, which is the third main geographical region.

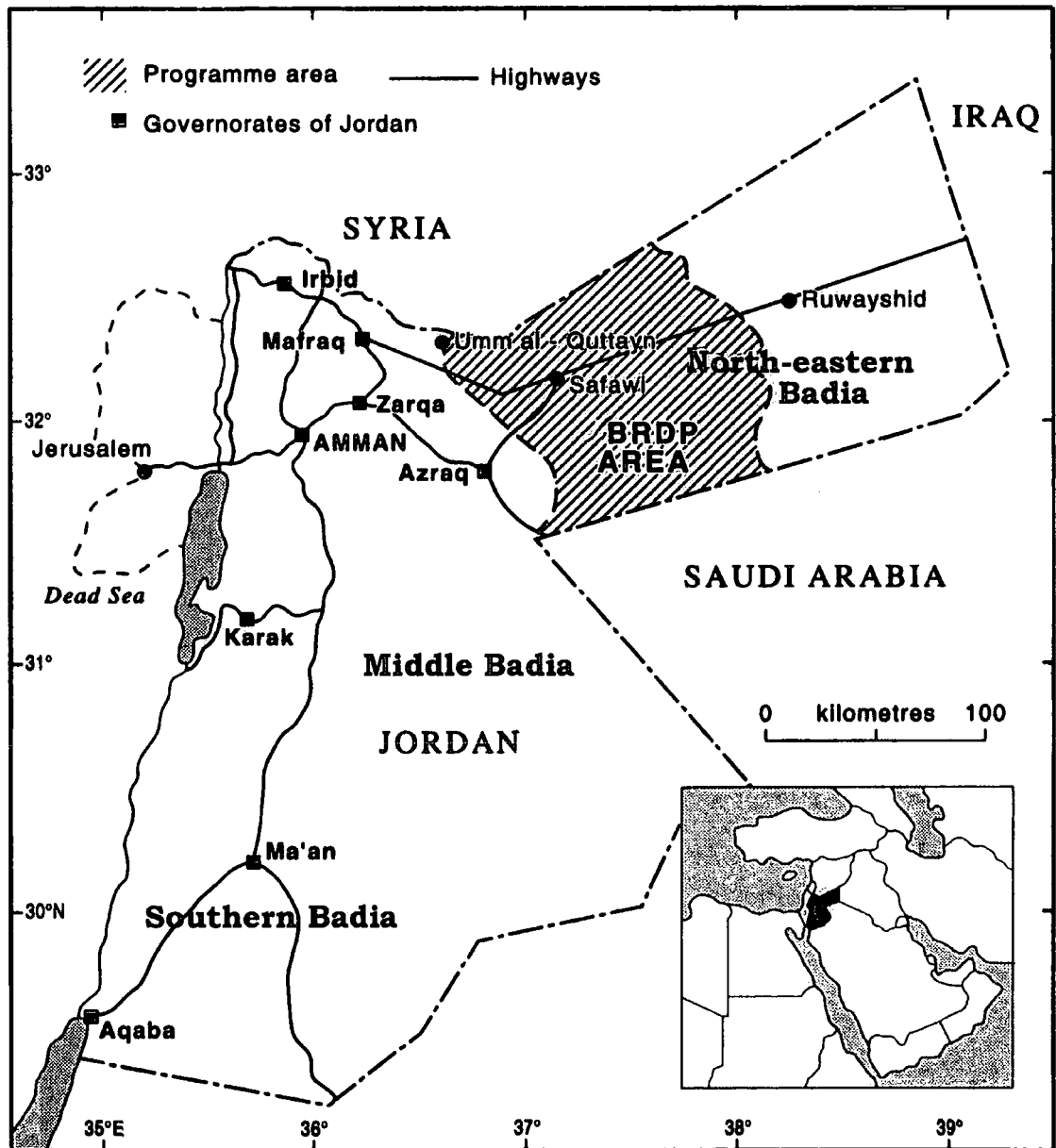
Regarding land use in Jordan, it is classified as 4% arable, 0.5% permanent crops, 1% meadows and pasture and 94% other (LOC, 1999). The irrigated land is around 570 km<sup>2</sup> according to 1993 estimates. According to EIU (2000) 75% of Jordan's land area is categorised as desert or semi desert. The agriculture sector is divided to rain-fed uplands, where cereals and olives are mainly cultivated, and the irrigated farms of the Jordan Valley where fruits and vegetables are grown. The drought which affect the area for the recent three-year period, 1997/8-2000/2001, greatly reduced agricultural production and left farmers dependent on food and agricultural inputs aid.

Although Jordan's natural resources are very limited, it is considered the world's third producer of phosphate and is rich in potash and shale oil. The scarcity of water resources in Jordan is a major obstacle for agricultural, economic and industrial development. Average annual



rainfall is about 8 billion cubic meters which mostly evaporates, leaving a remainder that flows into rivers and other catchments.

Figure 3.1: Location of Jordan and borders with neighbouring countries (BRDP area highlighted)



Source: Dutton (1998) 'Population, environment and development'

### 3.2.3.1 Geographical and climatic features of the north-eastern Badia of Jordan

As the focus of my research lies within the north-eastern Badia of Jordan and more specifically within the area covered by BRDP (see Figure 3.2), it is essential here to discuss the geographical, demographic and social characteristics of this area in detail. These characteristics inevitably affect the Bedouin social and economic structures.

The major negative environmental features of Jordan are overgrazing lands, soil erosion, desertification and lack of water resources. All of these strongly affect the Bedouin lifestyle, putting more natural constraints on their economy and livelihoods, alongside the structural and economic constraints forced by regional and international relationships with Jordan.

The Badia areas in Jordan are characterised as semi-arid and arid areas. Archaeological studies of the north-eastern Badia show that the climate has not always been as dry as it is today (Kirk, 1998). The average temperature during summer in the Badia ranges 35-38° C and can reach 46° C on the hottest days. In winter, a great transformation in temperature occurs. It drops to an average of 2-9° C and snow falls and sub-zero temperatures can be recorded (Kirk, 1998).

The north-eastern Badia generally receives less than 100mm precipitation in most areas (Kirk, 1998). Climatic variations can be enormous within the Badia area (Roe, 1998). The area has witnessed a great variation in its climatic environment that makes the lives of the Bedouin even harder. During the nineties, successive years of drought greatly reduced pasturage areas, in the Middle East in general and in those areas that depend mostly on rainfall due to the lack of other water resources, such as the Badia, in particular. This led to increases in the demand for animal feed when natural vegetation ceased to exist.

Lancaster and Lancaster (1994) pointed out that the Badia had suffered from five successive low rainfall years (1989 to 1994) which had hit the stock owners hard. The drought was renewed 1997/8-2000/2001 and a combination of climatic reasons and economic pressure due to the removal of animal feed subsidies in 1996 greatly increased feed prices and therefore weakened the Bedouin's traditional livelihoods.

According to Roe (1998), in the northern Badia, the livestock owners first reaction to the feed subsidy removal was the down-scaling of their livestock holdings. A few of the Bedouin made immediate decisions to sell all their livestock holdings and reinvest in other income generating activities. Most flock holders took the option of a reduction of flock size. When they were asked why, they explained that reducing the scale of livestock ownership would benefit them nutritionally by providing more healthy feed to the remaining number of animals and would limit the labour needed to maintain their flocks to household members.

The unreliability of livestock as a primary source of income had certain implications on various aspects of Bedouin lives. For example, Bedouin families developed a positive attitude towards educating their children in order to become better equipped for the future. In another respect, Bedouin started to seek full-time employment opportunities in the formal sector and women increasingly approached seasonal activities in order to secure their families' needs (other livestock-related changes in Bedouin livelihoods will be discussed in the next chapters).

### 3.2.4 Economy

The Jordanian economy has always been linked to the political and economic developments in the Middle East. Jordan's location at the heart of the Middle East and its shared boundaries with Israel had both benefited and harmed its economy in various ways. Bearing in mind that Jordan has limited natural resources, its economy has always striven for

foreign assistance from Arab and Western countries, particularly during periods of political instability in the area.

Indeed, the Jordanian economy has witnessed many changes over the past three decades. The economic conditions in Jordan varied during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in relation to the economic and political conditions on the regional level.

Highlights of the Jordanian economy up to late 1970s:

*"The windfall from the high oil prices in the 1970s brought great wealth to the oil-producing countries -wealth that radiated to the poorer countries of the region through generous financial assistance, through remittances from workers who migrated to the richer states, and to some extent through trade. Between 1973 and 1981, growth hit record levels in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, and their per capita incomes rose dramatically, reaching in 1987 \$670 in Egypt, \$1,640 in Syria, and \$1,560 in Jordan." (Lavy et al., 1991, pp.16).*

Jordan's economy, since its establishment, has relied on foreign assistance, initially provided at that time by the United Kingdom. During the sixties and seventies, Jordan's economy expanded its access to international and regional financial support as well as borrowing from international commercial banks. The Arab countries, such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, poured more generous financial aid into the Jordanian budget after the oil boom in the early 1970s (Day, 1986). Some went to the Army services which attracted many of the Bedouin in Jordan. Jordan's extensive dependence on external aid formed the base of Jordan's economic debt crisis in the late eighties (Nabulsi, 1994).

The oil boom had caused the Jordanian economy to flourish, thus demonstrating many of the characteristics of the wealthier and technologically advanced countries (LOC, 1999). According to WDR (1985), the GNP per capita of approximately \$1,640 categorised Jordan's economy among upper-middle income countries in the early

eighties. The average annual growth of GNP per capita 1965-1983 was 6.9%, the highest among upper-middle income countries (WDR, 1985).

According to Lavy *et al.* (1991), Jordan exported approximately half of its labour force to the oil-producing countries during the 1970s. Remittances from roughly 330,000 Jordanian workers in the Gulf countries were about \$1.25 billion a year in the second half of the 1970s. The Jordanian economy has not benefited as much as the Egyptian and the Syrian economies from trade with the Gulf countries, due to the country's limited natural resources. Despite this, Jordan's growth in GDP accelerated to nearly 11% a year during the 1970s. The GDP per capita reached 8% a year in Jordan compared to 6% in Egypt and 5% in Syria.

The Jordanian economy greatly expanded during the second half of the 1970s and the government received massive financial aid that resulted in the expansion of Jordan's imports and consumption.

Highlights of the Jordanian economy during the 1980s

*"Short-sighted government policies...contributed to the economic stagnation and decline of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the 1980s. The inflated public spending in the 1970s and early 1980s had created large budget deficits, intensified inflationary pressures, and undermined the balance of payments when economic condition worsened. And the use of foreign loans to finance the current account deficit boosted external debts, the servicing burden for which was already high." (Lavy et al.,1991, pp.21).*

The oil boom changed into a decline when oil prices started to drop in 1982, leading to a major decline in 1986. The impact of this was reflected on the Jordanian economy during the second half of the 1980s, while indicators showing economic prosperity continued to characterise the Jordanian economy during the first half of this decade. Table 3.3 shows the drop in total GDP and GDP per capita after 1982.

Table 3.3: GDP and GDP per capita 1982-1987 in Jordan

Year	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	Average
Total GDP	8.9	2.2	8.2	1.6	3.7	-1.5	3.8
GDP per capita	5.2	-1.4	4.3	-2.6	0.3	-5.2	0.1

Source: Lavy *et al.* (1991)

Remittances dropped from \$983 million in 1984, to \$787 million in 1985 and to \$754 in 1987 since some of the workers had lost their jobs due to the worsening economic condition in the Gulf countries. At the same time, Jordan's foreign debts were accumulating rapidly. In 1983 Jordan's balance of external debt was \$2.3 billion and rapidly increased to \$3.7 billion in 1987, rated at a 13.3% increase. In 1988, Jordan's external debts reached \$6.5 billion (Nabulsi, 1994). Between 1987-1989 inflation rocketed from 0.2% to 25.8%. Poverty increased from 4% in 1981 to 20% by 1991. The devaluation of the Jordanian currency in 1988, increased dramatically the cost of debt and subsidies, adding further pressure to the already strained economy.

Consequently, the vulnerable groups of the Jordanian population were affected by the worsened economic conditions. Regarding the Bedouin population, the army stopped absorbing many young Bedouin men, as part of the government's policy to cut down its expenditure. Some of the Bedouin returned unemployed from the Gulf countries at that time. The demand on the Jordanian livestock by the Gulf countries dropped, which negatively affected the livestock industry in the Badia.

Highlights of the Jordanian economy during the 1990s

*"The government was deeply concerned about the economy's vulnerability to external forces. Jordan's*

*economy depended heavily on imported commodities and foreign aid, trade, investment and income. But because plans to increase self sufficiency were only in the early stages of implementation, a short-term decline in national standard of living and increased indebtedness loomed as the 1990s approached; observers forecast that austerity would replace prosperity.” (LOC, 1999, pp.2)<sup>3</sup>*

By the end of 1989, Jordan had adopted an economic reforming measure (Structural Adjustment Programme: SAP) to stabilise its economy and introduce it to the global market. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 interrupted this process and Jordan had to adjust to the adverse impact of the Gulf crisis in many ways. Income from exports to the Gulf countries was cut down, and financial aid to Jordan was reduced due to Jordan's perceived political support of Iraq at that time. Remittances from the Gulf countries ceased to flow to Jordan, and unemployment rates rose 1988-1991 from 8.8%-18.8%, according to Poverty assessment (1994), due the increased number of Jordanian returnees from Gulf countries who were released from their jobs, CARDNE (1998). GNP per capita dropped from \$1,640 in the early eighties to \$1,190 in 1993 (HDR, 1996). According to the WDR (1996) the GNP per capita average annual growth rate 1985-1994 was minus 5.6% compared with plus 6.9% in 1965-1983. While the Jordanian total external debt reached \$7,100 million in the early 1990s, the net value of external debt in 1994 was 87% according to WDR (1996) and the annual inflation rate was around 10% during that time.

#### 3.2.4.1 Structural Adjustment Programme: a reforming measure:

SAP is defined in brief as a procedure of 'getting the prices right' (Pfieffer, 1999). The interrupted SAPI (1989-1992) was renewed by a seven-year agreement with the IMF and the World Bank SAPII (1992-1999). An ASPL was granted to Jordan in 1994.

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<sup>3</sup> This quotation has been taken from 'Chapter three: the economy' section, pp. 2 of 2 in Jordan: country study, Library of Congress web document. The document was stored in a temporary file for display purposes which is normally purged from the system in few hours.  
Website: [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cstdy:17:/temp/frd\\_v16C::](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cstdy:17:/temp/frd_v16C::)

The third phase of SAP started in 1999 and is expected to be completed by 2002.

The main objective of SAP in Jordan aimed to increase the GDP growth rate to 4.3% in 1998. The second objective was to reduce the budget deficit before grants from 17.9% in 1991 to 5% in 1998 and to reduce the deficit in Jordan's balance of payments before grants from 23.7% in 1991 to zero in 1998 (CARDNE, 1998). Although meeting these objectives would restore stability in Jordan's economy in the long-term, the economic and social implications of the measures was likely to be severe on the micro level.

According to UN (1994), the main objectives of ASAL were:

- Market led modernisation through the removal of import monopolies on agricultural commodities and the removal of product and input subsidies.
- Efficient use of resources through introducing a schedule of irrigation water charges and establishing new mandates for water sector institutions.
- Minimal government intervention through designing a national agricultural strategy, establishing a programme to develop agricultural research and reforming the agricultural co-operative system in Jordan.

#### The Impact of SAP and ASAL

Although in economic terms, SAP succeeded in reducing inflation rates, budget deficits and external debts, it did not maintain the country's savings profile, investment and growth rates (Pfieffer, 1999). The poor people of Jordan got poorer in consequence of SAP's implementation. Employment opportunities were reduced; salaries were frozen in some divisions of the public sector and the individual calorie intake dropped to



an insufficient level for some households, which fell below the poverty line. According to CARDNE (1998), rural families living under the abject poverty line increased from 0.6% in 1987 to 2.5% in 1992 and more rapidly to 17.2% in the first half of 1996.

Rural and Bedouin families who depend heavily on the agricultural sector as the main source of their income, were mainly affected by the removal of subsidies on animal feed and agricultural fertilisers (see Oakeley *et al.*, 1996). Small and medium size owners of livestock were forced either to reduce their flock sizes or sell their flocks in some cases when they no longer were able to provide them with unsubsidised feeds (Roe, 1998).

Comparing the difference in animal feed prices before and after the removal of subsidies, illustrates clearly that livestock owners had to adjust their livestock keeping strategies to the emerging hard conditions. According to Roe (1998) animal feed prices increased from JD 20 to JD 85 per tonne for barley and from JD 52 to JD 100 per tonne for wheatbran, due to the removal of subsidies. This high increase in prices forced, in some cases, farmers and the Bedouin to have to prioritise between feeding their animals or their own children. It was possible, when prices were relatively low, to provide feed for animals and use their production to sustain the household consumption needs from dairy products. With the massive increase in prices, it became difficult to depend significantly on that source of provision for only partial consumption purposes. It proved to be more economic to buy dairy products directly from the market rather than produce them within the household.

Although livestock owners of 100 heads or less were compensated by 6 JD per sheep to compensate for the increase in animal feed prices, still this did not cover the drop in sheep owners' profits, which was equivalent to up to 80% in 1996. All Jordanians were compensated by 1.28 JD due to the abolition of the bread subsidy in 1996, regardless of

their monthly income. This caused a major negative impact on the poor people whose daily survival depended on bread and tea. As a result, riots took place in the south-eastern part of Jordan, which is considered as one of the poorest areas in the country, immediately after the government took this action (CARDNE, 1998).

The economic and social implications of this programme are thus clear. Economically, since it was no longer profitable nor affordable in certain cases for the Bedouin to maintain the same flock size, strategic decisions had to be made regarding their ownership. On the social level, the strategic decision the Bedouin had to make encouraged changes in their lifestyle from livestock owners to full time employees or jobless citizens depending on the case. This meant that the Bedouin's social environment was inevitably affected by economic changes and they were forced to adapt accordingly. This has been associated with the development of new attitudes towards reducing livestock ownership, since it has become unpredictable and risky. In addition, a stronger attitude towards pursuing education and securing professional careers has evolved.

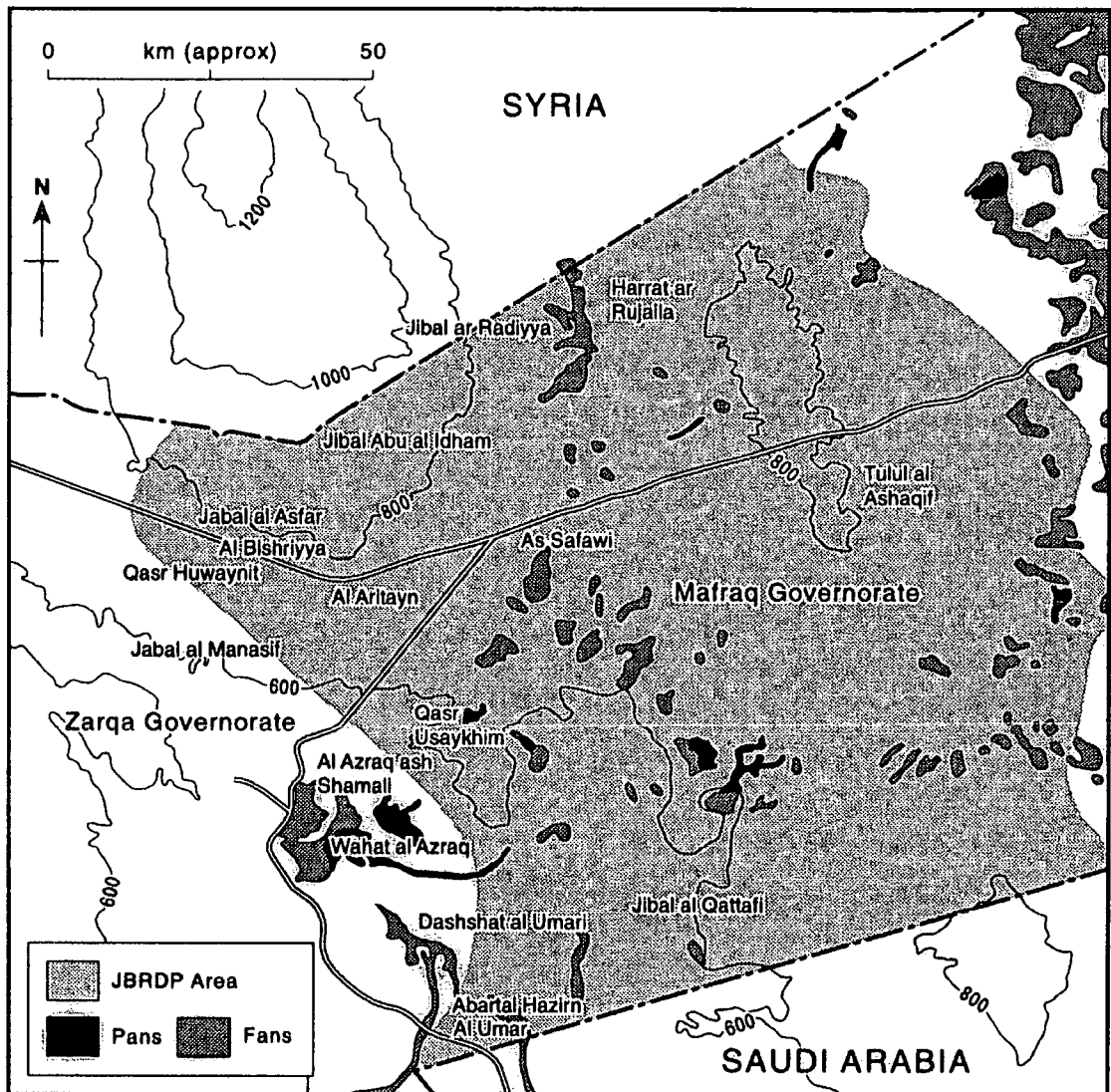
#### Features Missing from SAP and ASAL

Although SAP has proved to be an effective restructuring measure on the macro level of the economy, yet the impact of such programmes on the micro and human levels still needs to be questioned. As Ostergaard (1992) argues, macro economic strategies such as structural adjustment programmes have failed to alleviate poverty in the Third World. Therefore, a question needs to be raised about whether such programmes should include poverty alleviation targets in their agendas in the first place or not. If the answer is no, then, as Pfiefer (1999) suggests, a new set of macro economic, environmental and socially responsible incentives for private investment, along with an emphasis on active public and human inputs, needs to be introduced. In brief, it is essential when macro policies are designed, to take into consideration

micro human development needs in order to reduce to the minimum the negative impact of such programmes on the society in general.

