Berichte und Kommentare

Milk and Blood

Kinship among Muslim Arabs in Qatar

Fadwa El Guindi

Introduction

Local Mastery of Kinship Knowledge

Kinship is a vital domain in human life and is a foundational analytic tool in anthropology. Kinship feelings and relations among Arabs are intense in emotions and binding in obligations such that any discourse about kinship tends to be visceral.

I was impressed during fieldwork in Nubia[1] when boys under the age of 12 would recite with hardly any effort many generations of genealogical connections. I was struck then as I am fascinated now in Qatar by such capacity among Qataris and other Arabs to produce complex kin relations with ease and speed and from oral memory. Among the impressive encounters in Qatar is a student in class, during a session on kinship, casually relating that "X would be the son of the paternal uncle of his mother's maternal aunt." This prompted a charting session on the white board in which students participated. Once they learned the conventional signs used in anthropology for charting, most students charted this relationship fast and with ease.

A colleague in Sociology posed a different kind of a challenge. Coming onto my office, when I was charting genealogical relations on a chalkboard with another colleague, he blurted that he could not marry Laila "because he is her paternal uncle, her maternal cousin, and her brother at the same time." After snapping my attention, he rushed off to his class, leaving me with a puzzle which needed decoding.

1 Historically, the Nubian region has been an isolated stretch of Nilotic villages and hamlets but a continuously settled area which links sub-Saharan Africa and Egypt. There is a border between Egypt and the Sudan which splits Nubia and divides the population of Nubians into Egyptian Nubians and Sudanese Nubians. Within Nubia, several distinct groups are identified. Along the thousand miles stretch of Nile shoreline Nubian inhabitants spoke two related languages in several dialects.

The Nubian Ethnological Survey covered the entire region of Egyptian Nubia from the southern border of Aswan to the northern border of the Sudan. The survey consisted of an extensive study with intensive fieldwork by three teams of anthropologists, research assistants, and local associates. It comprised three linguistic areas: the Mettokki-speaking Kenuz, the Arabic-speaking central area, and the Faddicha of the south. This major project was funded by the Ford Foundation and was sponsored by the Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo, whose director was the late anthropologist Dr. Laila al-Hamamsy. Fieldwork was carried out by teams of researchers from the SRC, under the general research direction of Robert Fernea, with full consent and official approval of the Ministry of Social Affairs in Egypt.

Egyptian Nubia has always been a relatively isolated area, somewhat poor in natural resources. The cataract at Aswan was a natural barrier to river traffic long before any dams were built, and the scorching deserts on either side of the narrow Nile riverbed discouraged contact with other groups. Overall, however, according to Fernea and Fernea (1991: 129): "the environment restricted economic growth and could only provide a subsistence economy for some people. With such environment and its meager resources no population centers of any great size could develop. Probably the entire population of the Nubian valley never exceeded a few hundreds of thousands."

Nubia's river traffic has always been discontinuous, its desert environment inhospitable, and its natural resources limited. This discouraged colonial occupation of their lands and allowed Nubian indigenous culture to develop. But at the turn of the century, the first barrage was constructed at Aswan. The already meager arable lands of the Nubian valley had been progressively diminished by the reservoirs of higher and higher dams in a steady encroachment culminating with the building of the High Dam at Aswan. This has finally flooded the entire region of Egyptian Nubia and part of the Sudan and necessitated the resettlement of villagers in 1963 to more livable regions. As a result and for the first time in many centuries there is an uninhabited zone between Egypt and the Sudan. Egyptian Nubians were resettled by the Egyptian government in government-built villages and communities south of Aswan, near Kom Ombo. For studies on Nubian cultural practices by the present author see (Callender and El Guindi (1971); El Guindi (1966, 1978, 2006a). For fieldwork collections see El Guindi (1962a, 1962b).

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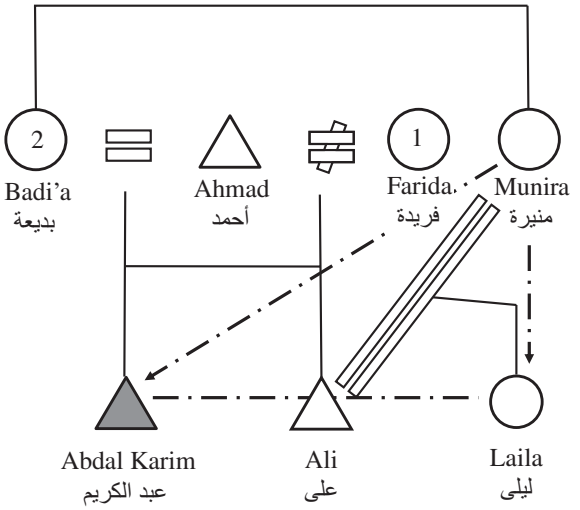
لا يمكننى أن أتزوج ليلى لأنى عمها وابن خالتها وأخوها فى أن واحدولذا فهى محرمة على



"I cannot marry Laila because I am her paternal uncle, her maternal cousin and her brother at the same time. She is prohibited to me."

