THE CHANGING ROLE AND STATUS OF ARAB WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

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By

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The major purpose of this thesis is to provide a preliminary examination of the role and status of the Arab women and to correlate these aspects with other aspects of Arab social life including those related to the recent changes taking place in varying degrees throughout the Arab world. A comparative, functional approach is employed. This approach is both diachronic, dealing with the role and status of women at different historical periods, as well as synchronic, focusing on women of different Arab social groups at fixed points in time.

The major conclusions drawn from this study may be summarized as follows:

---In examining the possible determinants of the status and role of Arab women, it is concluded that religion is an independent variable.

---Kinship is the primary determinant of a woman's status in traditional Arab society. Along with ecological factors, it may be isolated as the most important dependent variable in defining the traditional roles of Arab women.

---Although the recent changes in the position of Arab women in modern times was to a great extent the outcome of "westernization," the resulting changes are by no means identical to the western model

and have been influenced by important indigenous cultural forces.

---The widely reported relation between the emancipation of women and the breakdown of traditional family systems does not seem to hold true for the Arab world.

It should be noted that due to the limited nature of the data available on the social role of Arab women, the above statements should be regarded as suggestive rather than conclusive. This paper may therefore serve as a basis for further imperical investigations of the role of women in Arab society.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of human social behaviour as reflected in different subsystems of culture such as systems of kinship, religion or stratification reveals that the different manifestations and elaborations of human thought do not necessarily fit into mutually exclusive categories but may in fact be viewed as points along a continuum. Comparative studies of diverse social groups have pointed to the possible existence of a universal pattern of culture. The process of structuring such a pattern and clearly defining its components necessitates further description, comparison and classification of cultural systems. However, not all human patterns of behaviour are equally susceptible to being studied comparatively. Systems of human behaviour which lend themselves to systematic comparative study are those which have a common basis. Such are the systems of descent among diverse social groups for example. For although different systems of descent may be characterized by drastically different features, they may and have in fact been successfully subjected to comparative examination since they do share a common basis. They are only different elaborations on universally recognized biological ties. Similarly, differentiations of roles and status which is a universal feature of human societies may be subjected to comparative examination.

A better understanding of the complex sociocultural phenomena related to the differentiation of roles and status may be reached by

"breaking them down into their constituent elements."[1] These may include such criteria as age, kinship, sex as well as many others which are products of specific social systems and historical developments. Examination of these various elements in different sociocultural contexts is likely to produce important information which may point to the existence of structural regularities relating to these numerous systems of classification. This study focuses on one of these elements the status of women, and examines it in the context of its transformation in the Arab countries of the Middle East.

Reports of systematic research focusing on the women of the Arab world have been rather scarce in the anthropological literature. This fact has often lead scholars to rely on religious literary sources to explain the social behaviour of the female members of the Arab society[2] and middle eastern societies in general. Thus whenever changes in social roles of women have taken place in this area as during the period of reform in Turkey during the rule of Kamal Ataturk, they have often been attributed to "secularization." But as any qualified observer of Middle Eastern or any other culture knows, there exists a gap between ideal behaviour as expressed in religious doctrines, and actual observed social behaviour. Therefore an extrapolation that a similar gap exists between the ascribed religiously sanctioned actions of women and their actual social behaviour is only a logical conclusion. The assumption that the "inferior" status of the majority of Arab women is determined

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[1]L. A. Fallers. "Equality and Inequality in Human Societies" in Horizons of Anthropology, S. Tax (ed.) Aldine Publishing Co. Chicago, 1964 p. 237-247.

[2]Goode, W. J. World Revolution, Family Patterns. The Free Press of Glencoe. Collier-Macmillan Limited, London, 1963 p. 87.

by their religion has no factual basis and constitutes a gross oversimplification of a complex social problem and may in fact act as a deterent to further scientific investigation of a cultural phenomenon of great interest and significance. For while religion may indeed act as a powerful force in shaping the destiny of members of a given society, it is by no means the only force at work. And although some explanation may be obtained regarding the position of a given group of women in light of the religious teaching of their society, one should not rely solely on this kind of explanation but should support it with empirical data which deals with realities other than ideals. Islam, the dominant religion of the Arab world, as any other ideology, in the process of its adoption by a given social group had to hit a resonance frequency before it became completely absorbed by the non-Islamic environment into which it expanded, a process not unlike that connected with resonance phenomena found in many physical systems.* Similarly the content of the Islamic ideology had to be adapted to the numerous and varied sociocultural settings where it was absorbed.

The aim of this study is twofold: to establish correlations between the status and roles of Arab women with economic, social, geographical historical factors,[3] and to provide a sound basis for future empirical

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*In the process of the absorption of light by a given medium, if the frequency of the photon (quantum of light) is very different from the natural frequency characteristic of the medium, a dispersion phenomenon is exhibited in contrast to the absorption of the photon when both frequencies (photon and medium) are matched.

[3]The biological basis of sex role differentiation will be discussed in the section dealing with women in a cross-cultural perspective. Since the biological nature of females (i.e. their procreative capacity) is a constant, no attemtp will be made to deal with this aspect in the section dealing with Arab women in particular.

investigation of the subject matter of this inquiry.

The format of the study is as follows:

Chapter I serves as a background for the study. It presents a general (cross-cultural) perspective of women's role in society. It deals with the biological basis for sex role differentiation, the cultural determinants of women's roles such as early age socialization and division of labour. The effects of recent social changes brought about by "modernization' on the status and roles of women are also presented in this section. The last part of the chapter is devoted to the functional, comparative and historical approach employed in the study and introduces some of the concepts used in the chapters which are to follow.

Chapter II introduces the reader to the Arab world and shows the diversity of environments and populations underlying the unity of that area. It also deals with women in traditional Arab society, Ancient, Islalamic as well as contemporary and reveals that the traditional behaviour of Arab women is deeply rooted in the ancient traditions of the Near East. It also deals with the numerous sources from which Arab women derive power. This chapter should serve as a base line from which the change is to be perceived.

In Chapter III the author describes the process of change, its causes, its extent and the attitude of members of Arab society towards the change.

Chapter IV serves to summarize the facts presented in the previous sections, to analyze these facts and establish correlations between status and role and the various social aspects presented. The change is then evaluated in the context of Arab society and recommendation for

further investigation of the subject matter of this essay are made.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Women

The scientific community has generally tended to be influenced by theories which are dominant in one scientific field or another at a given time. The Darwinian theory of biological evolution indeed had a long range effect on social scientists ranging from Morgan to recent revivers of evolutionary theory such as Leslie White. Nineteenth century anthropologists lost no time in building a theory of "super-organic" evolution on a Darwinian skeleton. According to Morgan's theory of social evolution, forms of the family evolved by stages from an original state of promiscuity and eventually culminated in monogamy and patrilineal descent. Since the stage which was supposed to have preceded "civilization" was based on descent through women rather than men, the early anthropologists' interest turned to the position of women in contemporary "primitive" societies and to speculations on the position of women in prehistoric societies. Bachofen (1861) asserted that

> the Amazonism which resulted in the Mother-Right of the ancient world was due to the revolt of woman against the degraded condition of lawless hetairism, which previously had been universal among mankind. A condition in which men had a community of wives and openly lived together like gregarious animals.[1]

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[1]Needham, R. (ed.) S. Wake. The Development of Marriage and Kinship. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967 p. 14.

McLennan's view of the earliest human groups and their "general promiscuity" did not differ from Bachofens. As for Herbert Spencer, his view was that monogamy preceded polygamy, and in trying to account for kinship through females, he assumes that there had been an extension of the stage of promiscuity accompanied by monogamous connections and the continued birth of children to unknown fathers. He considered women in primitive societies to be treated as property which could be bought and sold. Under the influence of an evolutionary framework, a number of works dealing with the position of women in primitive societies made their appearance under such titles as Mason's "Woman's Share In Primitive Culture"(1895) and C. G. Hartley's "The Position of Women in Primitive Society." In his study entitled "Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia" (1885) Robertson Smith also shows great interest in the role of women in the descent system of the Arabs and although the source of his interest is his belief in the evolutionary priority of female descent, his interpretations are nevertheless of great value.

The evolutionary (unilinear) approach to the study of society fell out of favour rather rapidly and unfortunately this decline was paralleled by a decline in anthropological studies which directed a similar degree of attention to the role of women in the different societies under investigation by anthropologists. Reference to women has often been confined to their obvious public activities, such as their participation in subsistence or ritual activities and their legal rights and duties often to the neglect of other roles, such as their functions in the decision making process. The following statement made by Evans-Pritchard on the inadequacy of anthropological studies dealing with the position of women, made almost two decades ago, is still generally true today

> What has struck me most in my reading has not been this or that observation or ideas as the entire inadequacy, indeed almost complete lack, of serious scientific research into the questions we have been discussing "The position of women in primitive societies and in our own"[2]

In the absence of systematic comparative work and a conceptual framework to guide the study of the role of women in society numerous works dealing with women have resulted in nothing more than misleading generalizations. It is not uncommon to come across writing about women in one former European colony or another, which express a holier than thou attitude although such an attitude may be well disguised in the garb of sympathy for the "advances," "progress," "steps forward" or "new freedoms" attained by the women of one African or Asian society or another. Recently western feminists writing on women have tended to make sweeping generalizations on the status of females in human societies. They have teneded to treat women in isolation of the larger social realm of which they are part; thus women have been dealt with as a "minority group" or as "man's dependent if not his slave..." or as "slaves of their biology" (i.e. their reproductive capacity), "in spite of" their "responsibility for the agricultural revolution and civilization." It is by no means unusual to come across recent publications in which the author painstakingly enumerates the contributions of women in human societies, ranging from their role in the development of agriculture to their practices of the medical arts.

The anthropologist's approach to the study of different aspects of culture has of course been different, in addition to abstaining from such generalizations and following a more particularistic approach, the

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[2] E. E. Evans Pritchard. The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in Social Anthropology. The Free Press. New York, 1965 p. 57.

anthropologist bases his conclusions on direct observations and propagates his findings by accurate description. However, as sex poses limitations on the activities of the participants in a given culture, it also sets limits on the actions of the student of culture, the anthropologist. Up to the present, the majority of anthropologists have been males; a characteristic which may often set a limit on the type of direct information they may obtain. This of course is particularly true if the anthropologists happens to be working in a society where segregation of the sexes is the rule. Under such circumstances, the "natural habitat" of women is completely concealed from the anthropologist. If he tries to investigate the role of women in such a society he finds that it is almost non-existent with the exception of their assumed biological function of course or if their contribution to subsistence activities is an obvious one such as among peasant groups for example. Given such a situation the male anthropologist's only resort in seeking information on women is to turn to the males of the society. Of course in some cases such a channel may not even be open to him since such an act may be a serious breach of custom. Males' description of female behaviour, while in itself is of relevance and significance, does not necessarily coincide with the way women conceive of themselves and their worlds and offers a one sided interpretation. An example of such differences in role perception is provided by Chinas. She notes that

> if one asks a Zapotec man who keeps order at the fiestas he will reply that certain men alternate in that capacity, having been appointed by the mayordomo of the particular fiesta to serve for that occasion. Yet one finds that within the fiesta itself women actually maintain order while the appointed police try to control disturbances in the crowded streets outside among the spectators who are not actually participants in the fiesta. When a man becomes drunk and disorderly within the fiesta it is invariable an elderly women, usually the offender's

> kin who perusades, shames, and on rare occasions forcibly ejects the offender.[3]

Similarly, if one were to ask an Arab male informant to characterize the women of his society, his characterization would probably emphasize their dependence on him, and he is likely to stress his role as their protector to the complete exclusion of the indirect social manipulation and control which they use. While among themselves, as Fuller notes for Lebanese Villagers

> women are often conservers of the society. This conservation reaches beyond custom and law, in which areas women are less conventional than men. A hurried-up marriage, glossing over the awful error of the girl, is arranged by the womenfolk. The theft of money by a young man from his father is concealed by a grandmother, she herself making amends.[4]

Such behind the scene maneuvers are likely to be excluded in descriptions of women's roles by male informants.

The anthropologist has the task of describing women's behaviour from a number of perspectives; from the perspective of the males (old and young), in addition to that of older women and younger women. The older generations point of view tends to reflect the ideal while that of the younger may be taken as an index of change of attitudes. Such a task may be better accomplished by the aid of a woman anthropologist who is best qualified by virtue of her sex to investigate female behaviour. However, although such an approach is likely to fascilitate the study of women, it also has limitation, for the anthropologist whether female or male isusually a product of a different culture than the one he or she researches. Hence, to use the words of Sally Linton,

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[3] Chinas, Beverly. "Women as Ethnographic Subjects" in Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Preliminary Sourcebook. Compiled by Sue-Ellen Jacobs. Univ. of Illinois Department of Urban and Regional Planning, 1971 p. 27, 28.

[4] Fuller, A. Buarij Portrait of a Lebanese Muslim Village. Harvard Middle Eastern Monograph Series, 1961 p. 58.

"we choose to ask certain questions, and not others. Our choice grows out of the cultural context in which anthropology and anthropologists exists."[5] Therefore the only resort open to anthropologist in dealing with one aspect of culture or another, be it the behaviour of males or that of females, is to rely on a multiplicity of sources and to seek actual social behaviour not to the exclusion of ideal behaviour but as a supplementary source of information. The recognition of the first is of utmost importance in assessing the role of women in society. As Lowie pointed out

> The conditions involved in the relation of men and women are many-sided, and it is dangerous to overweight one particular phase of them. Least of all should excessive significance be attached to theory. Theory may and does affect practice, but often only in moderate degree. Theoretically the Mohammedan Kirgiz may divorce his wife at will, practically he very rarely does so. Chinese metaphysics associates the female principle of the universe with evil and the legal status of women is one of object inferiority. This has neither prevented a farily large number of women from establishing their supremacy in the household by sheer strength of personality nor from playing an appreciable part in literature and affairs.[6]

The labels of a descent system should also not be taken as reflecting the sex status or position in a given society, nor should the position of a given sex be thought to be the same in all the major institutional divisions of a social system. In dealing with Arab societies, for example, anthropologists have tended to overemphasize such labels (of their own creation) as "patriarchal" which stress the authority of the male head of a family or large kin group to the almost complete ignoring of "matriarchal" power. Authority is usually a male prerogative whether the system of descent is patrilineal or matrilineal but this should not

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[5]Linton, S. "Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology" in Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective op. cit. p. 9.

[6]Lowie, R. as cited by E. E. Evans-Pritchard op. cit. p. 42.

avert the anthropologist's attention from the type of "illegal" and "unlabelled" power wielded by women. Similarly the equation of power with the exercise of authority in public conceals the type of power exercised in another major institutional division, the domestic sphere which in many societies is the realm in which many important activities are centered. The anthropologist in his "native" society observes the process of implementation of decision making by men on such important matters as marriage of children, the buying and selling of cattle or the termination of a feud; but the manner in which such decisions were reached is likely to remain concealed from the direct observation of the anthropologist even if he asks the "right questions."

At a fundamental level, sex role differentiation may be examined within the larger context of the nature-culture debate. While some writers (especially of earlier periods) point to the mental and general biological inferiority of women, others emphasize her "natural" superiority, woman's biology and her cultural milieu have interchangeably been given as explanations for her "inferior status." Although studies on non human primates have pointed to the existence of sex linked characteristics, the application of such findings to human behaviour poses the problem of untangling of genetic from cultural factors which is by no means a simple one to tackle if not being in fact an impossible task. Since among higher primates and specifically the human primate, the development of a complex brain structure made possible increased capacity for modification through experience resulting in the increased importance of learned behaviour. It is my opinion that the basis for "inequality" of the sexes as exhibited in their difference of status and roles is due to both biological and cultural factors. The influence of the environment on the

genotype has frequently been demonstrated in numerous researches and the conclusions reached from such researches (namely, that the phenotype is the product of the environmental influence on the genotype) may logically be applied to explain the differences between males and females in human societies.

The difference in expected behaviour among members of different sexes is readily observed in all human societies; the biological difference between male and female although it may form the basis for such differentiation does not dictate its nature. Given the facts that members of all human groups belong to the genus and species Homo sapiens, that women's biological role of childbearing is a constant and that the degree of inequality between the sexes is a variable, an alternative explanation may then be sought in different cultural features; for although the assignment of different roles based on sex may have been based on biological characteristics in the protohominid and early hominid stage of human evolution, different cultural traits which either amplified or reduced the differentiation of the roles of the sexes developed through time. From the study of human social groups in a comparative perspective, it is becoming more and more evident that ecological, social and ideological factors influence the roles of women in different societies. Sex role differentiation is, to quote Ashley Montague, "a cultural expression of biological differences." Even such a role as childbearing which is often taken for granted to be a female monopoly has been subjected to different cultural interpretations. Thus while some societies deny the relationship between mother and child, others only undermine it and still others have elaborated women's reproductive capacity into magical and religious cults. The middle eastern proverb, "A woman is a

vessel that empties" and the Rossel Islanders belief that the male lays an egg in the female, point to the belief in the passive role of women in the process of procreation as does the Montinegrins reported denial of the existence of a relation between mother and child but to an even greater extent. Other societies "have built their whole symbolic relationship with the supernatural world upon male imitation of the natural functions of women."[7] Thus although the biological constant underlies all (human) social systems it does not explain the varieties of such systems. The relationship between cultural and biological evolution is indeed close and even under present day conditions of relative cultural insulation from the physical environment, selective pressures do continue to operate on members of simple as well as technologically advanced societies. However, the biological variation between individuals cannot be utilized to explain the variety of cultures existing in this world. A second generation immigrant to the United States, for example, can master the English language and adopt the various customs of American society regardless of his country of origin.

Given the rather limited state of knowledge related to the biological nature of the sexes which may "induce" differentiation in social activities, the student of society turns to cultural influences such as economic and political controls for an explanation of the variety of manners in which biological differences between the sexes are permitted expression. Every society assigns different tasks to members of different sexes. These assigned roles are "shaped" but not determined by the biological differences between the sexes. "Roles and statuses serve to emphasize the character of social expectations and thus control the

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[7]Mead, M. Male and Female. Dell Publishing Co., Inc. 1969 p. 38, 39.

nature of the responses made to them."[8]

One aspect of women's role in society which has received great attention from anthropologists has been their obvious contribution to subsistence activities. Such statements as "men hunt" and "women gather" "men clear land," and "women cultivate" are standard parts of ethnographic accounts. The division of labour along sex lines varies from one society to another and does not follow a definite fixed pattern. The example of Navaho women blanket makers in contrast to Hopi male weavers is a case in point. Similarly, although generally women's contribution to subsistence activities is phenomenal in societies which are dependent primarily on agriculture,[9] the contribution of women to subsistence activities in some such societies is minimal. However, within the diversity of patterns of division of labour among the numerous societies studied by anthropologists, there exists certain general trends, what Mead labels as "basic regularities." In Murdock's cross-cultural study of division of labour by sex he notes:

> While a number of occupations are universally masculine, none is everywhere feminine.[10]

His study shows that some tasks are associated primarily with women, others are performed equally by both sexes and still others are mainly the responsibility of males. A more recent comparative study of simple

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[8]Montague, A. The Natural Superiority of Women. Collier Books, New York, 1970 p. 15.

[9]Textor, R. B. A cross-cultural summary. Cited by J. K. Brown, Cross Cultural Ratings of Subsistence Activities and Sex Division of Labor: Retrospects and Prospects. Behaviour Science Notes. Vol. 4, #4, 1969, p. 287.

[10]Murdock, G. P. as quoted by J. K. Brown. "Leisure, Busywork, and Housekeeping: A Note on the Unequal Division of Labor by Sex. Text of Paper read at the 1970 Meetings of the Northeastern Anthropological Association in Ottowa. Courtesy of the author.

societies by Ford points that in spite of the diverse patterns of division of labour between groups certain activities such as fighting and hunting were usually defined as "masculine," while activities pertaining to the care of children and those associated with the home received the "feminine" label.[11] Judith Brown suggests that the fact that women are more likely to perform tasks associated with the home, which are repetitive and which may be easily interrupted is related to the universal association between child care responsibilities and women.[12] This suggestion of course does not define labour activities in terms of biological characteristics but points to their influence in the assignment of occupational roles. In technologically advanced societies, for example, the daily activities of females and males are based to a much lesser extent on such characteristics as the muscular and aggressive nature of males and child caring responsibilities of females.

Just as the nature of tasks performed by the two sexes is not fixed in all human societies, the degree of participation in subsistence activities is also by no means uniform. In Judith Brown's recent examination of the ethnographic data on the division of labour she shows that while among some groups such as the Kung Bushmen, the Fur of the Sudan and the Lungo Aborigines the division of labour between the sexes is equal.[13] In many other societies on the other hand this is not the case, and the contribution of one sex to subsistence activities is far

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[11]Ford, C. S. "Some Primitive Societies" in Sex Roles in Changing Society op. cit. p. 4.

[12]Brown, J. K. "A Note on the Division of Labour by Sex" AA 72, 1970 p. 1073-1078.

[13]Brown, J. K. "Leisure, Busywork and Housekeeping op. cit.

in excess of the other sex's input. Thus among the Nsaw of Cameroons, "women toil in the fields while the men remain in the compound drinking palm wine and "putting story."" Similarly among groups where women are subject to the restriction of purdah, their contribution to subsistence is minimal. However such seemingly inequitable distribution of tasks between the sexes becomes much less dramtic when the contributions of the sexes is sought out in other institutional divisions within the society and is not restricted to functions related to food quests. In so doing, the numerous factors underlying the interdependence of the sexes may be isolated.

The preparation for the "appropriate" sex-role begins at an early stage in childhood. Studies such as that of Hartley have shown that by the age of five, children have already developed a sex role ideology according to which "appropriate" behaviours for males and females are well differentiated.[14] The functional significance of early age socialization is illustrated by Barry, Bacon and Child's cross cultural surveys of socialization practices. (However one should bear in mind that their methodology is based on overgeneralized categories of societies). In one study they point out that the desired product of the socialization of girls is "compliance" in contrast to "assertion" which is seen as a desirable quality for boys. Both of these qualities are seen to be compatible with the nature of the adult males and females. In another study they conclude "that in societies with high accumulation of food resources (pastoral, agricultural societies with animal husbandry) socialization of males approaches the "feminine" end of the behaviour

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[14] Hartley, R. cited by J. Lipman-Blumen in "How Ideology Shapes Women's Lives." Scientific American Vol. 226 #1, 1972 p. 35.

continuum... "compliance" is stressed for both sexes. In low-accumulation societies (hunting, fishing, horticulture) all children are trained to be "assertive"... that is, independent, self-reliant, achievement oriented, what are generally considered to be "masculine" traits. In both these groups of societies, however, females tend to be more compliant while males tend to be more assertive.[15] In spite of such general trends, however, the socialization of girls and boys and the eventual assignment of roles based on sex varies from one society to another in such a manner that no positive correlation may be made between certain task, and one definite sex.

Another phenomenon which has attracted the attention of anthropologists has been the differential adaptation to conditions of sociocultural change by males and females. Mead's work on the acculturation of the females of a Plains Indians group, Joffe's study on Fox Indian women, the Spindlers report on the Menomini Indian women of Wisconsin as well as other reports on the Navaho and Ojibwa have all pointed to the possibility that the impact of cultural change and adjustment had a more disrupting effect on males than females. Among the Menomini Indians of Wisconsin the Spindlers note

> However unlike the situation found for the males, comparatively impermeable class barriers exist for the acculturating females between the lower status acculturated group and the elite. Lower status acculturated females are rarely accepted in the elite group, where status is almost hereditary. The males on the other hand, through gaining occupational and economic success and the proper symbols of middle class culture, do move from lower status to elite status within the reservation community. Having achieved elite status, the males select wives who are less than one-half Indian or

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[15] Barry, H. M. K. Bacon and I. I. Child as cited by Lewin, E. et autres "Power Strategies and Sex Roles: Paper presented at the 70th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, New York City, Nov. 1971.

> entirely white, since middle class values are associated with white skin color.[16]

The conservatism of the Menomini women is also attributed to the traditional role expectation according to which most public activities such as hunting, warfare, ceremony and ritual centered around males, while women's roles were loosely definted and flexible, allowing women to engage in some "male" activities. Under the impact of acculturation women continued to engage in such roles whereas men, on whom the traditional culture had imposed instrumental roles of public leadership, felt the impact of change the most and were forced to adjust to it.