### 3.3 The Bedouin of the North-Eastern Badia in Jordan

Figure 3.2: The BRDP area in the north-eastern Badia of Jordan



Source: Allison *et al.* (1998) 'Geology, geomorphology, Hydrology, Groundwater and physical resources'

### 3.3.1 An overview

*"The modern history of Jordan has given the country a population derived from many ethnic backgrounds. The native Jordanians are Bedou and the inhabitants of settled villages and towns that have existed in the land of Jordan for millennia. The Bedou, or Bedouin as they are called in English, are the inhabitants of the semi arid, steppe like desert, called the Badia in Arabic. Originally, nomadic or semi nomadic desert dwellers, the Bedou migrate seasonally along the fixed routes defined by their sources of pasturage and water. In the winter, the Bedou migrate to the rich lands of the Jordan Rift Valley to escape the harsh desert conditions. Traditionally herders, the Bedou would take their animals, families, tents and a few belongings with them. Today, most Bedou have become urbanised or semi-nomadic." (LOC, 1999, pp.2).<sup>4</sup>*

The picture of Bedouin society in Jordan might be best described as in the last sentence of the quotation above. Several changes have occurred in the Bedouin lifestyle and social structure. The nomadic or semi-nomadic feature of Bedouin societies in Jordan has been replaced by a sedentary or settled citizenship. Increasingly, the Bedouin are choosing paid occupations, particularly in the Jordanian army, instead of depending on the increasingly unpredictable income from livestock activities. The provision of infrastructure services, medical services and schooling, as part of government's settlement oriented policy towards the Bedouin, has affected their nomadic lifestyle. Although tribal affiliation has been reinforced by land allocation for settlement purposes, extended family and clan is taking over from tribal consideration as a reference point.

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<sup>4</sup> This quotation has been taken from 'People, Land and Climate' section, pp. 2 of 4 in Jordan: country study, Library of Congress web document. The document was stored in a temporary file for display purposes which is normally purged from the system in few hours. Website: <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/people.htm>

### 3.3.2 Changes in the Bedouin Lifestyle

The Bedouin lifestyle is often associated with nomadism and pastoralism in terms of describing their economic and spatial organisation. Chatty (1996) argues that nomadism and pastoralism are two inter-related definitions but their inter-relationship is not always absolute. The Bedouin of Jordan could be identified as nomads if they were constantly on the move looking for pasture and water. They may also be referred to as pastoralists if their economic dependence relies on husbandry and livestock production. The Bedouin these days cannot be categorised by either of these terms. Many changes, over the last 50 years, have occurred in the Bedouin lifestyle that require reconsideration of their status in order accurately to describe who the Bedouin are according to their actual economic and spatial organisation.

Traditionally, the Bedouin's social structure has been based on patriarchal tribal grounds. The tribe, according to Abu Jaber *et al.* (1987), is the basic social unit around which a number of patrilineal families, who are descended from a common ancestor, revolves. Extended family structure was the common social structure that involved collective social and economic activities. Recently, among the Bedouin in Jordan, nuclear families with their independent economic organisation, have partially replaced the extended mode of familial organisation. Increasingly, detachment between patrilineal families is taking place due to a reduction in inter-related relationships, both economic and social.

These constantly weakened relationships may be due to several factors. The introduction of technological and modern production operations within the Bedouin economy is one factor. The replacement of camels with trucks is another evident example of modernisation and its implications in Bedouin lifestyle and activities (Chatty, 1996). These changes in production activities entailed other changes in the gender division of roles between men and women. Although such roles have always been different, yet they were complementary. The mechanised

nomadism, as Abdulla *et al.* (1999) puts it, has lightened the burden of women's duties, which included water fetching and wood collecting in the past, to relatively less exhausting duties. Men's roles as well were replaced by a different set of practices that were not recognised as part of their set of responsibilities in the early days. Bedouin men those days became truck drivers rather than camel herders. The modernisation wave opened new proprieties for hiring labour instead of using the domestic work force. Milkers, cheese makers and hired shepherds are now commonly integrated into the contemporary Bedouin lifestyle.

The Bedouin within the past 50 years have gone through several major changes; settlement versus mobile nomadic life, modern versus traditional and basic production activities and individualistic nuclear families versus tribal extended human organisation structures. These all have contributed to the development of the Bedouin's social lifestyle. It is not the issue whether these changes have negatively or positively affected the Bedouin lifestyle. The main issue is how much the Bedouin have managed to accommodate themselves to these changes. It is not possible for a community to be static over a long period of time and not to go through developmental changes. Thus, it remains important to recognise the changing factors within a community and the adaptive strategies that may encompass major changes towards their livelihoods.

It is clear now that many aspects of Bedouin society have changed over the previous years due to a range of factors. Both economic and social developments have been equally influential and have thus transformed the Bedouin way of life into a complicated picture. This is sufficiently interesting to make it worth diverting research focus in order to comprehend and analyse its various aspects. Therefore, BRDP was set up as a response to this idea, encouraging development in the north-eastern Badia through national efforts.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Jordan's strategic location in the heart of the Middle East has played a major role in shaping its economic, political and social structures. Since its creation, Jordan has been a buffer zone due to its political and economic involvement in regional and international affairs.

Inevitably, the people of Jordan, including the small minority of the 4% Bedouin population, were hit by the changing economic and political situation in Jordan during the late eighties and early nineties, linked to the political and economic implications of the Gulf War and the relations with Gulf countries, the SAP and the devaluation of the Jordanian currency. More importantly, the Bedouin's livelihoods which had relied on the livestock industry, and proved to be profitable until the beginning of the nineties, could no longer retain this type of sole activity after the removal of animal feed subsidies and the successive years of drought during the nineties. Those factors have imposed changes on Bedouin economic and social lifestyles and livelihoods.

Therefore, the important efforts of BRDP since its establishment in 1992 have been directed towards researching the Bedouin community and understanding the real situation in the Badia in order to help the Bedouin to adapt their livelihoods through the evolving difficult circumstances. BRDP has been regularly in contact with the local people in the area researching different political, economic and social aspects of their lives, through technological transformation and by seeking to harness the natural resources available within the area.

Recently, BRDP has realised the importance of the single unit of the community, the household and its inter-relations, in understanding the mechanisms of the economic and social behaviour of the Bedouin. Therefore, more emphasis has been put on studying the social factors of the Bedouin's livelihoods, which are inevitably incorporated into all other aspects of their lives. The realisation of the importance of the human

factor in any developmental effort, made it crucial and thus desirable to decode individual and collective practices, gender and power relations, tribal considerations and other relevant aspects of Bedouin lifestyle and social organisation. The micro level analysis of households leads to a better understanding of the complex macro issues that formulate general trends concerning specific aspects in a community's life.

However, my research could be regarded as an attempt to analyse specific aspects of Bedouin livelihoods from the bottom-up through direct interaction with the Bedouin people, and specifically women, in this study that aims at understanding Bedouin livelihoods and the role of women in the Badia.



## **Chapter Four: Household Production and Domestic Economy**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses major aspects of my fieldwork findings regarding women and their productive contribution towards the economy of Bedouin households. The chapter reviews some of the literature on women and work in the Middle East presenting the persistent issue of the lack of accurate data on Arab women's participation in various activities. The chapter then moves on to categorising Bedouin female's productive contribution towards their households in terms of domestic and seasonal work. The chapter provides detailed information on Bedouin women's daily routine and mobility patterns, which are strongly linked to their productivity. Finally the chapter unfolds women's involvement in securing the household survival within the recently changing situation of the Bedouin society. The chapter draws in various cases from my fieldwork that illustrates the current situation in the northern Badia of Jordan, and more specifically in the three villages where my fieldwork was carried out.

### **4.2 Women and Work in the Middle East**

#### **4.2.1 Scarcity of Data on Women's Work in the Arab World**

Moghadam (1993:33) points out the scarcity of data representing women's economic contribution in the Middle East:

*"The region suffers from paucity of data on women's productive activities and contributions to national development. Women are under-represented in national accounts; census enumerators do not pose the correct questions and consequently receive wrong or inadequate answers regarding women's work, especially in the agricultural sector. As a result, census data in many countries frequently report an extremely small economically*

*active female population. A major problem involves definitions of work and employment; much of what women perform in the informal sector or the household is not recognised as a contribution to the national income or development which may be due to differences in definitions, even of age groups."*

The issue of women's invisible productive role and underestimation of their productive participation in census figures and national accounts has been pointed out by Boserup (1970). Repeatedly after that, scholars in economics have stressed the fact that this may inflate the Gross National and Domestic product figures in a specific country if unpaid women's outputs are accounted for in the market. While on the contrary, these figures may be underestimated when women's domestic and unpaid outputs go to the household consumption. (See Dixon-Mueller and Anker, 1988, Beneria 1982, Folbre and Able 1989.)

The United Nations publication of 1995, Women: Looking Beyond 2000 argues that the lack of data on informal, unpaid and household production, especially in developing countries is still a persistent issue, although it was identified as a major challenge towards developmental efforts about 25 years ago at the first world conference on women in Mexico city. The United Nations publication stressed that this fact is no longer gender issue but rather a major setback towards effective social and economic planning in developing countries. The failure to include unpaid domestic and personal services such as cooking, mending and child caring in the System of National Account (SNA) which determines the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in a given country is a clear example of females' unrecognised contribution towards their household maintenance. When SNA was revised to include all goods produced within the household, these female domestic activities were excluded because they were not regarded as viable in economic terms.

As a result, incorrect or inadequate figures were used to determine many governmental functions at ministerial levels regarding issues of education, urban planning and social and development strategies.

Consequently, one may conclude that decision-making regarding these fields is likely to deviate from the correct path and mislead and, as a result, produce flawed action plans to handle the persisting problematic situation in those countries.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on Women and Work in the Arab Region the marital reproductive role for Arab women has been strongly emphasised as their premium role in society due to the conservative patriarchal structure in this part of the world. Therefore, Arab women's productive economic participation is represented in low rates of female labour force participation and considered less important and secondary despite the fact that Arab women contribute a significant amount through domestic production and unpaid work to their household's survival needs.

Similarly, Dixon-Mueller (1985) points out that participation of the female agricultural labour force is the most underestimated category of female activities in developing countries. She argues that the patriarchal ideologies in the East and in Latin America undervalue the economic worth of women's activities. Much of the problem lies in the fact that surveys and population censuses use different definitions for the active members who are included in the labour force figures. For example, according to the ILO, cited in Dixon-Mueller 1985, in Egypt women's participation in the agricultural labour force was estimated to be 4% of the population in 1960. While a detailed rural labour survey showed that women compose one quarter of the productive working force in agriculture (excluding housework). Such discrepancies among data sources mislead economic planning and affect other long-term strategies in related fields.

Lobban (1998) raised an interesting point regarding the cultural and religious differences between the East and the West. He argued that the West has a clear division between culture and religion. While the East, especially Middle Eastern countries unify the sociocultural settings with

religion, whether Islamic, Christian or Jewish. Particularly in Muslim countries, traditions and culture stem from Islamic religion. Lobban argued that the problematic issue of conceptualising women's work in underdeveloped countries is due to the uneven, inaccurate and sometimes misleading disciplines used to acquire information on female's productive participation, rather than associating data discrepancies regarding women's work to religious factors such as sex segregation preference in Islam.

Mujahid (1985) puts more emphasis on both cultural and religious factors, which affect women's participation in the formal labour force. According to Mujahid (1985), Muslim countries are characterised by 75% or more of the population being Muslim. In the Middle East, most Arab countries Muslim comprise 90% of the population. In these countries, the female working force within the working age is half of those in non-Muslim countries. Mujahid (1985) argued that Muslim women's low participation in the labour force is due to the social preference of confining women to a specific set of paid work in selected sectors, such as education and public services. For example, female sales workers constitute a very low percentage of employed females in the Arab region due to the fact that women in such jobs are more likely to interact with strangers, which is not desirable according to the social interpretation of Islam. Therefore, women tend to avoid such jobs and prefer to work, for example, in the education sector, as it allows minimal interaction with strangers from the opposite sex and might possibly be a single sex (female) working environment.

A comparison of female engagement in sales occupations in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries illustrates this fact. In Jordan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates the percentage of females as sales workers was 1.1%, 3.5% and 0.8% respectively for the year 1975. However, during the seventies, in selected non-Muslim countries, such as Ecuador, Korea and Thailand the percentage of female sales workers reached 27.1%, 43.4% and 59.9%. Indonesia, a non-Arab Muslim

country, proves to be the only exception with a high percentage of females sales workers, rated at 48.3% in 1976. While Bangladesh, another non-Arab Muslim country followed the same pattern of low rates of female sales workers in 1974 with 1.2% of female workers in sales occupations, Mujahid (1985). Arab Muslim societies have a tendency to seclude women from open interaction with strangers in the market. The culture and religion work in parallel regarding limiting women's involvement in public activities. Traditions, which are extracted from religion emphasise the importance of confining Muslim women to their homes unless their economic earning is highly needed.

Flynn *et al.* (1999) summed up the nature of women's formal employment in Jordan:

*"Data on women's economic activities desegregated by sub-sector have shown that formal sector participation by women is heavily weighted toward public service occupations, and particularly teaching and government posts... although female participation in white collar occupations grew substantially, female representation in production and services decreased. Within white collar occupations, female participation among professional and technical workers increased from 28.1 percent in 1961 to 41.4 percent in 1976, with a similar substantial increase among clerical workers and smaller increases among administrative and sales workers." (pp. 5)*

Haider (1995) raised the issue of discrepancies of data collection regarding women's productive participation and the timing of conducting labour force research and surveys. She pointed out that a considerable amount of women's work is done on seasonal bases and therefore may be disregarded as an income earning activity. When a labour force participation survey in Syria asked men whether their wives worked, a large proportion replied: they did not. When the question was rephrased, "if your wife did not assist you in your work, would you be forced to hire replacement for her?" the overwhelming majority answered YES, (M. Chamie, Labour Force Participation of Lebanese Women, 1985 cited at Haider (1995) pp. 149).

I argue that the major setback of such surveys regarding women's work, is that they fail to include a considerable amount of the informal participation by women, particularly in rural and Bedouin areas. Hence, most of women's work is either domestic or located outside the formal employment sector and thus not economically valued. Furthermore, surveys conducted to measure female labour force participation use ILO standards for employment based on a one-hour criterion. This standard measurement fails to capture many types of work, including unpaid work, seasonal work and work outside the formal sector (Flynn *et al.*, 1999).

Beneria (1997) classified the unrecognised sectors regarding women's productive participation into subsistence production, informal paid work, domestic production and related tasks and volunteer work. She argued that the first two sectors receive more attention and are constantly reviewed by economists and development scholars. This has resulted in including subsistence production in national income accounts since it substitutes purchasing specific goods from the market when produced domestically. Whereas, the latter two categories are still considered ambiguous and not well recognised as economic activities. The fact that the volunteer and domestic work is conceptualised as unpaid and therefore unprofitable in economic terms complicates its inclusion in active labour remunerated work. The only difference between the latter two sectors is the familial and unfamilial related type of activity. Work offered by someone to others not in the immediate family is considered as voluntary in this context (Beneria, 1997).

The literature stresses that the level of women's participation in the informal economy<sup>1</sup> is high and usually underestimated in labour force surveys. Shami and Taminian's research in 1990 concluded that the informal agricultural sector offers significant income-earning

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<sup>1</sup> Unregulated and relatively labour intensive sector, which allows an easy entry with low capital investment required for those who cannot find regular wage employment. This sector includes petty trading, self-employment, casual and irregular wage work, employment in personal services or in small-scale enterprises in manufacturing and services, Weild, D (1992) cited at Haider (1995).

opportunities for Jordanian women. Women's work in this sector, although poorly paid, contributes directly to the survival of the households. Although Shami and Taminian's work does not offer an in-depth analysis of informal sector activities carried out by women, it shows that women and men may choose to engage in informal activities to support their households when formal employment opportunities are scarce or when people are not qualified enough to take formal jobs. Some households may be sustained by formal employment, yet a part-time informal job may be desired to keep up with the increasing living expenses.

#### 4.2.2 Arab Women's Participation in the Labour Force

In this section, I shall discuss Arab women's involvement in the labour force, particularly in Jordan. This section is strongly related to the previous one, but to give more emphasis to Jordanian women's participation in the labour force, I find it useful to stress the Jordanian case separately.

Looking back at the percentage of female labour participation in the Middle East region, it is very low compared to other developing and Western countries. Several factors must be taken into account to give a holistic picture of the current situation. Social and value systems, economic structure, demographic characteristics and the legal system should be considered when female labour participation is the subject of analysis (see Anker, 1982; Abu Nasr *et al.*, 1985; Toubia, 1988; Modhadam and Khoury 1995).

Anker (1982) pointed out that studies to be done within the Arab Middle Eastern region should take into account the differences between theory and practice. For example, the New Household Economics model (Sen, 1990) is based on the model of nuclear households as the unit of analysis. This model is not easily applicable in Arab Muslim societies, and especially to poor households, since the extended household model

has been the common structure of households within that region. Even with the emergence of nuclear families, possibly as a strategy to reduce the negative effects of poverty, familial relations remain strong and much support can be provided as a result of familial ties with other households. Therefore, Anker suggests that the concept of the household needs to be redefined in order to encompass the characteristics of Middle Eastern households. Another point noted by Anker is the necessity of decoding and understanding women's obligations and rights associated with nuclear and extended households, which may differ from one setting to another.

Due to the rapid economic changes that are noticeably affecting most Middle- Eastern countries, women's status and roles are changing accordingly yet to a lesser extent than the changes in economic settings. CARDNE's report (1998) on The Impact of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme on the Rural Poor in Jordan (see Background chapter no. 3), shows that women's poverty is not less than that of men. In many cases, it exceeds men's because of the social and legal constraints they face in society. Although only 4 percent of female labour goes to the agriculture sector in Jordan, according to the Department of General Statistics (DGS), their unpaid family labour contributes a major uncounted contribution to that sector. In 1997 the a DGS survey showed that 51 percent of female labour is in the informal sector, mainly agriculture (CARDNE, 1998).

According to the World Bank Report (1995) formal female labour force participation in Jordan was rated at 11% of Jordanian labour force for that year. In 1998, this percentage increased to 15% according to a study conducted by Jordan's Department of Statistics and the Fafo Institute for Applied Social Sciences in Norway, showing that 11% of adult women were officially employed and, in addition, 4 % of women were actively seeking employment. This represents a low rate of female participation in the labour force compared to other Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon and Kuwait.



According to Mehra and Feldstien (1998) a low participation rate of women in the labour market implies a larger participation rate in the informal sector of the economy. Their findings show that a small proportion of women are considered economically inactive in Jordan in comparison with Moroccan and Tunisian women. Notwithstanding, women in all Muslim countries contribute non-trivial amounts of labour to domestic and household economies; a contribution that has been underestimated in the official figures illustrating women's productive economic participation. Recent studies of Jordan's labour market, according to DGS, show that the total Jordanian labour force participation is 42% of the population aged above 15 for the year 1997. The women's share of the labour force for the same year was 13.6 percent in comparison to 69.2% for men. Back in 1987 the female labour force participation was rated at 9.1% and 6.7% in 1979. This low female labour force participation rate generally reflects the high dependency rate of family members on only one member of the family, mainly the head of the household, in the Jordanian community; although in some cases a number of adult males or females might work and contribute to the household's budget. The average number of dependents on the supporter in Jordanian households is three persons. Large and extended families have fewer savings opportunities and thus lower investment possibilities if their earnings are the same as smaller households.

Rural women's participation in the formal labour force is normally lower than that of urban women. However, the informal sector accounts for more women labourers in rural areas. There is only a slight difference in men's labour force participation rates when comparing rural and urban areas, because of their common responsibilities for providing the means of living for their families. The differences illustrated in female rural and urban work force participation is due to the social and economic variables affecting their status such as educational levels, marital status, fertility rates and the availability of employment opportunities. In addition, there is a difference in rural and urban areas in social

interpretation of women's role in the society whether by men who have control over women's lives or by women themselves. Urban women strive to obtain higher social status and to enhance their self-esteem by securing proper employment. While the social and economic nature in rural communities weakens such values in women's eyes and they prioritise their domestic roles and contribution to survival attitudes.

According to DGS<sup>2</sup>, the participation of older women has been increasing since 1987. Prior to this year, statistics showed that women usually pulled out of the labour force at the age of 30. This was due to female preference to leave work after getting married and having children. According to DGS (1999) the age at first marriage increased for women by 11% between 1979 and 1994. Recent statistics show that women tend to stay in work longer, leaving the labour market at the age of 45 these days. This characteristic applies to women in both rural and urban areas. It is mostly due to the increase in women's age at first marriage, the increase in levels of educational attainment and the supportive legislation that facilitates female incorporation in the labour market, all of which, presumably, suggest a change in social attitudes regarding these issues.

Kawar (2000) conducted research on 302 households in Amman to assess the impact of paid work on young women's lives. The results show that young Jordanian females seek employment to secure their financial needs rather than to pursue their career and personal development ambitions. It is important to take into consideration that Kawar's survey targeted females in relatively poor households in Hay Nazzal (one of the low income areas in Amman). This study focused on the attitudes of both the female workers and their families towards female education and employment. Major differences were found.