Fig. 1: Relations of Consanguinity, Affinity, and Suckling in Abdal Karim's family (original design and copyright 2011 by Fadwa El Guindi).

Such an entwined and paradoxical set of relations had to be unpacked. I went back to the chalkboard and began charting. My Qatari colleague, also puzzled, declared that there had to be "suckling" in this equation. Indeed, as graphically demonstrated in Fig. 1, all three kinship forms were activated in the case of colleague Abdal Karim.[2]

Clearly kinship is conceptually complex and entwining. But experientially it is also exhausting to live, is highly political to navigate, in addition to posing a major challenge to analyze.

It becomes clear, however, that embedded in such casually and easily produced utterances is a certain capacity. Underlying such naturalness and speed with which such complex relations that are internalized and remembered is some cognitive scheme generative of local mastery of such complex knowledge in kinship relations and kinship management.[3] And importantly, suckling practices (a particular cultural manifestation of the universal "Sponsorship Kinship Form") constitute a relatively neglected aspect of kinship both in Middle East studies, in Badawi studies,[4] and in kinship studies

2 The following list contains all the conventional tools for charting I devised to be able to conceptualize and analyze kinship relations as they emerge in the date gathered during the UREP research project on "Suckling":

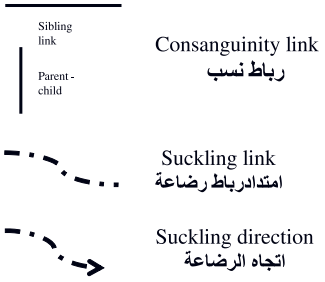
M أم Mother
F أب Father
B أخ Brother
Z أخت Sister
D ابنة Daughter
S ابن Son
H زوج Husband
W زوجة Wife

Male
ذكر

Female
أنثى

Affinity link
رباط مصاهرة

Link break
فك رباط



3 This idea is being developed in a publication in progress; cf. also El Guindi 2006b).

4 The term *badawi*, derivative of the same root as the referent *badiya* (desert) is Arabic, meaning "pertaining to" or "indig-

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in general. A closer look at this third kind of kinship can unravel general properties of kinship as a whole. It is argued that in Arab society suckling is a practice that forges a form of kinship parallel with and relational to consanguinity and affinity.

Goals

Current field data on suckling and consideration of existing work on Arab kinship together lead to proposing three points in this article. They are 1) examination of kinship, including kinship terminology must consider the three kinship forms together – consanguinity, affinity, and sponsorship; 2) it is *ʿasab* (nerves) not blood that drives Arab consanguinity; and 3) deep consanguinity among Arab groups is perceived as "ascent" from ancestry rather than "descent" from ancestry, which supports a use proposed here of ascent rather than descent system in studying Arab kinship and ascent group rather than descent group.

Three Kinship Forms

Consanguinity

ʿAsab *Not Blood*

It is a common Arab saying that "he who begets never dies."[5] The expression reflects a strong belief in the importance of relations by consanguinity, so that consanguinity becomes bond and idiom for strong kinship. In both title and abstract above the term blood is used: "as suckling milk circulates milk kin becomes 'blood' kin, and blood becomes thicker as it were, but only thicker than water not suckling milk, since milk suckling creates relations overlapping with or superseding relations of blood." This needs some clarification. In reality, while close consanguineal kin are perceived to share blood in some cultural systems (Schneider 1972, 1984), Arabs, particularly those organized by deep kinship (extended consanguinity), do not perceive the bond of genealogical consanguinity in terms of blood,[6] thick or thin.

The anthropological construct consanguinity is itself problematic. It derives from con- (with/together) sanguine (blood) -ity (noun marker), hence the reference to the property of being related by kinship in a particular way to another person or group. While consanguinity is used in anthropological vocabulary to refer in general to the quality of being descended from the same ancestor[7] as another person, we find a "blood" bias already built into the etymological Western root of the referent "consanguine." It is, therefore, already a problem to adopt the anthropological vocabulary which biases understanding of kinship in favor of "blood." It is no wonder that a majority of scholars of kinship studies have been making the assumption, falsely I might emphasize, equating consanguinity with blood. Blood is the bodily substance that flows universally and yet is not universally perceived as the means or metaphoric idiom linking people in kinship.