However the above example represents but one mode of response to cultural change. No generalization can be made on the manner and degree of adjustment by women to such changes. Specific socio-cultural factors inherent in the traditional forms of social organization, such as role expectations as well as external factors such as political restrictions (e.g. the restrictions imposed on African labourers migrating to urban centers in South Africa, which result in male departure while wife and children stay behind) among the different social groups have to be examined in relation to these changes and thus the elements which either hinder or enhance female adjustment to cultural change may be isolated. The "composition" of the change has also to be examined closely, for such loosely used terms as "industrialization," "urbanization" and "economic growth" do not necessarily denote identical changes among different groups. Thus, although the last few decades of the present century have been marked by migration of rural populations to urban centers, along with a shift from predominantly agricultural patterns of subsistence to

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[16]Spindler, L. and G. Spindler. "Male and Female Adaptation in Cultural Change" AA 60, p. 229.

increased dependence on industry for a livelihood, the rate of this process is observable to varying degrees.

In addition, while the shift of population from rural to urban centers in some countries was brought about by the release of labour formerly used in cultivation and now replaced by mechanization in some others, it was induced by the limitation of arable lands resulting from an expanding population. In the latter group of countries, whereas industrialization may have proceeded to some extent, the broad base for industrial development such as that found in the more highly industrialized countries does not exist. Thus one important factor which may limit the number of women in industrial jobs is the meager number of such jobs available to either male or female. The "emancipation"of women is also often attributed to industrialization and urbanization which bring about the breakdown of the traditional extended family and the destruction of traditional patterns of authority. The "breakdown of the traditional extended family" has by no means always been a necessary prerequisite for the increased participation of women in public life as the examination of the changing role of Arab women will reveal shortly and neither has urbanization been a necessary component in such a transfer as the case of the contemporary Chinese peasant family reveals.

With the growing interest in social change, which many of the developing nations of the world are experiencing, there has been developing in recent years an awareness of the need to understand the relationship between social change and women's roles. Recent publications on the subject all reveal the variety of responses made to such changes.

Among the San Blas Cuna of Panama Judith Brown reports that agriculture which was formerly the work of women has in more recent years

been conducted by men. The author attributes the shift in roles to the change from subsistence agriculture to the production of cash crops which necessitated the abandoning by males of their traditional occupations of hunting and warfare. As for the abandonment by women of their traditional occupation Brown writes

> It is very possible that Cuna women abandoned subsistence agriculture partially because of the increased distance of the fields from the villages.[17]

A contrasting situation is illustrated by the works of Baker[18] and Le Vine[19] in Africa where economic growth and urbanization brought about changes which reinforced the traditional division of labour.

Baker reports that economic growth among the Yomba of southern Nigeria have caused an expansion of the distributive trades in which African women have traditionally participated and the rise of women's voluntary associations which provide a social outlet for women in addition to serving the function of raising capital for trading, opening of private schools for girls, and generally serving as platforms for women to express their needs. But although these women have become emancipated economically, their association have reinforced the traditional division of the sexes. Similarly, among the Kenyan and South African societies studied by Le Vine, the change resulting from migration of males to urban centers simply accentuated the traditional roles of women as cultivators.

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[17]Brown, J. "Sex Division of Labor Among the San Blas Cuna." Anthropological Quarterly Vol. 43, 1970 p. 57-63.

[18]Baker, T. and M. Bird. "Urbanization and the Position of Women" Sociological Review. Vol. 1, 1959 p. 99-122.

[19]Le Vine, R. "Sex Roles and Economic Change in Africa." Ethnology V (2), 1966 p. 186-193.

Even in societies where a conscious effort to "equalize" the sexes is being made, the outcome of such efforts is still restricted by traditional values related to the "natural" role of women. In Sweden, in spite of the "radical climate of opinion and political unity behind supportive measures and reforms,"[20] the choice of traditional occupations by women still persists. A similar situation exists on communal establishments such as the kibutz where despite the ideology of equality between the sexes, the division of labour tends to follow along "natural" lines with women being assigned to traditional "women" work.[21]

Although the same stimulus (often westernization or change from subsistence type of economy to a market economy or urbanization) may act upon a number of societies, the outcomes of such "stimulation" are not by any means the same. Just as a multiplicity of cultures existed when subsistence economy prevailed, there is reason to believe that differences will continue to exist when the new form of economic organization dominates.

Methodological Framework of the Study

Social anthropology has long been associated with the study of simple societies. A recent definition of the field states that social anthropology is "that branch (of sociological studies) which chiefly devotes itself to primitive societies."[22]

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[20] Liljestrom, R. "The Swedish Model" in Sex Roles in Changing Society op. cit. p. 218.

[21] Spiro, M. Kibbutz: Venture in Utopia as cited by Barry, H. et autres "A cross cultural survey of some sex differences in socialization. Bobbs-Merril Reprint Series in the Social Sciences p. 23, 332.

[22] E. E. Evans-Prithcard as quoted by J. Goody. Comparative Studies in Kinship. Stanford Univ. Press, 1969 p. 3.

But the object of the social anthropologist's interest, namely "primitive" societies, are rapidly disappearing, and he is left with the choice of either seeking out such societies in the more remote areas of the earth, reinterpreting earlier works in light of new theoretical approaches, or turning to the technologically underdeveloped nations which offer opportunities for testing out hypothesis related to the impact of social change and the expansion of social networks. The latter approach is by no means new to the discipline of anthropology; manyof the earlier theories of societies were in fact theories of change.

This study deals with a process of change, the change of the role and status of women in contemporary Arab society. A functional and comparative approach is applied to the study of the process of change. The comparative approach followed in this paper is both diachronic, dealing with the roles and status of women at different historical periods, and synchronic, focusing on women of different Arab social groups at a fixed point in time. Such an approach of analyzing change by "fusing functional analysis with an interest in history," to use Murdock's words, should prove valuable in the study of structural changes through time and in isolating the influential forces which induce them. In utilizing the "holistic" approach, Arab women are seen not as forming a self contained structural unit but as part of an integrated whole which is the Arab social system. The different roles of Arab women among the three population groups described above is seen as a reflection of the discrepancies which exist between the social organization of these groups. However, the interest of this study goes beyond that of examining the interdependence of parts of the Arab social system and the mechanisms which maintain its state of equilibrium. Its primary focus is in fact

the explanation of the disturbance of a once existing state of equilibrium. While functional analysis points to the relation of interdependence between certain social features the historical dimension is necessary to explain such relations and the circumstances under which they were established. The changes in the role of Arab women cannot be fully explained without taking into account certain historical events which have been taking place in the Arab world in recent years. The struggle for independence from colonial rule, contact with the west and the rise of nationalsim are all historical events which contributed to the change of the status of women in Arab society. The problem at hand, namely the study of changes in Arab women's status, is thus formulated in terms of process-in-time as well as of centemporaneous structural relations; this approach involves not only the isolation of sociological interconnections between factors at a definite period but entails comparison between the present and the past.[23]

The investigation of one aspect or another of a given society's culture is not an end in itself but is a means to making the social events of this society "intelligible in the way they are intelligible to its members."[24] Since the members of any given society are both males and females, this study is a preliminary attempt to explain the social events of Arab society in the way that these events are intelligible to male and female members.

A number of terms used throughout this paper need to be explained at this point: Two such terms are "status" and "role." The usefulness

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[23] Cohen, A. Arab Border Villages in Israel. Manchester Univ. Press, 1965.

[24] Goodenough, W. H. "Rethinking Status and "Role"" in N. Graburn (ed.) Readings in Kinship and Social Structure Harper & Row Publishers, 1971 p.309.

of these two concepts in social anthropology cannot be over emphasized for although the manner of their application is not a point of agreement among all anthropologists, nevertheless, their different approaches offer students of society "powerful tool for (our) analysis of social systems and social behaviour."[25]

The use of the term status by social scientists does not denote a position of power or prestige which is often associated with this term in lay usage. To Maine, "status" designated a position in a social network; he distinguished between two types of statuses: "ascribed" statuses which are assigned to individuals at birth without references to inherent differences in abilities. Thus ascribed statuses can be predicted and trained for from a very early period in life. "Achieved" statuses on the other hand are influenced by an individual's actions during his lifetime and require special qualities. They are therefore not assigned at birth but are left open to be occupied through competition and individual efforts. This distinction is significant in this study in that although the ascribed status of a woman is "fixed" being based on her sex, her own individual choices and exploitation of the different social events, determine her "achieved" status.

The task of explaining accurately the concepts of role and status was taken up by Linton according to whom the term status is defined as

> a position in a particular pattern. Each individual has many statuses since each individual participates in the expression of a number of patterns. The status of an individual means the sum total of all the statuses which he occupies. A status, as distinct from the individual who may occupy it, is a collection of rights and duties.

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[25]Linton, R. "Status and Role" in Theories of Society. Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory T. Parsons et autres. (eds.) The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc. N. Y. 1961 p. 202-208.

"Role" on the other hand is seen by Linton to represent the dynamic aspect of status which is brought into play when an individual puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect. Role and status are thus inseparable. They serve to reduce the ideal pattern for social behavior to individual terms. The concept of "role" was expanded by sociologists with the introduction of ideas relating to role expectation, perception and performance. "Interaction" theorists viewed social life as a series of "encounters." Their approach represents a departure from the restriction of examining culturally sanctioned role expectations; individual choice of the social actor was made a central point of their approach.

The recent anthropological approach is exemplified in Nadel's model of society in which he used role as a basic unit representing expected modes of behaviour between social persons. Another anthropologist, Goodenough makes a distinction between "status" as a collection of rights and duties and "social identity" which is "an aspect of self that makes a difference in how one's rights and duties distribute to specific others."[26] Thus not unlike Linton, he differentiates between status as a collection of rights and duties and the individual associated with these rights and duties.

From the above brief resumé, it appears that the terms "role" and "status" are associated with a process of "exchange" of rights and duties; thus no matter how "inferior" the status of an individual in a given society, in "exchange" for his duties, he may expect reciprocity on the part of others, persons or groups, the nature of the reciprocal relation being variable, depending on his "social identity" within the

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[26]Goodenough op. cit. 311.

context of a given interaction.

Another term used often throughout this paper is "power." In this study, "power" signifies the ability to influence decision; it is not restricted to one particular institutional division within society and is not necessarily the form of recognized, legitimate power associated with authority. Traditionalism is also a concept which is frequently used. It may be defined as "validation of current behaviour stemming from immemorial prescriptive norms." This definition does not imply that traditional social systems are static but that any change has to be "mediated within the social system and charged to antecedent values."[27]

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[27]Apter, D. in Beyond the Frontier. Social Process and Cultural Change. P. Bohannan and F. Plog (eds.) The Natural History Press, 1964 p. 349.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL ARAB SOCIETY

The mysteries of the "East" are particularly profund for an observer if his object is knowledge of the actual behaviour of women; up to the 19th century such knowledge was virtually absent and was overshadowed by whatever description of Arab women was provided by the males of their societies.[1] Several myths have developed regarding the status of women in traditional Arab society and the causes of their position of subordination to male dominance. Islam has often been singled out as the greatest force for the subjugation of women in the Arab world as well as other parts of the Moslem world. Before reaching a conclusion as to the validity of this allegation, it should be pointed out that

> Islam is a concept which phenomenalized in a number of linked but diverse political, social and religious organisms, covers an immense area in space and time. In different regions and epochs it has presented differing features under the impact of and in response to local geographical, social and political forces.[2]

The traditional status of women in Arab world and the legal status accorded her by Islam can best be appreciated when viewed from a historical perspective and with the knowledge of the demographic and

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[1] Tomiche, Nada. "La Femme en Islam" in Histoire Mondiale de La Femme, P. Grimal (ed.) Nouvelle Librarie de France, Paris, 1967.

[2] Gibb, H. A. R. "An Interpretation of Islamic History" in The Traditional Near East, J. Steward-Robinson (ed.) Princeton Hall, N. J. 1966 p. 6.

ecological diversity of the area presented below. Given that religion (in practice) provides a link between a given people's world view and their ethos,[3] it is not surprising that the nature of religion in various Islamic countries is not uniform, nor is it surprising to find that Islamic doctrine is invoked for such contradictory purposes as the subjugation or the emancipation of women. Field work illustrating the accommodation of Islamic ideology to an indigenous social organization has recently been reported by L. Dube.[4] Her data from Kalpena, an island in the Laccadive group of the southwest coast of India shows that although religion is "deeply entrenched" among the inhabitants of this area who are descendants of Kerala Hindus converted to Islam as early as the 14th century, they have retained many of the features of their aboriginal social organization--the most outstanding of which is matriliny, a basis of social structuring seldom associated with Islam. Among the Kalpena inhabitants the unit of social organization is the Travad which is both exogamous and matrilineal; it is the property owning unit as well as the unit of production and consumption. In short Dube's work demonstrates that the indigenous matrilineal social system overrides the Islamic system "particularly where the system of social organization is also congruent with the demands of economic survival."[5] Other less dramatic illustrations of the accommodation of Islam to the indigenous culture as it relates to the role and status of women are

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[3]Geertz, C. Islam Observed. Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia. Yale Univ. Press New Haven, London 1968, p. 97.

[4]Dube, Leela. "Matriliny & Islam" as reviewed by H. Papanek AA 73, 1971 p. 347.

[5]Ibid.

well documented in the ethnographic literature: Among the women of the Moslem Hausa of Nigeria,[6] "bori," the cult of spirit possession related to market activities, "tsarance" a form of institutionalized pre-marital lovemaking and female "karuwai" who practice prostitution and are supporters of the "bori" cult are clearly of pre-Islamic origin. Among the Moslem Senigalese of Dakar, women in particular maintain many of the practices of the pre-Islamic indigenous religions.[7] In the case of Moslem women in India and Pakistan, the caste system of the greater cultural realm of which they are part has left a definite impression on their social system and manifests itself clearly in the establishment of the basis for choice of a marriage partner. Generally speaking the Islamic Sharia (law) relating to the status of women became adopted to various degrees in the islamized communities, the degree of its adoption being determined by its compatibility with the indigenous customs; thus in some of these communities the Sharia as it pertained to the rights and obligations of women was totally ignored. In some parts of Java, for example, inheritance rules remained regulated by the pre-Islamic matrilineal rules of inheritance; among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria the Sharia is scarcely applied and in the Indian sub-continent among Hindu converts to Islam such as the Ismailite Khojas the authority of appointing an heir was retained in spite of its obvious contradiction to Islamic Law. In the case of Arab women, the ancient Near Eastern tradition had an influence which "was crucial in determining the future of

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[6] Smith, M. "Baba of Karo A Women of the Moslem Hausa" F. A. Praeger, New York, 1964.

[7] Pauline, D. (ed.) Women of Tropical Africa. H. M. Wright Trans. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963.

women irrespective of whether the new religion was to be Jewish, Catholic or Moslem."[8]

Attempts to explain the status of Moslem women in light of socio-cultural factors other than religion have often been termed "apologetic" by western scholars.[9] The fact that the status of Arab or Moslem women does not approximate the western model of female behaviour requires no apology whatsoever. When a western woman observes her Arab counterpart she sees her as oppressed and overprotected; a glimpse from the other side by an Arab women "reveals" that the western woman is exploited and unprotected. The ethnocentricity of both observers distorts realities, i.e. the observer's own cultural medium refracts reality giving a distorted picture of either set of values which are otherwise "functional" in their respective social contexts. The following story related by Assia Djebar[10] illustrates this point:

> There was once an old Arab who arrived in a European city straight from the wilds of his own land and was amazed of the pictures of women he saw everywhere; on the films, on shoe boxes, cheese cartons--on everything that was for sale. He left the town the same day, or so they say, greatly pitying the women who lived there; in his simplicity he believed that some terrible crimeless form of punishment lay behind this exploitation of their likeness.

However given the new aspirations of the Arab world and the challenges which it faces, a change in the role of Arab women is an absolute necessity, a fact long realized by Arabs who advocate social reforms in the

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[8]Tillion, G. cited by Gordon, D. C. in Women of Algeria An Essay on Change. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1968.

[9]C. F. Gallagher, Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Vol. 8, p. 213.

[10]Djebar, A. Women of Islam. A Deutscle Ltd. London, 1961 p. 5.

Arab World.[11]

Geographical and Demographic Framework of the Study

The denotation of the word "Arab" has been the subject of long drawn out debates which transcend the interest of the present inquiry. For the purpose of this study, the Arab world is the area bounded by the Zagros mountain range in the east and the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Morocco in the west. The northern natural boundary is the Taurus range which separates Turkey from the Fertile Crescent and in the south, the Indian ocean, the African Jungle and the Sahara delimit the area. Within these boundaries all the Arabic countries are those where one dialect or another of Arabic is spoken. The main countries contained within these boundaries are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Kuwait. Aside from a number of characteristics shared by the inhabitants of the Arab world, such as language, history and religion (Islam being not only a religious doctrine but also a social code), there exists differences pertaining to the ecological setting occupied by the different social groups. Thus, although one may make generalizations in describing the pattern of the social structure of the inhabitants of the Arab world, this pattern is found to manifest itself in different manners.

Two main types of land may be distinguished for the Arab world, the desert and the cultivated areas. Within the areas covered by these two types of land three ecological groups are to be found; the desert being the domain of the nomads while the other regions are occupied by settled agriculturalists and urban specialists. Only estimates can be made of

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[11]Alami, M. "The Lesson of Palestine" MEJ Vol. III #4 p. 399.

the size of these different groups since reliable information on their distribution is not available. Bedouins are said to make up anywhere from a quarter to a third of the total population of the Arabian peninsula. In Saudi Arabia nomads and semi-nomads make up one half to two thirds of the population, in Libya they constitute about 20%, in Jordan, Iraq and Syria, 6-10% while in Egypt they account for only 0.25% of the total population and in Lebanon their number is also insignificant.[12] The majority of Arabs live in villages; in Egypt, for example, villagers constitute over 70% of the total population. Lebanon is the exception among the Arab countries in that over one third of its population is urban.

Of the three ecological groups of the Arab world, the Bedouin is the furtherst removed from the authority of governmental apparatus and the restriction of a crowded environment, a privilege for which he is often envied by other Arabs who hold the romantic picture of bedouin life to be ideal. However the degree of "independence" is determined by the type of subsistence activity on which he is dependent for his survival. The true nomad, or the camel nomad is by far the most independent due to the modest needs of his animals and his formidable adaptation to the harsh desert environment. Other Bedouin groups are found within closer proximity of settled populations. Such are the camel herders who supplement their herds with sheep, the sheep herders and the bedouins who raise cattle (known as baqqara). The last group's life style is intermediate between that of the true nomad and the settled agriculturalist.

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[12]Baer, G. Population and Society in the Arab East Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, New York, 1964 p. 119.

The social organization of the bedouin is based on kinship, descent being reckoned patrilineally. The extended family is the basic social economic and political unit. A group of such units (with a common ancestor) is often called a hamula. Within the hamula, the "purity" of the lineage is maintained by the preferential practice of endogamy. The highest social unit is the tribe which is primarily a political unit, headed by a tribal sheikh. The tribe assigns grazing territories, makes treaties with other tribes and generally exercises some degree of social control.

In the village which is the home of the majority of Arabs, land is the primary source of livelihood, and thus land ownership is an important determinant of status within rural communities. In addition kinship is a fundamental factor in social organization and the hamula is an important social unit in traditional village life as it is among Bedouins--although its function in the two ecological settings is different. Members of the same hamula usually occupy the same quarter, in the village, own adjacent lots of land, and jointly run a village guest house. Marriage within the same hamula or within a smaller kinship unit is the ideal. Leadership in the village community is the responsibility of the village headman ('umda or mukhtar) who is sometimes elected by the heads of the village notable families, however, their choice is subject to the approval of government authorities. The headman's responsibility is generally that of an intermediary between government agencies and the villages.

In recent decades, a number of changes have occurred among the three major ecological groups: In the Arab world as in other parts of the Middle East Bedouin society is gradually coming under the control of

state organization. The process of settlement of nomadic groups and their adaptation to sedentary life is by no means new in the area. However throughout the past century numerous factors contributed to increase the frequency of this process of settlement.

Changes are also occurring in the villages of the Arab world and the village is gradually becoming incorporated in the national life of the different Arab countries. The traditional urban character of the areas has also been modified in recent years. The proportion of townsmen to the total population has been on the rise with larger cities growing at an even faster rate than the smaller ones. This trend of rapid urbanization has been due to variable factors in the different Arab countries. In Egypt the shift from rural to urban centers was induced by the rapid population growth which by far outpaced the available farm land. In Iraq on the other hand rural-urban migration was intensified by the movement of tennants escaping the oppression of owners of large estates. The rise of new industries, the centralization of the bureaucratic apparatus and the establishment of institutions of higher learning in the larger cities also helped to attract rural populations. Males are usually the first to migrate to urban centers leaving their wives and children behind in the village but many with rural origins maintain their ties with the village and act as transmittors of urban ideology and mannerism to their native villages.

In spite of the increased interaction between tribal, rural and urban population, the differences and the changes brought about by such interactions, continuity exists and the differences between the life styles of these groups is still maintained. The characteristic "mosaic" including the "feminine mosaic" is still very much a part of the Arab world.

Ancient Traditions

Tillion's Hypothesis

The Arab world in addition to having been influenced by the religion of Islam and the culture of its earlier adherents and propagators, the Arabs, has also been the heir of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean civilizations, of the latter, J. Pitt Rivers writes:

> political and religious hierarchies were able to replace one another while leaving the local community, if not unaltered, nevertheless faithful in large part to its tradition.[13]

The influence of these earlier civilizations on the status of women is the subject matter of a hypothesis put forward by the French ethnologist Germaine Tillion[14] in which she attributes the status of women in the Mediterranean not to a specific religious ideology be it Judaism, Christianity or Islam but to a general cultural trend; namely, the process of detribalization which has been occurring continuously from ancient times down to the present

> C'est à partir de l'observation directe des sociétés enterissees que j'ai été amenee a supposer une relation de cause à effet entre l'endogamie tribale (ou plutot sa degradation) et un certain avilissement de la condition feminine.[15]

Tillion is by no means unaware of the part played by religions in shaping the destiny of Mediterranean women but points out that although these divine doctrines do not necessarily relegate women to an inferior position in society, they may in fact be misused and adapted to the

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[13] Pitt Rivers (ed.) Mediterranean Countrymen Mouton and Co. Paris, 1963 p. 9.

[14] Tillion, G. Le Harem et Les Cousins, Paris 1966.

[15] Based on her observations of Mediterranean societies, Tillion attributes the degraded status of women to the incomplete expression of tribal endogamy.

prevailing ideology which advocates male superiority. Campbell[16] provides an example of such an adaptation in a Mediterranean society, the Sarakatsans of Greece among whom,

> certain Christian values cannot enjoy a general application. Modesty, meekness, humility are values only admirable for women. Some Christian prescriptions have to be entirely set aside.

Tillion's hypothesis may be summarized as follows: Group exogamy often associated with unilineal systems of descent results in a relation of cooperation between a man and the brothers and cousins of his wife and her sisters' husbands; Tillion refers to this type of society as the "republic of brothers-in-law" ("la republique des beaux freres"). Unlike this type of society, the nomadic and semi nomadic societies of the Old World, referred to by Tillion as the "republic of cousins" (repulblique des cousins) emphasized the solidarity of a man and his patrilateral relatives and prescribed to an endogamous system of marriage. Under nomadic conditions the tribal women enjoyed a life of relative "unseclusion" since they were regarded as the property of the tribe and it was the duty of all the members of the tribe to protect this property. But as these tribal peoples moved into towns and cities, it was no longer easy to uphold their ideals of female protection and therefore in addition to preserving family solidarity and the endogamous values of the tribe new methods of protection came to be adopted; namely, the veil and the harem. Based on her personal observations of traditional societies Tillion establishes a few pairs of relations which in her opinion though ancient in origin still prevail in the Arab world.

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[16] Campbell, J. K. "Honour and the Devil" in Honour and Shame. The Values of Mediterranean Society. J. G. Peristiany (ed.) The University of Chicago Press, 1966. p. 167.

There exists a direct relation between urbanization and the veiling of women in the Maghreb; the Moslem women who live in towns are veiled while the ones who inhabit the countryside are not; among Christian and traditional Jewish women of the area, although the veil is not worn, these women live a life of seclusion until they reach an old age. Interestingly enough as veiling lessens in the towns, it increases in the countryside. In Constantine, Algeria, Tillion reports of women who have taken up the habit of veiling as lately as ten years ago, and the peasant women of Oran now wear veils while travelling to the city.