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<sup>2</sup> Although I have criticised this kind of official data collection sources earlier, I would still have to refer back to it as it is among the few sources available representing large-scale census figures. I tried to limit my usage of this source to commenting on general trends rather than absolute figures.

The families regarded their daughters' attainment of higher education as a means to acquire a prestigious position in the society not only for the daughter but also for her family. Whilst daughters who manage to reach high levels of secondary and university education, depending on the level of general educational attainment among other females within the same category, regard education as a facilitator to gain some independence through securing their own income. One case mentioned in Kawar's study illustrates that a female's negotiation power and ability to influence decisions made within her household increased when she made a monthly contribution to the household budget. When she no longer was able to contribute to the household budget after leaving her job, more interference into her personal life is likely. Another case mentions that after the woman threatened to cut off her monthly contribution if her brother continued to question her movements, she was able to live within a less restrictive environment.

Families put strict mobility restrictions on their daughters according to Kawar (2000). Using public transport is not allowed in many cases unless the females commute in groups back and forth. Although public transport is regarded as a male domain by the society, still single females reported that they might use buses during the day with no restrictions. It is regarded as a safer and cheaper means of transport than private taxis. The time of commuting to work is another important issue in female employment. It is mostly desired, if the family allows their daughters to work, that females return home before dark.

Statistics show that women's educational attainment is a major barrier towards their participation in the labour force. Although illiteracy rates for females above 15 decreased from 48.2% in 1979 to 17.5 in 1998, their participation in the labour force has not accordingly increased (Princess Basma Centre, 1999). It is stated that in 1952, female participation in the labour force was estimated at 3.5%, and 14% in 1998. Men's participation in the labour force is 69%, while women's unemployment is double that of men's. Similarly, women's share of

scholarships is low: only 19% for internal scholarships and 7% for overseas ones (Princess Basma Centre, 1999). This is due to family attitudes towards restricting female mobility and discouraging them from living abroad on their own.

There is no doubt that women's contribution within peasant households, whether visible or invisible, helps to secure the essential survival needs and to provide the baseline for household consumption. The poorer the household is, the more evident the role of women's contribution becomes. Shukri (1996) in an ethnographic study in northern Jordan found out that women in wealthier farming households engage in minimal, if any, agricultural activities. Their role becomes supervisory in such cases where labour is hired to perform various duties. The case of poorer households is different. Women in poor households perform various activities in all stages of agricultural work together with men. Domestic tasks stay the prime responsibility of women in middle class households. Shukri's research found that women of this class participate in a defined number of agricultural activities and tending of livestock but to a lesser extent than poorer women.

Concluding this section, the participation of Arab women in the formal labour force has increased due to economic and social changes such as the changing attitudes regarding age at first marriage and educational commitment. The participation of rural women in productive activities has increased simultaneously in both formal employment and informal activities such as seasonal work and household related duties. Yet women's significant roles in unpaid agricultural work and domestic activities continue to be economically undervalued and lack the recognition they deserve regarding securing the survival needs of the household.

### **4.3 Bedouin Women's Roles and Productive Contribution Towards Household Maintenance**

A study was undertaken by Gilian Levando amongst the Bedouin women in part of the Northern Negev in Israel, 1972-1973, examining Bedouin women's productive roles and their status within the household. She argued that even then in spite of the widely spread Western stereotype of Bedouin women seen as slaves, and overworked and unhappy members of their society, they were reasonably content with the significantly productive roles they were playing. She found out that it is partially true that Bedouin women have been burdened with domestic and livestock activities and have been subordinate in one way or another to their men over time but they do not completely perceive this as a negative situation. She argued that Bedouin women were compensated by being more secure and better protected than liberated Western women. Out of my fieldwork findings I can argue that these days women in the Badia recognise that their contribution to the household survival is essential, as will be discussed later on. I can say that they are reasonably happy with the role they assume even with the recent increasing demands for their more tangible productive contribution towards the welfare of their households in many ways.

The findings of my fieldwork in the Northern Badia of Jordan provide another good example of women's productive roles and the extent to which their contribution is undervalued and commonly unrecognised as productive. Female labour in the Badia can be categorised into two types: unpaid domestic and agriculture-related activities; and the informal seasonal and poorly paid work.

I shall present and discuss each separately, taking into consideration the different variables that affect the division of labour among women in the Badia, such as, age, previous experience, educational attainment and the social perception of women's work.

#### 4.3.1 Domestic and Agriculture-Related Activities

All the women I interviewed during my fieldwork were engaged in one kind or another of domestic work. In the 34 households I visited, including the original 29 households of my target group and the other five added later, housewives shouldered the responsibility of domestic work. In cases when the household did not have any livestock or farm related work, housewives undertook the total responsibility of managing housework.

In Dair Al-Kahf village I interviewed women in 12 households. Out of these 12 households, four housewives were totally responsible for the domestic work. This was due to the fact that three of them were newly married and living on their own with their husbands and children. In the fourth case, the mother shouldered responsibility for the housework although she had an adult daughter who was ill and therefore could not undertake any domestic chores but rather needed her mother's support. Housework in the remaining eight households was the responsibility of daughters-in-law in four cases, leaving the remaining four households to be managed by an adult daughter or collectively by both daughters and daughters-in-law.

In Abu Al-Farth Village three housewives were totally in charge of their household domestic activities due to the fact that their adolescent daughters were in school. The other two households included in my field study within this village were partly managed by the mother and one of her elder daughters who in one case had no schooling and therefore had undertaken most of the housework, while in the other case, the daughter made major contributions towards housework during her spare time after university hours.

In Salhia village, I had encountered various cases regarding the division of housework among female members of the household. In five households, the mother or housewife was the one in charge of domestic

work because they were the only ones available to assume housework responsibilities. In three other households, the daughters were the ones in charge of domestic work rather than their mothers because they were still unmarried and did not attend school. In two other cases, the divorced daughters who came back to live with their natal families took the responsibility of housework. I noticed that in those two cases the daughters were more powerful than the other females who had not been married before. They assumed the role of the head of the household since in one case the father was dead and in the other he was an elderly man who needed someone to look after him. In one specific household the mother was paralysed and had taken one of her daughters out of school to look after her and undertake housework while her other daughter was travelling around herding livestock accompanied by their father. Another case in Salhia village was for one household that was managed by the housewife and her sister-in-law who, together with her husband, shared the house and had verbally agreed to assume afternoon housework after attending her secondary classes at school. The remaining household of my target group in this village witnessed a division of housework between the mother and her daughter, who was attending school and helping with housework in her spare time.

The kind of domestic work indicated here includes all domestic chores concerned with the household's welfare, such as, cooking, baking bread cleaning, washing clothes, serving visitors and caring for little children (except breast feeding). I have to stress the fact that these chores are highly gender segregated in the Bedouin community. Men do not take part in any of these chores unless, in rare cases, emergencies force them to do so. In one case in Abu Al-Farth village, the wife reported that her husband was forced one day to cook some rice and sauce for their children because she got ill and could not prepare lunch for the children before they returned from school. She said that normally in such cases when the housewife feels weak and cannot assume her responsibilities, one of her female relatives, especially one living nearby, would cook on her behalf until she gets better. In that particular case, the next-door

female relative went to Mafraq city for the whole day and therefore her help was not available. Her husband was obliged to cook himself instead of his wife. The wife said that her husband has always been considerate and co-operative in such cases. The husband said that he had experienced something he has not done before and he added that he would not prefer to repeat it or assume any other of his wife's responsibilities unless a similar situation occurs that requires his contribution.

In almost all cases mentioned above, where the mother or housewife has to shoulder responsibility for domestic duties her daughter is either too young to assume such responsibilities or attends school and therefore can contribute only a little towards housework after school. I can say, the only exception was Um Hussein's case in Dair Al-Kahf village where her 16-year-old daughter was ill and needed her mother's support. All the other cases where the mother had adolescent daughter(s) and/or a daughter-in-law living in the same house, their domestic burden was lightened by the other female members' contributions towards domestic activities.

#### 4.3.1.1 Daily Routine Patterns

I asked the females I interviewed to provide me with their daily routine pattern, which they followed. I used this technique to trace the allocation of household activities among female members of the households. I asked each housewife, daughter, daughter-in-law and elderly woman to list down the activities they assumed within the household. I noticed after analysing and comparing their daily routine patterns regarding domestic work that elderly women do not assume any daily work when younger female members are available around the household. In fact, if they were living on their own, which is a rare case in the Badia, they would be dependent on any of their relatives that lived nearby. I came across two cases, one in Dair Al-Kahf village where the elderly woman could not sleep in a built house and had to use a tent outside the house



where she used to dwell, cook and sleep. Her daughter-in-law was the one responsible for the elderly woman's food and hygiene. In the other case, in Salhia village, the elderly woman told me that she prefers to have her own house and be independent although she would go and eat with her next-door relatives often.

Elderly women limit their contribution to the housework to dairy processing and caring for livestock within the household boundaries. This appears to be related to their age and previous experience. Most of the elderly women interviewed said that the younger generation is stronger and therefore can assume these tasks and they find it silly to exhaust themselves while younger females are around. They added that because previously they used to dwell in tents, they are not used to the 'modern' version of housework that is needed to keep the house clean. They added that even the kind of food they eat these days is different from that they used to live on. One elderly woman told me that they used to consume limited types of food, mainly meat, milk and some grains. She added that these days they tend to substitute meat with different kinds of vegetables which were not used by them in the old times and therefore she prefers not to contribute since younger women know how to handle them better. For this reason and because their contribution to the housework was seasonal (especially in cases of livestock ownership) and did not take a daily set pattern of activities, I decided not to present their daily routine pattern in a form of detailed daily tasks.

### The Pattern of Married Women's Daily Routine

Younger women assume their mothers responsibilities when they have to undertake housework. The older women in these cases engage in external activities such as seasonal farm work and livestock related activities, including herding, milking, and feeding animals. The only activity that was not included in the domain of female responsibilities in the Badia was selling and buying (trading) livestock. This is considered

to be a male task. Comparing the two patterns of daily routines for young women and older married women illustrates major similarities regarding women's daily activities. Normally, older married women, who have grown-up daughters that help in housework, have a daily routine pattern similar to the following:

Table 4.1: The typical daily routine pattern of married women

TIME	ACTIVITY
6-7 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dawn prayer<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Preparing breakfast</li> <li>• Preparing children for school</li> </ul>
8-10 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding animals and walking them around</li> <li>• Some input into cleaning the house</li> </ul>
10-11 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free time for coffee breaks and chatting with the elderly and neighbours</li> </ul>
12-1 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some input into preparing lunch</li> <li>• Feeding animals</li> </ul>
1-3 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having lunch and occasional input into tidying up afterwards<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
3-5 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free time for coffee and family gathering</li> <li>• Feeding animals</li> </ul>
5-7 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for children and feeding them</li> <li>• Occasional inputs into preparing dinner</li> </ul>
8-9 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering for dinner and tea<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• Putting children to sleep</li> <li>• Cleaning after dinner</li> </ul>
9-11PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching T.V</li> <li>• Chatting</li> <li>• Going to sleep</li> </ul>

It is worth mentioning that during free times (such as between 10-11 a.m. and 3-5 p.m. in Table 4.1), although women gather for coffee and chatting, at the same time they might be engaged in other activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Most Bedouin women perform 5 prayers per day including dawn prayer mentioned in table 4.1. The other 4 prayers are not included in the above figure because its timing vary around the year and each woman does it according to her free time. The dawn prayer is typically done first thing in the morning when women wake up and therefore is included above.

<sup>4</sup> In ordinary days, Bedouin men, women and children eat together if they all happen to be around when food is ready. In special occasions where there is a large number of guests, men tend to eat separately, while women and children would be served food after men have finished their meal.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 4.

In some cases, women watch over their little children and feed them, look after livestock left grazing nearby the household or repair clothes and weave wool, which is considered more as a hobby these days rather than a productive activity needed for household maintenance.

This typical pattern (Table 4.1) varies among married women according to their age and household ownership of livestock. Newly married wives with no children or livestock to look after, have a more flexible daily routine pattern. Their domestic duties, which occupy most of their time, are spread over the day since they do not need to fit other activities, such as looking after children or caring for livestock, within their daily activities. They have a daily routine similar to that of unmarried daughters who are completely in charge of domestic work with some contribution towards livestock and child caring activities in cases when the household may have either or both. However, newly married women with no children or livestock are often expected to contribute to their parents-in-law's activities, such as helping to milk animals (if present) and assisting in housework. During one interview with a housewife in Dair Al-Kahf village, she reported that she often asks for her daughter-in-law's help with housework. She sees her daughter-in-law free most of the time and by virtue of tradition she is supposed to be of great help to her mother-in-law since she has little responsibility because she is newly married and without children.

Wives with children and/or livestock to look after, enjoy less leisure time and are overwhelmed with many duties. If they have adolescent daughters to whom they can transfer some of the household chores and child caring activities, they tend to concentrate more on livestock activities. When the household does not own livestock or if they keep a small number of animals for consumption purposes, then they are more likely to have spare time and contribute more towards domestic duties. In 15 cases out of the 29 households of my target group in the three villages, mothers were totally freed of domestic work due to the fact that they had adolescent daughters who were in charge of domestic work

leaving their mothers to look after the livestock the households owned. Although the number of animals these households owned varied from 5-150, still the concept remained unchanged. The mothers were responsible for taking care of livestock regardless of their number, while the daughters did housework.

Three households in Dair Al-Kahf owned grocery stores nearby their houses. In those cases, the mothers were responsible for the daily running of the shops, in addition to managing the daily activities of the livestock owned by the households in two of these cases. Male members of the three households contributed to running the grocery shops, occasionally, when the mothers were unavailable. Daughters were seldom expected to operate the grocery shops even in cases where no one else was available to run them. The shops would be closed for the periods when no male member or relatively old women were there to run them. It is socially unacceptable for young unmarried females to engage in a public activity where there are more chances of interacting with men and strangers (except for one case that will be referred to in the next chapter).

It is important to note that what I describe as the typical daily routine pattern of married women in the Badia may include or exclude various activities depending on their household status and ownership. Therefore, although it is possible to draw a specific daily routine pattern for married women in each household I visited, this would be rather repetitive in most cases. Major differences may occur when, for example, the household owns a grocery store, as in the cases mentioned above, where women would spend a considerable amount of their time running it and, in other cases, when women go for seasonal work outside the house. In these cases, younger women will be available to manage housework instead of older women, as presented.

## The Pattern of Young Women's Daily Routine

Unmarried women who live with their families and do not attend school, university or work, typically follow the daily routine:

Table 4.2: The pattern of young women's daily routine (women who do not attend school or university, or work)

TIME	ACTIVITY
6-7 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dawn prayer (see footnote no.3)</li><li>• Preparing breakfast</li><li>• Preparing young brothers and sisters for school</li></ul>
8-10 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cleaning and tidying up the house</li><li>• Baking Bread<sup>6</sup></li><li>• Some input into feeding animals and walking them around the house</li></ul>
10-11 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Free time for coffee breaks and chatting with other female members of the household or nearby relatives</li></ul>
12-1 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cooking lunch</li></ul>
1-3 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serving lunch</li><li>• Cleaning up after lunch</li><li>• Tidying up the kitchen and preparing tea</li></ul>
3-5 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having a break, chatting and watching T.V.</li></ul>
5-7 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Caring for young brothers and sisters and feeding them</li><li>• Preparing dinner</li></ul>
8-9 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serving dinner and tea</li><li>• Washing dishes and cleaning up after dinner</li></ul>
9-11PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing tea</li><li>• Watching T.V and chatting with family</li><li>• Going to sleep</li></ul>

This typical daily routine differs from that of young women who attend school or university, or work. Their contribution towards the daily housework follows this daily routine:

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<sup>6</sup> Baking bread might take place early in the morning before preparing breakfast if the dough was prepared overnight, or later at noon-time for lunch.

Table 4.3: The pattern of young women's daily routine (women who attend school or university, or work)

<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
6-7 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dawn prayer (see footnote no.3)</li> <li>• Preparing breakfast</li> <li>• Getting prepared for school</li> </ul>
8 AM-1PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending school</li> </ul>
1-3 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving lunch</li> <li>• Tidying up and cleaning kitchen after lunch</li> </ul>
3-5 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free time (resting)</li> <li>• Doing homework</li> <li>• Caring for younger brothers and sisters</li> </ul>
5-7 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing housework</li> <li>• Preparing dinner</li> </ul>
7-8 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving dinner</li> <li>• Tidying up after dinner</li> <li>• Caring for young children and putting them to sleep</li> </ul>
9-10 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching T.V.</li> <li>• Going to sleep</li> </ul>

The above pattern is applicable to school-age females from 13-17 years with little or no involvement in livestock activities, depending on their household status and ownership. This typical pattern of daily routine is applicable to this group of young women. It differs to a certain extent from that of unmarried young women who do not attend school and married women's daily routines mentioned earlier.

Comparing the previous three patterns of daily routine, illustrates general similarities regarding domestic work. The married women's daily routine is very similar to that of unmarried females who stay at home, except for specific differences due to the intensive involvement of older women in livestock activities when available to their households. Young women who attend school or university, or work, have lesser involvement in housework and, accordingly, in livestock activities due to their other

commitments, leaving more domestic work for older women to shoulder within their households.<sup>7</sup>

Age and enrolment in school are two factors that cause differences that can be traced in the daily routine of young women mentioned above. The category of young women who do not attend school is likely to be involved in domestic and livestock activities to a larger extent than young women who attend school or university, or work. I was told that housework becomes the prime responsibility of the former group. Moreover, when we discussed livestock activities, it was clear that this group's contribution towards livestock maintenance is greater than the latter group regarding nearby herding, milking and milk processing activities under the supervision of older women. Older women supervise young women's milk processing duties and keep the processing of ghee and dried yoghurt for themselves to undertake. They consider it their speciality and do not see young women as being capable of managing such complicated tasks unless they prove to be well trained. I was told by several young women that dealing with livestock is a tiring job that they tend to avoid unless their input is highly needed. They added that they dislike the smelly atmosphere of livestock enclosures and try always to avoid it in order not to catch the smell.

Older women told me that young women in the past used to be much more involved in the herding activity. One woman said: "we used to depend on females to herd the animals more than males. They used to go away from home, accompanied by a male member of the household and camp for several days being in charge of livestock. These days it is no longer safe to go on such trips because of the existence of non Bedouin people in the Badia who we consider strangers and therefore cannot to be trusted" (Um Hussein, second interview on February 12, 2000 in Salhia village).

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<sup>7</sup> The major change of women's daily routine patterns during Ramadan (Muslim month of fasting) is that preparing lunch shifts to a later hour during the day which normally starts at 2 p.m. to enable women to serve food around sunset. All the other activities remain unchanged and women have more flexibility during day-time to perform domestic activities.

#### 4.3.2 Seasonal and Part-Time Work

Many changes in the social and economic systems in the northern Badia of Jordan (see Background Chapter no. 3) have altered the picture of the women's contribution to their household survival strategies.

At the present, women seek part time and seasonal employment during summer vegetable and winter olive picking seasons, by which they contribute to their household budgets. Farm work, especially tomato farms, is a widely spread and relatively new source of seasonal and part-time employment provision that is mostly available for women. Depending on the season, olive picking in Azraq offers another opportunity for employment for Bedouin women. For the reason that such employment is poorly paid and physically demanding, men rarely engage in such work even if they are unemployed.

Farm owners, on the other hand, prefer to hire married and young women because of their high commitment and ability to work for longer hours. I came across a case in Dair Al-Kahf village and three other cases in Salhia village where female members of the households were engaged in farm work either in the Badia or in Azraq. I have not encountered any case of female's involvement in Abu Al-Farth's village perhaps due to the limited number of my household sample in that village (five households) and partially because of this village's location.

In cases where women cannot leave their houses for long hours, for example when young children are at home, they would lose a chance of earning an additional income that would go directly to household consumption. To avoid this, some women, as in two cases in Salhia village, leave their children under the supervision of their neighbours or elder female relatives in order to be able to engage in farm work and not to lose this opportunity.



As mentioned before, young women usually prefer to undertake domestic work rather than outside farm activities. A division of duties was normally agreed in these cases where mothers go to work on farms and their daughters take responsibility of housework. Some young women may desire to go for farm work to earn some money for personal needs that are difficult to cover from the limited household budgets. This was illustrated to me in one case in Salhia village. The two adolescent daughters undertook farm work although they thought it was unpleasant to engage in such work, but still they had to do it in order to secure the money needed for their clothing and school stationery. They sought seasonal summer farm work during the school vacation to be able to secure their personal needs and contribute to the household budget for a short period.

As I embarked on the second phase of my research in Salhia village, I found out that, women there were more involved in such types of seasonal employment than other women in Abu Al-Farth and Dair Al-Kahf villages where I conducted the first phase of my research. This was due to the fact that Salhia village is located on the main Mafraq - Safawi road and has easier access to farms and other employment opportunities than the other two off- road villages.

I worked closely with one household in Salhia village composed of a husband, wife and 9 children. Although Abu Arref's household had a permanent 50 JD monthly income plus an army retirement pension of 120 JD, still it was not enough to support this big family. Six of their children are going to school, one is 18 years old and at home and there are two infants. The wife, who is known as an active woman in her village, decided to engage in any type of informal activities that would provide her family with more income to accommodate the increasing livelihood requirements since she had no educational qualifications that would enable her to find a secure job.

She worked as a tomato picker in nearby farms from 6 in the morning until four in the afternoon, leaving her two young children with her elder daughter at home. When the tomato season was over, she used to accompany a group of other women to Azraq to work picking olives. The olive picking season lasts for two months. She used to spend most of the season away from home in a tent next to the farm. She used to go back home every two weeks to check on her family and take back the money she had earned over the two weeks. Some of the other women who she had accompanied preferred to stay at Azraq and return to their villages once the season was over in order to cut down on travelling expenses. They considered staying at Azraq for the whole season as a saving strategy that enabled them to accumulate their income and take it back home to enjoy as a whole sum rather than splitting it among occasional visits back home.