Despite this reservation this study follows the anthropological convention established since Morgan's (1871) use of the term consanguinity for biologically conceived kinship. As explicit in the title of his classic work, Morgan recognized only two forms of kinship: consanguinity and affinity. While data on alternative forms may have not been accessible during Morgan's time, it is remarkable that many anthropologists continue to ignore such data, and to falsely assume that consanguineal kinship is necessarily blood kinship, or that consanguinity literally means biological ties. Kinship study cannot confine itself to the same two forms despite the uncovery of compelling data on forms of adoption and other similar kinship practices, and the publication of many studies (particularly out Mediterranean, Balkan, and Latin American anthropology) revealing data on other form, which support arguing for a third universal form of kinship.

Denying kinship status to practices and related terminologies, which coexist alongside consanguinity and affinity, diminishes understanding of kinship phenomena at best. Some manifestations of adoption practices appeared on record in kinship systems

enous to desert life"; it is used to refer to Arabians who traditionally lived a nomadic life in the desert and shared Badawi values and outlook. Another term used interchangeably with Badawi is Bedu. Both are distorted in the English language as "Bedouin."

5 See the English term "sire" deriving from Middle English, from Old French, from Vulgar Latin *senior*.

6 A review of the ethnographic literature can reveal case after case where anthropologists and ethnographers refer to consanguinity as blood, up to the relatively recent publication on research on Kenya by J. Teresa Holmes titled "When Blood Matters" (2009). The point made here is that perceiving consanguinity in terms of blood is a cultural not a biological matter and hence not universal.

7 An ancestor is a parent or (recursively) the parent of an ancestor (i.e., in English kinship terminology a grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent, and so forth). A parent (from Latin: *parens* = parent) is considered in American and some European societies a caretaker of the offspring. Accordingly a parent is usually the biological mother or the father. "Biological parents" consist of the male who sired the child and the female who gave birth to the child.

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of many groups including Native Americans, but these were ignored by anthropologists who continue along the facile traditional path (Jones 2010).[8] As stated in an earlier publication on kinship: "Anthropology is a robust, four-field science with kinship studies at its heart … broad and multidimensional" (El Guindi 2010: 384). Most prominent among studies of additional forms are those on *compadrazgo*.[9] Mintz and Wolf (1950: 354) described the function of such relations as "the creation of a security network of ritual kinfolk through ceremonial sponsorship." Labeling these manifestations of kinship by terms such as pseudo-, ritual, alternative, spiritual, fosterage, among other labels, has contributed to their marginalization. In reality manifestations of a third form pose a challenge to the conventional dominance of consanguinity and affinity being pervasively considered as the only two forms of kinship.

As argued in earlier works in order for analysis of kinship terminology to be viable, it must "link the three universal forms of kinship affinity and consanguinity and sponsorship, each of which is equally and interdependently significant to understanding human kinship" (El Guindi 2010: 384). Since my study of the Zapotec,[10] I followed the path of anthropologists who considered *compadrazgo* (coparenthood) as a manifestation of a form of kinship having the same ontological status as the other two forms. It is unfortunate that the focus in some of these studies on the ritual and spiritual attributes became the basis of classifying and labeling this practice which relegated it to secondary status in kinship studies.

The discussion in this article on suckling is based on my current field research project (2009–2010) on suckling kinship in Qatar which has revealed properties that support the argument for a third form of kinship which I label *sponsorship* which shares the universality of the other two and is considered equal in "kinship measure" as it were to consanguinity and affinity. Its properties include classification in terminology, reciprocity in behavior, lineality, and laterality of recursions in marital prohibitions – all properties of kinship (El Guindi 2010). It is argued here that kinship exists universally in human society, in its three interconnected forms, all three being vital in the lives of many people in the world today, making kinship as central as ever in anthropological study.[11]

Ascent from Ancestry

It is interesting that without anthropological mediation genealogies are perceived and drawn by Arabians from bottom up, ancestry in the bottom branching up and out to descendants. This challenges the view of tribal structures as being viewed from within, as identifying upwards to the ancestors, or that genealogical relations are constructed downwards from apical ancestry in descent through the generations, hence calling these forms descent systems organized by descent principles. It would be more ethnographically accurate to call them ascent systems, ascending from shared ancestry and genealogical identity and organized by ascent principles according to which groups are constructed, and economic and political choices that make them divide and coalesce. These structures are segmentary and generative and constituent groups are corporate. Figs. 2a and 2b conceptualize the difference between ascent and descent:

Groin and Womb

Becoming kin is constructed by birth from groin and womb and genealogical relations are glued together by *ʿasab*, which is nerve in English. Abu-Zeid (1991: 213) describes consanguinity among the Badawi (Bedouin) groups of North Sinai in Egypt by using the phrase *mabdaʾ* (principle) *al-ʿasaba* (stress on 1st syllable) or *al-qaraba* (kinship) *al-ʿasiba* (stress on 2nd syllable). Both *ʿasaba* (noun) and *ʿasiba* (adjective) derive from the same trilateral root as *ʿasab*, namely *ʿ-s-b*, thus referring to nerve as the binding element.

Genealogy, *silsilat nasab*, provides the cultural orientation to kin relations, orally transmitted for centuries (despite writing and prior to colonialism).[12] Arabs do look up at kin in ascent to ancestry, metaphorized as a tree with branches and with reference to segmentation as a body with limbs, and they

8 This is in addition to the critique by Maurice Bloch in a recent commentary (2010) that kinship terminology is not kinship. This point is further stressed by El Guindi (2010: 384): "[R]educing kinship to terms and terms to linguistic referents leaves out much of the anthropology of kinship. Kin terms are minimally linguistic phenomena but contain social, cultural, conceptual, cognitive, and algebraic dimensions as well."

9 El Guindi (1986); Mintz and Wolf (1950); Nutini and Bell (1980); Nutini (1967); Pitt-Rivers (1968, 1976).

10 El Guindi and Read (1979a, 1979b, 1980); El Guindi and Selby (1976); El Guindi (1973, 1977a, 1977b, 1982, 1983, 1986).

11 This challenges the distorted focus on gender, relatedness or worse by postmodernist scholars from cultural studies, intended to put kinship out of focus.

12 Eventually a specialization grew, dedicated to charting genealogical records, but value remains on its oral transmission. Today tribal websites run by the different tribal groups containing genealogical trees compete with oral traditions.

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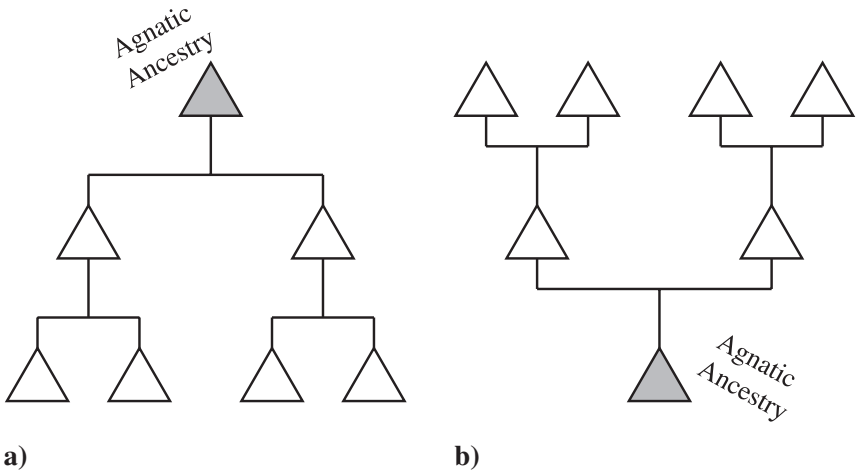

Fig. 2: Representation of Descent and Ascent: a) Represents Descent from Ancestry; b) Represents Ancestry from Descent (original design and copyright 2011 by Fadwa El Guindi).

calculate their relations ascending, using kin terms tracing relations genealogically. An individual without kin is a person referred to as "*maqtuʾ min shajarah*" or severed from the tree.

As is known already, preference for endogamy is expressed in terms of patrilateral parallel-cousin marriage. The genealogy functions as a conceptual scheme affirming a segmented genealogical structure, organized in terms of the agnatic principle of ascent that is generative of new structures. The splitting and coalescing of component parts serves as a mechanism of flexibility within the system, which allows it to incorporate, sever, and reincorporate members in corporate groups that ascend to common ancestry. The principle operating is one of ascent by which smaller units come from larger ones, all the way up to the encompassing, overarching confederation of units sharing ancestry.