The relation between the inheritance by women and the destruction of sedentary tribes is seen by Tillion as one of cause and effect; it is the inheritance by females which destroys the tribe. The whole tribal structure rests in effect on the impossibility for a stranger to the lineage to possess land which is part of the tribal patrimony. In the process of maintaining the tribal land intact, it is then necessary not only to block its sale to strangers but also to avoid the adoption of any type of inheritance system in which a stranger may be a potential heir of tribal property. Conformity to the Koranic law which entitles a female to share in the inheritance of her father's property is obviously an affront to the above ideal. The preservation of this ideal may be accomplished by two means; namely, violation of religious prescription, and or marriage of daughters of the lineage to their patrilateral relatives. The existance of an inverse relation between tribal structure and religious devotion is easily deduced from the previous pair of relations. In the course of Islamization, the peasant tribes were faced with a serious dilemma, either abide by the law of the Prophet (thus destroying tribal structure) or save the tribe (thus violating religious law). The

fact that there still exists a large number of tribes intact in the Maghreb is in Tillion's opinion a clear indication of which choice has been made. To Tillion, it is no accident that in North Africa girls are veiled only where females inherit. Religious doctrine dictates female inheritance, a practice which brings about the destruction of the tribal ideology since strangers are allowed to share in the patrimony of the tribe. A defense mechanism employed by the males of the tribe involves the veiling of their daughters and "preserving" them for the men of the family.

Tillion's hypothesis raises some interesting possible explanations for the seclusion of women. It is valuable in that it offers an alternative "cause" for the seclusion of women, other than the standard reference to religion by pointing to the relation between traditional urbanization and the seclusion of women in the Mediterranean. However in the explanation of this relation there has been an over emphasis by Tillion as is often done by others on the idealization of the preferential practice of endogamy as a means of maintaining the patrimony of the tribe[17] intact under sedentary conditions. These conditions may have in fact offered the opportunity of expanding the tribal patrimony.[18] Sedentary conditions as well as religious teachings are likely to pose threats not so much to tribal property but to the maintenance of tribal ideology of the "purity" of the lineage and the preservation of its corporate nature vis a vis the "hostile" environment of sedentary life. The urban environment poses a threat because of its numerous

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[17] Granqvist, H. Marriage Conditions in a Palestinan Village p. 78.

[18] Murphy, R. F. & L. Kasdan. "The Structure of Parallel Cousin Marriage" AA 61, 1959 p. 17.

demands for civic loyalty (a demand which entails the abandoning, at least in part, of tribal loyalty) while religious doctrine also poses a threat by its emphasis on the unity of the "community" (the community of Islam) over and above any other social group. The seclusion of women in the Moslem communities of the Arab world may thus be interpreted as a defensive reaction against the integrating forces of the urban domain and or Islamic integration with the veil serving the function of maintaining a social distance between its wearer and others with whom the maintenance of such distance is desirable.[19] On a recent visit to Algeria by this author it was observed that women who are covered from head to toe on the streets of Algiers, shed their covers once they enter the harem (sanctuary) of a building be it a restaurant, a movie house, a grocery store or whatever. The majority of women observed carried out business transactions with their faces uncovered but once they stepped outside on the "alien" environment of the city streets all but their two eyes were covered and sometimes only one eye was left uncovered. Another important point which Tillion fails to emphasize sufficiently is the relation between the need for women's contributions in economic activities and their seclusion. It is only the families (both in the towns and the countryside) who can afford to sacrifice the potential contribution of their women in the "public domain" that can also afford the "luxury" of confining them to the privacy of the home and the veil. Tillion's observation that in North Africa girls are veiled only where they inherit implicity points to the relation between financial capabilities of a given family and the degree of seclusion of

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[19] Murphy, R. "Social Distance and the Veil" in Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East. L. E. Sweet, (ed.) The Natural History Press. New York, 1970.

its daughters. Tillion's observation that the status of Mediterranean women of different nationalities and religions is in many ways similar is an observable fact, but that this similarity is due to the process of detribalization under the impact of urban forces is certainly an interesting possibility, the validity of which may be further checked by present-day observations.

Ancient Analogies

The influence of Ancient traditions on the status of women in contemporary Arab society may be pointed out in two ways, by comparing the lives of Arab women today with those of women of the area who lived in the distant past and by pointing out the similarities which exist among women of societies which although today are part of different nation states, have been, at one point of time or another, influenced by the same cultural tradition. Since this type of analysis is beyond the scope of this study, it will suffice to refer to some works which deal specifically with the subject of analogies between ancient and contemporary customs relating to the status and role of women in society. W. Blackman who carried out anthropological research among Egyptain peasants during the earlier part of the present century points out numerous analogies between contemporary peasant women of Egypt and their ancient ancestors. Blackman's sources of reference to Ancient Egypt material are well documented in her book.[21] She points to the similarities related to the dependence of a sister on the protection of her brother, the emphasis on female chastity, the love of a son for his mother, "female circumcision," and early age of marriage of peasant girls.

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[21]Blackman, W. S. The Fellahin of Upper Egypt. J. Harrap & Co. Ltd, London, 1927 p. 280-316.

Other similarities between women in Ancient and modern Egypt are pointed out by Glanville.[22] He notes that the men of ancient Egypt as their modern counterparts were very much the masters of their households and had the power to punish their wives. But in spite of the dominance of the woman by her husband "she was yet allowed a position of honour in her home." Another study which attempts to e stablish similarities between some aspects of Ancient and the modern cultures of the Middle East is that presented by R. Patai[23] where he points to "six basic traits" shared between Biblical and contemporary Middle Eastern families; they are both endogamous, patrilineal, patriarchal, patrilocal, extended and polygynous. In regard to the similarities which exist between women of different religions whose cultures have been influenced by the ancient traditions of the old world, one may point to the polarity between the sexes characteristic of the Mediterranean, the "hidden" power wielded by the women of the area as well as the similarity of customs related to birth, choice of marriage partner, the significance of kinship ties and seclusion among Jewish, Christian and Moslem. women of the area.

The analogies cited above are not by any means intended to constitute an explanation of the status of women in contemporary Arab society, obviously the culture of the Arab world has not been static for the past few thousand years, these analogies are only meant to point out the extent to which social values relating to women are deeply entrenched in the cultural heritage of the inhabitants of the

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[22]Glanville, S. R. K. Daily Life in Ancient Egypt, G. Roulledgeg Sons, Ltd. London 1930 p. 16-17.

[23]Patai, R. Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East. Doubleday & Company, New York. 1959.

area and that these values predate all three major religions of the area. This fact partly clarifies the negative attitude of the masses of Arab society to the actual or proposed changes in the status of women and should be incorporated in the boundary conditions when planned change (short of revolution) is contemplated.

The Islamic Tradition

There is by no means any complete agreement among scholars, be they Moslem or non-Moslem, on the influence of Islam on the status of its women. Some writers (especially Moslem writers) have championed the cause that Islam was the supreme liberator of women from their traditional"inferior" positions in pre-Islamic times; others see Islam as the primary determinant of women's subjugation, while still others, including this author, believe that Islam in its early stages did advocate near but not complete equality of the sexes and that it encouraged a true partnership between the males and females of the Islamic society. But as Islam came to be absorbed in different cultural milieux it underwent a transformation which resulted in the loss by women of many of the rights granted them under Koranic law and that throughout different historical periods down to the present, there has been emphasis on different facets of the law to blend in with current social conditions.[24] Deveraux's examination of the works of two 11th century Moslem authors, written only 13 years apart, substantiates this point very clearly.[25] The two authors although they belonged to the

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[24]Tomiche op. cit. p. 98.

[25]Deveraux. "Xlth Century Muslim Views of Women, Marriage, Love and Sex." Central Asiatic Journal 11, 1966. p. 134-140.

same temporal period, express contrasting opinions regarding women; their respective opinions are clearly the products of their specific cultural and social spheres and not of Islamic ideology. There is in fact a very clear relation between the status of the Moslem women and Islamic civilization in general. During the periods in which the latter fluorished so did the value of womanhood rise in Moslem societies while during the period of decadence of Islam we find a corresponding degradation of the status of women, the latter condition being particularly prevalent since the Middle Ages when "the stifiling of the spirit of liberty in the interpretation of the sacred writings" occurred, and woman's role in society "deteriorated because her place in society was determined too rigidly according to the letter rather than the spirit of the Koran."[26]

Different specific reasons are given in the literature for the apparent decline in the status of women after an initial "golden age" of Islamic history. In H. A. R. Gibb's view, Islam sought to impose a "family concept"[27] on a tribal society, and he attributes the decline in the status of women to a return to the patriarchal tribal ideology of pre-Islamic Arabia. N. Tomiche on the other hand views the changes brought about by Islam during the initial period of Islamic expansion as an attempt to extend the style of life of the relatively emancipated bedouin woman to Moslem women in general but after an initial "golden age" Moslem society seemed to close in on itself under the influence of the indigenous cultures of the newly conquered areas and the cleavage between feminine and masculine life became much greater. This cleavage

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[26]Djebar, op. cit. p. 33.

[27]Gordon, op. cit. p. 9.

became augmented by additional factors among which Tomiche believes this to be important: in the pre-Islamic as well as the early Islamic periods the woman derived great importance from the fact that she was the "reservoir" of epic poetry and various forms of narrations which were greatly valued among the Arabs, and she passed on her literary knowledge to her children, girls and boys alike but with the development of writing as a more widespread form of communication the woman lost her "intellectual" value except among the aristocractic families.

Another student of Islamic culture Ehrenfels[28] obviously influenced by the belief in the evolutionary priority of female descent, attributes the increased power of women under Islam to the "reintroduction" by Islam of some of the elements of the Arabic "matriarchal" social organization under which women enjoyed a position of independence and power and men served important and complementary social functions. The "matriarchal" form of social organization had been overrun by a "wave of patriarchal cultures" which "had swept over Arabia" shortly before the time of Mohammad; the source of this wave were "the strongly patriarchal peoples of Rome, Byzantine, Egypt, Persia..." In Ehrenfel's opinion this "positive" feature of pre-Islamic social organization regarding women has been overlooked by Moslems to whom "almost every single feature of (Pre-Islamic) Arab civilization came to be denounced as a typical element of the time of ignorance--the debased Jahiliyya." He sees the decline in the position of women in spite of the reforms introduced by Islam on her behalf as the result of the adoption of Islam by strongly "patriarchal" societies including those of that area

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[28]Ehrenfels, U. R. "Ambivalent Attitudes to Womanhood in Islamic Society." Islamic Culture 25, p. 73-88.

of the Middle East now known as the Arab world. The impact of these societies on Moslem women resulted in their prevention from participation in public functions including religious functions such as those that they practiced at the time of the Prophet.

The separation of women from public religious (Islamic) function is still observable today and may explain in part why women rather than men have turned to pre-Islamic beliefs and rituals. Hani Fakhouri in describing the zar cult as practiced by the villagers of Kafr El-Elow in Egypt notes that most of the zar spirits victims are women and in describing the charm practitioner's clientele he states, "the majority of his clients are women seeking improvement in their marital relations, termination of their husband's impotence or adultrous behaviour."[29] Similarly, of her field work in the Lebanese village of Buarij, Anne Fuller reports that women are more concerned with the world of evil spirits than men are and that village women in time of crisis even enter Christian churches seeking out some saint or relic.[30] A similar behaviour on the part of women is reported by Blackmann based on her observation of the fellahin of Upper Egypt.

> If a Muslim woman had had several children who have all died in early infancy, when another is born she asks a Coptic woman to give her barakeh (blessing, good luck), in order that the newly born child may live.[31]

The saying "women are lacking in mind and religion" (attributed to the Prophet to give it religious sanction) is a clear reflection of Arab

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[29] Fakhouri, H. Kafr El-Elow. An Egyptian Village in Transition. Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1969, p. 170.

[30] Fuller, A. Buarij. Portrait of a Lebanese Muslim Village. Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs Vl. Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1961, p. 58, 83.

[31] Blackman, W. The Fellahin of Upper Egypt, J. J. Harrap & Co. Ltd. London, 1927 p. 65.

society's attitude regarding the separation of women from religious as well as nonreligious education. The "lack of mind" is reflected in the limited exposure of women to education and the "lack of religion" is reflected in the limited participation of women in public religious functions.

Islamic Reforms

With the coming of Islam a number of legal and social reforms were introduced on behalf of Moslem women; these reforms constituted a drastic transformation of current social customs.[32] The value of these reforms is aptly described by Gibb.

> That his (The Prophet's) reforms enhanced the status of women in general by contrast with the anarchy of pre-Islamic Arabia is universally admitted.[33]

Before proceeding to discuss the important legal reforms introduced by Islam it should be pointed out that a clear understanding of the status of women in Islam may only be reached by knowledge of a central idea of Islamic ideology, namely, that of the Umma or the United Community of Moslems as a whole and as an unit. Awareness of the concept of tawhid (unification) is also essential in the study of any aspect of Islamic ideology. Within the context of the umma the roles of men and women are seen as complimentary rather than conflicting.

> The Believers men
> And Women, are protectors,
> One of Another; they enjoin
> What is just... Sura IX, 71

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[32] Flory, V. "Women and Culture in Islam" Muslim World 30, 1940 p. 17.

[33] Gibb, H. A. R. Mohammedanism. An Historical Survey, Oxford Univ. Press, 1962 p. 33.

The "nature" of all Believers is deemed to be uniform, the origin of men and women being identical,

> O Mankind. reverence
> Your guardian-Lord
> Who created you
> From a single Person
> Created of like nature
> His male... Sura IV

and so are their reward and punishments,

> Whoever works righteousness,
> Man or woman, and has Faith,
> Verily, to him will We Give
> A new Life... Sura XVI, 97

Unlike some pre-Islamic literary works, especially Arabic epic poetry, the Koran does not revolve around woman as a separate entity, it only refers to women as an integral part of the community of Believers in which membership confers a fixed status regardless of sex; the moral worth of all members of the umma is theoretically the same since it is only God who can perceive any differences. The distinction in the Koran is between Believers and nonBelievers in the spiritual realm while the differentiation between male and females is confined to the "material" realm[34] and is reflected in such matters as inheritance, payment of mahr and the financial support of women by men. According to Islamic traditions, men are superior to women because of the manner of the creation of Eve from Adam. Adam's superiority is extended to all men; hence a child inherits the father's name and not that of his mother. However under certain circumstances when a woman reaches a state of ultimate perfection her child inherits her name; thus Christ is referred to in the Koran as 'Isa Ibn Mariam (Jesus the Son of Mary). This brings up another point; namely, the idealization of motherhood in Islam. Many

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[34]Djebar, op. cit. p. 23.

"hadiths" attributed to the Prophet reiterate the praise of motherhood (within the institution of marriage). The following hadiths attributed to the Prophet illustrates the high esteem in which motherhood was held by Mohammed:

Once a man asked the Prophet, "Who is first worthy of my kind treatment?" "Your mother," answered the Prophet. "And who is next? asked the man, "Your mother" replied the Prophet once more, the man then asked "And who is next" and the Prophet replied for the third time "Your mother" and finally to the man's fourth inquiry the Prophet answered "Your father."

Thus the Moslem woman as a mother gained an even greater degree of respect based on divine sanctions of the Koran:

> We have enjoined on man
> Kindness to his parents:
> In pain did his mother
> Bear him, and in pain
> Did she give him birth" Sura ILV1

> The Lord hath decreed
> That ye workship not but Him
> And that ye be kind
> To parents. Whether one or both
> of them obtain
> Old age in their life
> Say not to them a word
> Of Contempt, nor repel them,
> But address them
> In terms of Honour Sura XV11, 23

Koranic laws dealing with the position of women were clearly intended to improve the position of women in the new Moslem society, of these laws N. J. Coulson writes:

> Without doubt it is the general subject of the position of women, married women in particular, which occupies pride of place in the Qur'anic laws. Rules on marriage and divorce are numerous and varied, and, with their general objective of the improvement of woman's status, represent some of the

most radical reforms of the Arabian customary law effected in the Qur'an[35]

In contracting a marriage, the consent of the woman is required and the mahr paid by the husband becomes the wife's personal property and not her father's or kinsmen's. The significance of this latter change lies in the fact that it changed the position of the wife from a passive one to that of an active contracting party. The husband occupies the dominant position in terminating the marriage contract but the Koranic law also introduced a number of checks on this unilateral power of repudiation by the husband. The most important of these checks is the inherent belief that the marriage bond is sacred and kind treatment to women is explicity stated to be the duty of the husband to his wife. Marriage is described in the Koran as "a tender relation based on reciprocal amity and kindness." But in addition to the spiritual type of guidance in reference to marriage there exists a number of legal limitations on the power of the husband. One of the guarantees of the wife's interest introduced by Islam was the obligation on the part of the husband to provide financial support for the wife during the "idda" or "waiting period" at the termination of which the talaq or repudiation becomes effective; the "idda" lasted until the wife had completed three menstrual cycles and in case she was pregnant, it lasted until after the delivery of the child. Another check to safeguard the interests of the wife is her right to maintain her own separate fortune including any property which she inherited from her family for under the Koranic law a woman became entitled to inherit from her parents the equivalent of

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[35]Coulson, N. J. A History of Islamic Law. Edinburgh Univ. Press. 1964 p. 14.

one half of her brother's share. The arbitrary right of a husband to divorce his wife may also be mitigated by means of the inclusion in the marriage contract of a clause ascribing to the wife an equal power to divorce. Under Islamic Law polygamy became restricted to four wives with the provision of administering equitable treatment of all four; this restriction has been subjected to various obviously contradictory interpretations and by and large the provision has been neglected.

That the Sharia is not universally applied to Moslem women in the Arab world will become evident as ethnographic accounts relating to inheritance by females are cited in the following section; at this point it will suffice to point out that as early as less than one hundred years after the death of the Prophet the reinterpretation of the Qur'an by the different schools of law became widespread and was greatly influenced by the existing social circumstances of the medium where these schools originated. In cases where a Moslem on his death was not survived by an immediate heir (male or female) the Hanafi School of Law (Kufa) allowed nonagnate relatives to share in the estate unlike the Malaki School (madina) which did not advocate such practice. This discrepancy between the two schools may be easily explained in terms of the social environment in which they originated;[36] the Malaki school sprung up in the strongly patriarchal society of Medina, while the Hanafi school had originated in the cosmopolitan society of Kufa where women's rights were more readily recognized.

In conclusion, although Islam did introduce numerous reforms to improve the position of women, these reforms are of no value unless Islamic ideology as a whole is applied in a given society. Moslems,

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[36]Ibid p. 48.

armed with the spiritual teachings of Islam are expected to act as their own "policemen" so to speak, for contrary to western beliefs, the "jehad al-akbar" is related to self restraint and compassion and unless this condition of restraint on the part of Moslems is met, any attempt to implement Islamic laws is doomed to failure.

Arab Traditional Societies in Modern Times

The term "traditional" has already been defined in a previous section. As will become obvious shortly, the term as used in this paper has no connotation of spacial or temporal unity; hence the interchangeable use of present and past tense throughout this section. Traditional behaviour of Arab women today is in many ways similar to what it has been in numerous years past and the difference between various social groups, nomadic, settled peasant communities or urban centers is one of degree. This observation should not be taken to mean that the behaviour of Arab women within a given social group is uniform or that their actions are guided by what Durkheim called a "collective conscience." The limiting boundaries for their choices are inherent in the different forms of their societies but within these boundaries numerous choices are available to the individual social actor and transgression of these boundaries is by no means absent. This fact although postulated by Tylor and later affirmed by Malinowski a number of decades ago has often been overlooked by anthropologists who have tended to concentrate their investigation on normative rather than pathological behaviour. Boas in his Forward to Mead's book "Coming of Age in Samoa' writes:

> The personal side of the life of the individual is almost eliminated in the systematic presentation of the cultural life of the people. The picture is standarized, like a collection of

laws that tell us how we should behave, and not how we behave...

This type of approach by social scientists where "legal" behaviour is emphasized is particularly true for the Middle East as Antoun* points out:

> But for the Middle East a great deal of writing by social scientists... betrays a view of peasant life that is not too far removed from the original conception of Durkheim. For example, stress is always placed on the restrictions of choice on both sexes by the rules of marriage, explicit and implicit, and the "patriarchal" structure of the family. Marriages are referred to as "contracted" and arranged by the parents for their children with little or no realization of the complexity or latitude of choice underlying such terms.[37]

Study of social structure based on normative, socially approved behaviour alone results in only a partial reconstruction of a structural model. The inclusion of actual social behaviour for such construction is indispensable. In the words of Raymond Firh:

> But to see a social structure in sets of deals and expectations alone is too aloof. The pattern of realizations, the general characteristics of concrete social relations, must also form a part of the structural concept. Moreover, to think of social structure as being comprised only of the ideal pattern of behaviour suggests the covert view that these ideal patterns are the ones of primary importance in the social life and that actual behaviour of individuals is simply a reflection of standards which are socially set[38]

The analysis of social structure from a "dual perspective," i.e. combining "problem of identity" and "social organization"[39] is undoubtedly

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*The nature of this study (i.e. based on library information unfortunately limits this author in dealing with the roles of women in traditional Arab society as the collective outcome of individual choices, for these individual choices are often well obscurred in the ethnographic literature.

[37] Antoun, R. "Social Organization and the Life Cycle in an Arab Village" Ethnology 6, 1967 p. 294-308.

[38] Firth, R. "Social Structure and Social Organization" in N. Graburn, Readings in Kinship and Social Structure. Harper & Row. 1971 p.159-63.

[39] Antoun, op. cit. p. 306.

an approach which is likely to produce a greater understanding of the dynamics of any given form of social structure. In the case of Arab marriage for example, although in the Arab world it is an institution which is advocated by divine sanction and idealized by all social groups, the process of reaching the socially desirable status of a married woman is neither an automatic nor a uniform one. It is subject to economic restrictions for unless a man is financially capable of supporting a wife his dreams of a marriage have to be abandoned. In addition, variable social restrictions also pose themselves and the individual is faced with a number of what Firth describes as "organizational choices."

With regards to Arab women, although their normative behaviour is well documented in the anthropological literature, their actual behaviour and their conscious "organizational choices" have received very little attention. To give but a few examples the ideal of "patriarchal" authority over children has often overshadowed the power of children over their elders, males and females alike. Similarly the ideal of female chastity and virginity has often overshadowed the reality of premarital sexual relations as has the passive obedient behaviour of women to their husbands in public obscured their behaviour in private. All these "deviant" types of behaviour are indeed part of the total social organization and unless these "abnormal" forms of behaviour are taken into account, no claim of a total study of Arab society can be made.

Early Socialization

As Simone De Beauvoir points out, "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one." In the Arab world the process of "becoming" starts almost instantaneously at birth. In spite of such sayings attributed to the Prophet as "In the eyes of God, the Master of the

Universe, a girl is worth as much as a boy," the reaction to the birth of a female child is often different from that to the birth of a male and ranges from a passive, neutral reaction to a violent, sad reaction usually on the part of the father who blames his wife for "producing" an infant of the wrong sex. The reaction to the birth of the first female ranges from a joyous one, to a neutral or often restrained one but if the wife continues to deliver girls, her husband many in some cases take the serious step of divorcing her and trying his luck with a new wife. Women, may earn the favourable reputation of the "bearers of sons" or the regrettable fame of the "bearer of girls;" either reputations may be of great signficance if at a later time they should want to marry once more. The neutral or negative reaction to the birth of girls, in contrast to the expression of great joy have received ample coverage in the literature: Among Moslems of the Lebanese village of Buarij, A. Fuller[40] reports that "Sweets are handed out to visitors at the birth of a male child. This may or may not be done at the birth of a daughter." In the Syrian village of Tel Toqaan[41] for the first daughter as for the first son there is a celebration and the money collected as gifts on such an occasion is used to purchase golden bracelets for the girl baby in preparation for her eventual "jehaz" (trousseau) as a bride. Similarly among some Arabs of the Maghreb the celebration of the birth of children of either sex is the same but the reaction of the father is different; of this reaction E. Daumas writes,

> As soon as a boy is born, there is real and profound joy and a father is told: "God has increased your fortune. May the

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[40] Fuller, A. op. cit. p. 35.

[41] Sweet, L. Tell Toqaan: A Syrian Village Anthropological Papers. Museum of Anthropology. University of Michigan #14. Ann Arbor, 1960.