Although this type of seasonal activity was poorly paid, women consider as being engaged in such activities as highly desirable in the Badia. One of the reasons behind this was that it gave women a chance to indulge in a part-time activity that left them free during the year to participate in other tasks they were expected to undertake either within or outside their households. Another reason was that they found themselves the only ones suitable for such activities as young women (mostly daughters and daughters-in-law) are socially discouraged from engaging in outside activities and, at the same time, encouraged to stay indoors and manage housework which they regard as a less tiring and more flexible task.

Bedouin men whether old or young find less demand for their labour in such jobs, except for box fetching tasks. Also, some men consider it shameful to undertake this kind of work, which is associated with imported cheap labour from Egypt and Syria. Still the need for money forces some men to go for these jobs in order to secure their survival. I recall one case in Dair Al-Kahf village where I had to go back to the household three times before I had managed to find the mother who was

constantly away doing farm work until the season was over. When I had the chance to talk to her, she complained about how tiring this job was. She said: "I'm a 57-year-old woman who has to go and work on farms for an average of 9 to 10 hours a day. At the end of each day I feel every muscle in my body aching but I have to do it because my husband is an old man who is ill and cannot work. My two unmarried sons join me and work occasionally fetching boxes. I asked the farm manager to employ them because we were desperately in need of the money. My sons did not mind working for the whole season although they used to hear some guys in the village picking on them for working on a farm. But we needed the money more than the social acceptance. Imagine that during Ramadan we survived on vegetable leftovers that I used to gather from farms. Does not this show how bad our situation is?" (Um Qublan, second interview on January 26, 2000 in Dair Al-Kahf village).

When I asked women and men in the Badia about the social attitudes toward working on farms, I found out their responses varied a great deal. Women see this kind of work as a survival tactic, which is merely considered for its economic benefits. They engage in such activities to improve their livelihood. However, men consider this type of work as negatively affecting their social status in the community and therefore do not find it acceptable unless they are very desperate. Most men do not mind their wives or mothers involvement in this field, as it is socially more acceptable for women than it is for men. At least this is how they see it. Some of the strict religious families do not allow their wives, mothers and mostly unmarried women to work on farms because it involves the possibility of mixing and dealing with strangers. But if their work outside the household is essential to the household's survival then preferably the older women go to work while younger and newly married women stay at home.

In some cases, close male relatives may put pressure on other male members of the family to forbid female members of their households from working in public areas. In one case in Salhia village when I was



still paying preliminary visits to the area, the DFID project staff offered a chicken house to a wife from a more conservative neighbourhood. The wife was keen on having it as an income generating activity, yet her father-in-law had a different view. Her husband, who had agreed to the activity, had to change his mind and ask his wife to turn the offer down because his father was against it. Her father-in-law's argument was that this work would mean dealing with strangers from the DFID project and others whom she would not have normally met if this house was not to be built on their land. In this particular case, the father-in-law managed to make his word rule and his daughter-in-law never again attended training workshops that took place in the village, although she used to do so before this incident.

#### 4.3.2.1 Women's Mobility Patterns in the Badia

After discussing Bedouin women's involvement in seasonal activities, it is essential to capture the whole picture of women's access to the public sphere and the restrictions put on their mobility patterns within Bedouin communities. Unlike urban areas, rural and Bedouin communities place major obstacles on some women's freedom to move from one place to another depending on their age, marital status, and the reasons for which they have to go out. Although each individual case has its own characteristics and therefore differs from other cases, still a general picture of women's mobility can be drawn. To serve this purpose, I asked all women I had interviewed to provide me with a simple diagram that identifies the places they used to visit, whether or not they had to be accompanied by other members of their families, when they needed to take permission to leave and from whom it was taken. After analysing these diagrams and their comments, I was able to distinguish between two groups of women's mobility patterns, which are presented below.

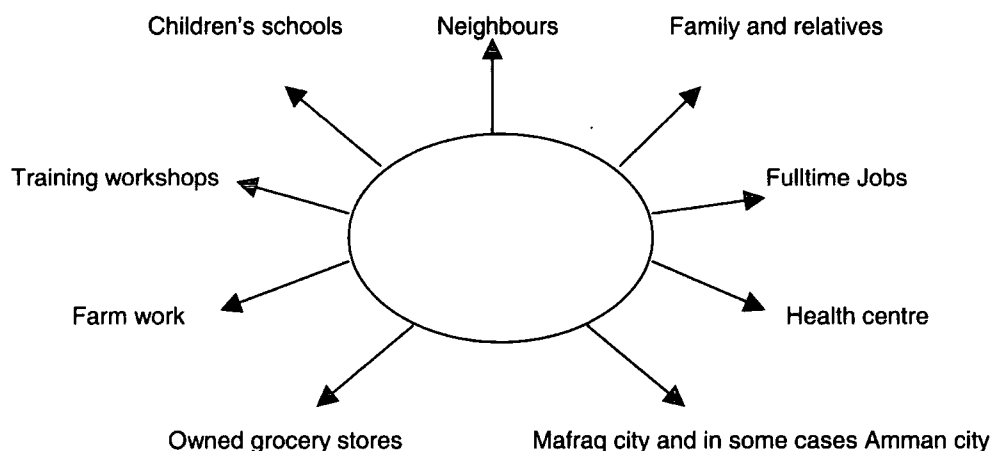
I argue that although elderly and married women surely had a more flexible mobility pattern than young and newly married women, still social restrictions and male supervision over women's mobility were applied to

both categories of women. These restrictions can be described as traditionally rooted in Bedouin mentality. To avoid social criticism, families are obliged to apply culturally defined limitations on women's public transactions and movements. Some of the people I interviewed during my fieldwork used to inquire about the fact that I was a single female travelling on my own back and forth from Amman and not being accompanied by any of my family members. This issue was regarded as problematic to some Bedouin people, as discussed in the Research Methodology chapter no. 2.

### Mobility Pattern of Elderly and Married Women

Throughout the course of my research, I was able to see that elderly and married women enjoyed more freedom to move around than their young daughters and newly married women. They had only to take their husband's permission when they needed to go, for example, to Mafraq city, health centres and schools. In cases when the husband was not available, they did not mind visiting some relatives, neighbours and other family members as long as they knew that the husband would not condemn their actions. With respect to farm work, it was clear that the idea would either be accepted or denied from the beginning and accordingly they had no reason to seek the husband's or father's permission each time they had to go. Even the social attitude towards women's management of grocery stores gives an example of the general acceptance of older women's interaction with strangers not only by her family but also by the whole village. Therefore, married and elderly women had more legitimacy to interact publicly with people and access the markets and various institutions. The illustration below shows the typical mobility pattern of elderly and married women:

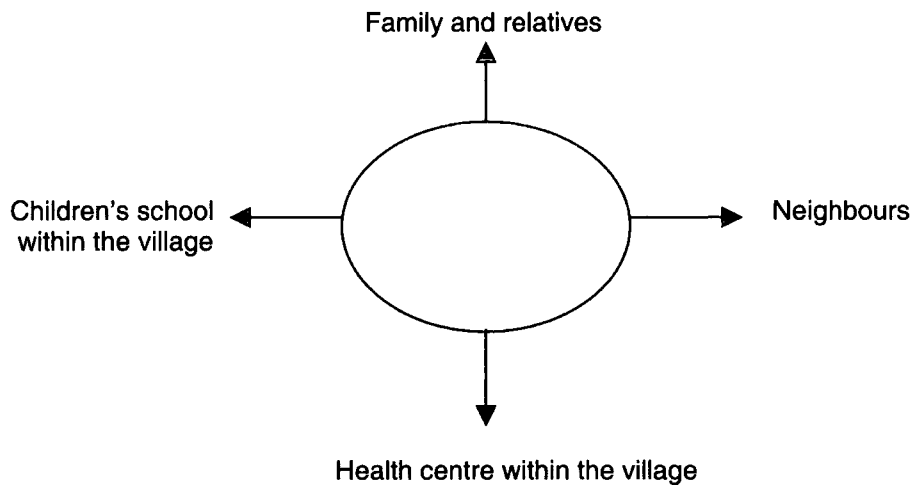
Figure 4.1: The typical mobility pattern of elderly and married women



For the nearby-located places mentioned above, women visited them alone or accompanied by whomever they wished to take along. I always saw women accompanied by their young children when they attended a meeting or a training session organised in the village and when they went to parents' meetings with their school-aged children. This might be due to the fact that there was no one available to look after their little children whilst they were away. But I tend to believe that it is more of a social custom to do so rather than a necessity. As for more distant visits, most women were accompanied by one or two of their children or other women depending on the purpose of the visit.

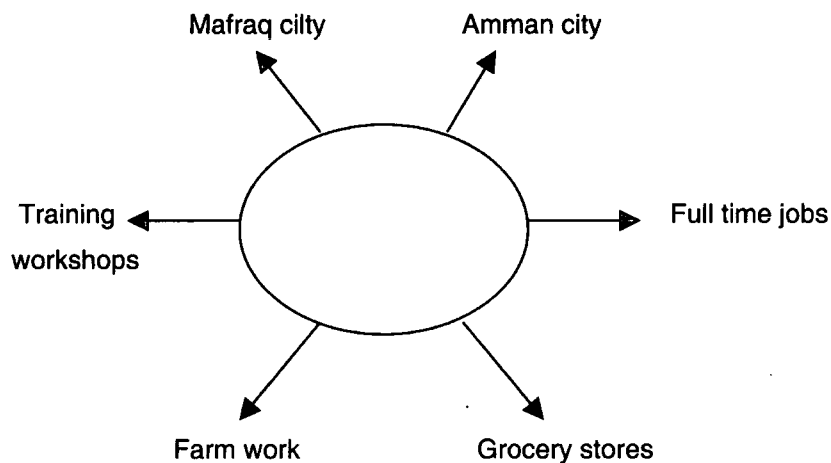
Some married women coming from the more conservative part of Salhia village were denied the right to visit many places included in the typical mobility pattern illustrated earlier. The places which they could not visit unless they were accompanied by a male member of their families, preferably the head of the household, were, for example, Amman and Mafraq cities. The commonly accessible places for all women in the three villages of my study are the following:

Figure 4.2: Places commonly accessible to elderly and married women (applies to all women interviewed in the three villages)



Only in five households from Salhia village, were women not allowed to visit the following places on their own:

Figure 4.3: Places commonly inaccessible to married women (applies in Salhia village to women of only 5 households)



Therefore, each individual case has its own circumstances. Some women find it difficult to visit public institutions on their own. One married woman in Salhia village told me that although her husband encourages her to depend on herself and travel around alone, she

insists that he accompanies her because she fears that she would not be able to handle any difficult situation if she was on her own. However, in one case in Abu Al-Farth village, Salma, a widowed 35 years old woman, used to travel on her own to Amman city to collect the monthly cheques paid by the army for her family and her dead husband's parents (Salma's acquisition of this quite unique status was due to several reasons which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter).

### Mobility Pattern of Young<sup>8</sup> and Newly Married<sup>9</sup> Women

In the Bedouin context, young women's (newly married women included) mobility is of a critical concern to family and household members. In a conservative and patriarchal society such as the Bedouin's, many restrictions are placed upon the accessibility of unmarried and/or newly married women to the market and public institutions. Even the possibility of interacting with strangers and male relatives is highly limited and restricted, especially when girls reach puberty. This also applies to newly married women of young ages who continue to be treated as girls until they start having children. Young and newly married women, in general, have a similarly restricted mobility pattern in terms of accessing the market and public institutions on their own. They are usually accompanied by an older woman or a male member of their families, if they are to pay visits to such places. In previous years, females were forced to leave school if attending school necessitated that they had to commute a relatively long distance from home<sup>10</sup> (see also Oughton and Addas 1999).

Young women are not encouraged to pay visits to their married sisters houses as these are seen as her brother-in-law's household who may be a stranger and therefore cannot spend much time there. The case of visiting friends is even more complicated. One female attending school

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<sup>8</sup> The age of young women referred to here ranges between 13 until marrying age roughly between 15-27.

<sup>9</sup> Newly married women are the ones who have recently been married for the first time regardless of their age. It applies as well to the mothers of infants.

<sup>10</sup> Secondary schools may be located in nearby villages that require girls to commute by bus or by foot.



explained that exchanging visits between friends is not part of the Bedouin culture. They may invite friends for certain occasions but paying regular visits is regarded as a suspicious act. Therefore, they tend to avoid making such visits in order not to raise questions about the reasons for them by their families and people in the neighbourhood. In this particular case, it was acceptable for Fadia to visit her married sister's house not more than twice a month, to assist her with child caring and domestic work since her sister had recently given birth to twins.

Such social perceptions concerning women's mobility differ among villages depending on how strict people in a given village are. In one part of Salhia village, some families do not allow the female members of the household to attend social and training meetings (regardless of their age) because they involve walking from one place to another even though within the same village. In this part of Salhia, women were more or less confined to their households and it was not desirable for them to be seen outside their boundaries unless for a valid reason and accompanied by a member of the household, preferably a male.

In Abu Al-Farth, Dair Al-Kahf and the other part of Salhia village, where I carried out my fieldwork, women enjoyed more access to the market and public institutions and travelled freely within the area. It largely depends on individual cases and the position women acquire within the household that makes them eligible to manage public interactions on their own. In some cases, when the male head of the household is absent for long periods, such restrictive rules are abolished. Army attendance, for example, requires men to stay away from home for varying times, which requires women to take over some of men's responsibilities in such cases.

The picture might appear to be contradictory when families restrict women's mobility to the markets and social events, but ask them to engage in a mixed activity such as herding. Probably the latter is seen

as a survival necessity that needs to be carried out by whomever is available from the household in order to secure their living, while the former is considered avoidable and socially unacceptable in certain cases. A diagram illustrating young and newly married women's mobility pattern is shown below:

Figure 4.4: The typical mobility pattern of young and newly married women

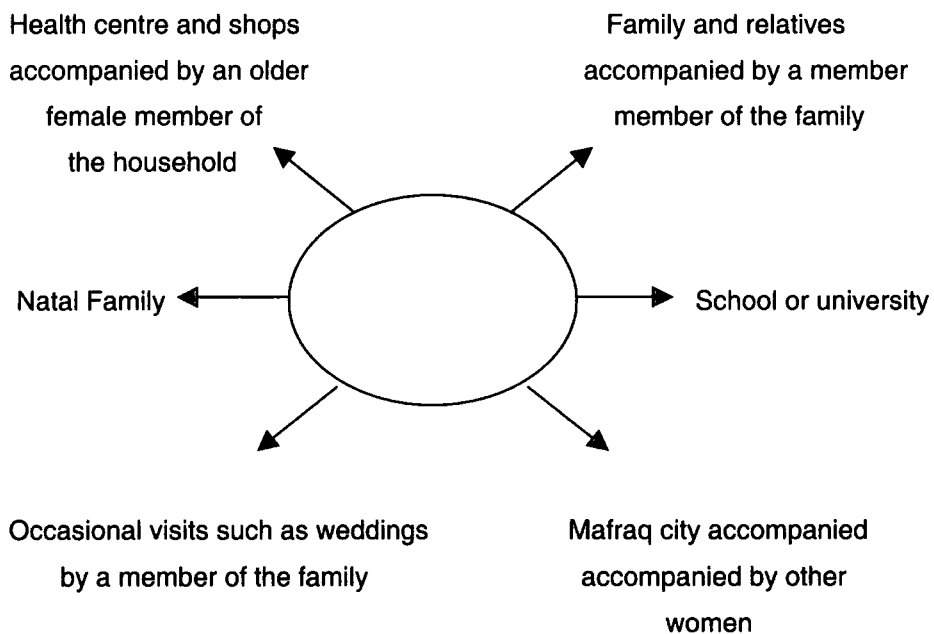


Figure 4.4 shows the places where young and newly married women need to be accompanied by a member of their families. Only when young women go to school or university, do they travel by themselves, and mostly they commute in groups with other females from the neighbourhood. Newly married women can visit their natal families on their own<sup>11</sup>. However, I should emphasise the fact that the mobility pattern of young and newly married women differs from one case to another depending on the level of their families conservative views.

<sup>11</sup> This applies to newly married women who need permission to visit their natal families. If their natal families live in the same village, they can visit them on their own. Otherwise, their husbands or other members of their husbands' families should accompany them.

It is considered shameful for a young women's reputation to be seen frequently in public and moving freely not accompanied by elderly women or, at least, by young brothers or sisters. I was told by a Bedouin woman that as she was raised in the light of these principles, she finds it difficult to go against them. In fact many young Bedouin women observe these mobility restrictions very carefully; they do not need to be told how to conduct themselves in this regard.

Nevertheless, in some cases, it is acceptable for young Bedouin women to work as seasonal labourers on farms during the summer season. They use this as a means of securing their own personal needs when the household budget is tight and cannot afford extra expenses. If the financial status of their households is desperately weak, young women contribute their seasonal employment earnings to assist in securing basic survival needs for their households, which further validates their public interaction. This was illustrated in an example mentioned earlier in this chapter regarding the case of two school-age females who worked on farms during vacations to secure their personal needs and contribute to their household budget.

Commonly, the male heads of the households are the ones from whom young and newly married women seek permission to go out. If not available, mothers and mothers-in-law come next and finally older male members of the households are legitimised to give permission to their sisters and sisters-in-law to leave the house. Unlike older women, young and newly married women are rarely expected to go out on their own but must be accompanied by any member of the family or relatives.

#### 4.3.3 Bedouin Women's Collective Activities Over Time

The discussion of women's involvement in livestock activities leads to the analysis of female collective work in the Bedouin neighbourhoods since several women working together are needed to perform various tasks associated with livestock, such as milking, milk-processing and

wool shearing, depending on the number of animals owned by the household. The emergence of nuclear families in Bedouin societies had weakened many types of collective activities that were previously done by women in general. Milking animals, milk processing, cooking for weddings and certain occasions were rarely done solely by women living within the same household. These were events that women from the neighbourhood and relatives would gather for and carry out in groups. I was told that it was common to see Bedouin women gathered for shearing and weaving of animals hair during the season. By the end of the season, one household with the help of other women would produce rugs, cushions and tents that could either be used by the same household or kept for expected future marriages.

Such activities are no longer common among Bedouin women, who consider them as traditional and old fashioned. When such products are needed for household consumption or by women for their marriages, they are mostly bought from the market or from someone who has taken up weaving as a profession and source of income.<sup>12</sup>

An older woman in Dair Al-Kahf showed me a collection of cushions and rugs she and other female relatives had produced in the past. She made a comparison between these hand-made items and the modern version of rugs and cushions which she had bought recently from the market. She said: "I treasure my own production and keep it as a reminder of the nice old days. It was an overwhelming event when we used to gather and produce these pieces. They are very durable and it was an enjoyable group activity as we used to chat and socially interact while we processed these materials through different stages. We used to wash the wool, keep it until it dries, weave it into threads, dye it with various colourings and then sew it into different pieces for various usages" (Um Mufleh, first interview on October 10, 1999 in Dair Al-Kahf village). She added that they used to produce tents and milk containers

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<sup>12</sup> Bedouin women are expected to bring in at least 6 sets of mattresses, cushions, pillows and some rugs when they move to their husbands houses.

from animal skins that needed to go through various processing stages until the final products were ready to be used.

The production of such materials might take place these days when elderly women wish to occupy themselves with an enjoyable activity that takes them into those old days. During my field research, other women showed me their collections that they had gathered and produced throughout their lives. They all stressed the good quality of their own production, which they thought was significantly better than the low quality of the modern machine-made items.

A mother in Abu Al-Farth village showed me the collection that she has been gathering for over a year. She has been ordering special patterns from Druze producers in a nearby village to be made for her. This lady was gathering this collection for her daughters for when they get married. She said: "My two elder daughters are still 14 and 16. But I should be prepared for their marriages because the potential grooms may want to get married within a short period. If this happens, I will not have enough time to prepare these things. So it is better to be prepared at my own pace" (Um Salem, first interview on October 9, 1999 in Abu Al-Farth village).

At the present, Bedouin women are concerned with securing survival needs for their households rather than performing communal and time consuming activities. It is common to witness Bedouin women gathered for socialising reasons during morning or afternoon breaks more than for collective production purposes. Today, women try to secure individually their household survival and consumption needs by either engaging in paid activities or producing goods for consumption, mostly dairy products, for their own households. There is hardly any sharing with other households due to the persisting scarcity of resources.

For example, due to the economic scarcity, the Bedouin custom of sharing processed dairy products with neighbours and relatives has

been reduced to a minimum. In the past, women's collective activities would result in dividing goods among the several households whose members had contributed to the production of such goods. Today, as this kind of collective activity is minimised, such products can be exchanged for money among households. During one of my field interviews in Dair Al-Kahf village, I was told by a daughter-in-law that she buys dairy products for household consumption from her parents-in-law. She explained that her parents-in-law could not afford to give such products, which are supposed to secure their annual consumption, for free because it was expensive. As she guarantees the quality of her mother-in-law's production, she has preferred to get it from such a trustworthy source rather than buy it from the market, since her husband sold the 20 sheep they owned a year ago. She added that when she runs out of dairy products, her mother-in-law provides her with some free of charge. This applies in cases when she needs some on the spot, but for big quantities she thinks it is only fair to pay.

When the household has an excess of dairy production because they own a large herd (which suggests relatively wealthy owners), then the household can afford to give away such products for free to close relatives such as married sons and daughters, brothers and sister and parents. While small-size herd owners prefer to market such products, rather than giving them away as in the case of large-size herd owners, because they are normally more in need of the money they earn by selling these products. Another way of managing milk production is to sell it unprocessed to cheese makers. I was told that this phenomenon hardly existed 15-20 years ago. In the past there was no need to sell milk in the market. Households would process all the milk they had and keep it for their own consumption and give away some relatives, neighbours and poor families who own few or no animals. Today, selling milk to cheese makers is the most common way of getting a profitable return that enables the household to meet the increasing need for fodder for livestock (see Roe, 1998; Khraishah, 1999).