The formal framework of genealogical connections traced from ancestry remains as groups split and coalesce and new members are flexibly incorporated. This flexibility in incorporation has its limits. Concern is strongly expressed in many different ways about guarding against "genealogical mixing" (خلط الأنساب) of relations. Not everyone is fully admitted. While outsiders can be admitted into the genealogy and do become members in ascent groups they cannot share that group's honor and reputation. It is honor and reputation that is transmitted genealogically and which outsiders cannot share.

ʿAsab (nerve) keeps genealogical elements conceptually together and cements genealogical kin. It glues agnatic relations into a conceptual whole. *ʿAsabiyya* is the bond and cohesive force felt and commonly expressed among genealogical relatives. Arab scholarship, traceable to 14th-century Ibn Khaldun's theory of the development of societal forms, is based on the concept of *ʿasabiyya*, the bond forged by *ʿasab* – the nerve center.

Al-Jamaʾiyya

Links by *ʿasab* relate to a concept developed in my recent study in which I conceptually linked space and time in Islam (El Guindi 2008) and introduced a new theory of Islam as a rhythm. Three properties mark its parameters: al-Khususiyya (privacy), al-Qudsiyya (sacred), and al-Jamaʾiyya (collectivity). They are conceptually interconnected as we see in Fig. 3.

Focusing on the property of al-Jamaʾiyya is directly relevant to this analysis of Arab kinship. The corporate nature of kin groups among the Badawi of Egyptian Sinai is described in these terms by Abu-Zeid[13]: "the society of North Sinai is patrilineal (*abawiyyah*, Arabic) and nerve-bonded (*ʿasibah*, Arabic stress on first syllable)" (1991: 257). He goes on to demonstrate situations in which such principles are activated: "in the case of a person's death without leaving behind male offspring or other close nerve-bonded (*ʿasib*, stress on first syllable) relatives such as the father's brother or his sons, inheritance goes to the 'khamsa' kin group (five-generation patrilateral cousins) instead of the female offspring … indicating how fixed material proper-

13 Ahmed Abu-Zeid led a large team of researchers in a major ethnographic field team expedition, the largest of its kind to date on a Badawi group, carrying out a holistic field study on all aspects of Badawi life, stressing social structure and organization for the period of November 14, 1987 to January 10, 1989. This was carried out under the auspices of the National Centre of Sociological and Criminological Research in Cairo and with anthropological expertise from Alexandria University, Egypt. A major conference and several significant publications resulted from this expedition.

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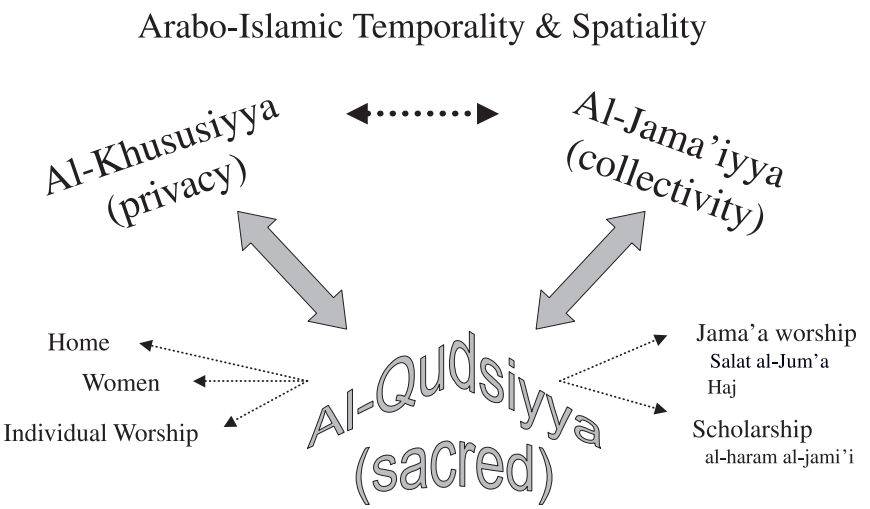

Fig. 3: Graph Demonstrating the Theory of Rhythm of Islam (based on El Guindi 2008; original design, modification, and copyright 2010 by Fadwa El Guindi).

ty is *corporate property* concerning the group as a whole and its branches and divisions that are *ʿasiba* (nerve-bonding)" (Abu-Zeid 1991: 257, emphasis and translation are author's). Out of intensive field data gathered during the North Sinai expedition, Abu-Zeid describes nine case situations extracted from field notes of researchers describing different "clans" of North Sinai, each unambiguously demonstrating the centrality of patrilineal *ʿasiba* (nerve-bonding) relations (Abu-Zeid 1991: 256).