> newly born be prosperous, may God prolong his life." Whereas to the old one who has been presented with a girl, people will simply say: "May all be well," and the father will as a rule reply: "Never mind."[42]

In Helen Grangvist's classic writings on the inhabitants of the Palestinian village of Atras[43] she also reports the greater joy of a father at the birth of a son; similarly among the fellahin of Upper Egypt, "boys are more highly valued than girls,"[44] as they are among the inhabitants of the Egyptain Village of Silwa.[45] This preference for sons is not confined to the Moslem communities of the Arab world but also holds true for Christian communities.[46] Several reasons are given for this preference: a boy will eventually be the propagator of the lineage, whereas a daughter will produce children for a lineage other than her father's; since female chastity and virginity are such highly valued qualities, the father of a daughter has a greater "risk" of being dishonored than does the father of boys. In addition, the great expense of preparing a "jehaz" (where this custom is applicable) for a daughter is often a burden on her family. These reasons just sited do not necessarily apply equally to all members of Arab society. The "jehaz," for example, does not pose a problem to wealthy families as it does the less well endowed members of the society. Similarly the propagation of the lineage does not figure as highly among relatively powerless lineages as it does among powerful ones.

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[42]Daumas, E. Women of North Africa. Translated by A. G. H. Kreiss, San Diego, Calif. 1943 p. 2.

[43]Granqvist, H. Birth and Childhood among the Arabs, Helsingfors, 1947.

[44]Blackman op. cit. p. 81

[45]Ammar, H. Growing up in an Egyptain Village Octagan Books, Inc. New York 1966.

[46]Khayat, M. K. Lebabnon Land of the Cedars, Khayat's Beirut, 1956.

Overt expressions of joy for the birth of a son in comparison to the more subdued reaction on the occasion of the birth of a daughter should not avert our attention from the value of a girl child to her parents and the close bonds which develops between daughters and mothers and which persist throughout their lives, for a daughter's individual personality and characteristics like her brothers, play a crucial role in determining the extent of her endearment to her parents. Her physical beauty, her eloquence, her cleverness, her kind treatment to her parents in their old age, her honourable actions as a representative of her father's lineage among her husband's kin group along with numerous other actions at different stages of her life may be a source of pride and comfort to her father and mother alike as well as to her kin in general.

Differentiation on the basis of sex manifests itself in the early years of childhood in the different games and task performed by girls and boys which are clearly either a conscious or unconscious preparation for the eventual roles of man and woman. Socialization during the pre-adolescent years as during later years gradually "nourishes" a child and prepares him or her for the role of an adult member of society. The dichotomy between girls' and boys' play is extensively analyzed by Ammar[47]

> The sex distinction is so binding that it is unbecoming of a member of one sex to play the game of the other sex. There is no single game which is played by both sexes.

But Ammar also points out that girls do not always confirm to socially imposed restrictions, and when not being watched, they do engage in

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[47]Ammar op. cit. p. 154.

"boy play" which they quickly interrupt once they feel they are being watched. The sex dichotomy is also reflected in the nature of games played by girls, which are usually of a quiet and often sedentary nature in contrast to boy's aggressive play. The eventual dependence of girls on their male kin especially their brothers takes roots in the days of their childhood. In his description of the Egyptain village of Silwa, Ammar notes, "Girls jeer at their playmates who have no brothers, and swear by their own brothers."[48] Boys even at a very early age have power over the action of their sisters who in time become dependent on their brothers and an intimate relation often develops between brother and sister. The nature of the relation between a brother and his sister is likely to influence the latter's decision at a later point in her life in regards to turning her share of her father's inheritance to her brother or to her husband. From a very early age infant care is a girl's responsibility; she is responsible for taking care of her younger siblings and watching over them while her mother is busy with housework or is out on errands. In addition she engages in domestic activities associated with females, such as baking, cooking, washing, and fetching water or firewood. As a matter of fact the most outstanding characteristic of the Arab woman starting at a very early age, is her very close association with the "domestic domain."

Education

A girl's education[49] in Arab traditional society is geared towards instilling in her the necessary values and skills which are compatible

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[48]Ibid p. 95.

[49]education being the total process of transmitting cultural values, attitudes and skills.

with her role within the domestic domain; in other words the education of girls is directed to fulfill what C. Kluckhohn calls "social actions," hence the lack of emphasis on formal education in traditional Arab society is seen to be in accord with the socially accepted function of a woman. Lane's[50] description of 19th century Egyptian society indicates that female children were very seldom taught to read and write. Among the rich a "sheykhah" or learned woman visited the harem daily to teach the females of the household to say their prayers and recite the Koran and only in some cases to teach them to read and write; girls from middle class families sometimes attended schools with boys. Lane also reports a much greater emphasis on the learning of feminine skills such as embroidery, needlework, and that a greater number of girls were allowed to attend schools in which such skills were taught. During the earlier part of the present century, girl's education in the Arab countries was the exception rather than the rule. In Egypt in 1913-14 the percentage of girls in all schools was only 14% and no women at all attended institutions of higher education. By 1927 only 3.4% of the female population could read and write. In Transjordan for the period 1922-23 girls constituted 10% of the total elementary school enrollment and in Iraq in 1930, only 20% of elementary school attendants were female.[51] Patai gives the "classical" explanation for girls limited education in traditional Arab society, namely religion or precisely, Islam:

> But the education of women was actually countermotivated by

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[50]Lane, E. W. Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptian. London, 1908, p. 64.

[51]Baer, G. Population and Society in the Arab East translated by H. Szoke. Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, New York 1964 p. 49-50.

> old, established Muslim views on the God-given inferior nature of women which had the religious sanction of the authority of Mohammed and which happened to coincide in many places with pre-Islamic popular traditions.[52]

Patai's statement is in direct contrast with Izzedin's opinion of the influence of Islam on the education of women during the early Islamic era:

> The Moslem religion gave an incentive to learning, and Moslem society provided ample opportunities for study. Learning was not confined to men. A saying attributed to the Prophet makes the acquisition of knowledge a duty required of every Moslem, man and woman.[53]

It is the opinion of this author that the limited acquisition of formal education by girls in traditional Arab society is not due to the "established Muslim views on the God-given inferior nature of women" for as Tomiche points out in relation to early 19th century Egyptian women: "Women lived inside their homes, completely illiterate even among the Copts where the numerous schools were reserved for boys."[54] The acquisition of a formal education by women in addition to being undermined by the need for more "relevant" knowledge associated with the domestic realm, was restricted by limited economic means:

> The statistics from the Elementary Education Department show that during the year 1939-40 average school attendance in the entire country was only about 60 percent of the total number of students registered. Absence from school was especially high in the village during the irrigation and harvest period when there was much work to be done in the fields.[55]

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[52] Patai, R. Golden River to Golden Road. Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 3rd ed. 1969 p. 461.

[53] Izzedin, N. The Arab World. H. Regnery Company, Chicago, 1953 p. 300.

[54] Tomiche, N. "Egyptian Women in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century" in Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East. W. R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (eds.) The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968 p. 174.

[55] Ammar op. cit. p. 216.

Seclusion of Women

A fundamental restriction on the education of women was the important social ideal, namely the strict segregation of the sexes of which veiling is one form of expression. This practice which does not originate in Muslim religious law and which was also imposed on Christian women became widespread during the Abbasid period as a means of distinguishing "free born" women from slave girls, a distinction which has survived in some Arabic countries down to modern times. In the Sudan exposure of the face and head is still considered the mark of the female slave or woman of slave origin."[56]

It is interesting to note that the seclusion of women and the strict segregation of the sexes is directly related to the degree of participation by women in economic activities outside the home which is in turn influenced by ecological and economic factors. The roles of Arab women and the extent of their seclusion in its different forms is by no means uniform and is directly related to the status of the particular woman in addition to being influenced by the different environmental niches occupied by the various social groups of which Arab women form a part.

The relatively isolated desert environment of the bedouin woman, along with the pattern of residence, where a kin group is the residential unit as well as the need for her economic contribution in such a harsh environment does not necessitate for a bedouin woman to be as "fiercely guarded" as is the case among urban women. The bedouin woman is the direct responsibility of a large group and in many nomadic societies women move about unveiled within the tribe. Among the Riwala

[56]Baer, G. op. cit. p. 42.

Bedouins women move about unveiled,[57] similarly among many nomadic tribes, the absence of the veil and the relatively free interaction between the sexes is prevalent and women participate in numerous public activities. Among some of the nomadic groups of the Arabian peninsula, "girls have much premarital freedom in their relations with men" and "although the traditional mores require of the girl to guard her virginity, flirting and petting take place, and uncautious girls may even become pregnant."[58] In the village environment, freedom of the peasant woman is more restricted by the relatively limited geographical framework and thus her freedom of movement and participation in public life is restricted to either the immediate vicinity of her dwelling and to the fields or the nearby market places where she sells her produce. In the village setting the individuals with whom a woman may come in contact are not as likely to be members of her own kin group as is the case among nomads and thus certain limitations are placed on the interaction of peasant women and members of the opposite sex outside of their immediate kin group.

In the urban environment with its diverse ethnic, religious and economic groups and the lack of concentration of a very large kin group within a limited space, the restrictions placed on women were and still are even greater than among villagers. However it should be noted that although ecological factors do influence the ideal behaviour of women, they are by no means the determinants of such behaviour. Such factors as the socioeconomic backgrounds and the age of the different women

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[57]Musil, A. Manners and Customs of the Riwala Bedouins, New York, 1928 p. 122-24.

[58]Patai, op. cit. p. 121.

within each of the above mentioned groups are indeed crucial in determining the role of women.

In the villages of the Arab world the possession or the utilization of land is of utmost importance since it is land which forms the basis of the economic and consequently of the social life of all villagers. Among Egyptian peasant there is a large body of traditions associated with the soil; some of which may be traced to ancient times, e.g. the offering of a maiden to the River Nile, the life of the land. Ayrout describes several customs which designate the importance of the soil and its means of sustenance, water, to the Egyptian fellah. "A fellaha when her time comes may crawl to the brink of the river and take up a handful of moist earth to swallow at the time of delivery so as to have a successful birth."[59] Words used in connection with agriculture are also used in connection with child rearing; thus, "the word "fitama" used for the weaning of children is also used for the tenth and last watering of maize." The land and the river figure even in the religious services of the Coptic peasants of Egypt, and it is not unusual for a priest on the occasion of religious worship to ask, "Let us pray for the rise of the water or the rivers in their season that Christ our God may bless them and cause them to rise to due heights and gladden the face of the land."[60] Among the inhabitants of the village of Silwa in Egypt, "Agriculture is the best occupation and most dignified of all and farm earnings are the most meritious of all earnings; in other words, they are the surest of all "halal" earnings--legitimately deserved and thus divinely

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[59]Ayrout, H. H. The Egyptian Peasant. Beacon Press, Boston, 1968 p. 131.

[60]Ibid. p. 58-59.

approved."[61] Similarly for the Lebanese village of Buarij, Anne Fuller notes:

> yet in considering their village as a world apart, it is not primarily because of the foregoing physical and other factors... but for more intimate and immediate reasons, all heavily laden with emotional attributes. First, the feeling stems in part from the fact that the village inhabitants are the possessor, utilizers, and inheritors of village land, land which is their own possession and guarantees some means of sustenance.[62]

The importance of the land to the fellah requires that he channels all his energies to maintain its fertility, if he is financially capable he pays others to do the work but if not he has to turn to his family for assistance. Thus in connection with the Egyptian fellah Ayrout notes:

> One must never lose sight of the help given to the fellah by his family. The wife, the children, the buffalo and the donkey are the cultivator's capital... His wife lends a hand at seed time and harvest, rears poultry at home and makes butter and cheese for sale.[63]

In the Village of Buarij

> Women's work overlap that of men. They share in the care of nearer garden plots. They, as well as all village hands, are called into the fields at the time of the grain, harvest and threshing. Women also take part in house repairing and building, mixing the clay and setting the mud bricks to dry in wood frames.[64]

Cooperation between men and women villagers is the rule rather than the exception, and among the Fallahin of Upper Egypt as among many Arab peasants:

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[61] Ammar op. cit. p. 21.

[62] Fuller op. cit. p. 6.

[63] Ayrout op. cit. p. 132, 133.

[64] Fuller op. cit. p. 73.

> The women and girls join their menfolk in the cultivation after sun has risen but their work is usually confined to the gathering of dry roots, tending the cattle, fetching the water for the household and so on.[65]

In all the cases cited above the participation of women in activities outside the home (which also means a lesser degree of the segregation of the sexes and seclusion of women) is determined by economic needs. Thus the extent to which women participate in activities outside the home should be expected to vary with the socio-economic situation of the social group of which a woman is part and indeed this is so. The degree of seclusion of women and the segregation of the sexes is directly related to the economic status of the different social groups and the restriction of women's activities to the domestic realm is a distinguishing mark of the elite members of the society. Hence veiling of women among villagers is more common among the well to do than among the poorer peasants. Among the fellahin of Upper Egypt, "the degree of seclusion varies, being rather stricter among the better class peasants than among those of lower social status. Among the latter, there may be considerable freedom of intercourse between the sexes. If a man allows a woman of his household to be seen walking about in public places his family would at once lose their position, and they would be looked down upon as nobodies."[66] Among some of the Berber tribes of the Maghreb, "if the chief's wives might be veiled, more out of patriarchal pride than out of economical scruplousness, other women of the tribe were debarred from this custom."[67] Among other tribes such as those of the Libyan desert, "seclusion exists only among the noble tribes. In other

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[65] Blackman op. cit. p. 40.

[66] Ibid p. 37.

[67] Berque, J. French North Africa. The Maghreb Between Two Wars, Faber and Faber Ltd. London, 1967 p. 115.

groups young men and girls mix freely, boys are allowed openly to court the girls, to visit them in their camps, and to sing to them of their love in verses of their own composition as a preliminary to m arriage."[68] Unlike the veiled and secluded women of the upper classes of nineteenth century Egypt, Lane notes that "it is not uncommon to see females of the lower orders flirting and jesting with men in public, and men laying their hands upon them freely."[69] In a comparative study of the meaning of the veil in Egypt and Tunisia, Abu Zahra found:

> That the main function of the veil in Egypt was to differentiate between social classes, for women of different social classes had different styles of veil. Another function of the veil was to differentiate between modest women and protitutes, as the latter also had their own style. On the other hand, unlike the case in Egypt, the function of the veil in Tunisia is not to differentiate but to hide and conceal completely; this gives women more freedom and versatility of actions, as it conceals both the identity and class of the woman concerned.[70]

The type of seclusion imposed by traditional Arab societies on its women of the higher and middle classes may be imagined by outsiders to be indeed oppressive but as Lane points out, "this is not commonly the case; on the contrary, an Egyptian wife who is attached to her husband is apt to think, if he allows her unusual liberty, that he neglects her, and does not sufficiently love her; and to envy those wives who are kept and watched with greater strictness."[71] In fact this complete physical concealment of women may be used by a woman to

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[68]Patai, op. cit. 122.

[69]Lane, op. cit. p. 184.

[70]Abu Zahra, N. On The Modesty of Women in Arab Muslim Villages: A Reply, AA 72, 1970 p. 1086.

[71]Lane op. cit. 185.

great advantage;

> accompanied by a slave girl who shared her secrets, she left the harem as she pleased, under the pretext of going to the baths or of making visits which could be prolonged for several days without returning home. She was free in her actions and was left undisturbed.[72]

It is interesting to note that the differences between bedouin and village women on the one hand and urban women on the other, support Tillion's hypothesis which was introduced at an earlier point in this chapter. Jomard's observation of Egypt at the time of the Napoleonic occupation also lends support to Tillion's hypothesis; his reports point out a direct relation between urbanization and the break down of endogamy; a phenomenon which partly explains the greater restrictions on women in urban areas:

> In Cairo, there is a marriage bureau near Bab al-Kharq... Those who wish to marry subscribe there, where they find suitable marriage partners.[73]

In addition to socio-economic status, age also influences the extent to which women are secluded and prevented from participation in activities outside the home. Thus among the Algerians studied by Miner and De Vos, it was observed that:

> women are cut off from the world during their sexually active years. The decision as to when a girl should begin to be kept at home is based on her stature and breast development, rather than on the onset of menstruation.[74]

The termination of the period of seclusion is also variable and ends when the woman is no longer considered physically attractive. In

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[72] Menger, Histoire de L'Egypte cited by Tomiche, op. cit. p. 175.

[73] Jonard cited by Tomiche Ibid p. 179.

[74] Miner, H. and George DeVos. Oasis and Casbah: Algeria Culture and Personality in Change. Ann Arbor, Univ. of Mich. 1960 p. 77.

comparing the period of seclusion for "oasis" women and those of the "city" Miner and DeVos found no significant differences but they did observe a tendency for later initiation and earlier termination in the city.

The reasons given by men for the isolation of their women are numerous and varied and may include any of the following: that it is God's will, that women represent the group's honour, and it is therefore the duty of every male member of the group to protect them from the evil intentions of strangers; that women are lustful and therefore all means are to be utilized to prevent them from following their uncontrollable desires lest they bring shame on their kin. Another reason which is seldom given is as Miner and DeVos report on Algerians, that:

> one of the purposes of seclusion is to keep women content by not letting them see more attractive men, other women who are better cared for, and the wealth of material goods which their husbands cannot provide.[75]

In a study of modesty among Arab village women, Antoun reports two beliefs regarding women and the reason for their seclusion. Women are thought to be physically weak. In addition, woman's physical weakness is thought to extend to her mind over which she has limited control. Women are thus thought to be "driven by inordinate sexuality."[76] In this study Antoun draws conclusions about sexual imagery in Arab villages by interpreting literary Arabic and Koranic words--an approach which has been severely criticized by Nadia Abu Zahra. Abu Zahra for one thing objects to Antoun's generalization; she notes that

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[75] Ibid. p. 80.

[76] Antoun, R. "On the Modesty of Women in Arab Muslim Villages. AA 70, 1968 p. 690-91.

> to generalize about sexual imagery in Arab villages on the basis of the analysis of idioms used to denote it in a particular Arabic community seems dangerous as it is well known that different parts of the Arab world have different dialects and different customs.

Her second objection is directed against Antoun's correlation of Koranic passages with the behaviour of Muslim villagers,

> It is also methodologically questionable to draw conclusions about the sexual imagery in Arab villages from interpretations of literary Arabic and Quranic words that are unknown to the illiterate villagers.[77]

However Antoun's study should not be undermined; it is useful in that it attempts to isolate the "structural mechanisms" which are utilized by Arab villagers to safeguard the modesty of their women. Its shortcomings lies in the fact that it limits the sphere from which these mechanisms are likely to have originated and in so doing it does not provide an explanation for the ideal modesty of the nonMuslim women of the Arab world. The whole concept of the modesty of Arab women in general may be best understood only in relation to the values of both male and female. Whether they like it or not women have to pretend that they are modest and men have to pretend that they are virtile.[78]

So far, we have been concerned mainly with the "ideal" of female modesty, but this conformity to ideal behaviour is not practiced universally among Arab women. As Lane points out, "motives of coquettry, however, frequently induced an Egyptian woman to expose her face before a man when she thinks that she may appear to do so unintentionally or that she may be supposed not to see him."[79] The seductive use of the

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[77]Abu Zahra, N. op. cit. p. 1081, 1084.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Lane op. cit. p. 184.

veil is not uncommon either and the veil may actually be used to a woman's advantage for not only does it hide beauty but it also hides ugliness of which a potential husband is not aware until it is "too late." The commiting of adultery is by no means absent and the discussion of sexual matters within female circles is not unusual. In reference to the women of the fellahin of Upper Egypt, Blackman notes:

> Sexual matters form the chief topic of their conversation, and this has a most degrading effect both on them and on their children, before whom they discuss the most private matters without the slightest reserve.[80]

In short, conformity to rules relating to female modesty is an individual choice on the part of every woman, but certain conditions including the social status of the particular woman involved may either facilitate or hinder this conformity. It is also of interest to note that certain socially approved actions on the part of women offer them a "license" to practice what under other circumstances may be considered immodest behaviour, such is the case when a mother nurses her infant. This otherwise, immodest act occurrs also publicly and in the presence of male strangers without invoking the slightest criticism.

In summary, the degree of seclusion of women in the Arab world ranges from the complete seclusion of women to the point that they are not even exposed to sunlight[81] to the institutionalized practice of prostitution such as is the case among the "Daughters of Nail."[82] In surveying the seclusion of women in the Arab world, it may be concluded that socio-economic status and age along with ecological factors are the important dependent variables.

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[80] Blackman op. cit. p. 43.

[81] Patai op. cit. p. 171.

[82] Gordon op. cit. p. 18.

Economic Activities

The traditional division of labour is based on sex; no attempt will be made here to innumerate the types of work carried out by women. It will suffice to point out that women's economic activities are confined either to the domestic sphere and to such undertakings that are compatible with their child rearing duties or to the fields where their help is of a supportive nature while men tend to play an authoritative role. The ideal role of a woman is that of a "homemaker" and deviations from this ideal stem from economic necessities. Thus among the women of the community on the Turkish-Syrian border, which was studied by Aswad, women who belong to land-owning lineages do not labour in the fields as those women of the sharecroppers do, and their activities are confined to the domestic domain where they lead a life of relative leisure.[83] Women who have male kin to depend on for support are thus spared the hardship of tilling the soil and women with many children especially male children are also less likely to participate in such activities. In the Egyptian Village of Kafr El-Elow Fakhouri observed that:

> The few female agricultural workers who are residents of Kafr El-Elow are described by the villagers as widows who are trying to earn extra money to take care of their own little plots. Under any other circumstances it would be considered disgraceful for a woman in Kafr El-Elow to labor in the fields.[84]

Men and women alike strive to confine the labour of women to the domestic domain since such confiement is a status symbol. Among the residents of 'Ain Ad Dair, a druze Village in Lebanon, the material enrichment of their life as a result of funds arriving from their overseas colony in

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[83] Aswad, B. "Key and Peripheral Roles of Noble Women in a Middle Eastern Plain's Village. AQ 40, 1967 p. 142.

[84] Fakhouri op. cit. p. 63.

Edmonton, Canada has changed the mode of participation of women in public activities in only one way,

> by withdrawing them from work and occupations they might have otherwise moved into out of necessity; the increasing wealth of the community earned by the men overseas has been more significant in realizing the ideal that it is a shame for women to work outside the family domestic unit.[85]

Similarly Fawzi attributes the limited venture into the labour market by Sudanese women to social pressures and points out that when women do venture in the economic sphere, it is due to extreme economic necessity and once the necessity is removed, the females drop out.[86]

In the case of the members of the upper strata of Arab societies, there seems to be an inequitable division of labour between males and females, with the main burden being carried by the males while the women lead a life of leisure, thus Levi-Strauss' view of the division of labour as the establishment of a series of prohibitions for the purpose of maintaining a state of interdependence between the sexes does not seem to hold true for Arab society at first glance. But as Brown points out

> It is through the confinement of the women to the courtyard and the observance of the restrictions of purdab that the men receive confirmation of their (caste) status...[87]

The Arab male derives pride and dignity from limiting the activities of the female members of his kin group to the private domain.

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[85]Sweet, L. E. "The Women of 'Ain Ad Dair" AQ 40, 1967, p. 182, 183.

[86]Fauzi, Saad El. Din. Women's Role in the Development of Tropical Countries. IIDC, Brussels, 1959.

[87]Brown, Judith, K. Text of paper read at the 1970 meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association in Ottawa , p. 5.

Kinship, the Primary Determinant of a Woman's Status

In the proceeding section, it was pointed out that the Arab woman's role, the dynamic aspect of her status, is to a large degree determined by her kinship ties. Hence a study of a woman's social status cannot be undertaken out of the context of the important social institutions of the social group of which she is part. The importance of kinship ties among the Arabs cannot be overestimated; Asl (origin) figures very highly in Arab social structure. Thus it is no surprise that individuals who reach a position of power in the Arab world are likely to consolidate their position by establishing real or fictious ties to an ancestor of great renown, quite often, descent has been traced to the Prophet. In Peter's study of a Moslem village of Southern Lebanon[88] it is clear that although wealth is an important criterion of status, the retaining of such wealth is markedly influenced by descent, for the "Learned Families" as Peters points out, "Land is a commodity for which they have to struggle along with the rest of the village inhabitants, but their rank enables them to dominate successfully their economic and political life of the village." In light of the fact that descent is a crucial element in determing the status and role of an individual in traditional Arab society, any meaningful evaluation of the status and the role of Arab women has to be made within the context of their kinship networks; for it is on her kinsmen's protection that a woman can depend, and it is to them that she turns in time of need and from among them she is more likely to find her future spouse. Throughout her life, an Arab women can rely on the support of the members of her kin group

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[88] Peters, E. L. Aspects of Rank and Status among Muslims in a Lebanese Village in Mediterranean Countrymen. Essays in the Social Anthropology of the Mediterranean. Mouton and Co., Paris 1963, p. 159-202.

but as pointed out earlier her individual decisions should not be overlooked, for it is by the clever "manipulation" of the support of her kinsmen that a woman can work out matters to her best advantage.