Nevertheless, although an individualistic attitude based on the unit of a single household has emerged in the Badia regarding certain activities that women used to carry out in groups in the past, in order to capture the picture more clearly I asked a group of 30 women to rank some domestic and livestock related activities according to the manner in which these activities are undertaken today. Table 4.4 ranks their responses.

Table 4.4: Ranking collective activities today; responses from 30 women

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Answers<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Milking	27	90%	<b>2</b>
Milk processing <sup>14</sup>	30	100%	<b>1</b>
Herding	10	33.3%	<b>4</b>
Making Cushions, rugs, leather containers and tents production <sup>15</sup>	18	60%	<b>3</b>
Housework <sup>16</sup>	5	16.6%	<b>5</b>

All women considered milk processing to be a collective activity, needing more than one woman to produce milk products. The number of women needed for the different stages of milk processing depends on the quantity of milk available and whether it is for household consumption or selling in the market. 90% of the women considered milking to be a collective activity as well. The three women who thought that milking was an activity that could be done individually based their answers on their actual situations since they had a very limited number of animals, which they were able to milk themselves.

<sup>13</sup> Answers based on individual responses from 30 women.

<sup>14</sup> Ghee and dried yoghurt 'jameed' processing is normally done in an individual manner since elderly women consider it as their speciality and young women are not seen to be able to perfect it unless they were properly trained by elderly women.

<sup>15</sup> The production of these items has always been carried out collectively, but due to the decline of this tradition women considered it less collective than other activities.

<sup>16</sup> Housework includes domestic activities such as cleaning, washing, cooking, making bread and caring for children.

Regarding herding, some of the 10 women who thought it was a collective activity based their views on the fact that the Badia is not as safe as it used to be in the past and therefore if women were to carry out a livestock herding activity, then it should be done collectively for safety reasons. Other women who agreed that herding is a collective activity thought that since this activity has always been carried out in a collective manner, there was no reason to introduce changes to this activity in the present. The remaining 20 women thought that herding is an activity that should not be carried out by women anymore. They perceived it as a man's responsibility while women can take the responsibility of looking after livestock within or nearby their households.

The production of cushions, rugs, leather containers and tents was seen as a traditional activity that had more significance in the Bedouin culture in the past. The 18 women who still carry out this activity in a collective manner were mostly elderly women who find it a way to pass time and produce useful and durable items for their households or for their sons and daughters houses. The other 12 women who did not see this activity as a collective one had based their opinions on the fact that they do not perform this activity anymore and prefer to buy such items from the market. Some of them have never been involved in the production of such items since this group were mostly middle aged and young women.

Housework was seen as an individual activity by 25 women, who normally undertake domestic activities by themselves. The five women who were elderly thought that if they had to perform housework, then they needed the help of other female members of the household since they believed that on the one hand they were not strong enough to engage in such tiring activities and on the other hand they were not keen on performing such activities, in which they consider themselves less experienced than young women.



#### **4.4 Unfolding Bedouin Women's Roles and Their Contribution Towards Household Survival**

Due to the deterioration in the importance of livestock as a dependable source of income to the Bedouin household, Bedouin families are forced to diversify the sources of their income in order to be able to provide basic survival needs to their families. It is not necessarily that Bedouins are keen on picking up new types of activities to secure their survival, but rather they are forced to consider new options after waiting in hope for several years that the livestock situation would improve. Many of the Bedouins who I met claim that livestock is not only a source of income, or for direct consumption purposes, but it is rather more a style of life which they are used to, making it difficult to shift to another speciality.

There are several reasons behind the deterioration of livestock numbers in the Jordanian Badia since the mid-nineties. The low levels of rainfall (see Dutton *et al.*, 1998; Al-Sharafat, 2001 for figures and more details), the removal of animal feed subsidies as part of the SAP in Jordan (see Background Chapter no.3) and the affordability of the relatively cheap imported meat are the most important reasons behind the fall of livestock numbers and for a decreasing extent in livestock production in the Badia. The market was saturated when people started to sell their breeding stock so the selling prices dramatically decreased causing structural changes in the Bedouin economy<sup>17</sup>.

During the course of my fieldwork, I came across 7 households that had substituted poultry (mainly chickens) for sheep and goats for household consumption since they were affordable in terms of fodder supplies and year-round production.

These factors of economic or environmental nature are associated with other socio-cultural changes that have occurred in the Bedouin society recently. The tendency towards pursuing education in the Badia (Dutton

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<sup>17</sup> Though prices rose sharply in the winter 2000-2001 following good rains.

*et al.*, 1998; Al-Shrayddah, 2001), has resulted in a higher number of school and university graduates who do not desire to be involved in livestock related work and consider it a traditional activity associated with the elderly people.

The new Bedouin generation seeks employment that guarantees a permanent monthly income instead of occasional rewards that may be secured from livestock trading activities. Not only do these young Bedouins consider livestock a highly risky investment, but they also regard it as energy consuming with no guaranteed returns. As I have argued earlier, young women prefer to shoulder the responsibility for domestic and household activities leaving livestock activities for elderly people and their mothers to deal with. This generational change in attitudes towards livestock activities adds to the overwhelming fact that livestock in the Jordanian Badia is facing a major decline in terms of importance and contribution to securing Bedouin survival.

In order to understand which sources of income Bedouins perceive as secure these days, or in other words which sources of income they would rather have in order to meet their survival requirements, I asked a group of 40 women during my fieldwork to rank the following sources of income according to their own preference while giving the highest number to the most secure and the lowest to the least secure. The sources of income, which were subject to ranking are: monthly salary or pension, livestock trading and/or selling processed milk products, seasonal agricultural work and petty trading. The responses show (Table 4.5) that a monthly salary or pension is the most highly ranked source of income from the point of view of security.

Table 4.5: Secured income ranked by security, by a sample of 40 women

Sources of Income <sup>18</sup>	Answers <sup>19</sup>	Percentage	Ranking
Monthly salary or pension	26	65%	1
Livestock trading and/or selling processed milk products	5	12.5%	3
Seasonal agricultural work	8	20%	2
Petty trading	1	2.5%	4
Total	40	100%	

Table 4.5 shows that a permanent monthly income, either a salary or a pension is (which is almost always earned by a man) highly desirable and perceived as the most secure source of income by Bedouin women these days. Most of the interviewed women were not professionally qualified and so could not secure a permanent job. Seasonal agricultural work, which may be referred to as part-time employment, was given the second place regarding income security. This is mostly due to the emerging need for women to increase their participation in seasonal agricultural work to be able to secure their family survival, which in many cases, livestock activities were failing to sustain. The weakness of the livestock sector relegated livestock trading and related activities to third place, illustrating a decline in the degree of credibility and reliability given to this source of income.

The only woman who placed petty trading as the highest secure source of income based her judgement on her personal experience. Petty

<sup>18</sup> Income indicated here flows mainly into the household budget, which might be earned by men, women, or both.

<sup>19</sup> Answers based on the source of income in terms of security.

trading was the activity that had pulled her family through the financial difficulties it faced when neither the few animals they owned nor the pension her husband used to get were enough to cover their expenses. At the same time, I recall Um Hussein saying: "my work in petty trading has proved to be profitable and at least we don't have to borrow money from people anymore. Although it is tiring, my plan is to work in this profession for some time and save some money by which I can buy more sheep in the future" (Um Hussein, first interview on March 8, 2000 in Abu Al-Farth village). This statement about buying more sheep was somehow contradictory since Um Hussein had said earlier that neither livestock nor pension was covering their expenses. To satisfy my inquiry, Um Hussein pointed out that although petty trading is a profitable source of income at the moment, she will not be able to continue doing the same job for a long time as she will grow old and won't be able to travel around regularly. She added that although livestock is in decline at present, she hopes that this situation will positively change in the future. She added that since the Bedouin have been bound to livestock all their lives, livestock will continue to be an essential part of their future.

Out of a number of discussions with some Bedouin men regarding their perceptions of women's work in the Badia, I was able to capture the following picture. During one field interview in Dair Al-Kahf village, a husband said that women's productive participation in the Badia after the deterioration of livestock status is a "zero square"<sup>20</sup>. He explained that in the past, women were occupied with livestock caring, weaving and milk processing activities. Some women are no longer involved in this work, therefore, according to him, these Bedouin women do not now have much to do around the household that would keep them busy, as the case used to be in the past. His wife protested at his statement. She argued that women in the Badia still have much to do within the household that men do not regard as productive work. She drew one

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<sup>20</sup> In Arabic, *sifr hafeth manzelh*, is a commonly used expression which undervalues the input of someone towards a certain task of a topic of discussion. This description of women status in Arabic means that their contribution is regarded as nil.

example from their daily life: "this morning after my husband finished shaving, I had to clean the place and tidy up after him. If I had not done that, who else would have done it? Is not that counted as productive in order to maintain our household in a good status" (Um Sami, third interview on December 2, 1999 in Dair Al-Kahf village). Her husband was not convinced that this was an example to be considered as a productive activity. He thought that this is part of his wife's responsibilities as a married lady and that there was nothing productive about it.

Few men in the Badia would disagree with this case regarding women's domestic work. Culturally, both men and women regard such activities as naturally obligatory for women. While this attitude regarding women's contributions is widespread, it continues to undermine their inputs towards the maintenance and well-being of their families. In this sense, the inclusion of the domestic activities in productivity data at the national level continues to be a problematic concern to the production of such data (United Nations publication, 1995).

Another case<sup>21</sup> I went across during my fieldwork contradicted this generalisation and proves the importance of women's contribution towards household survival. During one interview in Abu Al-Farth, Abu Hussein explained that his family would not have been able to survive after he had sold his flock two years ago if his wife had not taken the initiative to secure their living. He said: "I sold my flock to use the money for my son's marriage. My second wife, whom I live with now, and our seven children, decided to find a kind of self employment activity that would assist us in meeting the increased cost of living, which we could not keep up with because we had to depend on an 80 JD monthly pension.

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<sup>21</sup> Um Hussein is the one pointed out earlier on in the chapter who considered petty trading to be the most reliable source of income at present.

My wife and one of her relatives decided to buy children's and women's clothes and some household items from Syria and sell them here in the Badia. They had faced many difficulties in marketing their purchases at the beginning but now they are doing well and our life has improved" <sup>22</sup> (Abu Hussein, first interview on March 8, 2000 in Abu Al-Farth village). His wife added: "I had to come up with something that generates additional income. Since my husband is an old man, I was the one obliged to work and secure our family's needs. My children often came back crying from school because they used to see other children buying snacks from a nearby store while they did not have any money to do the same. I was fortunate that part of my family lives in Syria and therefore I could go twice a month accompanied by my relative, buy what is in great demand here, come back and sell it making a marginal profit. I have always to observe God when dealing with money and people" (Um Hussein, first interview on March 8, 2000 in Abu Al-Farth village).

Towards the end of my fieldwork and in order to verify the general picture I had developed regarding Bedouin livelihoods, I asked as many women as possible to prioritise what they considered to be the essentials of living in the Badia. Their answers in prioritised order are as follows:

1. A permanent monthly income to meet daily living requirements and to enable people to repay their loans in case they have any, which has proved to be a common situation in the Badia.
2. A secured furnished house to live in, owned by the family, and to be able to secure a place for their sons when they marry.

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<sup>22</sup> When I was conducting my fieldwork, this household had no other source of income except for 80JD pension. The wife was constantly asking me to find her a job. Six months later, when I visited the area in November 2000 she told me that in few months she has managed to establish this business which provides her with better income than a full time job. She calculated that she was making an average of 200JD per month.

3. Accommodating visitors and being able to host meals especially on certain occasions such as Ramadan (the month of fasting) and Eids (Muslim festivals).
4. Living in an understanding and non-violent (peaceful) environment within their households.

This was the typical order of women's answers regarding the essentials of living in the Badia which shows that the provision of basic needs that ensures financial security and shelter is among the essential basics of life in the Badia, as everywhere else.

A small minority of women prioritised living in an understanding and non-violent environment because it leads to peace and happiness in the first place. They argued that if people were unhappy and unsatisfied with their lives, then nothing else mattered and life itself would become worthless. Almost all elderly women mentioned health security as a basic requirement for a secure life. Since elderly women in the Badia face various health problems, which the health service in that area is not equipped to cover, they find themselves required to access the health services in Mafraq or Amman city which, may be inconvenient and expensive to most of them. For this reason, the provision of a good health service was among their priorities. All women stressed the vital role of the government of Jordan in securing Bedouin people's livelihoods through the provision of education, employment opportunities and other basic services.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, there is a lack of data regarding women's active participation in different fields of the market, not to mention the scarcity of data on women's unpaid family labour, according to Mujahid (1985), Dixon-Mueller (1985), Moghadam, (1993), United Nations (1995) and Haider (1995). The social values and family structures, in addition to

educational and marital status, all contribute towards women's economic inactivity in the Jordanian labour market. The sectors of public services and education are the most common fields for women's productive participation in Jordan (Flynn *et al.*, 1999, CARDNE's report, 1998). The agriculture sector also accounts for a large percentage of women's productive participation in the informal market which is still uncoun- ted in most cases (Shukri, 1996). Women's unpaid farm and domestic work occupy most of the time of rural and Bedouin women, leaving little space for them to participate in other officially recognised jobs. It is important here not to forget the fact that this informal participation in the market needs unskilled labour, which is the case of this stratum of female population in Jordan. Because women in these areas lack qualifications and skills to compete in the formal market, they see big opportunities to secure their income from working as cheap labour. This family work brings no financial reward and therefore their participation continues to be undervalued. Yet, it is clear that without Bedouin women's various contributions towards their household survival, Bedouin families would suffer far more from the negative impact of the deterioration of the livestock market. Bedouin women's domestic and agriculture-related tasks, seasonal work and self-employment alternatives have recently proved that they can pull Bedouin households through the difficult economic conditions that have been affecting the Bedouin population in Jordan.



## **Chapter Five: Women and Decision-Making in the Badia of Jordan**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I have discussed women's roles in Bedouin households and their contribution towards household production and domestic activities. Bedouin women's power relations and more specifically their decision-making regarding household production and consumption will be analysed in this chapter. This will illustrate the linkage between their role in decision-making and their productive contribution in securing their household survival.

As the focus of my study was centred on Bedouin women's livelihoods at the household level, the discussion of intra-household relationships and the division of power between men and women becomes a necessity. I will analyse the role and status of women in decision-making in Bedouin households; I will not discuss participation in the political and public spheres. The status of women's decision-making, about which little research has been done, needs to receive more emphasis and recognition by researchers and scholars in this field and so brought to the attention of the state and policy makers in Middle Eastern countries in order to be integrated into national strategies. Women in relatively poorer households, such as the Bedouin's, are those whose participation needs to be recognised as vital in securing their households' survival. This underlines the necessity of exploring the roles associated with their economic contributions such as their decision-making share, bargaining and conflict resolution abilities in relation to their social and economic status within their households.

Since little research has been done on Muslim women in general, and rural and Bedouin women in particular, regarding their productive contribution and decision-making roles, then the focus of my research

forms a good starting point which addresses the significance of women's roles in Bedouin household management. One challenge which this study puts forward regarding Bedouin women's share of power within their households, cannot be understood unless affecting factors such as religion and traditions are also examined. Therefore, in this chapter, I will present the concept of power arrangement within Middle Eastern households in general. This will be introduced through the discussion of power, patriarchy and women's role in decision-making. The major factors that affect and shape the model of decision-making and the division of power in patriarchal and conservative societies, such as religion, traditions and other factors, will be explored. I will, then present the findings of my fieldwork and the application of a 'power Game' during the focus group discussions held with Bedouin women. A presentation of a selection of representative and unique cases that illustrate the picture of decision-making in Bedouin households regarding different situations in which Bedouin women may be categorised, such as educated, widowed/divorced, female-headed and others, will follow. Finally, the chapter will sum up women's role in shaping the decision-making process within their households and the division of power relationships, particularly in Bedouin households.

## **5.2 Power, Patriarchy and Women's Decision-Making Role in Muslim Countries**

*"Even the most powerful women are thus constrained by the ideological frameworks which delineate the patriarchal boundaries of their lives. Within these constraints women have differing options and embark on different strategies. But those who step out and attempt to break the bonds are likely to spark off a severe backlash and be singled out as scapegoats. It is true that women collaborate to perpetuate the patriarchal bargains, but they do so because of their derived status, whereas for men it is a simple matter of perpetuating their power and authority over women." (Afshar 1993, pp. 4)*

Since the family kinship structure in most Middle Eastern countries is male-oriented and patriarchal, the first conclusion one can make is that men generally control decisions. In other words, the male head of the household is the reference point for family management issues, whether inside or outside the household domain. This conclusion is valid to a certain extent. Although in many cases in the Middle East men have more control over the interaction with the outer sphere, still women and men often jointly take decisions concerning the household survival patterns, children related issues and the conduct of social interaction. Women may have more say than is generally perceived and exercise significant power in certain family matters related to divorce, marriage and education. They even have more evident roles in other aspects of familial life such as childcare and household purchases. Traditional and cultural perceptions keep women out of the market and public interaction depending on many factors that restrict their mobility, related strongly to issues of shame, male honour and pride. (See El-Saadawi 1980, and Faqir, 1998).

Due to the strong emphasis political issues receive within the Middle East, more attention has been given to women's participation in the public and political spheres, which are undergoing radical changes in many Middle Eastern countries. Yet, few studies regarding decision-making at the household level have been conducted in countries of the Middle East region. For example, in Jordan great attention has been devoted to women's influence and decision-making role during the process of democratisation (Naqshabandi, 1995). Sri Pardina Pudiastuti, Indonesian State Minister for Women's Empowerment, when speaking about Indonesia but making a point of relevance to Jordan, said:

*"There are major opportunities for women to become decision-makers. Women should work twice as hard to get their rights..... Some men think women are not capable of sharing power. However studies show women are more*

*creative, clear and open than men on certain issues.”<sup>1</sup>*  
(STAR Newspaper, 2000, pp.1-2)

Chatty and Rabo's (1997) analysis of women's organisation in formal and informal groups in the Middle East points out that their participation for political expression of their rights and needs was the first to be cited. Egypt, Turkey and Tunisia are among the leading Middle Eastern countries where women have participated in political demonstrations and reforms since the beginning of last century. (Moghadam, 1992; Chatty and Rabo, 1997; Badran, 1995). Less attention has been given to internal household dynamics, the private sphere, where all members of the household normally practise negotiation, conflict resolution and decision-making powers.

Nelson (1973) argued that women exercise considerable authority and autonomy regarding various matters within the family economic and domestic spheres. Therefore, she said, they do exert indirectly power over the public, political domain of men. Nelson distinguished between the tent (the private domain of women) and the camp (the public domain of men). It is almost 30 years since Nelson's study, but Bedouin women in general in Jordan are still confined to their private domains, the house, while Bedouin men are highly involved in public interaction in addition to their involvement in internal household management affairs. The difference I found comparing the situation over this time period, was not only that the physical setting has changed from tents and camps to houses and occasionally tents, but also women have managed to influence men's domain more than men have managed to interfere with women's set boundaries. I argue that although men form an authoritarian power over women's conduct, they do little to change their functional actions. This may be a result of women's high achievements

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<sup>1</sup> Sri Pardina Pudiastuti, one of three women ministers in the Indonesian Government, told STAR newspaper, (see reference), during women's leadership course held in Amman and concluded on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2000. This course was organised by the United Nations University/ International Leadership Academy (UNU/ILA).

and contributions regarding the survival of their families, which gives men little space to challenge and redirect women's efforts.

In fact, the analysis of the division of power as an intra-household component, requires first a definition of the household to be given. The household is a multi-disciplinary concept that can be tackled from different perspectives. According to Bryant (1990) the household is commonly defined as: "those who dwell under the same roof and compose a family" (see Shukri, 1996). From different points of view, the household can be studied as a basic unit of reproductive nature (Kandiyoti, 1988), as a co-residence unit (Shukri, 1996; Moghadam, 1992), as a decision-making environment (Wilk, 1989) in addition to its production and consumption functional natures.

It is important to note that economic and anthropological analyses of the household, its members and functions vary considerably. First, each school's definition of the household unit is based on different assumptions. From an anthropological point of view, the household boundaries are seen to be flexible and varied among a number of conjugal and residential structures. Early work of economic analysis of the household was adopted from models of individual rational behaviour, which have been the fundamental assumption of economic thought. Early in the last century, the peasant household emerged as an important topic for analysis. This work was carried out by Chayanov in 1920, followed by Mellor's work in 1963, Nakajima (1986) and others regarding the farm household production model and several variables such as time allocation and risk factors. Kabeer (1994) argued that early economic analysis based on individual behaviour created difficulties in conceptualising the household as a collective unit. The so-called 'Mr. and Mrs. Hyde problem' was the foundation of the New Household Economics. Kabeer (1994) cited Samuelson's work:

*"In an early exposition of what he called the 'Mr. and Mrs. Hyde problem', Samuelson articulated the conundrum of*

*intra-household issues for economists: how could the preference of individual household members be collapsed into a single aggregated order of preferences so that households could continue to be treated within economic models as internally undifferentiated (and therefore mathematically tractable)?" (Kabeer 1994, pp. 98)*

Altruism in economic analysis was presented by Becker in 1965 through the New Household Economics model (Evans, 1989; see also Bryant, 1990; Ellis, 1988; Kooreman *et al.*, 1996). Becker's model has dealt with the household as a total of inputs and outputs subject to market prices and to the maximisation of benefits by its benevolent authority. The major criticism the Beckerian model received was the challenge of the degree to which the household can be perceived as an altruistic model (Senauer, 1990; Kabeer, 1994). Since the household is comprised of more than one member, the members of the household may have different preferences and therefore may end up in conflicting positions regarding different matters.