On this same aspect among the Rwala, a different Badawi group, Lancaster describes the workings of large kin groups consisting of *hilf*, *ʿashira*,[14] *qabila*, *fakhd*, *ibn-ʿamm* (latter consisting possibly of 5-generation, known as *khamseh*, or 3-generation) (Lancaster 1981: 28). From most ethnographic description of Badawi groups, including Lancaster, it is possible to conclude that one can consider a constant quality of Badawi kinship, a parameter, at both higher and more inclusive levels and an idiom that frames these units, justifies action, and provides a "constitutional" framework for the structure. But we simultaneously find that perimeters of the kinship group tend to be fluid and keep shifting its affiliation and alliance in changing contexts.

In other words, there is a fixed idiom of patrilineal genealogical identity kept in place by the concept of *ʿasab*, which is disturbed by even a suggestion of *khalt al-ansab*, whereas patrilineally organized groups would be structurally nested, yet generatively fluid as they divide and coalesce. In living reality these *ʿasiba* (nerve-binding) groups act as a corporate unit, sharing reputation and honor, bound by a jural responsibility toward its members acting as a unified entity vis-à-vis other such groups. This conceptual framework organizes the way people think about their kinship and provides an idiom for expressing relations of consanguinity, affinity, and suckling. It is the *jamaʾa* (group) that gives identity to individuals.

Affinity

Matrilateral links figure strongly among Arab groups (on the significance of matrilaterality, *makhwal*, in Arab contexts see Antoun 1972; Lancaster 1981). Lancaster discusses the role of affinal links in creating bilaterality in the system. Actual marriages, however, while using the idiom of agnation are calculated bilaterally. Marital preference reaffirms endogamy and agnation. Marriages are forged, mostly by women, whose calculation is carefully intended to prevent conflict within and between lineages and promote links that serve an ethos of egalitarianism and political and economic cooperation within groups. Women calculate and manage these choices in ways that perpetuate both the idiom of agnation and the pragmatics of matrilaterality. Marital links are calculated to preserve the integrity of the formal genealogy, organized patrilineally, and to preserve endogamy.

Marriage intensifies consanguinity and aims to preserve endogamy and maintain the integrity of genealogy, while suckling allows men and women to share gender-divided public space and prohibits marriages otherwise permissible, which results in widening the pool of spouses and circle of permitted marriages, thus countering close endogamy. Polygynous unions which are mostly unconstrained by generation or age also contribute to widening pool vertically and laterally.

14 Some Arab groups use *hamula*.

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Marital links, largely controlled by women, constitute the mechanism by which consanguineal ties are manipulated, channeled, redirected, and intensified. This character also characterized "tribal" rural groups, such as those described by Richard Antoun (1972) in Kafr al-Maʾ of Transjordan and which are not confined to Muslim groups (Abu-Jaber 2008). There are some indistinguishable features of genealogy among Christian Arabs. In other words, the kinship organization described here is neither confined to nomadic groups nor to Muslims in the Arab region.

Sponsorship

Suckling Kinship[15]

As suckling milk circulates in Qatar and elsewhere, milk kin become "blood" kin (as it were), and blood becomes thicker,[16] but only thicker than water not suckling milk, since milk suckling creates relations overlapping with or superseding relations of blood. These kinship practices extend throughout the Arab-Islamic region and elsewhere among Muslims and non-Muslims, forging relationships which some anthropologists mistakenly label "fosterage." This practice of suckling belongs to a broad form of kinship that I call "sponsorship"[17] and which is widely and cross-culturally manifested in a variety of institutionalized patterns. They are forged in different ways, as in the exchange of bodily substances such as blood or milk, as in ritualized blood brotherhood or blood oath, or contracted socially or legally (social or legal adoption تبنى), fosterage, patronage relations (prevalent in Mediterranean and Balkan cultures), godparenthood عماد (prevalent in Christian cultures), and milk kinship (prevalent today in Arab/Islamic East), among other manifestations. The latter two manifestations, godparenthood and suckling, are subjects of study in my field research. In my study of the Zapotec of Oaxaca in the 1970s and 1980s, I explored the practice and form of *compadrazgo* (El Guindi 1986, 2006b) in the context of the domain of ritual. Suckling is comparatively grouped with *compadrazgo* and adoption as another manifestation of sponsorship. Suckling creates new kin or redefines consanguineal kin as suckling kin. Sponsorship is no more or less real kinship than consanguinity and affinity. Yet, despite its wide presence among human groups, it tends to be relatively neglected in anthropological studies and ignored in discussions of kinship. The gap is also notable in studies of kinship terminology.