As an unmarried young adult, a woman is under the direct protection and authority of her father and the males of his patrilineage in which she is a member by virtue of her birth. The status of her father and his close patrilateral kin determines the woman's rights and duties within her community. However patrilineality among the Arabs does not by any means eliminate the significance of the matrilateral kin and matrilateral ties supplement patrilineal relations. Thus a woman's mother's brother's status for example also has a direct bearing on her own.

During the course of her life in her father's household, a woman's close relationship with her brothers develop. This relation usually lasts throughout her life. The significance of a brother's protection is well known to Arab women:

> A husband may always be had
> a son can also be born
> but a beloved brother
> -when he is once dead-
> from where shall he come back?[89]

On the death of her father, the responsibility for a woman's well being passes to her closest male patrilateral kin, her brothers. The property of the family head should, according to Islamic Law, be divided among his children with the daughters receiving half as much as sons, but the woman usually turns over her share of the inheritance to her brothers in return for their continued protection. In Egypt, for

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[89]Granqvist, H. Child Problems Among the Arabs. Ekenas, 1950, p. 179.

example, "A daughter's share is frequently left with her brothers and subsequently her husband considers it beneath his dignity to claim it." Similarly in Palestine "brothers would compensate a sister with gifts when she left the family home to marry;"[90] these gifts are symbolic of the protection that a woman is entitled to expect from them. "This family-kin protection is fundamental to a woman's existence. Its loss is a tragedy leaving the woman vulnerable before society."[91] Thus giving land to a woman without brothers "is a means of compensation for the protection and security she lacks."[92] A woman has the choice of either retaining her share of her father's inheritance or giving it up in favour of her brother and relying fully on their support when such support is necessary to her. Although women usually make the latter choice, "some have found the right of inheritance more important than that of protection and claimed their share in their father's property."[93]

The woman's marriage is a "family" affair and the status of her kin determines who her prospective husband will be. Marriage among equals is the Arab ideal and the act of giving a daughter of the lineage in marriage to a stranger is a token of its members' trust and respect for the new husabnd. Thus it is not surprising that families of the "higher order" of society do not give their daughters in marriage to members of the "lower orders" but accept the daughters of the latter as spouses for

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[90] Baer, op. cit. p. 39.

[91] Rosenfeld, H. "On Determinants of the Status of Arab Village Women." Man 60, p. 67.

[92] Aswad, op. cit. p. 142.

[93] Mohsen, S. in Sweet L. (ed.) op. cit. p. 233.

their sons. The marriage of a daughter does not severe her ties with her household, and it does not change her status as a member of her father's patrilineage, but her children belong to the patrilineage of her husband. Her ties with her kin are maintained by their frequent visits to her and on such occasions it is her husband's duty to extend the hospitability of his home (which is a reflection of his Asl) to his visitors. A woman's brother in particular is obligated to provide his sisters with gifts for her and her children on the occasion of his visit; in addition a woman in need may turn to her brother's household for he is likely to say, "I am eating from my brother's house and my father's property."[94] If a woman is not happy with her husband's treatment she can rely on the support of her brothers as well as her other patrilateral kin. It should be noted that the protection of males for the women of their agnatic kin group is not confined to women who inherit property but is a general ideal in Arab society. Of the Palestinian villages of Atras, Granqvist notes:

> Should a sister be neglected, she can take revenge. Or, as it is said very strongly: A woman has a right to her father's house. She can rob it seven times. Thus, if they do not act justly to her. Alya says: When dying a man asks his sister's forgiveness. If she answers: "I forgive thee." All his sins are swept away.[95]

However in the case of women with property, their bargaining power is greater and influences their status in the household of their husband. In case of a polygamous marriage the status of a woman vis a vis her co-wives, her husband and his kin is a function of her "origin," (asl); for no matter who her husband is and although his status in the

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[94]Rosenfeld op. cit. p. 67.

[95]Granqvist op. cit. p. 176.

community does reflect on her to a great extent, her own descent is critical not only for her person but for her children and is in fact a distinguishing mark between them and their half siblings. As the woman becomes older and especially after the death of her husband, the responsibility for her protection and now for her very livelihood is either split between her sons or is shared between them and her brother(s).

"Woman Power" and Its Sources

In the preceeding section, the dependence of the Arab woman on her father, brothers, sons and husband as well as on her male kinsmen in general has been emphasized. Does this great degree of dependence mean that the woman is virtually powerless? The answer is in the negative, provided that one defines the realm of power within Arab traditional society to be not only the public domain but also the private. In addition to the overt power that women have by virtue of their contribution to economic activities, for the most part, power wielded by women is confined to the private domain. But given that the family is the most important cultural and structural unit in Arab society, the woman's power should therefore not be underestimated simply because it does not manifest itself in such an overt manner that may be easily preceived by the anthropologist. As Friedel points out

> if a careful analysis of the life of the community shows that, pragmatically the family is the most significant social unit, then the prviate, and not the public, is the sphere in which the relative attribution of power of males and females is of the greatest real importance.[96]

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[96]Friedel, E. Vasilika AQ 40, 1967 p.

Similarly Fuller notes that women "form a more distinct world of their own. Their influence and role in the community is covert rather than overt. By being overt, however, it is nonetheless effective."[97]

Thus the Arab woman derives her power from "the close integration of the Arab society and the importance of the family in Arab life."[98] Two forms of power may be distinguished, "coersive" and "expert." The former is exemplified in the right to apply punishment and the latter signifies the use of knowledge as an instrument of manipulation.[99] Arab women wield both forms of power and use them interchangeably under different circumstances and at different points in their life cycles. However the use of the "expert" form of power by far exceeds the "coersive" form and requires a very important ingredient--a male "front" who is the embodiment of the legitimate authority which is very seldom conferred on women except in cases of the old and wise and those believed to be "possessed" by supernatural forces. As an unmarried young adult, a woman by maintaining her virginity and a "good reputation" confers honour on members of her kin group, but she has the potential power of bringing shame on them by straying from the path of prescribed modes of behaviour. In fact as Abu Zeid notes for the Bedouins of the western desert of Egypt,

> much of the honour of the "beit" household, and the lineage depends on the woman's unique role in preserving the honour of her people. Thus the main contribution a women makes to

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[97] Fuller, op. cit. p. 43.

[98] Izzedin, op. cit. p. 312.

[99] Hallenbeck, P. An Analysis of Power Dynamics in Marriage. Journal of Marriage and the Family 28, 1966 p. 200-203.

> the honour of the lineage is through this passive role of preserving her chastity and purity.[100]

Although a married woman's behaviour does not affect the honour of her husband's lineage and continues to be the responsibility of her father's lineage, her behaviour nevertheless has tremendous importance on the honour of her children and their descendants. Within the institution of marriage, a context in which the great majority of Arab women are likely to be, given the high esteem in which this institution is regarded in Arab society, a woman has various uninstitutionalized channels through which she may direct her indirect form of power. In addition to authorized power such as that which she has over her young children or over the distribution of resources within the domestic domain, the power of a woman in her husband's home increases with the birth of a child especially a male child. For the birth of a male symbolizes the contribution of the woman to the continuity of her husband's patrilineage. In addition to the symbolic aspect of this contribution, it also has an important bearing on the economic condition of the extended family which is the basic social and economic unit in Arab society, for male infants are potential labourers in the family's estate. The authority which a woman establishes over her children in their childhood is often maintained throughout her life. At the time of their marriage she plays a key role in choosing a marriage partner and in making the necessary arrangements including the establishment of the bride price, although the person who announces the decision regarding a son or a daughter's marriage is a male--the "front." In cases where

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[100]Abu Zeid, A. "Honour and Shame Among the Bedouins of Egypt" in Peristiany (ed.) op. cit. p. 253.

a son is contemplating marriage outside his kin's immediate circle of acquaintance he sends his female relatives to the home of the prospective bride, where the latter is subjected to very severe scrutiny by the "old ladies" whose "report" to the anxious bridgeroom may make or break the contemplated marriage.

With her position secured by the newly acquired status of mother, a woman may have tremendous influence on her husband when he decides after his father's death, whether to keep the dead man's property intact by maintaining the partnership between himself and his brothers who also inherited a share in their father's property or to become independent. If the latter decision is made, the woman is relieved of the authority of her mother-in-law and when her children are old enough she sets up her own domain where she rules supreme over her daughters-in-law whom she may choose at a very early age even at birth and who try to gain her favour, given their man's great respect and love for his mother. In polygamous unions the mother's power in securing benefits for her children from their father may often be of strategic importance.

Women also derive power from the fact that they are good transmittors of information and in the process of transferring news they are capable of evaluating their "load" either negatively or positively. Among the Humr of the Sudan women's "gossip" and their singing of praise or insults is crucial in establishing a man's reputation.[101] As an older woman and especially as an older mother, the power of the Arab woman increases within the domestic domain by virtue of the fact that her husband, who is usually older than her, is more dependent on her than

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[101]Cunnison, J. G. Baggara Arabs: Power and the Lineage in a Sudanese Nomad Tribe. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1966.

ever before during this period. In addition her power is no longer restricted to the same extent as her younger sisters to the domestic domain. Her modesty in dress and language declines sharply for she is no longer identified with sexual activity. Her advice and wisdom is sought by females as well as males and with the aid of other women she strives to preserve the community.

> In order to maintain community life, old women in particular work out adjustments by means of covert and scheming methods. But this conservation reaches beyond custom and law, in which areas women are less conventional than men.[102]

In addition to the above mentioned conditions under which women may wield power, women may acquire power under other specific conditions in which a woman acts out the role of a man. Such a "role shift" may take place when a woman "substitutes for a deceased husband in the case that his death leaves immature male children;" thus "this role shift has sometimes permitted a strong woman to head an extended family, much as a father does."[103] Due to the fact that women are indeed ifluential in many manners unavailable to men, it is not unusal for a man who in case he needs a favour from another man, usually of higher status, will send a female member to the latter's household for the favour.

In conclusion the impression that Arab women are powerless is indeed a myth as the following quotation from Blackman indicates

> Though theoretically they are supposed to be entirely in subjection to the male sex, in practice, they can and often do, maintain a very firm hold on their husbands. I have known many men who are in mortal terror of their wives. Indeed I am often inclined to think that it is the poor oppressed

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[102]Fuller, op. cit. p. 58, 59.

[103]Aswad, op. cit. p. 151.

Egyptian man who has a claim to my sympathy, and that the over-ruled oppressed wife is somewhat of a myth.[104]

Marriage

No survey of the status of Arab women may be near complete without a discussion of the institution of marriage within Arab society for marriage and the birth of children opens the gateway to the status of "adult" for both men and women. The characteristic element of Arab marriage is its endogamous nature which has received relatively little attention from anthropologist whose studies of unilineal exogamous descent groups by far exceeds the endogamous types. Endogamy among the Arabs ranges from religious endogamy to the narrowest form of endogamy short of incestuous unions; this being the marriage between cousins and patrilateral parallel cousin marriage being the preferential form of marriage. Religious endogamy applies to Moslem women but not to Moslem men who according to Koranic Law are permitted to marry the daughters of the "people of the book," i.e. Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. The next narrower circle of endogamy is community endogamy. Various authors have pointed out the great tendency towards marriage within the village, for example. In addition to these two forms of endogamy and clan endogamy, there exists the ideal of marriage between equals; thus women who are members of noble tribes do not usually marry men from vassal tribes nor do women who are members of landowning lineages marry peasants for example. Marriage and divorce in each of the above forms of endogamy are processes in which loyalties are established or dissolved not between two individuals but between families or larger kinship groups.

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[104]Blackman, op. cit. p. 38.

The practice of endogamy among the Arabs has attracted the attention of anthropologists and has been approached with different emphasis. While some anthropologists on the basis of statistical data have tried to show that Fa Br D marriage does not vary significantly from the expected normal distribution of endogamous marriages and that it is, therefore, an epiphenomenon of other social processes; others argue that this form of marriage is indeed statistically significant. However neither of these approaches has an explanatory value. The explanation of parallel cousin marriage has been approached by scholars in basically two manners, some students of the subject follow the approach of explaining this characteristic feature of Arab societies in terms of a single factor such as property, power, honour and modesty or harmonious family relationships; this approach may be termed the "single factor approach." Other anthropologists on the other hand have followed what may be termed a "total social structure" approach. These two approaches should not be thought of as contradictory; the latter approach is simply more inclusive. The first approach produces limited explanations of the function of the practice within Arab societies and in theory one may explain the practice in terms of the numerous factors given as reasons for the practice by different informants for all these different factors are in fact complementary rather than contradictory. But these often cited positive attributes of parallel cousin marriage may be achieved equally by exogamous forms of marriage. The preservation of the tribal patrimony is often given as an explanation for Fa Br D marriage, however this argument implicitly takes for granted the abiding by the Islamic rules of inheritance, a fact which is contradicted by reports of actual practice of inheritance by Arab women and even in case that

the Islamic Sharia is followed exogamous marriages are potentially equally profitable since an incoming woman would add her share of her father's inheritance to her husband's group's property.

The consolidation of the power of the minimal lineage is also offered as an explanation of the practice of Fa Br D marriage. In answer to this explanation, it should be pointed out that whenever circumstances under which a minimal lineage acts as corporate unit arise the support of the nephew to his paternal uncle is automatic and does not need to be elicited by the father's brother by one means or another, and in cases where conflict arises within the minimal lineage, a nephew is most likely to support his own father against the latter's brother for as Murphy and Kasdan point out, "degree of relationship is the significant criterion in the determination of allegiance." The pursuit of power beyond that which a man can automatically count on at a time of difficulty may in fact be more effectively achieved by marriage to a member of a group whose support to the groom's group is not committed. Such marriages within a larger endogamous sphere take place regularly in Arab societies.[107] Another point which refutes the power argument is the fact that:

> among the Arabs, the paternal uncle does not give his daughter to the nephew, rather the nephew has a right to her, whatever may be the uncle's sentiments and motivations.[108]

Still another explanation for Fa Br D marriage is that unlike marriage to outsiders, marriage to a father's brother's son keeps a woman under the direct supervision of her immediate family and thus her honour may

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[107] Marx, E. Bedouin of the Negev. New York, Praeger, 1967.

[108] Murphy and Kasdan (1959) op. cit. p. 18.

be better protected. But again this argument does not by any means provide a satisfactory explanation since a woman's immoral behaviour although it reflects primarily on her own family, nevertheless is a great insult to her husband and reflects on their common children and therefore it is also in the husband's interest to protect his wife's honour.

A more recent explanation is that advanced by Khuri who sees Fa Br D marriage as a means of contributing to harmonious family relations.[109] But this explanation ignores such factors as the tremendous rivalry between sisters-in-law (the wives of brothers) a rivalry of which a daughter is well aware and in case she marries her Fa Br So she will carry with her to her paternal uncle's residence the unpleasant feelings harboured by her own mother towards her paternal uncle's wife who is now her mother-in-law and far from "harmonious"relations are likely to insue precisely <u>because</u> Fa Br D marriage "perpetuates, after marriage, the same social relationships which prevailed before it.[110] One may also point out that exogamy brings about harmonious relations of an even greater scope than the family sphere, between lineages or even larger kinship groups. In short while the above explanations may hold true under certain specific circumstances, their particularistic characteristic disqualifies them as general explanations for the phenomena of Fa Br D marriage.

In following the "total social structure approach" ideally one would take into consideration all the above single factors in addition to

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[109] Khuri, F. "Parallel Cousin Marriage Reconsidered" Man New Series Vol. 5 #4, 1970 p. 597-618.

[110] Ibid p. 597.

numerous others but such a model would be too clumsy to be manipulated effectively. For besides including the basic features of Arab social structure, it also includes features which Arab societies share with numerous other social systems. An alternative of approaching the problem at least initially would be to construct a model which monopoloizes on the basic features of Arab social structure (which are a high degree of segmentation plus the tremendous flexibility of the system to be inclusive to the point of including all Arabs) and to establish a relation between these features and endogamy, taking Fa Br D marriage as an extreme expression of endogamy. Such is the model constructued by Murphy and Kasdan. From their perspective, parallel cousin marriage among the Arab Bedouins is seen "to be functionally congruent with the capacity of Bedouin society for massive fusion and fission of lineages."

Thus marriage of a woman in traditional Arab society like other aspects of her life and behaviour is largely though not exclusively determined by her kinship ties.

Conclusion

In conclusion the position of women in traditional Arab societies is a function of their kinship affiliations. Where women's contribution to the subsistence economy is necessary, their freedom of movement is granted out of necessity, the ideal being the restriction of women's activities to the domestic realm. Ecological factors in addition to social status are the important dependent variables. Thus the position of women of the higher social orders among nomads, villagers and urban dwellers is similar in that greater restrictions are placed on them

with the purpose of maintaining a social distance. In some cases where the maintenance of social distance by the seclusion of women is not possible such as among the Tuareg, it is men who are "secluded." Women derive power from a number of sources but for the most part, this power is in a covert form.

The influence of religious ideology on Arab women though of great importance is adapted to suit prevailing social conditions. The similarity between the behavior of women of the Arab world, who profess different religions points to the greater influences of cultural forces other than religion.

CHAPTER III

CHANGES IN THE ROLE AND STATUS OF ARAB WOMEN IN MODERN TIMES

Introduction

The term "emancipation" is often applied to describe the process of change of the traditional role of women; one cannot help but feel that the word has connotations of a process of liberation from a state of oppression such as conditions of slavery or imprisonment of one form or another. In the previous chapter it was pointed out that although the "de jure" position of women in traditional Arab societies is one of complete resignation to their male kin, their de facto position within the private domain offered a contrasting picture; the extension of their power to the public domain although present, was never direct but required male support. As the life of the individual becomes more dependent on public functions, "the subordinate" position of women in public life becomes more obvious. The word "emancipation" as used throughout this chapter, signifies the process of extension of the direct power of women from the private to the public domain where their rights and duties are gradually becoming recognized as legitimate.

The changes pertaining to the roles and status of women described in this chapter do not by any means apply uniformally to all Arab women. In addition to the heterogeneous character of Arab societies described earlier, the rate at which the different Arab countries and the many diverse communities within each of these countties are changing is far

from uniform. Thus the change in the position of Arab women may be viewed as an integral part of the differential change affecting the Arab world. The aspirations for economic growth and political reconstruction in the Arab world necessitate alterations in the roles of women; where these aspirations have been greatly emphasized and backed by action as is the case in Lebanon, Egypt, and Tunisia for example, the greater changes in the position of women have taken place and in those Arab countries where no significant changes in the economic and ideological spheres have occurred, e.g. the Arabian peninsula, little or no change in the status of women may be detected. In the area of education, for example, countries which have stressed the importance of education and allocated a large portion of their national budget for this purpose (e.g. Egypt) are increasingly turning out more educated men and women. In Yemen, on the other hand, where formal education in general is not emphasized to the same extent, both the great majority of men and probably almost all women are denied the opportunity to acquire an education.

Within the individual Arab countries, a wide gap exists between the rural and urban areas--a gap which is reflected in the behaviour of both men and women of the two areas. In surveying the changing status of Egyptian women Tomiche notes that:

> the largest body of women in Egypt belong to the peasantry: 4,000,000 in number, but largely unorganized, uneducated and neglected. A 1956 decree fixed the daily wage of a male agricultural worker at 180 millimes, and that of a female worker at 100 millimes. Thus the woman peasant is discriminated against by law. True, she has been given the right to vote, but as most peasant women are illiterate and thus are ineligible to vote, this right is a very limited one.[1]

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[1] Tomiche, N. "Changing Status of Egyptian Women" New Outlook Vol. 1, 1957 , p. 43.

In addition to the general differences between urban and rural women, within each localized group, the changes have affected women whose families have the economic bases to support a transformation of their status. Among urban dwellers, it is the daughters of the middle class and aristocratic families who have an opportunity to acquire an education, to be introduced to western customs either indirectly through movies, novels, radio or directly by contact with Europeans in the numerous language schools either at home or abroad or even by more intimate contact with a European "nanni,"-- a fashionable addition to the household of aristocratic families. Similarly under conditions of contact between urban and rural dwellers, either by the movement of villagers to towns or by the "coming" of the town to the village through improved means of communications and transportations, it is the well to do villagers who can afford to adopt the ways of city folk. In addition to being able to afford the financial responsibility pertaining to the education of girls, it is also the members of the upper social levels who can afford to deviate from traditional behaviour. This point is illustrated by Farrag's report of a Mzabite community of Algeria where she notes that although the Azzabat (a powerful women's association) threaten to put women in tebreya (a form of punishment for those women who deviate from socially approved norms of behaviour). "What actually happens is that the wealthy women who value education disregard the threats and do send their girls to school. Conformity and non-conformity and the effectiveness of the tebreya and other controlling factors on those who deviate from such norms, vary with the

deviants' social status."[2] Similarly in Saudi Arabia where girls' education is frowned upon and where a budget for girls' education was not allocated by the state as late as 1960 families of means and power send their daughters to boarding schools in Egypt and Lebanon or in European countries. Thus once again at least in the initial stages of her emancipation, the Arab woman is dependent on her family and its status in the extension of her role to the wider public sphere.

The transformations in the status and role of Arab women were induced by numerous factors--some of which will be discussed in greater detail below due to their particular relevance to women. The forces of change were felt in the Arab world to varying degrees and at different times; in Egypt they were felt as early as the first part of the nineteenth century during the reign of Mohammed Ali whose grand plans for industrialization of Egypt necessitated the introduction of new economic practices along with western technology.

> A profound change in the social structure of rural Egypt was brought about through the replacement of the traditional subsistence economy by the growing of cash crops, by the transformation of the land from state property into the full private property of individual citizens, and finally by the gradual introduction of a modern westernized system of administration.[3]

The development of a market economy brought about differentiation among the masses of peasants and created a new class of rural dwellers with urban contacts in addition to migrants to urban centers where their labor was exploited by the state. Mohammad Ali's state monopoly made use of female labour in addition to the traditional male economic

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[2] Farrag, A. "Social Control Amongst the Mzabite Women of Beni-Isguen." J. of Middle Eastern Studies. Vol. 7 #3, 1971 p. 318-327.

[3] Baer, G. Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt. The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969 p. 214.

activities. But this participation of women in public life in Egypt was short lived and ended with Mohammed Ali's failure to industrialize Egypt and "Europeanize" it as his original dream had called for. However this short lived emancipation of Egyptian women, limited as it was, represented a change which undoubtedly brought about disturbances in the additional male-female relations--a disturbance which culminated in the revolt against traditional values relating to women in the twentieth century[4] when new changes occurred in Egypt as well as other Arab countries and gradually acquired a more stable nature under the intensified impact of new forces the most outstanding of which is "westernization." For after a brief occupation of Egypt by Napoleon in the early part of the 19th century, France became the ruling power in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria. Great Britain became "responsible" for Egypt, Iraq and Palestine while Italy concerend itself with Libya.

Westernization

Patai defines the term "westernization" as "the culture change that takes place in any non-Western society under the impact of contact with western groups or individuals. It is therefore a cultural process in the course of which a society or part of it adopts Western culture either totally or partially."[5] The process of adoption of western culture in the Arab world has been partial and is limited to a small segment of Arab society. This limitation may be attributed to the circumstances under which Europeans came in contact with Arabs. As colonizers or as

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[4]Tomiche, N. (1968) op. cit. p. 183.

[5]Patai (1959) op. cit. p. 365.

"foreign experts," the Europeans formed an exclusive, closed circle and only a very limited segment of Arab society had access to their company; this segment being the members of the urban upper class who had the financial means "to emulate the Westerners by acquiring their paraphernalia and learning how to use it."[6] Another means of exposure to western culture was by the travel of Arabs to European countries especially on education missions. During the period between 1813-1919, for example, about 900 Egyptains were sent on educational missions to Europe. The acquisition of a European education was not limited to those who sought it abroad; thousands of students were educated at foreign schools in Arabic countries; and thus the gap between the masses of Arabs and European educated members of the upper classes grew wider. This gap is observable to variable extents in the different Arab countries and attempts to close it are reflected in the continuous effort on the part of members of the lower strata of Arab society who on coming in contact with the "Europeanized" members of their communities try to emulate their different western mannerisms.