Work by other researchers, such as Kabeer (1991) and Sen (1990), favoured conceptualising the household, including its members, as a functioning bargaining unit in contrast to the pure altruism presented in the New Household Economics model. Sen's model of the household put more emphasis on the social signal that affects the material and human resources of the household. Sen said:

*"The members of the household face two different types of problems simultaneously, one involving co-operation (adding to total availabilities) and the other conflict (dividing the total availabilities among the members of the household)". (Sen 1990, pp. 129)*

Sen's model serves my analysis better since this model recognises the conflict between unequal powers within the household in the process of making decisions as being important social signals. Applying Sen's previously mentioned quote to my analysis of Bedouin women's livelihoods, I have already discussed women's productive and

cooperative roles towards the maintenance of their households (Chapter 4) which fall within Sen's categorisation of the household as firstly being a co-operative functioning unit. In this chapter, the discussion of women's decision-making inputs and the division of power among the members of the household will fulfil the second category of Sen's model regarding conflict as another function of the household along with the household's co-operative feature. This is rather a simplified distinction of productive and decision-making roles, since conflict and/or cooperation may occur in the settings of both roles.

### 5.2.1 Women's empowerment within the household boundaries

Kabeer (1991) argued that members of the household exercise different levels of influence regarding the decision-making processes that affect the household as a whole unit, and that women continue to be less empowered to take decisions in the presence of the head of the household (in some cases the patriarch). But still they manage to find their ways, sometimes through social pressure, to influence certain decisions of particular interest for them. My research focuses on Middle Eastern households of a patriarchal nature, specifically Bedouin households where women can be perceived as less empowered than men and less empowered than other women living under different circumstances. Therefore, it is relevant to bring up the issue of women's empowerment (Hall, 1992; Karl, 1995), which has been increasingly promoted as a development target during the last decade.

The UNIFEM Biennial Report stated:

*"Extending the idea of human development to encompass women's empowerment and gender justice puts social transformation at the centre of the agenda for human development and progress of women. Choices for women, especially poor women, cannot be enlarged without a change in relations between women and men as well as in the ideologies and institutions that preserve and reproduce gender inequality. This does not mean reversing positions,*

*so that men become subordinate and women dominant. Rather, it means negotiating new kinds of relationships that are based not on power over others but on a mutual development of creative human energy.....it also means negotiating new kinds of institutions, incorporating new norms and rules that support egalitarian and just relations between women and men.” (Cited in DFID plans, 2000; pp. 11-12).*

Originally, the term “empowerment” was associated with the political and economic conception of this term within a “dominant culture” of western capitalism. By emphasising individualism, consumerism and personal achievement, empowerment contributes to changing the focus from the economic and political system to the development approaches that involve women (Afshar, 1998). Power is the source of oppression in its abuse and the source of emancipation in its use (Afshar, 1998). This can be very true in the Bedouin context. Male-dominant power over household members including women, as a traditionally acceptable practice, exemplifies the usage of power as a tool of oppression, subordination of others and negative control. On the other hand, women’s ability to exercise their power over their household matters and their personal lives, if possible, may promote higher levels of self-reliance and self-confidence and might lead to self-sufficiency in some cases and therefore can be regarded as an emancipatory power.

Chambers (1997) stresses the concept of promoting people’s own power and will to help themselves. Women’s empowerment, as a major component of community mobilisation through development efforts, must focus on strengthening women from within (such as building their self-reliance, self-confidence and self-sufficiency) in order to provide them with the capabilities of helping themselves and thus becoming empowered. In Bedouin terms, empowerment simply means acquiring a more powerful status within the household that is different from that which Bedouin women commonly enjoy. This Bedouin definition of empowered women is thus based on more tangible criteria that can be easily measured and may, in the long term, achieve development



empowerment-related objectives such as self-confidence, self-reliance and self-sufficiency. I shall present some of the Bedouin criteria here, based on my discussion with Bedouin women and men, to give a general picture of how a woman can obtain an improvement in status in the Badia.

Generally, a woman's negotiating power and her status within the household improve if she is economically active and brings income either from seasonal activities she performs or formal employment. In some areas, especially within traditional and highly segregated communities such as the Badia, women's activities are usually restricted to the culturally accepted kind of work they may perform, as discussed in Chapter 4. As mentioned earlier, social and religious factors play a major role in Middle Eastern societies in shaping the type of activities and employment women engage in. For example, the service sector is among the most acceptable fields of work for educated women because it provides a low profile of sex mixing and interaction (Abu Jaber *et al.*, 1987). Highly qualified women are not usually bound to follow a socially tailored pattern of employment to the same degree as other less educated women, such as those who live in the Badia.

Another criterion which strengthens the negotiating power which a woman may possess is marriage. Negotiating power based on this criterion will be enhanced when she has children, particularly sons. The age factor is one important determinant of a woman's authority over household members and of their higher status at a later stage of their lives. Elderly women assume a higher position in the household and greatly affect the decision-making process. This advanced position may be, as well, the result of the same cultural restrictions that hindered their involvement in decision-making at the early stages of their lives. As women grow older they are usually perceived as experienced and enjoy a similar status to that of elderly men, not only at the household level but also within public interaction. In general, women's decision-making power increases when they are considered economically active,

according to the definition of a feasible, income generating activity. This power is enhanced in older, married women (Agarwal, 1997).

A woman's affiliation to a big tribe qualifies her to gain a powerful status when she marries. For example, a sheikh's daughter (the daughter of the head of a tribe) assumes a more powerful position in her parent-in-law's house than another daughter-in-law coming from a less powerful family. A woman's ownership of property or livestock similarly enables her to obtain a better status than a poorer woman. Having now presented some criteria, which affect Bedouin women's status and power in the household, I shall move on to consider how other factors such as religion and tradition overlap and affect women's decision-making power.

### **5.3 Religion, Traditions and Women's Decision-Making in the Middle East**

The concept of power has been deeply rooted in Bedouin societies from as far back in time as we know. Power may be differentiated into power among different tribes, individual power within each tribe and division of power among household members. Since Bedouin societies are known to be more traditional and conservative in comparison to multinational and urban societies, then the link between religious and traditional factors can be seen as a major factor in shaping the division of power relations and, consequently, the decision-making model within such societies. Therefore, when discussing the division of power within Bedouin households, one should realise the complexity of the situation and the various factors affecting this issue in Bedouin societies. Since Bedouin women's productive roles and contributions towards the survival of their households have been discussed and analysed in the previous chapter, I shall focus here on the role of religion, customs and traditions in shaping women's decision-making participation. These factors depend strongly on each woman's status within her family and therefore vary between different cases. For this reason, I will not discuss each

case individually but rather will present them generally and integrate them within the content of my fieldwork examples (case studies). Therefore, it is essential now to contemplate how women's decision-making power is shaped by the religious and traditional factors that govern their lives, particularly when discussing a conservative, patriarchal and tradition-bound entity such as the Bedouin household.

This tendency of pastoral societies to be androcentric is reflected in women's absence from formal political institutions. Decisions regarding herd mobility, conflict resolution, and diplomatic relations with neighbouring groups and the state are made and represented by older men. But in spite of this, women can enjoy high social status and exercise a considerable measure of autonomy and decision-making power, as a result of their participation in daily productive and reproductive activities. Gender discriminatory property relations and political representation may further be challenged through such institutions as trousseau, fecundity, agnatic support, sexual rejection and public humiliation of their husbands, refusal to do house chores, divorce rights and reproductive control. Women exercise, in fact, considerable informal political influence in their communities and households with regard to men's economic activities, marriages of their offspring, inheritance, and the like.

### 5.3.1 The Impact of Religion and Traditions on Muslim Women

*"Much of the Quran is difficult to understand because of obscure references as well as the traditional arrangement of chapters and verses in which unrelated passages are interspersed. As a result, philological analysis and additional information obtained from the Prophet's Companions were utilised to explain and amplify the meaning of the revealed text.....In fact, classical exegetes created a mainstream Islamic interpretation of the Quran which was handed down from generation to generation." (Roded 1999, pp. 27).*

Islam, as a religion, is viewed as a barrier towards women's emancipation and participation in decision-making within the family and

larger community. According to Al-Haj (1987), Arab Middle Eastern women, in particular Muslim women, have been viewed as powerless, subservient and submissive by Western feminism at least in the beginning (Mujahid, 1985). On the other hand, Norica Romania<sup>2</sup> said that she had an opportunity to learn more about Islam's teachings and values during her visit to Jordan. She added:

*"Islam is a strong religion. It provides more opportunities for equality between men and women. In Europe, we still don't have a good understanding of Islamic values."  
(STAR Newspaper, 2000, pp.2).*

When discussing the impact of Islam on, particularly, Bedouin women, it will not be my intention to examine Islamic thought, which needs specialised comparative research to identify the nature and position of this religion among a variety of other existing religions in the world. Nor will I challenge the essence of Muslim Faith and beliefs, which is not the objective of this study. The relevant exploration, which will assist in clarifying my research findings, will be to understand to what extent is human interpretation of Islam in the Badia and, accordingly, its practical application consistent with the original teachings and values of Islam. In other words, the important issue here is to realise whether what is taking place in Muslim communities, and more specifically in Bedouin societies in Jordan, stems from God's words or from man-made interpretation of these words.

Women's status in Middle Eastern Islamic countries is therefore the outcome of two forces: the application of Muslim laws and the inherited traditions and cultural background. Back in 1973, Nelson pointed out that there was a lack of literature that focuses on Bedouin religious lives and also a lack of research on women's private lives and rituals.

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<sup>2</sup> Norica Romania participated in women's leadership course which was held in Amman and concluded on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2000. This course was organised by the United Nations university/ International Leadership Academy (UNU/ILA).

Some then believed that the Bedouin observe religion less conservatively than they observe traditions. The question remains, whether this is true or not, whether the reason behind the strong observation of traditions is due to the deficiency in rituals among the Bedouin or because of the significant role traditions play in a Bedouin context, though it is important to note that there is a difficulty differentiating between religion and tradition in Bedouin societies. In any case it remains difficult to draw a clear line between culture and religion. They overlap and are tightly related in Islam, which is in many cases taken as a way of life.

Moghadam (1993), argued that Islam is neither less nor more patriarchal than other religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism. Women in all cultures strive for higher status, more recognition and less undermining than in previous decades. It is true that the picture differs from one set of religious teachings and values to another, but Islam may appear more patriarchal in the sense that it places greater stress upon the theme of honour depending on women's good conduct and behaviour (Khairat, 1978; Moghadam, 1993).

Some extremists or fundamentalists take Islam as a divinely ordained path of human life. They do not believe in the necessity of adapting the rules and teachings of this religion to their current lives within the world. They simply prefer to disregard any possible alteration or adaptation to contemporary life, which, they think, may bring about confusion to their faith.

Others expect Islam, seeing that it is revealed by God, to operate in human life in a magical, extraordinary and incomprehensible manner. They expect it to operate without any regard to human nature (Qutb, 2000). In reality, human abilities and material realities of human existence interact with Islam. This inevitable interaction is the origin of many inquiries regarding the essence of this faith. For example, non Muslims, whether coming from other religious backgrounds or being

completely atheist, do not comprehend how the realisation of this religion in the life of mankind depends on the exertions of men themselves, within the limits of their human capacities and the material realities of human existence in a given environment.

In his attempt to clarify that Islam is not a miraculous faith, Qutb (2000) said:

*“All errors arise from misunderstanding or neglecting the nature of this faith, from expecting the occurrence of miracles, of hidden origin, miracles which will transform the nature of man, pay no attention to his limited capacities and have no regard for the material realities of his environment and changing circumstances.” (Qutb 2000, pp.1).*

The subject of women in Islam is highly controversial. It includes a wide spectrum of approaches which have the Islamic fundamentalists and western feminists at opposite ends. While Islamic feminism lies in the middle of this spectrum and ranges between the conservative approach which sees feminism in tune with Islam, and a more liberal approach that considers Islam as a barrier towards women's emancipation. (See Hussain, 1984; Nashat and Tucker, 1999; Mernissi, 1991; El-Derkazly, 1997; El-Solh and Mabro, 1994).

Regardless of the wide range of different approaches to conceptualising Islam and women's status in the Middle East, the issue here is to capture the impact of this religion on women in Middle Eastern settings. Culture and traditions are intimately bound to religious behaviour in such settings and all these must be considered in order to understand women's status in the Middle East.

*“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means.” (4:5:34) The Koran, Surat An-Nisaa (Women Chapter)<sup>3</sup>.*

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<sup>3</sup> The English translation of this verse was taken from Al-Hilall, M (1996). (See references)

Literal interpretation<sup>4</sup> of this verse may easily lead us to a conclusion that puts Islam in a weak position when trying to defend the reason why Islam has given men such an advantage over women, when it is clear that this religion is not discriminatory and treats all people the same.

Some believe that Islam has placed men on the top of the tree due to the extra amount of responsibility they have to shoulder, rather than to their superiority to women. At the same time, this cannot deny feminists the right to explore the issue of women in Islam and its underpinnings, yet identifying various disadvantages that disfavour women to the benefit of men. In another Koranic verse, Allah said:

*“O Mankind! Lo! We have created you from a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware.” (49:26:13) The Koran, Surat Al-Hujurat, (Al-Hujurat Chapter).<sup>5</sup>*

*“And their Lord hath heard them (and He saith): Lo! I suffer not the work of any worker, male of female, to be lost. Ye proceed one from another.” (3:4:195) The Koran, Surat Aal-Imran (The family of Imran Chapter).<sup>6</sup>*

These two verses from the Koran introduce the concept of equality between men and women. The cause of their creation by God is for the human race to breed into tribes and families. The only basis for discrimination between men and women, as the verses suggest, is their work and honourable performance during their lives. The Prophet of

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<sup>4</sup> It is important here to note that this approach of quoting Koranic verses then elaborating on and explaining them has been explicitly used in the literature over a long period of time, Awde (2000). Nevertheless, I believe that such an approach will contribute more to the understanding of Muslim practices if based upon Koranic words themselves. Therefore, it will be far more difficult to discuss the impact of the Islamic religion on women in the Middle East if one does not draw evidence from the book they observe. For this reason, I have followed this approach where necessary to clarify the picture and to ensure better analysis of the subject.

<sup>5</sup> The English translation of this verse was taken from Pickthall, M, year of publication not mentioned. (See references)

<sup>6</sup> The English translation of this verse was taken from Pickthall, M, year of publication not mentioned. (See references)

Islam, Mohammed, stressed the fact that men and women are equal in the eyes of Islam. Their observance and right conduct of Islamic teachings is the only determinant of either one's superiority to the other.

While the recurrent theme in Islamic society stresses that Islamic identity is in danger and Muslims must return to fixed traditions, women are seen as social channels for transfer of change throughout the community. Moghadam (1993) sees that this illustrates the overlap between tradition and religion: identity lies in the female private sphere (women's behaviour, dress, and appearance) while Muslim laws are necessary on the state level.

From the Islamic point of view, Islam has been recognised as salvation for women from oppression and denial they had faced during pre-Islamic ages, Khairat (1978). Koranic verses concerning women, place them on an equal level with men. The equality women gained after Islam can be illustrated in different ways according to Islamic thought. One is their right to inherit. The issue of the share of women in inheritance is exploited by the opponents of Islam who cite it as another example of the so-called injustice of this religion towards women. Islam indeed gives women in inheritance half the share of men. If we contemplate this carefully, taking into account the Islamic point of view, we would reach a conclusion that women have a greater share simply because whatever a woman takes is only for her personally while men shoulder the responsibility to provide for their parents, wives and children. Men take more, this is true, but they must spend much more with the result that women's savings are far greater than those of men.

According to Gritili (1997), when and where Islam is practised, women's rights to ownership are recognised by the Shari'a (Islamic law), although, for example, Muslim law grants daughters only half the inheritance rights enjoyed by sons. Unfortunately, these inheritance laws, despite their religious validation are not always respected. This is the case, for example, among the Sudanese Arabs where male agnates retain



custody over women's animals as they can do in Jordan and other Arab countries.

Even when women inherit or acquire livestock, they enjoy less freedom in the disposal of animals than men do. Adult men's typical role as the head of the household legitimises their decision-making with regard to the disposal of all household stock, although their wives are customarily consulted before such actions as selling, buying or slaughtering are taken. Nevertheless, these ideologies and structure disfavour women's equal ownership rights over animals, by restricting women's decision-making freedom over their own stock. This may in the long run affect the security of elderly widows who depend on their sons for support.

From another perspective, a woman in Islam is normally put under the guardianship of her father, brothers or husband depending on her marital status. Some may argue the validity of the polygamous concept in Islam regarding men's right to marry four wives at the same time. This is critically a weak point from which Islam may be attacked seeing it as a major inequality factor between men and women. Defenders of Islam see that the reason behind this legislation is to solve certain problems and to face certain circumstances. Because Islam believes in the purity and chastity of the society, it does not allow sex outside marriage (Afshar, 1993; Meriwether *et al.*, 1999).

Callaway (1994) argues that the way in which patriarchy in Muslim societies is practised brings about more evidence of this concept and reinforces the belief that Muslim women are more subject to men's control than other women in western countries. Although Muslim societies are patriarchally structured, women can still practice a great deal of power from within the household and the private domain, as Whitehead (1981) argues. The validity of Islamic values and teachings together with the challenge of the practical application of Islamic rules in contemporary Muslim societies remain as persistent debatable issues.

Jureidini (1984) points out that although Islam, in general, accepts positive progress to enforce positive developments to individual and group behaviour, still traditional Muslims call for a 'return to the past' to reinforce Islamic strengths. Therefore, social changes occur over a long period of time in Muslim countries and go through a lot of processing until they are adopted by the society. Unlike western societies, modernisation cannot be easily introduced to Islamic cultures. Kurian (1981) argues that traditional Muslims present a diversion from Islamic ideals, if their attitudes and actions hinder positive change regarding women's personal progress. For example, Muslim women are found to be the most educationally backward of all women. In other words, the oppression of Muslim women in many cases is more the result of human interpretation and application rather than the law itself.

Back in 1973, Levando carried out research on Negev Bedouin women by which she challenged Western feminism regarding their perception of Muslim women, particularly Bedouin, as slaves and subordinated to their men. Her findings proved this issue to be highly controversial depending on the viewpoint from which it is regarded.

Esposito (1982) agreed with Levando that while traditions play an important role in most cultures, in Islam, and particularly in more patriarchal societies such as the Bedouin's, they have been elevated to an almost sacrosanct status. The patriarchal nature of this religion reinforces the pervasive belief among the Bedouin that women are subject to men's control and authority due to the basic teachings of Islam that place women under the guardianship of their fathers, brothers or husbands because of their responsibility towards securing their women's well-being in such matters as their food and shelter (Callaway, 1994). Therefore, members of conservative patriarchal societies tend to observe traditions with the same level of caution with which they observe religious teachings and values. In other words, many traditions and customs applied in such societies overlap with religion and create a set of social and behavioural ethics to which members of those societies

adhere and regard, in some cases, as being as sacred as religious principles.

For example, Shukri (1999) argues that women's conduct of themselves as a source of their family's honour (sharaf) has evolved from the concept of men's guardianship over women in Islamic ideology (Faqir, 1998). Women's good conduct was sustained to a certain extent by their confinement to a private domain, The Hareem<sup>7</sup>, in the past. While in the present, this concept is ensured when women's activities are associated with domestic-related duties but since, increasingly, women are participating in the labour force, this sexual segregation is hardly controlled. But at the same time, barriers regarding women's mobility and access to the public sphere continue to hinder their full integration in various fields within their societies. The overlap between Islam on the one hand and the traditions Muslims observe on the other hand becomes clear here. While Islam promotes segregation between sexes, unless their interaction is of a necessity, traditions continue to translate this concept into various types of social norms which might lose the essence of the reason behind this segregation and thus impose irrelevant practices.

Jordan, like many other Middle Eastern countries, has been through a progressive period of change during the last 30 years. Modernisation and social change have occurred widely (and continue to occur) throughout the region, affecting some groups more than others. Naqshabandi (1995) argued that although the Jordanian constitutional law and the personal status law have been amended several times and granted women more advantages than they had previously before regarding issues of employment, marriage, inheritance and other relevant issues, still this law has many pitfalls that hinder women's full integration in the public and political life. Naqshabandi said:

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<sup>7</sup> The Hareem, which was evident during the Ottomans period, is a sexually segregated area within the household to which only women and close male members such as the father and brothers are allowed, including young boys.

*"The laws affecting Jordanian women that there is a strong similarity with laws in neighbouring Arab countries. Constitutional laws grant women the same rights and duties as men, but there are contradictions with other laws such as the labour, retirement and personal status laws." (pp. 185)*

Islam promotes the concept of equality between men and women as stated in the Koran and the Prophet's teachings (Hashim, 1999), and has provided significant rights for women. According to Naqshabandi (1995), the Jordanian constitutional law, which is based on the Islamic Shari'a, grants women the same rights as men and makes them similarly responsible before their duties. Thus inequality in many aspects of Jordanian women's lives may be due to the outcome of people's own interpretation and application of these laws.

I want to stress the strong impact of the religion, traditions and social laws in Muslim countries and particularly conservative societies such as the Bedouins in Jordan. However, the key point I want to argue is the fact that traditions can be easily confused with religious teachings in this society, which results in imposing false limitations and restrictions on people's lives and, more specifically, on Bedouin women's status within their communities. During the course of my research, I was able to tackle the issue of women's perceptions of their status at the household level regarding the division of power between women and men, in the light of Bedouin traditions and religious principles.