In Qatar the centrality of kinship in life reasserted itself to me. Questions such as "who is a relative" and "who should not be" are daily life issues, particularly among those of Badawi affiliation even after their recent urbanization. In rituals of death and marriage the intensity of kinship and genealogical relations is strongly demonstrated. In ritualized receptions of *ʿaza* (special days dedicated to a public reception of condolences by family of the deceased) women are introduced as "this is my aunt by suckling" and "this is my sister by suckling." In weddings, behaviors, and cross-gender space management are influenced by kinship relations. Contexts of prohibition manifested in veiling and deveiling behaviors are largely determined by suckling.

My present study in Qatar is about the specific manifestation of the sponsorship form of kinship, referred to as suckling رضاعة, or as used more often but less accurately, milk kinship. This form and practice of "suckling kinship" is intensely prevalent in Qatar. Puzzles, such as the one posed by my colleague Abdul Karim, who could not marry Laila, and other daily public stories in the media, with religious references to "little suckling" and "big suckling" involving lay and Islamic *shaikhs* advancing fatwas here and there, led to the decision of conducting research on suckling kinship.

Suckling kinship is kinship in which a relation is forged by sharing women's milk. As mentioned earlier, marital links cross-cut genealogical patrilineal links and build bilateral relationships. But, marriage can be prohibited by women's milk, which flows to forge new ties and supersede existing ones, as it widens the pool of prohibitions lineally and laterally. Women are central to the management of, and memory about, affinal and suckling ties. Suckling of individuals who are not kin or are kin in consanguinity extends prohibitions of marriage among those otherwise marriageable. New kin status and new terminology are constructed to supersede consanguineal relations. This form of kinship, as it re-

15 The suckling kinship research project funded by a Qatar Foundation UREP grant was carried out in collaboration with a Qatari team of researchers consisting of colleague Dr. Wesam al-Othman and student Ms. Shaikha al-Kuwari in 2009–2010. Three other students who worked on this project are: al-Anoud al-Marri, Sara al-Mahmoud, and Raneen al-Najjar.

16 Using thickness as quality of blood is inspired by two sources: common saying among Arabs with reference to family bonds – that blood is thicker than water, used to alleviate conflict among kin. The other source is Parkes' title of one of his articles (2004a) on the subject.

17 Note classic titles mentioning consanguinity and affinity only as in Morgan (1871) or (Evans-Pritchard 1990). The third form of kinship is often not considered nor perhaps ethnographically noticed in field projects.

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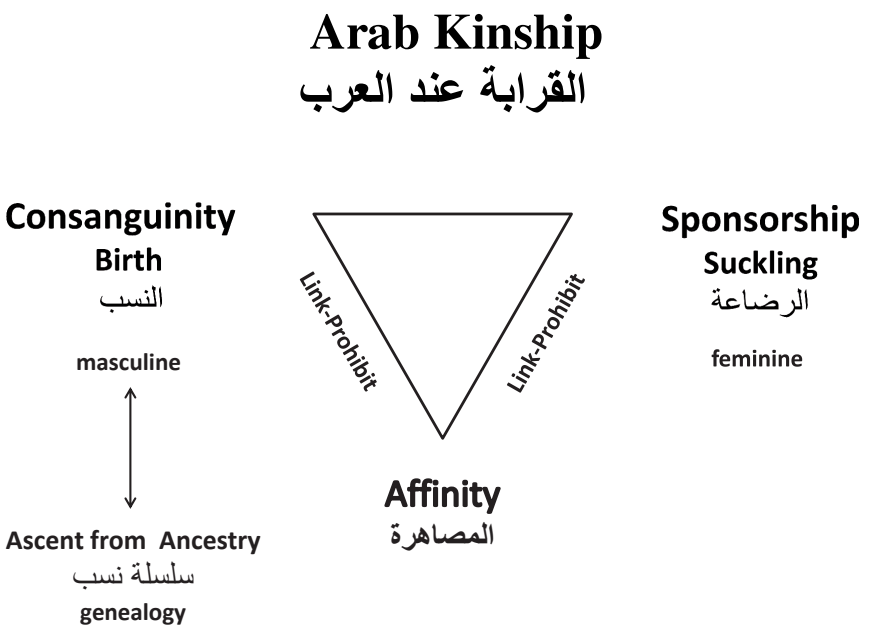

Fig. 4: Arab Kinship: Consanguinity, Affinity, and Suckling (original design and copyright 2011 by Fadwa El Guindi).

lates to the other two forms in the case of Arab kinship, is diagrammatically represented in Fig. 4.