The influence of western culture on Arab society has been increasing steadily in the past few decades; one of the most profound influences of the colonial era is the direct or indirect changes in induced in the lives of the women of the colonized countries. For although the Arabic countries are gradually utilizing western technology and their women are being indirectly exposed to it by the use of appliances, cosmetics, movies, etc., the adoption of western mannerisms related to fashion, food and speech have either been actually adopted by some Arab

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[6] Ibid p. 365.

women or are their goals. Some of the direct changes include the adoption by Arab women of western fashions of dress and the use of European languages which have come to be status symbols. As recently as a generation or two ago, an important qualification for a prospective bride in Egypt was her knowledge of French.

Changes in the ideals relating to women's roles in Arab societies were also indirect outcomes of westernization. Arab countries aspiring to develop technologically and economically along the lines of western models and Arab leaders trying to impress foreign powers introduced new legislations and other changes to prepare the Arab woman for her anticipated role under the forthcoming conditions of economic and technological development in the Arab world. Even under circumstances when the encounter between Europeans and Arabs was extremely hostile, as during the years of the Algerian revolutions, although Algerian women in a reaction against French rule turned to more conservative native customs such as the veil which came to be a national symbol, the lives of these women were markedly influenced by the French presence both directly in the course of their interaction with French women and their exposure to French education as well as indirectly during their participation to varying degrees in the Algerian battle of liberation. During the later years of the Algerian revolution women served as warriors, nurses, "terrorists" and spies and during this period of struggle for independence from French rule Algerian women acquired many rights which were denied them prior to that period,

> the father could no longer give orders to a daughter he knew to be working for the national cause; women fighting by the side of men could no longer be regarded as passive objects. Heroines now appeared as "models" for other women; the husband might have to remain at home when his wife was called out on a mission and in a maquis women were often married

> before an officer of the FLN without being able to consult their fathers.[7]

The change of the role of women to resemble that of the western model is often associated with industrialization, however, technological development and the emancipation of women should not be regarded as a phenomena of cause and effect nor should the latter be viewed as a "stage" in a unilear evolutionary process. In the western countries an industrial technology gave rise to an appropriate social system and ideology, but in the spread of these various components, they were not received by the different societies in the same order.

> The colonial areas had to be politically administered and economically exploited. This meant transplanting many of the political and ideological concomitants of an industrial technology to these societies at the very same time that they were preventing or retarding, the spread of the technology itself.[8]

A result of this retardation of technological development and its precedence by the spread of ideologies advocating changes in the position of Arab women has been the attainment of a very privileged position by educated Arab women. As mentioned before, the role of Arab women is being changed in anticipation of industrial development. At least in the initial stage of the transition, the Arab women is benefiting to a greater extent than did her western counterpart. She is valuable for her potential contribution to society--one which she may infact never execute on an individual basis. During the course of her education, she gains a degree of freedom and independence previously unknown to her in addition to maintaining her traditional dependence on her family for moral and financial support. She acquires the

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[7]Fanon, F. as cited by Gordon op. cit. p. 59.

[8]Sahlins, M. D. and Service, E. R. (ed.) Evolution and Culture. The Univ. of Michigan Press. Ann Arobr, 1968 p. 90, 91.

prestigious status of an educated woman without being expected to fulfill the concomitant role as is the case of an educated male. In cases where men and women hold the same job and receive the same salary, the expectations from a woman are far less than those for a man. The traditional attitude of women's place being the home reduces the tension between the sexes in the public domain since men do not feel that women colleagues pose a competitive element. The domain for sexual identity remains the home and not the office or the class room, outside which the traditional segregation of the sexes is maintained though to a much lesser extent than at earlier times. The best friends of women in modern Arab societies remain other women. No social stigma is attached to such friendships which constitute very intimate emotional bonds. With the changing role of the Arab woman to include that of students, teacher, physician, etc., although the interaction of the sexes is increasing, even within integrated milieux, voluntary segregation is usually practiced with members of the same sex aggregating to form their own exclusive groups. A similar siutation occurs in Turkey where as Fallers reports that:

> in the provincial towns of Turkey the sexes are still, outside school and working hours, very segregated, even after decades of complete legal emancipation of women under the Ataturkist reforms. Men "own" (by custom, not law) the public space--streets, shops, coffee houses; the women while no longer veiled, scurry through them on necessary errands, well covered and, whenever possible, in groups. Women "own" the private space--the houses and courtyard--so that a husband may not enter until his wife's guests have left. Women live in women's group, men in men's.[9]

In short although the changes in the position of Arab women in modern times was to a great extent the outcome of "westernization" the resulting changes are by no means identical to the western model and

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[9]Fallers, L. A. "Comments on Levy" Sociological Inquiry 41, (Winter) p. 79.

are influenced by important indigenous cultural forces.

"Feminist" Movements and the Emancipation of Women

In addition to the external force of westernizations some internal forces were and still are at work to bring about a change in position of women in Arab society. The movement which started in Egypt under the leadership of Aishah Timur (1840-1902) and Malahk Hifni (1886-1918) (known by her pen-name Bahithat Al-Badiya, "The Inquiring Desert Woman") two pioneer literary feminists whose initial aim had been the extension of the education of girls, proved to be of great significance for the cause of Arab women as well as Moslem women since Aishah Timur wrote in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. The demands of both these early feminists were well with the framework of Islamic law and one of them, Malhk Hifni, even opposed unveiling. Their pleas were simply for social justice within the Sharia. However, reasonable as these demands were, they were met with violent opposition which grew even greater when the feminist cause was taken up by such male reformers as Al-Tahtawi and Qasim Amin (186-1908). The latter was western educated and a disciple of Mohammad Abduh; his approach to the problem of Arab women's emancipation reflected what is termed a "modernist" point of view which, briefly, advocated social reforms within the framework of the original teachings of Islam based primarily on the Koran and called for opening the door of ijtihad the freedom of individual interpretation of Islamic concepts by analogous reasoning which had been closed after the establishment of the four Schools of Law. Qasim Amin's ideas were expressed in his two books, "Woman's Emancipation" (1900) and "The New Woman" (1902) both written in Arabic. The main thesis expressed in these books were that the backwardness of the Moslem world was due to

ignorance--the primary source of which was the Moslem family In his "Woman's Emancipation" he argued that, in its initial form, Islam had provided for full equality between the sexes and he advocated changes in the position of women within the context of Islamic Law. He opposed veiling and seclusion and called for economic independence for women which necessitated their education and proper training. His opposition to polygamy was absolute. He pointed out that it is impossible for a man to behave with complete justice towards four women--a requirement explicitly stated in the Koran, "And indeed you cannot do justice between women, even when you are eager to be (completely just)" Sura IV 129. Further he stated that since polygamy in Islam was not a duty but a privilege, it may be banned if social conditions existing at a certain period of time necessitated such action. In his second book Qasin Amin called for the emancipation of women outside the context of religious doctrine, perhaps a precautionary measure against the attack of religious authorities. Quoting Herbert Spencer, he pointed out that social progress followed nonreligious principles and called for a state of social equality which he maintained could not be reached until equality between the sexes is realized.

> The feminist movement was by no means confined to Egypt,
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> it is in Iraq that women have had the longest way to go. Iraq had not been affected by the Nahda, the renaissance, to the same degree as Syria and Egypt, and it had not, like the latter country, enjoyed a long pedagogical tradition starting with Tahtawi.[10]

The Iraqi Jamil Zahawi, one of the first heralds of Arab nationalism and a contemporary of Qasim Amin took up the feminist cause; his

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[10]Berque, J. The Arabs, Their History and Future. Frederick A. Oraeger, Publisher, New York, 1964 p. 178.

article on the emancipation of women, which he sent to the Egyptian newspaper Al-Mu'ayyad in July of 1910, caused a great outcry among traditionalists. His demands included, independence for the woman from the authority of her father in matters related to marriage unveiling and equal rights for women in divorce proceedings. The opposition to his demands was so violent that it brought about his dismissal from his job as a lecturer in Baghdad which he left to join the feminist movement in Lebanon. In Zahwi's efforts, the link between movements for women's emancipation and the rise of nationalism is clear; this connection has also been expressed in more recent years in the Algerian revolution.

In the early 1900's in Egypt, "the feminists made little headway until they joined forces with the nationalists and worked with a group of liberals strategically placed in government and press circles."[11] The Nationalists under the guidance of Saad Zaghlul Pasha and the Wafdists during the revolution of 1919 made their explicit demands for Egypt's independence from Great Britain and became the rallying point for revolutionary movements such as was the feminist movement and for the first time in the history of modern Egypt, a women's political committee (of the Wafd party) was organized by Labiba Ahmad. "Women veiled and unveiled, participated in the revolt of 1919 and four lost their lives. Girl students joined the nationalists."[12] Thus the struggle for emancipation was by no means peaceful. It often involved violent demonstrations and even imprisonment--such as was the case in Syria in the early 1930's and later in Egypt in 1954 when a group of women under

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[11]Abbott, Nabia "Women" in Mid East: World Center, Science of Culture Series. R. Anshen (ed.) Harper & Brothers, New York, 1956 p. 207.

[12]Ibid. p. 207.

the leadership of the Egyptian feminist Doreya Shafiq went on a hunger strike demanding the right to vote.

Up until the time of the Second World War, women's demands (as well as those of men who were pro-feminists) and the activities of women's organization dealt primarily with the improvement of the educational status of women, unveiling, laws of marriage and divorce as well as philanthropic activities such as the establishment in 1922 of the society of the "goutte de Lait" which distributed milk and clothing to needy children and ran a clinic for sick children and instructed their mothers in child care.[13] In Tunisia in 1930, the Tunisian socialist Taher-el-Hadad published his book, "Our Women in Religious Law and Society" in which he pointed out that:

> we should differentiate between the eternal truths which are the foundation of the Moslem faith and certain laws and regulations which Islam laid down to meet temporary conditions, and which the passing of these conditions has rendered obsolete.[14]

He believed that the backwardness of Tunisia stemmed from the degraded status of women and that any progress in Tunisian society required the education of Tunisian women and their active participation in national life.

In the second half of the present century the feminists shifted their emphasis to demands of granting political rights to women. The Arab Women's Federation, founded in 1944 by the Egyptian feminist Huda Sharawi, a daughter of a wealthy Egyptian family, along with Arabic magazines such as Labida Hashhim's Fatat al-Sharq, the Party of Feminist Union of Egypt's magazine, El Masria, the Daughter of the Nile and other

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[13] "The Arab Women's Federation" Women Today. A Journal for Women in a Changing Society Vol. V1, #4, 1965 p. 71.

[14] Izzedin, op. cit. p. 383, 384.

smaller scale orgnizations such as the girl guides, served as platforms for such demands. The vote was granted to women in Syria (1949), Lebanon (1952), Egypt (1956) and Iraq (1967). In the Maghreb, in Morocco the struggle was taken up by Laila Haicha, King Mohammed Ben Youssef's eldest daughter, and Zhour Zarka who brought about reforms such as minimum wage and minimum age of marriage legislations, encouraged the education of women and their unveiling. In Tunisia the demands made by Haddad in the 1930's were adopted by Borguiba's Neo Destour Party, and in 1957 Borguiba personally supported the establishment of the Union Nationale des Femmes de Tunisia and in the spring of the same year women were granted the right to vote in municiapal elections and maintained this right in subsequent elections.

The support for women's emancipation has not always been so enthusiastic as in the case of Tunisia, the Algerian situation is a case in point; the Algerian woman received numerous promises of political rights for her "heroic" participation in the Algerian struggle against the French in numerous speeches and official pronouncements but promises and reality proved to be worlds apart as an Algerian woman states:

> La Constitution, sans doute, et les résolution du Congrès reconnaissent l'égalité de tous les citoyens; mais l'ecart est tel entre les textes et les fait que tout se passe comme si les textes n' existaient pas: dans l'approche des rélaites vécues, on le negligera sans dommage.[15]

The greatest opposition to the emancipation of women has come from religious leaders who in one fatwa or another have stood against the change in the role of women in the public sphere. But in presence of a powerful central government which advocates such a change their

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[15] M'Rabet, Fadela, La Femme Algerienne. Francois Masperio, 1969 p. 13.

opposition has been negligible and was ignored when decisions for passing legal reforms were made

> On June 11, 1952, the jurists of Al Azhar issued a judicial promulgation (fetwa) which in the name of God and Mahomet, formally condemned the granting of political rights to women. But after the revolution in July of the same year the Official Studies Commision decided (on September 29) to grant the vote to every woman capable of reading and writing. Going even further the Consititution, issued on January 16, 1956 recognized women's rights to employment and charged the State to assure to woman the "harmony between her role in society and her duties in the bosom of her family." Liberal pressure became so powerful that even the traditionally conservative ulemas were forced to express favorable opinions on the subject of female emancipation.[16]

However the influence of the ulemas on the general public should not be underestimated, for in spite of the "progressive" views taken by some government leaders, a minority of the women in Arab countries do take advantage (or maybe even want to take advantage) of the governments "reforms;" the force of tradition is by no means negligible. In Tunisia, for example, despite Bourgiba's drastic efforts for the unveiling of women, expressed in his statements, "It is unthinkable that half the population be cut off from life and hidden like a disgraceful thing," and "We even see civil servants going to work in that ochious rag... It has nothing to do with religion."[17] Most women in the countryside are still veiled and in 1966 only 33% of the girls between ages 6-14 attended school in contrast to 86% of the boys.[18]

From the above survey, the following points may be deduced:- Women do not play their role in a vacuum; thus the situation of women is a reflection of the medium which they occupy. The movements for

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[16]Tomiche, N. (1957) op. cit. p. 38, 39.

[17]Moore, C. H. Tunisia Since Independence Univ. of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965 p. 55.

[18]Gordon, op. cit. p. 28.

the emancipation of women gained momentum and significance at times when social consciousness in the different Arab countries was on the rise. The earlier movements were affected if not in fact being the outcome of the Nahda, the Arab Renaissance. During the early 1900's the national movements for independence from colonial rule formed the rallying point for enthusiastic females; this tendency has continued to be expressed in more recent years--such as during the Algerian revolution. An expression of the condition of a woman's social milieu may also be noted in comparing Yemen and Saudi Arabia to Lebanon. In both Yemen and Saudi Arabia electoral rights are not granted to men or to women but in Lebanon both sexes participate in elections, although women gained the right to do so after men did.

> In traditional society the role of women is still fairly well delineated by the continued role division between the sexes. But in modern societies it is the time lage between social change for men and women which is the main index or role differentiation.[19]

Thus in Egypt, voting which is compulsory for men is only optional for women and in Syria, although women and men have the right to vote, in the case of women, this right is restricted to those with at least a primary school education.[20]

Enthusiastic and valiant as these efforts for the emancipation of Arab women may seem to be, their outcome is confined to a very small segment of the Arab female population--the women of the small educated bourgeoisie.

The demands made by the feminists and their supporters were and still are well within the framework of Islamic Law. More recent writers on

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[19]Sullerot, E. Woman, Society and Change. McGraw Hill New York, 1971 p. 7.

[20]Goode (1963) op. cit. p. 147.

the subject of women's emancipation back their demands by reference to such Moslem reformists as Mohammad Abdu or Qasim Amin. This approach is in direct contrast with the drastic measures taken by Ataturk who in 1926 adopted the Swiss Personal Code. The difference in approach between these two Islamic societies in addition to being the outcome of numerous complex factors which are beyond the scope of this study, may be attributed to the fact that Islam to the Arabs unlike the Turks in addition to being a central spiritual and social ideology of great significance, is the cornerstone of their Arab cultural heritage, and to denounce Islam is to divorce an essential element of their past--a past which is a subject of continuous glorification and which serves as a comfortable cushion to fall back on at times of disillusionment and setbacks.

Legal Reforms Related to Personal Status

In addition to the passage of legislation granting political rights to women, the most significant legal reforms introduced on behalf of Arab women in the present century are those relating to personal status. For unlike the reforms which granted electoral rights to women the new laws of personal status have the potential of benefiting all women, educated and uneducated alike; and in case the woman herself is ignorant of their significance, members of her family or other acquaintances, who are always intimately involved in such matters as marriage and divorce, are likely to point out to her the rights granted her under the law and to utilize them in her best interest.

Although numerous western concepts of law had been introduced in the Arab countries under Ottoman rule,

> matters relating to the family have been considered too closely linked with religion, and the hold of conservatism was nowhere stronger than in this domain. No fundamental changes had been made before the First World War, although a few fatwas (legal opinions) were issued to alter certain minor practices. It was not until 1917 that the bold step was taken of the enactment of a Law of Family Rights.[21]

This law, based on the Hanafi law of personal status has remained the basis of the laws of personal status in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Arab countries remained committed to reform within the Sharia and rather than limiting themselves to the codes of one school of Islamic Law or another, broadened the area of interpretation by reference to a multiplicity of sources.[22] Thus in some cases rulings from different schools of law were combined and on occasion when no previous ruling on a given subject was available, the legislators resorted to the Koran for more flexible interpretations.

In matters related to divorce, several reforms have been introduced in the different Arabic countries to limit the husband's power of divorce and to extend the right of the wife to terminate her marriage.

> It was far from uncommon in most of these countries, moreover, for a husband who wished to discourage his wife, let us say, from buying any more jewelry to pronounce a suspended divorce should she do so; and the divorce would at once become valid and binding as soon as the condition was fulfilled.[23]

This type of conditional divorce is no longer effective in Egypt, Iraq

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[21]Khadduri, M. "From Religious to National Law" in Modernization of the Arab World J. H. Thompson and R. D. Reischauer (eds.) D. Van Nostrand Co., N. Y. 1966 p. 44

[22]Salem, E. "Arab Reformers and the Reinterpretation of Islam MW Vol. LV #4, 1965 p. 311-320.

[23]Anderson, J. N. D. "The Eclipse of the Patriarchal Family in Contemporary Islamic Law" in Family Law in Asia and Africa. Allen Unwin Ltd. London, 1968 p. 227.

and Morocco and in nearly all the Arab countries, the triple pronouncement, "I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you," is not recognized by law. In Egypt divorce is no longer valid unless granted by a judge and in his presence the latter requirement being for the purpose of giving the judge a chance to bring about a reconciliation between the couple. Similarly in Tunisia, no divorce pronounced outside a court of law is legally valid. The Syrian Law of 1953 provides that a man who divorces his wife without adequate reason, and in case his actions cause her financial problems, should provide her with a sum of money which is decided by the court as a compensation. The Tunisian Law of 1957 and the Moroccan Law of 1958 called for the same compensation irrespective of the woman's financial status.

Laws regulating the minimum age of marriage introduced under Ottoman rule have also been revised. In Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, the minimum age of marriage is eighteen for males and fifteen or sixteen for females; and in the case of Syria, Jordan and Egypt, the judge has the power to prevent the marriage of a couple where the age difference between the man and woman is large. In Iraq, the 1959 law fixes the minimum age of marriage at 18 for both sexes but gives the judge the power to ratify marriages of couples of sixteen years and over. Laws for checking the compulsory marriage of an adult daughter (djabr) have also been introduced. In Morocco a woman cannot contract her own marriage until she is twenty one years of age and prior to this age the unqualified consent of her guardian is required. In Tunisia the presence of a woman at the time the marriage is contracted is required by law. The consent of her guardian is required if she is under sixteen years of age. In Algeria the woman's consent is also

required. The prevention of a woman from contracting her own marriage on the grounds that the man was not her "equal" or that the mahr (dower) he was offering was not worthy of her status, had been of widespread occurrence. This intervention by the guardian in the marriage of an adult woman has been curtailed by the introduction of appropriate legislation. "In most of the Arab countries the guardian's intervention, to be effective, must now be made before pregnancy is apparent."[24]

Polygamy is the institution which has received the greatest blow in the process of introducing these reforms of laws of personal status. The earliest attempt to deal with the problem of polygamy came in 1917 with the introduction of the Ottoman Family Law under which a woman could prevent her husband from contracting a second marriage under penalty of nullifying her marriage to him or his marriage to the second woman; this limitation has been incporporated in the Jordanian and Syrian codes. Developments of significance in the matter of polygamy did not occur until 1953 when Syria introduced a clause in its Law of Personal Status making the permission of the judge obligatory and four years later Tunisia completely prohibited polygamy. In Morrocco in 1958 legiglation was introduced whereby a first wife had the right to obtain a divorce if her husband married a second woman while the latter was granted the same right provided she had been ignorant of the man's first marriage. Iraq's 1959 law went a step further by requiring the consent of the court before a second wife was married and that such a consent may not be granted under such conditions as the lack of adequate financial resources, the absence of a "need" for such a marriage (e. g. sterility or illness of the first wife) or the possibility that such a

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[24] Ibid. p. 233.

marriage would give unequal treatment to one of the wives. Numerous other reforms were introduced such as those dealing with child custody, mahr,(bride wealth) and personal chastisement and alimony but some of these reforms presented only a minor deviation from previously established rules. With regard to the mahr, all the laws of personal status based on the teachings of the Hanafi School stipulate that the payment of the mahr is a necessary conditions for marriage, while other such codes such as that of Tunisia states that the payment of the mahr is necessary while that of Morocco deems it to be obligatory. In some Arabic countries (Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan) the woman has the right to demand a divorce (prior to the consummation of the marriage) in case the part of the mahr payable on marriage is not advanced. The second part of the mahr, "muakhar," is payable to the wife in case of divorce. It is not uncommon for the wife's family to demand a high muakhar to safeguard their daughter's marriage.

Reforms designed to protect the rights of women are undoubtedly of great significance provided they are directed at societies where the social consciousness, not of an elite minority but that of the masses, has been readied to be recipient of such reforms. An example of the discrepancies which exists between law and reality, is the practice of "female circumsion" the ablation of the clitoris, a practice which although outlawed in Egypt is nevertheless of common occurrence in Egyptian villages. Among the villagers of Sirs-al-Layyan in Egypt, Berque attributes the practice to "la croyance populaire, a reprimer l'appetif de femmes qui serait a celui des hommes vingtriple a l'unite,"[25] and unless such a belief is altered, the law which condemns the practice

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[25]Berque, J. Histoire Sociale d'un Village Egyptain a XXeme Siècle. Mouton and Co., Paris 1957 p. 44.

remains only a very interesting statement. The laws regulating the minimum age of marriage have also been faced with problems which disturb their proper implementation; the "loss" of birth certificates is a common means of circumventing the regulations laid down by the laws. The law extending the right of a woman to contract her own marriage is undoubtedly beneficial to older women, but a young Arab girl hardly has the courage to break away from her family, and quite often a young man and his family will refuse to marry a girl without the consent of her family. In cases where elopement does occur, it is within an institutionalized context and the couple seek refuge or become adopted by a family other than their own. Among the bedouins of the Negev for example, custom provides elopers with an institutionalized way out, they can put themselves under the protection of an important person who helps them establish a family away from their group or origin and they may be reconciled with members of their group years later.[26]
In other cases of elopement in Egypt, with which this author is most familiar, its occurrence is more likely to be between a couple where the male is of higher social status than the female and under such a condition, although the husband's family objects, that of the girl readily consents.
Generally the protection of the rights of a woman in such matters as inheritance, marriage and divorce is still largely determined by the "bargaining" power of her family. In reference to divorce laws in Morocco, which, unlike Egypt or Tunisa, reflect little change from the codes of the rather conservative Maliki School according to which the husband's right to divorce his wife remain considerable, Rosen notes:

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[26]Marx, E. Bedouin of the Negev. Praeger, New York 1967.

> Consideration of the laws of divorce alone then, give only a partial and truncated view of the nature of divorce as it is actually practiced in an Islamic state like Morocco. A woman's legal rights, though limited, can be supplemented with significant economic and social powers.