## **5.4 Women, Power and Decision-Making in the Badia**

### **5.4.1 Power Game<sup>8</sup>**

During the group discussions I held when I first started my fieldwork in each village, I applied a 'power game' to analyse women's perceptions

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<sup>8</sup> This 'Power Game' is a technique that was used and tested by CARE International in Jordan throughout project related training sessions that targeted rural women. (See Research Methodology, chapter no.2.)

of the division of power within the household. This game involved dividing participants to two groups or more, depending on the number of participants in the discussion group. I asked each group to have a close look at eight cards and then formulate a story out of them depending on how the participants interpreted the development of power relations between men and women in the Badia. Included were five cards with different arrangements of male and female characters. One card showed a female tied with strings that were controlled by a male. The second showed the opposite, a female controlling a male who is tied to her hands with strings. Two other cards showed a female and male person standing next to each other, with one having the male considerably larger than the female and visa versa. The fifth card showed a male and female person standing on the same level and displayed as the same size. The sixth card included a male on his own and participants were asked to draw a female figure in relation to the male according to their own wish. The seventh card presented a case opposite to that of the sixth card. The remaining card was left blank so participants could add whatever female-male power relation they desired in order to complete their story. The arrangement of cards within each group then depended on how women perceived power relations between men and women, not how they ought to be. Although some groups were not sure whether the cards were intended to show how power relations were divided at the present time or could possibly be in the future, they tried their best to come up with a logical version of the power story.

I obtained seven results from three discussion groups when group meetings were held in each of the three villages. In Salhia village, the three groups of five women presented three versions of the 'power story'. In both Abu Al-Farth and Dair Al-Kahf, I conducted two sessions including four groups in total. After each group had presented their version of the 'power story', a discussion of the reasons behind each group's arrangements of the cards followed. In addition, we discussed their perception of each card, their preferences and choices regarding the blank card and to what extent these cards reflected the current

situation regarding male-female relationships in the Badia. I will present the main findings I concluded from the groups' presentations and the following discussions regarding the division of power between men and women in the Badia.

1. All groups with no exception placed the card which illustrates the male being in control of the female as their first card describing the beginning of the 'power story' in the Bedouin society. They said that this case is more representative of male-female relationships in the past, when men were completely in charge of the material and human resources of the households they belonged to including female members of the household.

2. Five groups placed the card, which showed the male larger in size than the female, as their second choice. While the other two groups chose to draw similarly a female character released from the strings, but still with the male character displayed at a higher level and on top of the female, as their second placement. They argued that the relationship between men and women did not develop as fast but instead when women were somehow freed from being tied to the strings then they acquired a better status since they managed to stand at the same level with men. When these two groups analysed the situation as mentioned above, participants from the five other groups seemed to agree more with this analysis, seeing it as a more solid and logical argument than their own.

3. Six groups placed the card that showed both male and female characters at the same level as the third card representing the 'power story'. Only one group disagreed with this placement and thought that it was better to draw both female and male cards that showed both mutually tied to strings by each other. They then placed the card that showed them on the same level, freed from strings. This group argued that the relationship did not immediately develop from having the female smaller than the male, which they regarded as similar to being tied to

strings, to being standing in equality on the same ground with men. This group explained that there must be a stage in between when both males and females were equally controlled by each other, then a following stage when both were set free from each other's control and became totally equal.

4. All groups thought that the fourth card must be the one which shows the female larger in size than the male, which indicates that she has acquired a more powerful status than that of the male. Most groups said that they cannot say that the female can be more important than the male in any stage of the 'power story', but they had to place the cards in this sequence to develop the story. They argued that in reality this story is hardly true but the most logical way to see it is when they become equal. Then, perhaps, women's status may become more recognised and their contribution towards the household welfare more evident, but the woman's can never be more important than that of the man.

5. The fifth card that completed the 'power story' was the one that showed the male tied to stings under the female's control. Almost all groups said that this is an unrealistic situation. One group said that this might be applicable to a few cases when the male is desperately helpless, in situations of major physical disability or economic unemployment. One participant in a Salhia group thought that these two cases are not the only ones when the female is in control of the male. She said that although her husband is not suffering from any physical disability and he is economically sustaining his family but still her husband's relationship with his second wife can be expressed by this card. She thought that her husband's second wife was totally in control of her husband, his earnings and the running of the daily routines of their lives. She added that mostly her husband's second wife's opinions affected her (the first wife's) household routines as well. But in general almost all participants agreed that this case was rare in the Badia. One said that if this situation was true, it would present a deviation in Bedouin society from religion and tradition.

6. Five groups could not suggest another female-male relationship regarding the two cards that show one of the opposite sexes on their own. They said that all the possible arrangements had been presented in the previous cards and that there was nothing left to be added. Two groups suggested leaving the cards as they were because there are cases when the husband is dead and therefore the female can be in charge of household survival. The same applies to the only-male card, explaining that the wife might be dead or that he might have divorced her and he manages the household and his children's affairs on his own. They added that this is not a common case because most men remarry after they divorce their wives, but, it is still possible.

7. The blank card was left blank in four cases because the groups did not see any possible male-female relationship to add. Three groups added a card that showed, in two cases, one male with two females and, in another case, three females tied to him. They decided that these cards might go in the middle of the 'power story' or at the end when the husband decides to marry more than one wife and would be in control of all his wives.

This 'power game' gave me a good perspective on how women in the Badia perceive the male-female relationship and the division of power between men and women. It formed the basis for further analysis and exploration of this issue, which was discussed frequently later on during my individual field interviews with Bedouin women. In the next section, I will use real case studies to draw examples from my field interviews regarding Bedouin women's control over their lives and the social pressure imposed on them by other conflicting human forces in their societies.



## 5.5 Women, Power and Decision-Making in the Badia (Case Studies)

For the reason that few female researchers of Bedouin women's lives have managed to conduct fieldwork in the past two decades, little material is available to provide us with a reliable background on the nature of this topic. As most of the research work was undertaken by male researchers, who have minimal access to women's private domain, the picture that was given is likely to be misleading and guided by men's opinions.

Chatty is one of the few female researchers who has been able to unveil the private sector of the Bedouin women's world. Her own views regarding women's power do not conform to what has been suggested by previous or current male researchers. After 20 years of conducting fieldwork, she argued in her book Mobile Pastoralists (1996) that Harasiis Bedouin women in Oman have much of a complimentary role with men rather than a dependent and subordinate one.

*"In that context the private domestic, or informal universe of women was regarded as generally subordinate to the public, extraordinary or formal universe of men. Power was generally seen to be attached to the public and formal sphere of life, and women were subsequently viewed as powerless subjugated.....I conclude that Harasiis gender relations are not based on a concept of inferiority and superiority but are founded on a complementarity of duties, roles and needs...women do not take a formal role in the gatherings of men. They do nonetheless participate informally from the background sidelines and their opinions can inform the discussion." (Chatty 1996, pp. 143, 145 and 147)*

Lancaster's work with the Rawala Bedouin (1981) clarified the fact that Rawala Bedouin women, as much as other Muslim women, are kept in the private domain of Bedouin life but not out of a belief that women are the property of men. On the contrary, women in Bedouin settings form the survival element for Bedouin families. Women can easily assume

men's roles and undertake their duties whenever needed, as well as performing their own household survival role which is essential to all. On the other hand, men cannot assume women's roles in the way that women can easily assume both roles.

What Lancaster (1981) tried to point out was that because of the importance of the women's role in the Rawala Bedouin community, they were treasured and brought into the public sphere only in emergencies which required their involvement. As long as stability prevailed, women undertook their natural roles as mothers and family managers but when instability occurred, women's natural role continued or might be delegated to other women and new roles might be assigned to face the upcoming situation.

Women in Bedouin areas enjoy a powerful status within the household even with the existence of men. According to the study undertaken by Oughton and Addas in 1998 concerning how Bedouin households in Northern Jordan make a living, women were found to hold a relatively strong position regarding household decision-making matters. Their economic contribution and ownership of assets in the form of livestock, land and jewellery enhance their power even further. During the course of this study, one case illustrated how a Bedouin wife did not allow her husband to buy livestock by threatening to leave the house if he did. This wife thought that owning livestock at this particular period would generate debts and cause the worsening of their financial status. I encountered a similar case during my work in the Badia.

#### 5.5.1 Cases of Decision-Making Regarding Livestock Ownership (Karima's Case)

Karima is a young woman married to Ahmad, a school principal, and has four young children. They live in Abu Al-Farth's village. While her husband has a full-time job as a school principal in their village, he trades a few livestock in his free time after work. Karima has always

discouraged her husband from keeping livestock since the profit they make out of selling them is very little and in some cases they have spent more money than they gained from selling them, leaving them with a loss. After several unsuccessful attempts from Karima's side to convince her husband to abandon this trade, she refused to look after the few head of sheep her husband had bought because she thought that they were not helping in securing their survival, but rather consuming more money in unprofitable activity.

Karima said: "I have four children and these few sheep are part of the family. My husband makes sure that he secures their food before ours. When I calculated their viability, I found out that it would be cheaper to sell them and get our dairy products from the grocery shop or buy fresh milk from a neighbour and process it myself. When I suggested this to my husband, he did not like the idea saying that he has nothing much to do in his spare time and these sheep keep him busy. In fact, I was doing all the work and he only took them for a walk whenever he felt like it. I decided, after several attempts to put him off this trading activity, not to look after them because I was already overwhelmed with domestic and child caring duties. When my husband tried for few days to do the task I was assuming caring for livestock, he discovered that it needs hard work, therefore he gave up and sold the last 10 sheep we had and never bought any after that" (Karima, third interview on Nov 8, 1999 in Abu Al-Farth village).

In this particular case the wife used her power to push for what she thought was a sensible thing to do. She wanted to make it easier for herself, by reducing the amount of work she had to undertake, and for the benefit of her household, by using the money that went to the sheep on the members of the household. Although her husband was against it, he found himself in a weak position and incapable of handling the situation on his own after she had stopped looking after the animals. In this case, the husband took the practical action of selling the sheep and not buying any more, a decision that was strongly influenced and based

on the wife's refusal to perform any duty related to livestock. While this cannot be considered as a common case, since married women normally follow their husband's will, in this particular situation Karima had the power to influence her husband's decision since their family's survival was not dependent on livestock as a source of income to the household but rather it was more her husband's preference. Therefore, Karima's opposition of this trade did not negatively affect her husband's earnings but instead, from her point of view, saved them the risk of losing more money on this trade and saved her a considerable amount of livestock maintenance duties.

#### 5.5.2 Cases of Educated/Employed Bedouin Women's Status Within Their Households (Fatima's Case)

Out of my field research, it was clear that educated and/or employed wives possess more superior positions within their households than illiterate and/or unemployed women. In some cases, when the wife was found to be managing the household budget, the husband was normally engaged in a job that required his absence from the household for relatively long periods of time. Probably the absence of the husband left him with no choice but to hand over his responsibilities to his wife. This is mostly true when husbands are engaged in army employment and cross-border driving. After retirement, some households continue to be run by the housewife. Some of the interviewed husbands believed that their wives were more capable of managing internal household matters than they were.

It is the financial responsibility of male heads of the household that enables them no gain more power over the decision-making process. When women are somehow financially independent and to be able to contribute to the household budget, they are more likely able to influence the decisions taken by the male heads. Women's financial independence contributes effectively to eliminating cultural and social barriers, restricting their participation in shaping the decision of

patriarchal heads of their families. But although financial independence has a significant impact on the division of power within the household, yet there are other similarly important factors that affect the power distribution and therefore involvement in decision-making of men and women in the household. One, which is related to financial independence through employment opportunities, is the level of educational attainment a female is able to reach. The higher the level of education women attain, the more significance is given to their role in decision-making within their families (Iwai, 1985).

During my field research, I came across a case of a third wife who is a school principal in Abu Al-Farth Village. She was among the few women who continued their university degree there. Although she had a high level of educational attainment, still this did not keep her from becoming the third wife of an illiterate man. The cultural and social organisation of marriage practices in the Badia proceeded in this case, as the polygamous structure of families is common and acceptable. As an educated, financially independent wife, Fatima confirmed that the process of making decisions within her household is participatory, unlike the cases with her husband's first and second marriages. In those cases her husband is the decision-maker and the controller of the household budget. Fatima explained that her husband once said that the situation regarding the life he shares with her was different. He pointed out to her that it is easier for him to communicate with her; he trusts her decisions and approves her logical way of thinking.

I can argue that even for an educated and employed wife, the male head of the household will still assume the authority of taking decisions on behalf of all members of the household. In Fatima's case, her education and employment served as assets providing her with more power in the eyes of her husband who believed that his first and second wives were not as qualified to participate in the decision-making process as Fatima, his third wife.

Some women in Al-Badia aim to have a greater influence not only in the private sphere of the household but also in the public sector of their communities. This depends on the level up to which women are aware of their rights to participate in the decision-making process and the importance of their presence at the community level. In the case of Fatima, who was a school principal, she wanted to become a candidate in the municipality elections at the village level. She first tried to sense how much support she would obtain from female residents and school students. She discussed this issue during parents' meetings at school. She sensed a great opposition not only, as expected, from male members in the village, but also from a large number of Abu Al-Farth women. Their response entailed great opposition towards her desire, for fear of poor representation anticipated from a female in a male-oriented setting. She recalled: "I was surprised that the women in my village did not show interest in supporting me during the elections. They actually tried to put me down, explaining that the public sector is the domain of men and women should be devoted to their families. They added that political representation needs interaction with strangers, mostly men. For them, if a woman is to work outside the house, the service sector is the place for her, such as teaching and nursing" (Fatima, second interview on December 4, 2000 in Abu Al-Farth village).

Fatima's case provides us with an overview of the cultural perspective of women's involvement in decision-making on both the political and household levels. Even if women are eligible to participate in the decision-making process within their household, by virtue of being female they have still to go through big challenges to achieve their political rights, especially in poor rural and Bedouin settings, as in Fatima's case. This not only requires introducing change into the political order, it also involves modifying people's understanding and attitudes, whether men or women, of the importance of women's participation in the public sphere as well as the private one.

### 5.5.3 Cases of the Involvement of Young Women in Decision-Making (Salma's Case)

Salma is a twenty-year-old female who managed to finish her high school (tawjeehi) at the age of seventeen. She wanted to join the police department but was faced with great opposition from her mother and the male relatives of her family, as her father is dead. Her dream was to manage to enrol in a new field and have a different life than the one, which in general educated Bedouin females have. Although she possesses a strong character and tried her best to convince her family, all her efforts failed as the opposition she faced was bigger than her dream. Eventually, she accepted the fact but still wanted to find herself something interesting to engage in. She decided to work in the village store, her mother runs for a few hours each day. This was still an unacceptable action in the Badia, but although she faced rather less opposition she said that her family was still not happy about it. Young unmarried Bedouin women are not allowed to join in public interaction and activities unless it is necessary, as discussed in Chapter 4. I was told, during the course of my fieldwork, that it is even not desirable and often unacceptable for a young female to visit her married sister's house for no good reason. If this was true, one can imagine that standing in a public store dealing with strangers and male members of the village would be considered shameful.

As Salma's argument for this case was stronger than the previous idea, because they owned the business, she managed to perform this task. This has resulted in changing the pattern of labour division in her family. As discussed in Chapter 4, normally young females are expected to shoulder domestic work while older women and mothers, if men are not available for any reason, engage in public activities outside the household. In this case, Salma's mother had to stay at home and look after her young children, which in normal cases would be done by the elder sister, while Salma managed the store her father had left after he died.

Although this situation was not appealing to Salma's family and the larger community in which she lives, not long after she started and proved that she could manage the store well, people in her village got used to the new situation. After Salma had managed to minimise their debts and followed a strict lending scheme, her mother revealed to her that she used to struggle with that duty and did not want to ask for help from male relatives, in order not to lose control over their business. Salma now participates in two saving groups and considers starting a home-based activity that would enable the family to diversify their income and invest more in their spare time. This is exceptional among female members of Bedouin communities at present. Young females in the past herded their livestock and interacted with the outer public world in the presence of male members of their families. Today, however, due to the lack of grazing areas and the availability of hired labour, young females are assigned highly segregated and private domestic duties. Being able to go against the trend and introduce a different perception of what females should do in the Badia, Salma had managed to perform a personally desired role and follow the line she wanted for herself although cultural and traditional barriers were and are always there.

When a female grows older, her power over decisions made within the household increases in all respects, but still some young women such as Salma enjoy more power over their lives depending on their personality. Salma's strong character enabled her to pursue a career that she somehow has chosen for herself although her original plan of joining the police was condemned by her family and therefore she had to disregard it.

#### 5.5.4 Cases of Divorced/Widowed Women (Aisha's Case)

After marriage, generally a female has more control over her own new house when she does not live with her parents-in-law. She enjoys more power over internal affairs within her house, whether she is employed or not. On the other hand, divorced and widowed women have more



power, when they return to live with their natal families, than they had before leaving the house. This is merely due to the accumulation of experience expressed in the procession of age, which adds more recognition to women's knowledge.

One interviewed household in Salhia village, was composed of old parents, a divorced daughter and her little girl. In this particular case, the divorced daughter managed the household budget and was in control of market transactions such as household purchases and livestock inputs. Her father, who is an old and weak man, as he described himself, handed over his responsibilities to his daughter when she got back to live with them. The daughter said that she could feel the change in her father's attitude towards her and the increased trust he gave her, which allowed her to be in control of the household. Her mother does not share any domestic work with her daughter except for looking after the livestock. Both parents are in favour of managing the livestock as in herding and feeding the animals, while the daughter is responsible for securing the fodder and care needed for the animals.

Aisha (the daughter's name) works on farms when possible and joins saving groups to provide the income needed to run the household. She believes that the few sheep they own are money consuming, they do not generate enough income to cover their costs (though they do provide for the household dairy needs) and Aisha thinks it will be better to sell them. The only reason keeping her from doing this is that her parents spend a considerable amount of their time looking after the livestock. This actually takes most of their time leaving them with little room to complain about illness and boredom.

Old women are deeply involved not only in the decision-making process within their households, but also in the decisions being made in their sons' and daughters' dwellings. Mothers and mothers-in-law continue to have power over the decisions of their sons and daughters but in this case to a lesser extent as the decisions are normally within the male's

control. A mother will sometimes be the son's reference point more than his father or wife is. She may also continue to influence her son's decisions in different aspects, as in livestock management, expenditure and other major decisions regarding his familial matters. Although this influence is clearer if the son continues to live with his parents after his marriage, still it can be traced when he chooses to live outside.

During my fieldwork in the Badia, I found out that a daughter-in-law usually has a less prominent role when she lives with her parents-in-law. In such cases, the mother-in-law is usually the decision maker for the internal running of the household, requiring that the son's wife makes major inputs into the domestic work. The daughter-in-law is expected to serve the family and show less interest in decision-making. I came across several cases where the daughters-in-law were the main housekeepers in their parents-in-law's households. Some of them faced great difficulties since they had failed to fulfil the expected physical and behavioural routines when they were living with their parents-in-law. In one case, in Dair Al-Kahf village, the son was forced to divorce his wife because she refused to continue to serve his family and undertake household duties. In another similar case, I interviewed a divorced woman, living with her parents because her brother and mother-in-law did not think highly of her and thought that her husband deserved to have a better wife.

During my fieldwork in Salhia village, I came across a case where the son was forced to find another house and live away, with his wife and children, because his wife's performance was not up to her mother-in-law's standards. The daughter-in-law in this particular case said: "I could not put up with the work I was asked to do. There were twelve people living in the same house and I had to serve them all. I had to get up at five in the morning to prepare and bake bread daily. Then I had to clean the house and look after my young children. During the evenings I could not rest because of the continuous visits my father-in-law kept having from male relatives and friends. This pressure made me ask my

husband to move out. I threatened to go away if we did not manage to move out. Because my mother-in-law was not in good terms with me, she did not mind us leaving the house. Although she is a strong lady and can manage housework easily, she was totally dependent on me regarding housework but occasionally contributed some effort to seasonal activities such as milk processing. Now I am happy because the work I have to carry out is much less than I had to do when we were living with my husband's family" (Amal, first interview on January 16, 2000 in Salhia village).

#### 5.5.5 Cases of Decision-Making Within Female-Headed Households (Sameera's Case)

Chatty's work with Omani Bedouin confirms that as women age, their position and status in the society develop and grow. She concluded that Bedouin women have power in various spheres of life and that they can initiate change as much as men can. Against many Western researchers, Abu Lughod (1993) sees that women do not hold inferior status in the society but rather they have an important role regarding various aspects of life in nomadic communities. Lancaster (1981), together with his wife, found out that Bedouin women play a major role in the society. He added that although women may not be treated equally with men in public, they are surely on the same ground with men in the private sphere.

In a Bedouin setting, patriarchy is an overwhelming fact at every level of individual groupings. Traditionally, the concept of having a representative of a tribe's interests is reproduced at the lineage and household levels. At the household level, the patriarch who is normally the male head of the household holds the power and authority of decision-making within that unit. Sometimes, this gained power goes beyond the immediate boundaries of his household to impose different actions or suggestions on other members within linked households. For example, a female-headed household may have continuous interference

from both natal and parents-in-law's families. Not only do women face interference from other members of their families in their personal lives; married men may be forced to act against their will as a result of their natal family's interference in their personal lives as mentioned earlier.

#### A Case of a Female-Headed Household (Sammera's Case)

I shall present the following case in some detail to show a complicated picture of gaining control in a highly patriarchal and traditional community such as the Badia. Firstly, this case illustrates a model of a Bedouin female-headed household, which is rare in a male-dominant community. Secondly, Sammera's case is another version of conflict relations between a widow and her parents-in-law, along with the involvement of her natal family. Thirdly, the extent to which a widow can manage her life independently is illustrated in this case.

This interesting example, which I came across during my fieldwork in Dair Al-Kahf village, was the case of Sammera, a 33-year-old woman. She is a widow heading a house of six children; the eldest daughter is fourteen and the youngest son is almost eight years old. As she recalled: "my husband died seven years ago after one week of his retirement from the Jordanian army. After his sudden death in a car accident, his father and brothers tried to take control of my life. They interfered in every aspect of my life. They wanted to get hold of the monthly allowance we get from the army. I went through a lot in order not to allow this to happen to my children and me. The governmental procedures of cashing the money required either his father or me, his wife, to cash the payments. And since his father is paralysed, they were left with no option but to let me pay monthly visits to collect the money that goes to his children, wife and parents" (Sammera, first interview on November 5, 1999 in Dair Al-Kahf village).

Sammera married her husband Abdullah when she was sixteen. She gave birth to her first child at the age of seventeen. She said that

because she was the eldest daughter in her family, her father made her leave school at an early age. She then used to look after the herd and undertake grazing and herding tasks along with other young male relatives. At the age of twelve she was assigned housework duties and a younger sister went on with the grazing task. When Sammera first got married, she lived separately from her parents-in-law from the beginning. She referred to that as the cause behind having a good casual relationship with her husband's family.

After her husband's death in the car accident, JD 4000 was paid by the person responsible for the accident as a compensation that needed to go to his wife and young children. In such cases the payment goes directly to the elder son of the family and he takes the responsibility of managing it. But because Ali (elder son) was still young, the money was given to the father then passed on to her husband's brother to be delivered to the children but managed by the uncle. A decision was made by the male members of the family, with the consultation of Sammera to use the money effectively in adding to the two rooms in which they were living. This was seen to be the best investment to secure widowed Sammera and her orphans. As construction proceeded, the money was paid in instalments to the workers directly by the uncle, while Sammera was not involved in any financial transactions. Half way through the construction work, she was told that the money was used up and nothing was left to pay for extra materials and labour work. Sammera had doubt about whether this was true or not. But nevertheless, she had to finance the half-completed construction work from the monthly payments they had received. After six years, she had still one more monthly instalment to pay. Probably the uncle was sure that the money they received was sufficient to finance the remaining part of the construction.

Sammera said during a prolonged visit: "after I realised what happened with the JD 4000, I was determined that I should keep control of the monthly allowance we receive. I hand my parents-in-law their cheque

each month and I cash my children's and mine and make sure that no one has access to our money. We get a total of JD 275, half of which goes to the construction debts and the remainder is usually divided between consumption needs and saving accounts. From the beginning I decided to open a savings account for each of my children in order to save them some money for their future. Now, after I finish paying my debts, each will be able to save more every month. We will have to think of a business or an activity to run. I don't believe that it will have to do with livestock. Livestock work needs human labour to manage it. As I am determined to provide my children with a proper education, no one will be available to take care of the animals but myself. As I don't want to be involved in that anymore, especially now that it is no longer viable these days, I would have to consider another field. Maybe embroidery, I prefer this one" (Sammera, second interview on November 12, 1999 in Dair Al-Kahf village).

After her husband's death, one of her brothers-in-law proposed to her. She turned his proposal down because she sensed that the main reason behind his proposal was to have direct access to and control over their allowance. He kept interfering in her life and caused her a lot of trouble by trying to impose control over her. She said that she had to go through a hard time to set some rules for her relationship with her parents- in-law's family. She said: "once I had to ask my brother to have a serious talk with my brother-in-law after I had given up on him. He used to inspect my every movement outside the house, as he lives opposite to us. He used to check who walks in and out of my house. I tried several times to ask him to stop, but he would not. In such a male dominant society, I had to ask for my brother's help regarding that particular issue in order to resolve it. Now, my brother-in-law keeps his distance and never shows up unless he is invited to any gathering I organise in memory of my husband" (Sammera, second interview on November 12, 1999 in Dair Al-Kahf village).

Not only did Sammera's brother-in-law interfere in her life, but her next-door sister-in-law did also. She had once asked Sammera to go and find herself a husband and move away, leaving her children for them to raise. Sammera thought this suggestion was meant to keep Sammera away from the sister-in-law's husband who might otherwise become interested in marrying her in order to have direct access to the allowance they get, especially since he is unemployed.

Sammera was always supported by her family and relatives. She proved to be a strong and independent woman in a way that had enabled her to set guidelines for her relationship with her parents-in-law's family, which has changed since the death of her husband as a result of their conflicting interests. She wished that they were more of a support to her and her children than a threat. She sees the current low profile relationship for her as best now. They have occasional visits during religious events, such as Eid visits and meals during the holy month of Ramadan.

Out of my interest in this particular case, I went back after six months and visited Sammera again on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2000 to follow up with the new developments that were taking place in her life. We spent two hours chatting about her situation and what new ideas and attitudes she had developed during the time we have been out of touch. I found out that she had been hosting a Syrian woman, separated from her husband for the previous three months, after her husband had abandoned her because of the problems that occurred between his first wife and her since they were living in the same house.

The Syrian woman, who joined our discussion said: "two years ago when I came to visit my sister, I met this Bedouin man and he proposed to me, promising that he would provide me with a separate house to live in so we would not face any problems that he anticipated, his first wife might try and cause. After our marriage, he said that he did not have any money to buy or build a house at that time and therefore I had to

share the house with his first wife and children, hoping that I would move out to a house of my own in few months as he had promised. Inevitably, many problems occurred between me and his first wife that made him force me to leave the house and face an unknown destiny on my own. I am pregnant now and he does not ask about me at all although he knows that Sammera hosted me after my own sister refused to accommodate me in order to avoid trouble which her husband might have caused her" (Fadda on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2000 in Dair Al-Kahf village).

Sammera explained that she felt sorry for Fadda after she realised what had happened to her and offered to let Fadda stay with her until she solved her problems. This offer has caused Sammera some trouble with her parents-in-law's family who protested about this situation, which they thought was not appropriate since Fadda had a sister who lived in the same village and that this situation might cause Sammera trouble from Fadda's husband or first wife. Sammera insisted that Fadda needed some support that she could not even get from her own sister and therefore some one had to help her. This happened to be Sammera since she had the space and financial ability to accommodate her. Sammera associated her behaviour towards this case with the fact that Islam stresses the duty to help one another through difficult times if possible. She explained that her attitude towards Fadda's case allowed her to fulfil her duty before God (Allah) and will definitely have a positive impact on her life.

During our discussion, I found out that Sammera's attitude towards marriage has changed from that which she had when I was doing my fieldwork six months earlier. At that time, she thought that she would never remarry again because she feared that the new husband might not treat her children well, he might be only interested in the money she gets and that her parents-in-law might claim that since she remarried they have the right to keep her children. But recently she has been facing some problems with her elder son who wants to claim responsibility over the family and their income although he is only fourteen. She said that



he adopted his uncle's attitude of inspecting her movements and inquiring about his share of the money they have and still receive and he showed his interest in putting a hold on at least his share. Sammera thought that if her son started causing her trouble regarding such issues at this early age, then he would surely cause her more trouble, as he grows older. She realised that she might eventually lose control over her life if her son and parents-in-law manage to get hold of what she runs at the moment. Then, she will be left with no authority over her household or personal life, which is unacceptable to her and therefore she has started considering marrying a good man, which she defined as someone who will observe God in his relationship with her and her children. By this Sammera thinks that she will stop her parents-in-law's family from interfering with her life and will have her new husband's support if her son continues to behave in his present manner.

Sammera's case exemplifies the struggle a widow may go through to gain control over her life and against negative interference from relatives (Sawalha<sup>9</sup>). Twenty years ago, one could hardly find a relatively young woman such as Sammera running a household on her own. This case was only possible for an elderly woman whose husband passed away and when the woman continued to live with her grown up or married sons and daughters. From Sammera's case, one can see not only that the social structure is undertaking new organisational reforms, but also women's status within their families is evolving rapidly and their decisions are becoming more effective and forceful.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, that there is no clear distinction between Islamic teachings regarding the organisation of societies and the significance of women's roles within those societies, and the traditional patriarchal structure which evolved a long time ago, even prior to the emergence of the

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<sup>9</sup> Unpublished Report, no date was mentioned.

Islamic state. The overlap between religion, traditions and social customs in Bedouin settings creates an artificial environment in which women are still not eligible fully to share power with other members of their societies, and specifically men.

Although one cannot deny the vast male dominance over women's world in the Badia of Jordan, nor assume that women's share of power is clearly evident there, still I argue that there is more possibility for women to impose their opinions and to share more power with men in contemporary Bedouin households. Changes in social and economic settings of Bedouin societies are allowing a positive alteration to take place in the world of the Bedouin women. In addition, there is a rise in women's own will and assertiveness to gain their rights, as is illustrated by some of the case studies included in this chapter.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

There is no doubt that issues of Muslim women in general and Jordanian women in particular are receiving more recognition and given more attention by researchers, scholars, state officials and development practitioners. Jordanian women's political, economic and social status is formed by three ideological powers: Islam, the law of the state and traditional culture.

The overall aim of this study was to investigate Bedouin livelihoods, and women's roles in securing their household survival and in their participation in the decision-making process at the household level. Based on this aim and the related study objectives, presented in Chapter 1, I present below the major conclusions of this study. But my conclusions can only be understood in the context of the social and economic changes that have occurred in Jordan, and more specifically, within Bedouin society over the last two decades. These have been discussed in the previous chapters. Social and economic changes provide a background to understanding changes in women's economic power and their social status in the Badia of Jordan.

### **6.2 The Changing Livestock Industry**

Bedouin attitudes towards livestock were negatively affected by the deterioration of the livestock industry, which was mainly caused by the removal of the animal feed subsidies, the low levels of rainfall in the Jordanian Badia during the nineties and problems of market access and sheep imports from Saudi Arabia. A large proportion of livestock owners were adversely affected (in general, owners of large and some medium-sized herds managed sustain their livestock numbers and, in some cases, generate profit, while owners of small herds were more negatively

affected). The rise in animal feed prices coincided with the degradation of the grazing areas due to the lack of sufficient rainfall during the three-year period 1997/8-2000/2001, needed to provide grazing. Therefore, livestock owners were forced to substitute natural grazing with purchased fodder, which prices rose drastically in the second half of the nineties. Since many livestock owners could not maintain their livelihood and afford their livestock expenses at the same time, some were forced to sell out their herds, reduce herd numbers or suffer negative consequences from trying to maintain their livestock size. As a result, Bedouin people were forced to explore other sources of income since the livestock industry did not maintain its credibility as a dependable source of income. Livestock keeping became a subsistence-oriented measure, mainly for providing household consumption needs. Traditional practices, which involve livestock, have been altered due to the deterioration in livestock conditions. The findings of my research show that Bedouin norm of slaughtering seven sheep in gratitude to a dead member of the family have been affected by these economic hardships. Fewer sheep are slaughtered, perhaps only one or two depending on the financial status of the family. In addition, practices regarding sheep slaughtering during Ramadan and the Eids occasions have been modified and the number of sheep slaughtered has been reduced and might be disregarded in some cases to save the household excess expenditure.

Bedouin women showed less interest in contributing efforts towards raising livestock unless it had proved to be profitable for their households. A large number of interviewed women expressed their desire to keep few animals in order to secure household consumption of dairy products. Most of the women interviewed kept a few number of animals, which they would keep despite the economic hardships. They believed that these sheep contribute greatly in their households consumption security. Some women had shifted their interest from raising sheep to poultry for household consumption and, in some cases, as an income generating activity. As presented in Chapter 5, some

women who could see no benefit in keeping sheep, since they had become a burden on their household budgets, substituted sheep with chickens or used their influence over the head of their households to sell the sheep and goats. The new generation of young women had already developed a negative attitude towards livestock activities and preferred in most cases to perform domestic duties instead of livestock related chores. They considered livestock-related activities to be the responsibility of older women since they believed that older women were more experienced in this work and they regarded livestock raising duties as exhausting and unpleasant.

### **6.3 Bedouin Women's Economic Contribution Towards Household Survival**

Bedouin women's contributions to sustaining their household survival have become more substantial and measurable in contemporary Bedouin households. Because the livestock industry followed a declining curve during the late nineties, Bedouin women have developed strong attitudes towards seeking work opportunities in the informal market, such as seasonal farm work and part-time employment. An increasing number of Bedouin women work in full or part-time jobs, seasonal paid work and self-employment activities. Looked at over a long period of time, Bedouin women were more closely associated with livestock-related activities and domestic duties in the past. Regarding the present time, I cannot claim that the picture has changed completely. But due to economic reasons, such as the deterioration of the livestock industry in the Jordanian Badia during the last decade, Bedouin people, and specifically women, have been forced to consider other productive activities to secure income needed for their household survival. Recently, farm seasonal activities have become a major characteristic of the Bedouin economy.

Older women were found to be more eligible to seek this kind of work since they had more flexible and less restrictive mobility patterns than

younger women. Nevertheless, some young women were found to perform seasonal farm work during summer vacations if they were attending schools. The money they earned from activities such as farm work could be used to cover their personal and school stationery needs as well as contributing some money into their household budgets.

#### **6.4 Allocation of Bedouin Women's Productive Roles**

The changes that affected the Bedouin economic structure due to the deterioration of the livestock market have imposed major changes on the division of Bedouin women's productive roles at the household level. The changing social attitudes towards reducing young women's interaction with the public sphere in light of the changes in the composition of Bedouin structure, which requires mixing with strangers from outside the Bedouin community, have affected the allocation of women's roles to a large extent. While in the past, young women were associated with outdoor activities related to livestock, such as herding and grazing, recently they have become more associated with indoor domestic activities since the livestock industry is not as strong as it used to be. Regarding older Bedouin women, they are forced these days to seek employment and income generating activities, if they need to secure income, outside the boundaries of their households rather than being confined to their households as the case used to be in the past. Although older Bedouin women were never too involved in domestic activities in the past, still they were more attached to their household territories (tents). Today it is not a matter of giving up domestic duties for external activities, but rather a matter of adopting outdoor activities as a necessity to secure their households survival, leaving younger women to manage domestic work.

Linked to the previous point, the mobility pattern of Bedouin women has changed accordingly. To achieve the freedom that some Bedouin women have to work outside their households necessitated a less restrictive mobility pattern to emerge, particularly regarding older

women's groups. Young Bedouin women are more associated with domestic activities and have more restrictive mobility patterns that limit their movements to specific places and impose certain limitations on making long-distance visits while being accompanied by a member of their households. Even some older women might have a similarly restricted mobility pattern depending on how conservative their family background is, such as women who live in the more conservative part of Salhia village as discussed in Chapter 4. But in general, I can say that a large proportion of older Bedouin women enjoy more freedom regarding their mobility and access to public areas than younger women.

Based on older women's greater involvement in outdoor activities, a division in the pattern of daily routine among old and young women regarding domestic activities has occurred. This division of labour involves older women's participation in outdoor livestock-related activities and seasonal work, and younger women's association with indoor domestic duties.

### **6.5 Social Attitudes Towards Women's Inputs in Securing Household Survival**

The social perception of women's role in securing their household survival differs between men and women in the Badia. Although women acknowledge men's essential contribution in providing survival needs for their households, they regard their own inputs, whether in domestic and livestock related activities or outdoor employment, as vital contributions to their household survival. Men, on the other hand, regard women's role in maintaining their domestic duties as obligatory as part of their responsibility as wives and members of the household. The majority of men to whom I have spoken during my fieldwork pointed out that women's involvement in livestock raising activities gives significance to what can be described as a productive contribution to the household survival and not their domestic obligations. Most of the Bedouin men believed that when women are no longer involved in livestock raising or

income earning activities, their contribution towards their household's survival becomes less valuable. Few men could see that all aspects of women's roles and the socially obligatory duties they perform are essential for their families' livelihoods. When women keep a few numbers of animals for household subsistence, men do not necessarily regard their roles as productive as they might be if women were participating in raising large numbers of animals for production purposes.

## **6.6 Power Relations**

Control over human, material and financial resources of the household is a highly controversial matter in Middle Eastern Muslim countries and especially in Bedouin areas. Based on my study, I have found that although Bedouin women make major contributions to securing their household needs and managing their livelihoods, the control of all the resources involved in these processes remains within men's hands. Therefore, the division of power between men and women in the Badia, which is related to the control one has over resources, weighs more to the advantage of men.

Bedouin women's perceptions of the division of power between men and women are mostly traditional, seeing male-dominance as a naturally given phenomenon supported by Islam and Bedouin traditions. The findings of the 'power game' sessions conducted with Bedouin women in the three villages included in my research showed that most women believe in male's superiority regarding the share of power and control over the household resources. Nevertheless, Bedouin women identified some cases in which women's power is illustrated more clearly such as in cases of female-headed households, men's physical disabilities or absence, which require major contributions from the female side and therefore entitle her to have more power, varying in each particular case. Although the picture of power in the Badia is still male-oriented, Bedouin women are more entitled to participate in decision-making and share



more power with men at the household level. The more productive and financially rewarding contributions women make, the more significant their inputs in making decisions concerning their household survival become. Although Bedouin women's contemporary decreased involvement in livestock-related activities has caused a devaluation of the importance of their productive roles, their other productive contributions to household survival in the form of full-time, self and seasonal employment have added another dimension that maintains recognition of their productive roles and is strongly linked to their share of power within their households. On the other hand, women who enjoyed minimal or no power within their households were not likely to be found working outside their households. I came across some cases during my fieldwork, where women were not allowed to leave their households unless they were accompanied with male members of their households, not to mention outdoors forbidden involvement in outdoors activities. Those women were not allowed to work even if they wanted to, or their hard economic conditions required that because initially they had no negotiating power within their households.

Age plays an important role in the sharing of power among women from different age groups within Bedouin households. From my fieldwork, it became clear that as a woman grows older, her influence over other members of the household, whether men or women, increases. Older women are normally considered wiser and more experienced than younger women and thus more eligible to impose their opinions and therefore influence the decisions taken by the male head of the household. This is partially based on the concept of power division within Bedouin tribes, which normally goes to the older member of the tribe. Similarly, at the household level, older women gain more powerful status, as they grow older, as a result of their accumulated experience over the years, which, in the Bedouin context, earns more recognition and acknowledgement by all members of the household. Young women, on the other hand, continue to be under the supervision of their fathers,

elder brothers and mothers as long as they are unmarried and living with their natal families.

### **6.7 Female-Headed Households**

The emergence of female-headed households is relatively new in the Bedouin society. The significance of this phenomenon lies in the fact that Bedouin women whose husbands die or divorce them are entitled to remain singles. As presented in chapter five, Sammera's case, provides an evidence of women's capacity to manage their households and of the social acceptance of women's independence in this regard, although in most cases the women stay strongly related to either their natal or parent-in-law's families or both. In the past, widowed or divorced women expected to go back to live with their parent-in-law or natal families in order to be under the guardianship of the male head of those households. Due to the economic and social changes in contemporary Bedouin households, it is no longer unexpected for a woman to run the household on her own depending on her ability to do so. The same applies for divorced women who go back to live with their natal families and practically, in most cases, become the managers of the households, such as in Aisha's case, which was presented in chapter five.

### **6.8 Changing Social Attitudes Towards Bedouin Women's Education and Marriage**

Bedouin's social attitudes are still strongly affected by religion and traditions, as they have always been. Hence, the economic changes in the Bedouin structure play a major role in altering peoples social attitudes towards education and marriage. The Bedouin have developed a positive attitude towards educating their children, whether males or females, in response to the deterioration of the livestock industry. The Bedouin regard education as a means to qualify their children to have better employment opportunities in the future. They regarded this as

being particularly important because the livestock industry had become less reliable as a means of securing Bedouin livelihoods in recent years. Young women who are increasingly becoming less involved in livestock-related activities benefited in terms of pursuing their education to higher levels. It is common now to see young women attending secondary schools and setting for High school certificate (tawjeehi). Some have the option to continue their education at the university level, as long as their families guarantee their safety when commuting between home and university. I found out, that a large number of the young women, who do not attend school or university but have the opportunity and permission to pursue their education, are the ones who decided to quit because of some lack of ambition. These cases were different than others when families imposed their decisions on their daughters to stay at home for various reasons' such as long distance, domestic responsibilities and conservative attitudes. The cases of young women's commitment to livestock herding which, necessitates their attendance of flocks and therefore increases the difficulty of attending school at the same time, is no longer evident.

Regarding marriage, a negative correlation between livestock ownership and marriage has developed in recent years. Many Bedouin families now tend to avoid marrying their daughters to livestock owners since it involves more work and a less secure income unless the potential husband comes from a relatively wealthy family. Bedouin families prefer to marry their daughters to government and army employees since they earn monthly salaries, which entitle them to have pensions when they retire and allow them to afford marriage expenses by taking loans that can be repaid over a long period of time. In addition, marrying officials who do not own livestock saves their daughters the time and effort needed to raise livestock. On the other hand, educated women who have secure jobs certainly attract more marriage proposals. Men perceive women's direct financial contribution into the household budget as purely productive, while their productive contributions toward their

household maintenance in forms of domestic and child-rearing activities have always been underestimated.

From another aspect, Bedouin marriages became more flexible in terms of 'bride price' payment, which used to be paid to the father or the female's guardian in the form of large numbers of sheep and camels. These days and due to the deterioration in the livestock market, bride price is paid in cash which goes directly to buying the bride pieces of gold, clothes and household items that she needs to bring when she moves to her potential husband's house.

### **6.9 Recommendations for Further Research**

The overall picture of Bedouin women's status within their households has changed over the previous two decades due to changes in the social and economic structures of the Bedouin society. Yet, a comprehensive assessment of their roles within their households and the larger community needs to be further researched and analysed in order to identify the focal points of their roles and contributions towards their families survival and livelihoods. Although my research has been able to reveal specific areas regarding Bedouin women's productive contributions their family livelihoods and their share of decision-making power at the household level, there are yet more interesting areas to be investigated which would add more depth and enable a better understanding of their status within their households and the larger society. For example, specialised research on female-headed households in the Bedouin society will provide more evidence of Bedouin women's roles in maintaining their households. A thorough analysis of young Bedouin women's roles in sustaining their household's survival could be another area of investigation. A continuous assessment, of the impact of Bedouin women's changing roles and contributions on their lives, is recommended. Further research should identify whether Bedouin women's changing status works as an advantageous factor or extra burden.

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