In personal matters such as marriage and divorce the Arab woman's status vis-a-vis her husband and his family, although affected by national legislation is still dependent on her family who

> try to balance their social and legal obligations with demands that can be made on a husband in the hope of giving the wife the greatest degree of security possible under the circumstances.[27]

Education

The most significant factor leading to a change of the status and roles of women in Arab society has been the acquisition of a formal education. Although educational reforms were introduced at the time of the Ottoman Empire, these reforms were too modest to be of any meaningful consequences. The early feminists of the Arab world adopted as their primary motto the extension of education to all girls and although their demands were far from being fulfilled at the time, the trend for increased female education has continued down to the present day with almost all Arabic countries granting the constitutional rights to girls to obtain an education, although this right is not always explicity stated in legal documents. In the case of Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Egypt and Tunisia, no distinction is made between the two sexes. The Kuwaiti, Libyan, Syrian and Egyptian Constitutions grant the right to education to "all citizens" while the Algerian and Iraqi constitutions refer explicitly to both sexes. In Lebanon, although there is no specific reference to the right of education in practice,

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[27] Rosen, L. "I Divorce Thee." Transaction, Vol. 7, June 1970 p. 37.

no legal differentiation is made between the sexes."[28] In Saudi Arabia a Royal Decree was passed in 1960 whereby public schools for girls were to be opened and subsidized by the government and by 1965 thirty-seven thousand Saudi girls were registered in government schools.[29] In Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Syria, U.A.R., Tunisia, Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait compulsory education is provided for children ranging in age between 6-12 to 6-15, while no compulsory education is decreed in Sudan, Bahrain, Lebanon, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.[30] In addition to the introduction of legislation granting the right to education and the establishment of a period of compulsory education, all Arab states in an effort to make education accessible to the majority of their populations have made primary level public education free for both sexes. In Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia and Egypt, free education has been extended to the secondary level.

The effect of these educational reforms is reflected in the statistical data on the enrollment of girl in educational institutions. During the period between 1913-1914 to 1944-45, the percentage of girls in all schools in Egypt increased from 14 to 40%; female enrollment in elementary schools, trade schools and teacher's colleges rose by factors of fifteen, ten and ten, respectively and enrollment in secondary schools rose by a factor of six. By 1944-45 enrollment of Egyptian women in institutions of higher reducation had reached 1,040 and by 1957-58, women constituted 12.2% of all university students. Similar increased

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[28]Access of Girls to School education in the Arab States." Education Panorama. Vol. Vll #1, 1966 p. 23.

[29]"Education in Saudi Arabia" in Education in the Arab States. Arab Information Center, N. Y. 1966 p. 179, 180.

[30]Unesco Statistical Yearbook, 1970.

female enrollment took place in Syria, where elementary school enrollment of girls doubled in the period between 1944 and 1954 and university enrollment increased from 69 to 934 in the same period. In Iraq girls' attendance of elementary schools rose from 20 to 25% during the period between 1930-1955 and in Jordan the percentage of girls enrolled in all schools rose from 20-31.4% in the period between 1945/46-1955.[31] The enrollment of women students in all Arab universities has also been undergoing a steady increase. Thus the enrollment of women students in Arab universities rose from 4,000 in 1950-51 to over 22,000 in 1959-60.[32] More recent developments in the area of girls' and women's education are illustrated in Tables I and II.

A few trends may be noted from Tables I, II and III. In all the countries of the Arab world, fewer girls than boys attend school and in the transition from primary to secondary school, there is a decline in the percentage of enrollment of girls. At the level of higher education the percentage of women enrolled in institutions of higher learning is even lower than at the secondary level. However statistical data, although of great help, nevertheless do not reveal all the facts. In examining Table III, it is found that the enrollment of women in institutions of higher learning in Kuwait for the year 1968 closely approaches 50% of the total enrollment; however this numerical representation does not necessarily indicate the equality of opportunity for obtaining higher education between the sexes in Kuwait but is undoubtedly due to traditional views on female residence within close proximity of their families while male students are allowed to travel abroad to universities in

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[31]Baer, G. (1964) op. cit. p. 49, 50.

[32]Qubain, F. Education and Science in the Arab World. The Johns Hopkins Press. Baltimore, 1966 p. 48.

TABLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OF GIRLS (1955-1968*)

Country	1955 No. of Thousands	1955 % Female	1960 No. of Thousands	1960 % Female	1965 No. of Thousands	1965 % Female	1968 No. of Thousands	1968 % Female
Algeria	442	36	315	40	520	38	595	38
Libya	11	17	25	20	53	28	-	-
Morocco	149	34	224	28	332	30	366	33
Sudan	32	20	87	27	151	35	162	33
U.A.R.	688	37	1000	39	1340	39	1361	38
Iraq	87	25	204	27	286	30	299	29
Jordan	61	31	77	36	124	42	98	43
Kuwait	6	37	12	42	21	43	24	44
Lebanon	77	40	123	47	-	-	193	46
Saudi Arabia	-	-	11	-	57	22	102	28
Syria	92	29	139	29	226	32	277	37
Yemen	-	-	-	-	4	5	5	7
Tunisia	72	30	149	33	256	35	323	55

*Unesco Statistical Yearbook 1970

TABLE II SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OF GIRLS (1955-1968*)

Country	1955 No. of Thousands	1955 % Female	1960 No. of Thousands	1960 % Female	1965 No. of Thousands	1965 % Female	1968 No. of Thousands	1968 % Female
Algeria	26	42	37	44	30	31	52	29
Libya	0.2	3	2	12	5	15	-	-
Morocco	12	38	22	26	50	24	74	26
Sudan	2	11	12	16	21	23	34	23
Tunisia	13	30	16	26	-	-	39	27
U.A.R.	107	22	147	27	292	30	402	31
Iraq	12	21	30	21	60	24	79	26
Jordan	6	17	14	24	29	28	23	30
Kuwait	0.2	17	4	31	12	35	22	41
Lebanon	-	-	-	-	-	-	51	39
Saudi Arabia	-	-	0.1	1	3	9	10	14
Syria	16	24	21	22	43	22	62	24
Yemen	-	-	-	-	-	-	.06	2

*Unesco Statistical Yearbook 1970

TABLE III ENROLLMENT OF WOMEN IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING (1955-1968*)

Country	1955 No. of Thousands	1955 % Female	1960 No. of Thousands	1960 % Female	1965 No. of Thousands	1965 % Female	1968 No. of Thousands	1968 % Female
Algeria	-	-	2	32	2	20	2	22
Libya	-	-	.02	2	0.2	8	-	-
Morocco	0.5	28	0.7	14	1	12	2	14
Sudan	0.02	2	0.2	5	0.6	7	1	11
Tunisia	0.4	17	-	-	1	17	2	21
U.A.R.	9	14	18	17	36	21	44	24
Iraq	-	-	3	23	8	27	10	24
Jordan	.1	30	.2	27	1	32	1	26
Kuwait	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.6	46
Lebanon	-	-	-	-	4	18	7	21
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	-	0.1	4	0.3	5
Syria	1	17	2	17	5	17	6	17
Yemen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Unesco Statistical Yearbook 1970

Egypt, Lebanon, Europe or America.[33] Traditional views regarding the role of women in society, although not obviously apparent in statistical data are nevertheless very much a part of "modernizing" Arab societies. In Saudi Arabia, although there has indeed been an increase in girls' school enrollment, the emphasis has been on types of education "where their natural ability would be put to the best use"[34] such as nursing and teaching. Similarly the traditional barring of women from religious education (beyond the elementary knowledge of the Koran and the basic tenents of Islam) is easily perceived by comparing the enrollment of women to that of men in the area of Religious Sciences. In the Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences at the University of Tunis no women as opposed to 254 men are enrolled and at the Azhar University the "Moslem Girls Faculty" was not established until the academic year 1962-63.[35] Although the rate of female education in the Arab world has been and is definitely increasing, illiteracy among women is still higher than among men; according to the 1966 census of Algeria (published in Unesco Statistical Year Book) females of ages 10-14, 20-24, 45-54 formed 60.9, 89.0 and 87.9% respectively of the total illiterate population with the corresponding figures for males being 38.2, 60.6, and 81.9. Similarly in Libya according to the 1964 census females of ages 6-14, 20-24, 45-54 formed 80.4, 93.4 and 99.2% respecitvely, of the total illiterate population while the corresponding figures for males were 48.1 43.5 and 77.1%. However, the traditional ideology

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[33]Abu-Laban, B. and S. "Educational Development in The Arab World From Nationalsim tc Revolution. Medina Univ. Press Int'l. Wilmette, Ill., 1971.

[34]"Progress in Saudi Arabia" Women Today. Vol. Vl #5, 1965.

[35]Education in the Arab states op. cit. p. 265, 283.

relating to women's "place" does not always have a negative effect on women's education. In all the Arab countries, including the most "modern," the extent of the socialization of girls and women outside the circle of immediate family and friends is not equal to that of boys and men and neither is the responsibility of a woman to support a family the same as a man. These two traditional customs have the potential of contributing positively to girls' and women's education. Thus in Bahrain, "experience showed that girls on the average not only were better students than boys, but also continued their studies until they became marriageable, whereas a large number of boys dropped out to start work."[36]

One of the most significant attributes of education for the Arab women in addition to being a means for exposure to new ideologies and her preparation for her new role as an active participant in national economic development is that it increases the value of a woman in what remains the most important institution for an Arab woman to play her role--the institution of marriage. Girls who acquire an education experience changes in attitudes to varying degrees; some women who acquire an education use it as a passport to the labour market; but all women should, according to "social law" get married and education is nowadays becoming an increasingly valuable qualification for a bride to be. After her marriage a woman's education becomes a source of security on which she may rely in case her marriage is terminated or in case she is widowed. Although she can still rely on the support of her family in such cases, this dependence is gradually decreasing. It is said that a woman should acquire an education as a "selah" (weapon) against "unfortunate times." In reference to the importance of

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[36]Thornburg, M. People and Policy in the Middle East. W. W. Norton and Co. Inc., N. Y. 1964 p. 80.

education for the purpose of marriage Goode in describing a recent report on education in Saudi Arabia notes:

> Some education of girls was finally beginning, according to one report, because the educated sons of wealthy men had begun marrying Turkish or Egyptian girls who had been through school.[37]

In summary, education of women in the Arab world is increasing but illiteracy remains higher among women than among men. Education is important as a means of exposing women to new ideologies, and it is only through the acquisition of a formal education that a woman can hope to attain a satisfactory position in the economic sphere but education is of primary importance to women as eligible brides for the increasing rate of education among Arab men necessitates their marriage to a "social equal." This new trend signifies a change of the determinant factor of a woman's status in Arab society. Whereas in traditional Arab society, the primary determinant of a woman's status was her kinship ties. This seems to have changed under the impact of modernization and great value is attributed to a woman's educational status. But since educated women are usually the daughters of well to do families, this change is not readily observable. However daughters of well to do families are now more likely to be "competing" with women of the lower classes who come in contact with men in the educational institutions and the professional sphere. It is not uncommon to read in Arabic magazines letters from a "broken-hearted" mother addressed to the Arab counterpart of "Dear Abbie" seeking advice on how to avert the marriage of her son to a "nobody" who happens to be his colleague at work or in class.

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[37]Goode (1963) op. cit. p. 150.

The Impact of Economic Development on the Role of Women

In Chapter II, it was pointed out that according to the Arab ideal, a woman's labour should be confined to the home and that it is only out of necessity that a woman's services are put to use outside of the domestic domain. Under such conditions women's contribution to labour activities outside the home are of a supportive nature; thus in Arab countries the percentage of women engaging in agriculture is low (in comparison to sub Saharan Africa for example) and the need for large scale female participation may often be confined to harvest seasons. However population growth in rural areas, e.g. rural Egypt[38] has upset the balance of work between the sexes and has necessitated increased work participation by women since under such conditions, the labour of both the husband and wife is required to support their large family. Table lV illustrates the degree of female participation in agriculture according to the latest population census of each country listed. The statistics of some sub Saharan countries are also included to provide a reference point. It should be noted that the participation of women in agricultural work is probably underestimated in these statistical data since the data deal with labourers who receive a pay in one form or another in return for their services while women who do in fact work on the family farm do not receive any compensation for their work and are therefore excluded from the statistical sample.

Some changes have occurred in the pattern of female participation in the labour force as a result of industrialization, urbanization and female education. However these changes are definitely influenced by

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[38] Seklani, Mahmoud. "Population Active et Structures Economique de L'Egypte" cited by Boserup op. cit. p. 35.

TABLE IV FEMALE AGRICULTURAL LABOR*

Country	Female Family Labour (As percentage of total agricultural labour force)	Male Family Labour	Agric. Workers of both sexes
Algeria	37	40	23
Libya	2	79	19
Morocco	9	72	19
Jordan	3	70	27
Sudan	9	78	13
Tunisia	38	42	20
U.A.R.	2	61	37
Syria	5	56	39
Iraq	1	74	25
Sierra Leone	42	57	1
Ghana	36	55	9

*Boserup, E. Woman's Role in Economic Development. G. Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1970 p. 27, 28.

the traditional values pertaining to the separation of the sexes and the ideal of confining the services of women to the home.

Industry in the Arab world has lured female labour in a rather indirect manner; as Table V reveals the percentage of women among industrial workers is low; whereas the percentage of women working on own account and as family aids is considerably higher; in other words, for the majority of Arab women engaged in industrial occupations, industry "comes" to them in their "natural environment," namely, the home. This is by no means a new development. A large part of the home industries' labour force has always been performed by women in the traditional industries of many Arab countries. Home industries have a number of advantages for women. In addition to allowing the woman to maintain her supervision over her children while she supplement the family income, working at home preserves the ideal of confining a woman's labour to the home and maintaining the segregation of the sexes. In short whereas factory work is looked upon as being not "respectable" and degrading to the family prestige, industrial occupations which are confined to the home preserve familial pride. However the benefits of home industries have a price. Women working in home industries, "because they have no choice, they tend to accept very low rates of pay from these industries which can therefore compete successfully with larger industries based upon relatively expensive male labour."[39] In cases when women do work in factories, the segregation between the sexes is maintained but is limited by the nature of the work.

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[39]Boserup op. cit. p. 108.

TABLE V WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL OCCUPATIONS*

Country	% of Women in family labour force in industrial occupations	% of Women among employees in industrial organizations
Morocco	25	15
U.A.R.	7	2
Syria	14	6

*Boserup, op. cit. p. 109.

The participation of Arab women in market activities has traditionally been limited and remains so under the impact of economic development. According to the most recent available statistics of women's participation in trade and commerce, women constitute 8% of the total labour force engaged in trade and commerce in the Sudan, 4% in Morocco, 6% in the U.A.R., 1% in Syria and 2% in Iraq. The limited nature of women's participation in these activities becomes even more obvious when it is realized that of these low percentages just quoted above, 48% of all women in trade and commerce in Morocco are women trading on their own account. Corresponding figures for the U.A.R. and Syria are 81 and 48% respectively. Thus whereas many men may be employed in large commercial establishments, more women are likely to be self employed and handle small-scale marekt trade in vegetables, poultry, fish and a variety of other foods. The confinement of women's labour to small-scale enterprises, be they related to home industries or market activities, produces a gap between the contribution of women and that of men to economic development and results in a large discrepancy between the earnings of men and those of women. This discrepancy although it may set limitations on the family income nevertheless is seen to be compatible with the traditional ideal that the man should be the bread winner and although the working wife does contribute to the family earnings, her contribution may be accepted under the justification that it is "negligible any way." Quite often, it is the woman who in an effort to supplement her family income, takes the initiative to do so; while the male members of the family, although they make no serious attempt to prevent her from doing so especially if her work is restricted to the home, nevertheless continuously express their dismay at her actions.

Economic development in the Arab world has also affected the rate of rural-urban migration. A recent study of industrialization in Alexandria reveals that one third of the workers included in the sample came from rural areas. In another study in Cairo Janet Abu Lughd notes that throughout the present century over a third of Cairo's population has been of rural origin.[40] Under urban conditions a woman cannot utilize the skills related to village subsistence activities to supplement her family's income. A woman whose labour in rural areas was confined to the home and the farm is indeed in a difficult position on arrival to the town unless she is prepared to take on a job as a domestic servant. Women who are engaged in private domestic service constitute 19% of all women in non-agricultural occupations in the Sudan, 30% in Morocco, 6% in Libya, 32% in the U.A.R., 31% in Jordan, 31% in Syria, 21% in Iraq. These figures may in fact be an underestimation of the actual number of women engaged as domestic servants, since quite often poorer female relatives may be active participants in domestic services without being labeled "servant;" similarly, unlicensed female domestic helpers are also likely to be excluded from the statistical sample. On the other hand, a woman migrant to the city who during her residence in the village had engaged in a non-agricultural profession, may utilize her skills in the new environment. In the urban areas of Egypt and in the nearby suburbs, village women go from house to house pedalling their load of vegetables, poultry and eggs. A woman may also be engaged in domestic industrial activities or may set up small stalls in the local bazaars. As a final resort she may join a factory as an unskilled labourer. In a Moroccan study quoted by Boserup, she mentions "that even women workers in Morocco think that women with an

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[40]The Arab World from Revolution to Nationalism op. cit. p. 34.

earning husband should refrain from ordinary employment as unskilled labourers."[41]

The effect of planned social change on the role of women has been more striking among the educated women of the upper classes of urban society than among those of the lower social strata. However this effect should not be overdramatized since women who have acquired a higher education in the Arab countries constitute no more than two or three percent of the adult population of these countries. Among the Sudanese and Iraqi population engaged in clerical and administrative occupations only 2% are women. In Libya, Jordan, and the U.A.R. women constitute only 5%; in Morocco 21% are women and in Syria women make up 6% of the total administrative workers. In all the Arab countries the percentage of women engaged in administrative occupations is much lower than that of the female student (of higher education) population. Examination of the rate of female participation in the professions offers a contrasting view with the proportion of women in the professions being similar to their distribution in the student population at the level of higher educational institutions. This phenomena is understandable in view of the Arab ideal of the separation of the sexes. A break down of the category of "professionals" (in Table VI) reveals that a large percentage of these women are engaged in occupations where the separation of the sexes may be maintained. The relatively high percentage of Arab women in the professions may be seen as a necessary outcome of the segregation of the sexes. Women teachers are needed to

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[41]Forget, N. "Femmes et Professions au Maroc" in Chombart de Laurve, Paul Henri (ed.), Images de la Femmes dans la Societe, Paris 1964 p. 162 as quoted by Boserup op. cit. p. 218, 219.

TABLE VI WOMEN IN THE PROFESSIONS*

Country	% of all women of all personnel in all professions	% of women of all personnel in teaching	% of women of all personnel in nursing	% of women of all personnel in other professions
Sudan	8	14	32	1
Morocco	13	15	No information	No information
Libya	14	16	31	3
U.A.R.	22	30	100	3
Jordan	30	35	54	3
Syria	27	34	50	1

*Boserup, op. cit. p. 126

educate female students, and thus the teaching profession is considered "suitable" for women. This belief is undoubtedly of benefit to women who do not have to compete with men for better paying positions in the hierarchy of educational institutions, many of which have been founded and are managed by women.[42] Similarly the services of women for other women are required in the health professions since the customary modesty of the majority of Arab women prevents them from seeking the services of a male physician or a male nurse.

In summary, economic development has had a relatively limited effect on the economic roles of women in the rural areas of the Arab world with the traditional pattern of restricted female participation in agricultural occupations being maintained unless population pressures dictate otherwise. Under the impact of industrialization and rural-urban migration the participation of women in home industries is preferred. The ideal of the segregation of the sexes has proved to be beneficial to the minority of educated women in the labour market. By and large the contributions of women to economic development in the public sector remains limited. Women constitute 1.8% of the economically active population of Algeria, 2.7% in Libya, 3% in U.A.R., 2.3% in Iraq and 21.6% in Jordan.[43]

Marriage and the family

Changes in the status of women are often attributed to the break down of traditional family systems under the impact of modernization (i.e. industrialization, movement in the direction of a market type of

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[42] Izzedin op. cit. p. 310.

[43] International Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1970.

economy and urbanization). This relation between the emancipation of women and the dissolution of the extended family generally does not hold true for Arab women.

The traditional extended family among the Arabs consists of a man, his wife or wives, their unmarried sons and daughters and their married sons and their wives and children. It is a residential unit, residence often being patrilocal, an economic unit and a social unit. It is also the basic embodiment of the characteristics of the unilineal (patrilineal), endogamous descent system of the Arabs. Unlike the "breakdown" which has befallen unilineal exogamous groups under the impact of modernization, the Arab extended family has been altered in minor ways as a result of urbanization, economic change, industrialization and the spread of formal education. As Patai points out,

> in the Middle East, occupational differentiation, a wide range of specialized skills, productive capital and monetary media of exchange are not recent introductions accompanying the erection of a modern economic framework. They are parts of local traditional developments which went on for centuries in cities and which never caused a breakdown in the UDGs. The endogamous urban extended family and the UDSs unilineal descent groups of the Middle East were always social framework within which all economic development took place.[44]

It is interesting to note that some traditional forms of kinship units (hamula) which had declined in Palestine during the period between the latter part of the 19th century and the middle of the present century have actually been revived in association with (but not as a result of) modernization.[45] In recent years the Arab extended family as a residential unit has been declining and some of its functions, including those related to women, have been modified. Nevertheless it still

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[44] Patai (1969) op. cit. p. 429.

[45] Cohen, A. Arab Border Villages in Israel. Manchester Univ. Press, 1965.

plays a central role in the life of the individual for although as mentioned before its functions have been modified in response to the changes in the economic and political spheres of the Arab world but they have by no means been eliminated.

In recent years, the most striking change which has affected the traditional extended family is related to its physical structure. The residential unity of the extended family has gradually been declining.

> Many middle eastern mansions with their extensive courtyards, which in the nineteenth century were the homes of extended families numbering thirty or fourty persons, no longer house such families; their owners let them to institutions or split them up into apartments.[46]

The disintegration of the structure of the family as a residential unit is related to economic growth which results in the increased availability of alternatives for obtaining a livelihood. Under such conditions, a son may migrate from a rural to an urban area in search of a more profitable occupation than what his family and its immediate surroundings may offer. With the increased availability of alternatives for obtaining a livelihood, a son under the influence of his wife who as mentioned earlier desires to be independent of her mother-in-law, is more likely to depart from the household of his father before the latter's death. Thus if economic functions of the extended family may be fulfilled by an alternative means, then its pattern of residence also tends to change. As Rosenfeld points out in reference to Arab villagers, "the extended family becomes a fiction if the father is landless."[47] It may then be expected that the extended family structure

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[46] El-Daghestani, "Evolution of the Moslem Family in the Middle Eastern Countries" as cited by Baer (1964) op. cit. p. 59.

[47] Rosenfeld, H. "Process of Structural Change Within the Arab Village Extended Family" AA Vol. LX, 1958 p. 1127.

would remain intact among families who can offer to their sons a better alternative than would be available to them in the "outside world." The movement of sons away from their extended families has therefore occurred to a greater extent among middle class urban families, and in villages which have been exposed to urban influences. Thus in Gulick's study of the Lebanese village of Al-Munsif where many of the inhabitants work in the city and some of whom have actually migrated from Lebanon, he reports the existence of only two extended families as opposed to eighty-nine nuclear families. Although the existence of the extended family as a residential unit has been lessening in some parts of the Arab world,

> this does not mean, however, that we can dismiss the possibility of the power of extended families as social units regardless of residence. As a matter of fact, among the sedentary Bedawin living around Aleppo, several generations of one family never live together under one roof (Daghestani, 1932 p. 188) yet it is safe to assume that among these people strong extended families as social units are the rule.[48]

Farsoum in a study of family structure in modern Lebanon has shown that although the classical pattern of residence among Lebanese has changed

> in the sample interviewed, of the extended family kinsmen living in Lebanon, 40% resided within a fifteen minute walk radius of each other. The rate of face to face contact is incredible by Western standards; it amounts to daily contact with significant kin such as parents, grandparents, as well as married children, married siblings, and to a lesser extent with nephews, uncles, etc. Even in the urban context the pivotal structural position and functions of the functionally extended family, in interdependence with the economic, political, religious, welfare, and stratification spheres, remain

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[48]Gulic J. Social Structure and Culture Change in a Lebanese Village, Viking Fund Publication in Anthropology No. 21 New York, 1955 p. 109, 110.

exceedingly important.[49]

Thus the influence of the family on its individual members, males and females alike remains paramount for kinship ties still remain of great significance although the context of their application has changed.

Marriage in the Arab world even in the urban centers still remains a union between two families. The process of mate selection although it is increasingly becoming an individual choice is nevertheless subject to the approval of the family. In Chapter II the endogamous nature of the Arab pattern of marriage was discussed; although some changes have occurred under the forces of modernization, the difference between the traditional range of choice of a marriage partner and the pattern prevailing among present-day urban dwellers is only slight. Marriage between members of the same religious community remains the ideal. Community endogamy is still preferred with migrants to urban centers returning to their villages to get married (however this practice has declined as the ties of the migrant within his new home become stronger). Migrants to foreign land often either marry a local girl before their departure or send for one after they reach their destination. Even among educated Arab students on educational mission abroad, marriage to a woman from their own country if not from their own town is usually the rule. In urban centers in Egypt it is not uncommon for parents to set a condition (oral) for the marriage of their daughter that she remains in the same town after her marriage; and quite often civil servants on government missions to the more remote rural areas or parts of Southern Egypt have their wives live with

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[49]Farsoun, S. K. "Family Structure and Society in Modern Lebanon" in Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East L. Sweet (ed.) op. cit. p. 306-07.

their in-laws. As to father brother's daughter marriage,

> it is apparent from the few quantitative data that in the recent period the strict rule has not been ordinarily followed even in outlying regions. Moreover, now that some type of courtship between a young man and woman has become common among the educated groups in the cities, the likelihood of cousing marriage has declined.[50]

The ideal of marriage between "equals" still prevails; marriage tends to be arranged within the same social class although with the increasing independence of the individual (especially men) in selecting his potential spouse, this may not be as closely followed as in earlier times, the new conditions under which the sexes come in contact entail the coming together of people of different social classes and marriages between people of different social classes and marriages between people of different social strata though uncommon nevertheless do occur. However the force of tradition still remains strong. For whereas the marriage of a male to a woman of a lower class, although it is most likely to be opposed by his parents, it is nevertheless tolerable compared to the marriage of a daughter to a man of lower status. For in the case of the former his ties with his family may be severed and reconciliation can be brought about after some time, whereas in the case of the latter, the deprivation of the support of her family leaves her as a "nobody" in the eyes of her in laws and the society at large. Although a woman may be educated and economically independent, her status vis a vis her in-laws is a function of "whose daughter" she is. In inquiring about the marriage partner of a bridgegroom, the first question posed is "bent meen" whose daughter or "men 'ailat meen," from whose family, specific questions related to the bride's physical

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[50]Goode (1963) op. cit. p. 95.

appearance, educational background and other specific information follow later. Thus direct or indirect dependence on the extended family in the selection of a marriage partner remains the norm. Although "rejection of older techniques of marriage arrangement, either through ideological shifts or involuntarily as a result of the migration and social mobility of the population"[51] (which separates young people from their extended families) does occur. A reflection of this rejection (either voluntary or involuntary) is found in the marriage advertisements in Arabic magazines reported by Abu Lughd. The author notes that "women advertisers were found to be marginal by virtue of demographic characteristics, being both older and of a marital status, not valued highly by the culture. Men, on the other hand revealed their marginality indirectly, not through what they were but through the values they sought to achieve through marriage."[52] Thus it is women whose marriage needs cannot be fulfilled by their family who find themselves compelled to other means of acquiring a spouse. Just as a woman depends on her family for either the choice of a husband or the approval of the one she has chosen, her ties with and dependence on her family continue after marriage. A working wife with children finds in her mother or other close female relatives built-in babysitters. Among urban wives in Egypt it is by no means unusual for a daughter to "give" her first born to her mother and if the child does not actually live with his grandparents he is at least with them most of the time. The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren being very intimate

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[51]Abu Lughd, J. Egyptian Marriage Adjustment MicroCosm of a Changing Society. Marriage and Family Living 23, p. 136.

[52]Ibid.

and very affectionate. In cases when the relations between a wife and her husband become strained, the urban, educated woman today as women in many generations past can still turn to her family. No reports of the relation between adult brothers and sisters in areas which have been exposed to rapid change are to be found in the literature. However it is the impression of this author that such relationships are decreasing in intensity among the educated members of Arab society and the woman's education and increasing economic independence are steadily becoming alternative sources of security in case her marriage does not work out.

In recent years some changes have taken place in the pattern of Arab marriage. Polygamy is declining especially in the cities but even in the villages.[53] This decline may be attributed to ideological changes, new legislation either prohibiting or limiting polygamy and, or, economic changes. A woman taken as a second wife is more likely to belong to the lower social stratum of the society since members of the educated upper social classes do not allow their daughters to become second wives. Changes in the age of marriage have also occurred but are more difficult to acess since marriages below the legal age limit do not appear in census data. Marriage at a young age continues to be the norm in the Arab world as the figures of Table VII indicate. However it is safe to assume that the age at marriage is rising. Chatila's field reports indicate that for Syrians the age of marriage in the 1930's had increased to between 20 and 25 among girls of the upper strata of Syrian urban societies. Among the educated middle class girls were married

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[53]Burger, M. The Arab World Today. Double Day & Co. Inc., New York, 1964 p. 108.

TABLE VII MARRIAGES IN YOUNG AGE CATEGORIES (BY AGE OF WOMEN)*

Country	Total # of Marriages	15-19 yrs.	20-24 yrs.	25-29 yrs.
Algeria (1965)	67,525	35,323	14,770	7,824
Morocco (1955) (Northern Zone)	7,760	2,998	2,274	1,215
Tunisia (1960)	24,446	11,854	7,487	2,462
U.A.R. (1966)	294,630	163,292	72,573	27,507
Jordan (1967)	10,909	6,339	3,255	754

*U. N. Demographic Yearbook 1968

between 17 and 22 years whereas among the more traditional city inhabitants the age of marriage for girls was between 13 and 16. A relatively more recent survey carried out in Beirut in 1952-53 compared the marriage age of heads of households (husband and wife) and their parents; 28.9% of the women of the older generation as opposed to 18.2% of the younger generation were married under 15 years of age. The corresponding figures for marriages between 16 and 20 years were 44% and 44.8%.[54] It is safe to assume that the age of marriage is class related, being lower in the villages and among the lower strata or urban society and higher among the educated upper classes in towns and cities. In the case of the latter group with the increasing desire on the part of a young man to marry an educated woman, he is now more willing to wait for her to finish her education.[55]

Divorce rates still remain high in the Arab countries with the rates being higher in the countries with a larger Moslem majority; as Table VIII demonstrates the divorce rate is lowest in Lebanon, the Arab country with the largest Christian population.

From Tables IX and X it may be deduced that divorces occur more frequently in the earlier years of marriage and in the absence of children. Children are said to "tie" a man to his wife and even under circumstances when a husband stays with his wife out of his own free will and without the need for him to be "tied," the status of a woman as an adult member of society is not recognized until she becomes a mother. This holds true for educated women, uneducated women, village women, urban

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[54]Goode (1963) op. cit. p. 108, 110.

[55]Forget, N. "Attitudes Towards Work by Women in Morocco." Int'l. Social Science Journal 14, 1962 p. 92-124.

TABLE VIII CRUDE DIVORCE RATES*

Country	Year	Rate
Algeria	1953	1.70
	1955	1.61
	1959	0.90
Tunisia	1961	1.01
	1964	1.05
	1967	0.84
U.A.R.	1963	2.11
	1966	2.10
	1968	1.96
Lebanon	1956	0.37
	1961	0.46
	1968	0.41

*Number of divorces/1000 population
Source: U. N. Demographic Yearbook 1968

TABLE IX DIVORCES BY DURATION OF MARRIAGE*

Country	Total	Duration of Marriage in Years				
		-1	1	2	3	4
Algeria (1959)	710	7	12			
U.A.R. (1966)	63,257	18,461	11,815	7,793	4,954	3,307
Jordan (1967)	1,391	146	283	226	162	125
Syria (1966)	2,900	810	674		506	

* U. N. Demographic Yearbook 1968

TABLE X DIVORCES BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN*

Country	Total No. of Divorces	Number of Children 0	1	2	3	4
Algeria (1959)	710	373	135	86	27	8
U.A.R. (1966)	63,257	46,181	8,759	3,842	2,160	1,141
Syria (1966)	2,900	2,008	386	198	132	78
Jordan (1966)	2,124	1,293	229	181	129	93

*U. N. Demographic Yearbook 1968

women, Moslem women and non-Moslem women (but to varying degrees). The Arab countries like other underdeveloped areas exhibit a much higher fertility rate than urban industrial societies. Egypt, one of the most densely populated countries in the Arab world has one of the highest fertility ratios in the world. This fact may be attributed to a number of values and beliefs which go beyond the "fatalism" of the Egyptian peasant. Early exposure to sexual intercourse through early marriages avoids loss of potential fertility and thus increases the chance of a higher birth rate. In addition the high value attributed to marriage determines the high number of individuals who enter this institution.

A man and woman who are parents of a large group of children are held in high esteem in their community and especilly in rural communities where opportunities for enhancing one's prestige other than by acquisition of land are rather limited. Children especially in the rural areas are valuable for their contributions to the family labour force. Thus a peasant with a large family has his built in helping hands and since bringing up children under rural conditions does not entail a high cost, this gives the parent an even greater incentive to have more children. Ammar in his study of the Egyptian village of Silwa reports that from the economic point of view,"a child's process of growing up connotates his father's gradual relinquishing of all the farm tasks he has been carrying out hitherto." According to his calculations a boy of 13 years of age can be relied upon to perform as much as two thirds of the tasks involved in the cultivation of crops.[56]

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[56]Ammar op. cit. p. 28.

Under rural conditions where infant mortality was until very recently extremely high, high fertility was a necessary precautionary measure to insure the survival of at least some children who in addition to their contributions to family labour and family prestige are a form of social security to the parents in their old age.

An additional factor which even if it does not contribute to the increased birth rate, at least does not prevent it, is the lack of restrictions on sexual intercourse between a man and his wife (excepting the restrictions pertaining to a menstruating woman) in the Moslem religion.

Thus given the above attitudes of Arabs to the value of children, it is not surprising that a woman could enhance her value within her family as well as in the community at large by producing as many children as she could. This desire for children is clearly reflected in the fantastically high figures of fertility rates reported for Arab countries.

It is only within the last two decades that serious efforts on the part of some Arab governments have been taken to limit the birth rate. Family planning centers were set up throughout the rural areas of Egypt, contraceptive devices were distributed free of charge, advertisement campaigns on television, in newspapers and on the radio bombarded listeners and readers with the ills of overpopulation. A popular song in the 1960's was intended to put the Egyptian woman to shame by comparing her to a rabbit. But most important of all, family planning needed to be approved by religious leaders to have any significant appeal among the masses. Thus titles such as "Religion and Birth Control," "Islam and Family Planning" were either printed or pronounced to as

large an audience as possible. A fetwa handed down by the Azhar in March of 1953 stated the compatibility of religious teachings with birth control for the purpose of avoiding ill health to a woman as well as avoiding economic difficulties.[57]

The effectiveness of such campaigns for birth control cannot be evaluated at this point; meanwhile the birth rate in the Arab world remains high. Rizk in defining the difficulties facing an effective birth control movement in Egypt noted that "family organization, marriage customs, the place and function of women have been organized in a way compatible with continuous childbearing.[58] Thus the introduction of birth control devices may not be expected to be a sufficient means of reducing the birth rate in the Arab countries; items which are the functional equivalents of intrauterine devices have by no means been unknown to peasants in the rural areas. Yet such knowledge has not prevented the idealization of a large family. We may expect to find a change in the birth rate when the "function of women" is changed. This in fact is revealed to be true according to recent studies which show a lower birth rate among women whose actual function or ideas relating to their function have changed, these women being the educated urban dwellers.

Two studies were carried out to establish fertility rates among rural, urban, educated, uneducated, old and young Moslem and Christian populations. The first study was carried out in Egypt by H. Rizk, the second in Lebanon by D. Yaukey. For the Lebanese sample Yaukey reports

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[57]Abdallah, E. "Tanzeem al-Osra Halal" Rose-Al-Yussef. Vol. 2061, 1967 p. 25.

[58]"Nasser Drops Ban on Birth Control" New York Times, 6-1-1962 p. 2 sec. C.

that within major religious groups, the total fertility rate among the educated city inhabitants was lowest as opposed to the fertility rate among the educated city resident fitted somewhere in between these two extremes. No difference was found between generations within the same socioeconomic bracket. For the rural samples no significant differences in fertility rates were detected when education, occupation or religion was a variable. Among city dwellers the total fertility rates for uneducated and educated Christians were 4.414 and 3.44, respectively, for the corresponding types of Moslems they were 7.35 and 5.56. Yaukey also reports "the near absence" of fertility differences between uneducated village Moslems and uneducated city Moslems and between uneducated Christians and educated city Christians. The difference in fertility rates among Christians and Moslems within the same ecological setting is attributed to the fact that "the Christian elements in the population have furnished an avenue for European ideas."[59] Thus the transfer and acceptance of ideas is a necessary pre ondition for the reduction of the fertility rate. In addition, under urban conditions the "utility" of children is reduced and the burden of housing and educating them increases. A woman who as an urban dweller has acquired new roles is no longer as anxious as her rural counterpart to produce sons who will eventually move with their wives into her household where she can rule supreme over her daughters in law. Alternate means of deriving power and prestige are now open to her in the city.

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[59]Yaukey, D. Fertility Differences in a Modernizing Country. Princeton Univ. Press, 1961.

Attitudes of Members of Arab Society Towards Changes in the Status of Women

As noted earlier a number of legislations have been introduced in recent years to enhance the emancipation of Arab women; however offical prouncements relating to the status of women and their "new roles" in the different Arabic countries do not necessarily reflect the views of the general populace. The attitude of the individual towards women's emancipation is likely to be related to his educational background, to his socioeconomical status as well as to his sex. A number of surveys to determine the attitude of different groups in Arab society towards the emancipation of women have been carried out in recent years. However such surveys may often reflect the prevailing offical ideology or may be the embarrassed responses of individuals making up the survey sample, who in an effort to appear "modern" respond in such a manner which does not necessarily correspond to their real views on the subject. Bearing this limitation of such surveys in mind one may then proceed to examine their contents.

A survey carried out among Egyptian youths of the same educational level (formal school education) showed that village youth are more opposed to women's emancipation than urban youth and that lower class youth are more opposed than middle class youth. The primary factor affecting these youth's attitude was the degree of education achieved by their mothers.

> The more educated mother seems to be able to affect her son's attitudes towards the status of women. Most liberal of all are the sons of women who have had a secondary school or university education.[60]

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[60]Dodd, Peter C. "Youth and Women's Emancipation in the United Arab Republic. MEJ 22, 1968 p. 159-172.

In another survey carried out on a larger scale among college and high school students in a number of Arab countries and the U. S. 46% of the Moslem men interviewed as opposed to 28% of the Arab Christian men, and 20% of the U. S. men believed that girls should not be allowed to choose their own friends. To the question, "should girls be allowed to go out with mixed groups of boys and girls, negative responses by Moslem men were 62% and 25% for Christian Arab men. 50% of the Moslem men interviewed believed that girls should not be allowed to do paid work and 45% of Christian men agreed. 95% of both Christian and Moslem females believed that girls should be allowed to pursue a college education. Similarly the majority of men favoured education for women. In other parts of the questionnaire, questions that had to do with complete freedom to choose friends and mix freely with members of the opposite sex received an overwhelmingly negative response from men and women alike. In interpreting the results of the above survey the author notes that "the man consistently pays lip service to the idea of feminine freedom but he betrays himself when it comes to the crucial question, What kind of person would you like your wife to be?" What he really wants it would seem is still someone like his mother, better educated (but not too much so) "pleasing in appearance, possessed of the traditional virtues of sympathy, understanding and devotion to the home."[61]

In yet another survey carried out among students in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, in answer to the question of whether women should work or not 41% of the men did not approve of women working outside the home after marriage, while only 24% of the women showed definite disapproval the

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[61] Muhii, Ibrahim, A. "Women in the Arab Middle East. Journal of Social Issues 15, 1959 p. 45-57.

remaining 76% think that they should work provided the wife-mother role is not handicapped. All women and 97% of the men interviewed raised no objection to women working before marriage however agreement among men was frequently qualified by the phrase "provided she can guard her honor."[62]

Among women themselves attitue towards work is related to their social class, in a Moroccan survey cited by Goode, a larger percentage of women who were factory workers,

> who much more accustomed to allowing their children to run unsupervised, are somewhat more inclined to approve of the woman working if she has children: that is they believe that a woman would ordinarily have to do so.[63]

It is of interest to note from the above surveys that opposition to changes in the status of women and support for the maintenance of the status quo, is not confined to men but it is also exhibited among women. This is not surprising since the motivation for a specific pattern of "female" behaviour is merely a reflection of a prevailing ideology, an ideology to which men and women alike are exposed in the different stages of their socialization. It is the opinion of this author that the above surveys do not reflect sufficiently the extent of the opposition of Arab society as a whole to the emancipation of women since the samples of many such surveys are composed of literate if not educated Arabs who in the final analysis are by no means a representative sample of the inhabitants of Arab countries.

In conclusion the official ideology relating to the status of women in Arab society, be it in the form of religious beliefs or legal

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[62]Najarian, P. "Adjustment in the Family and Patterns of Family Living. Journal of Social Issues 15, 1959 p. 38, 39.

[63]Goode, op. cit. p. 153.

pronouncements are subject to the filtering or additive effect of the prevailing social beliefs and values related to female behaviour.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The differentiation and ascription of status on the basis of sex is basic to all societies. A wide range of variation exists in what may be broadly called the "division of labour" among members of opposite sexes. This lack of a definite ascription of status to one definite sex points to the absence of biological determinants, although biological differences may "shape" the roles of the two sexes. The main aim of this essay has been to examine the status of Arab women and to correlate it with different features in Arab social life including the recent changes taking place to varying extents in the Arab world. Aside from the personal interest and familiarity of this author with this region, the plurality of social groups represented in this area makes it an attractive setting for such an inquiry.

In traditional Arab society, the primary determinant of a woman's status is her kinship association; to use Rosenfeld's words, "she cannot function without her kinsmen." As a young adult a woman's honour is the responsibility of her kinsmen; in the process of mate selection, the status of a woman's kin group determines the social status of her marriage partner, marriage between equals being the ideal. As a wife, her status vis-a-vis her husband and his kin is also influenced by her family's status and in case her husband's treatment is harsh she can always rely on the support of her kinsmen, especially her brothers to whom she turns in time of need.

The degree of women's participation in economic activities and their seclusion is directly related to their families' social status with members of higher social strata among the different ecological groups being subject to greater restrictions. The status of women in Arab society also varies at different points in their life cycle and the onset of old age reduces the restrictions related to seclusion and general behaviour.

Under the impact of internal as well as external forces, a number of changes have occurred in the roles of (a limited number of) Arab women. These forces have tended to open new avenues in the public domain to women. The specialized nature of occupations in urban centers make them available to men and women as individuals although traditional values related to women tend to influence the type of occupations with which they are associated. Legal reforms related to the status of women in the different Arab countries have been numerous in recent years. However just as the legal reforms introduced by Islam at an earlier period in history, the implementation of these reforms is dependent on their compatability with existing social values. Due to the very limited body of data available on the degree of implementation of legal pronouncements in the Arab world one may cite examples from another Moslem country to illustrate this point: Turkey's reforms called for much more drastic changes than those called for in the Arab countries. Thus marriage for example is legal only if a civil ceremony has been performed and the marriage registered by the state. According to a Turkish authority, it is estimated that the 70,000 marriages registered each year in Turkey are only half of the actual marriages taking place. The unregistered marriages though considered illegal according to the

government, are considered perfectly legitimate by the couple involved and their acquaintances so long as the marriage ceremony has been performed by a religious leader.

> No girl would feel at all abashed to admit that her marriage is not registered with the state. The informal system of social control provides strong sanctions for the performance of the traditional ceremony, but none at all for the performance of a civil ceremony.[1]

This is not to say that legal reforms are useless; as a matter of fact they are likely to restrict practices which they forbid, for although such illegal acts as polygamous marriages or "female circumcision" may and in fact do occur, they are carried out secretly. The state bureaucracy, formal education and the reduction of the degree of isolation of population groups are all forces which are likely to have inevitable effects in implementing such reforms and extending the role expectations of women.

The changes pertaining to women's roles, which have been occurring to a rather limited extent up to now but are likely to be intensified in the future, should be evaluated within the context of Arab society. The fact that the role of Arab women is gradually coming to resemble that of western women is not necessarily viewed as a sign of "progress" but should be judged and evaluated as it pertains to the general aims of Arab society. In light of the Arab countries' aspirations for economic development, it is necessary to mobilize both males and females to accomplish these aims. Some aspects of women's traditional roles are obviously no longer functional under new conditions of economic development and do require modification.

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[1]Sterling, R. "Land Marriage and the Law in Turkish Villages" Int'l. Soc. Sci. Bulletin 9, 1957 p. 21-33.

In spite of changes affecting the lives of Arab social actors, there is great stability which contributes to the preservation of traditional values. Thus examination of stability along with change is necessary to explain the diversity of cultures which continues to exist and most likely will remain in existence. The changed roles of Arab women have definitely been influenced by western ideologies but although the changes induced by the spread of these ideologies have been in the direction of closer approximation to the western model they are far from being identical to it.

This paper as stated earlier has been a preliminary attempt to correlate the status of women with a number of variables. General conclusions have been reached within the context of the present inquiry. In addition to these conclusions, the following general observation seems to apply to Arab society and may also hold true for other social groups: A powerful group within a given society tends to emphasize values which would insure its continued domination. As stated earlier, authority is a male prerogative in human societies. It may then be expected that males would emphasize the aspects of female behaviour which would insure continued male domination. Thus they are likely to emphasize such "female characteristics" as "dependence," "inferior mental and physical nature" and whatever other qualities are held to be obstacles to the attainment of positions of power and domination in particular societies. This emphasis by males on female dependence may find only symbolic expressions among certain groups, or it may manifest itself in an overt manner as reflected in the Arab ideal of stressing the economic dependence of females on males, or the traditional barring of women from participation in public religious activities (given the

importance of religion as an instrument in reaching positions of power in the Arab world.) Women who pose a threat to male dominance in certain institutional divisions of society where authority is a male monopoly, may have their sexual identity challenged by being labeled "masculine," "possessed," or "witches." Older women who are no longer identified with "femininity" and who themselves tend to be very conservative are able to be more independent witnout such accusations. Such older women, as pointed out for Arab societies, are likely to be powerful in social spheres in which the exercise of power by younger females is barred and are therefore likely to emphasize the social values which make possible their attainment of a privileged position of power among their fellow women.

In the incipient stage of "revolutionary" movements (which may be considered a liminal period) the traditional pattern of stratification may be altered. These movements may be in the form of the spread of a new religious ideology, an effort of national liberation, or the appearance of a national hero who advocates economic development and political reconstruction. The newly immerging leadership in an effort to draw as large a group of followers as possible and to eventually consolidate its power, emphasizes and propagates values which appeal to as large a segment of society as possible. This phenomena is readily observable in present day revolutionary movements such as the Algerian revolution, the Vietnamese struggle and the wars of liberation launched by the peoples of such African nations as Mozambique and Angola. In all these movements, female participation and the stressing of female equality with males is an integral part of the revolutionary ideology. Such recruitment of female support during times of crisis has occurred

in the Arab world in modern times as well as during the period of the rise of Islam. However once the need for female support was no longer required, women's roles in society were redefined in traditional terms. In other situations, on the other hand the reversal of women's social roles may not occur, as the belief in the "equality" of the sexes becomes incorporated in the general social ideology and is seen to be compatible with other newer social goals.

At this point in the study of Arab women's social role, it is necessary to undertake more specific examinations of the functional relationships between the sum total of women's rights and obligations (i.e., their status) and such variables as degree of incorporation in urban industrial life, fertility control, education, kinship ties, etc. In traditional Arab society, it was pointed out, power within the private domain is not necessarily proportional to contribution to subsistence activities; under the impact of economic growth women's contribution to economic activities is increasing in the public sphere. It would be of interest to investigate the manner in which the expansion of women's power in one sphere affects their power in the other. This in turn points to the need for formulating standardized means of assessing power in the different institutional divisions. Other points of interest for further investigation would be the changes in relationships between women and members of their kin group, the type of tensions arising from "role conflicts" and the manners of their expressions, different patterns of socialization and their relation to women's adaptation to social change as well as the influence of religion, or more precisely the mode of adaptation of religious ideology for implementing proposed changes in the status of women. Finally, efforts should be

directed not only to the examination of changes but also to reexamination of what has up to now been considered the "usual" behaviour of Arab women as well as women in general with greater attention being paid to their "organizational choices." Such a task undoubtedly calls for the expertise of anthropologists of varying specific interests and will hopefully lead to a better understanding of "man."

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