The anthropological interest in suckling slowly began after Al-Turki's pioneering published article on the subject of suckling in Saudi Arabia. Her publication (Altorki 1980) was followed by Khatib-Chahidi (1981, 1992); Conte (1994, 1991); Long (1996); Anonymous (1997); Giladi (1999); Fortier (2001); Parkes (2004a, 2004b, 2005); Clarke (2005, 2007), among others. But despite such increasing attention to suckling studies, the full significance of "milk kinship" as integral to kinship was not fully appreciated. As attention to this phenomenon increases so does confusion as to its name and nature.

The designation "milk kinship" is tempting. Its strength lies in its stress on the feminine substance of milk which does introduce a gender balance in the kinship system whose idiom is cast in patrilineal terms by which genealogical links are agnatic and agnatic ties are bound by nerve. However, it is in the act of suckling that creates new ties and intensifies existing ones. Here we find Arab kinship system balanced between the feminine and the masculine elements of milk versus nerve and womb versus groin brought together by marital unions of both sexes. Both consanguinity and suckling can determine whether marital links are permitted or prohibited.

It was a common assumption and belief that suckling is characteristic of kinship practices among Muslims, until studies pointed to the fact that Christian groups and other cultural groups have apparently similar practices (Parkes 2004a, 2040b). Parkes (2005: 320) mentions Jacobite Syrians, Armenians, and Copts. He also discusses fosterage in the Hindu Kush region (2001). The question arises what is the difference among these manifestations. Also it was found that suckling practices existed since ancient times in the Mediterranean region (Parkes 2001); they were prevalent as well during early Islam in Arabia (Parkes 2005). While belonging to the same general grouping of kinship practices, the character of these practices, referred to as fosterage (Parkes 2004a, 2003), appears to be different from regular suckling behavior manifested in Qatar. Some other variants exist among the different groups and in different historical epochs.

Milk is the feminine substance that makes suckling of others' children a way to create and prohibit kin ties. Suckling is not simply breastfeeding.[18] Rather it is kinship. As milk circulates, suckling

18 Maurice Bloch (2005: 50) remarked briefly that "[B]reastfeeding is often seen as the natural continuation of the linkage of the body of mother and child to the extent that, as in the Arab world, rules of incest often apply to people who, though unrelated by kinship, have been breastfed by the same woman." In this segment Bloch uses kinship to mean consanguinity and considers suckling kinship a practice of breastfeeding that is then approached as a mother-child relationship, going back to the woman-nature paradigm. In a study on nonkinship aspects of breastfeeding among the Mandinka of the Casamance Region of Senegal, Whittemore and Beverly nevertheless mention that "the giving of maternal milk is an undertaking that consciously 'makes' a special relationship between a child and a woman, regardless of whether or not the nursling is her biological child" (1996: 46). Clearly the practice of suckling children of other women is not confined to Arab women, but the present study on suckling leads to a perspective that does not consider it as simply breast-

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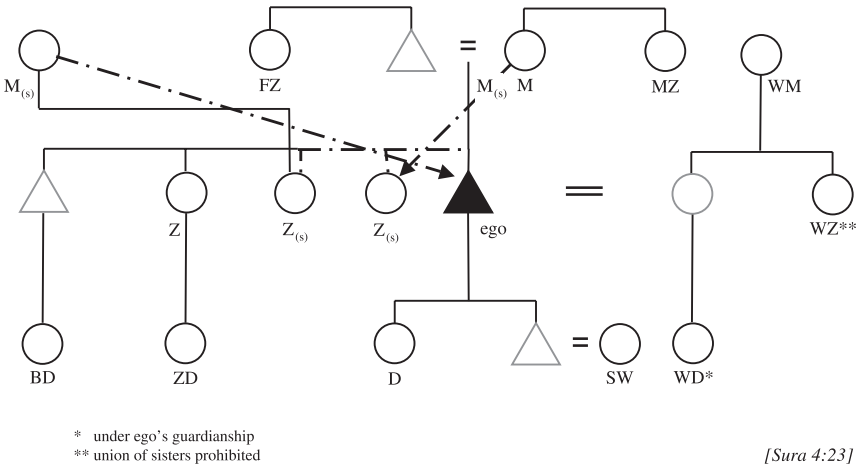

Fig. 5: *Maharim* According to Qurʾan, Sura 4: 23 (redrawn on the basis of the original Fig. 12 in El Guindi 1999: 99). This diagram represents a new original charting of all relations regarding *tahrim* (prohibition) as specified in the Sura. *Tahrim* is, as in the original, from the perspective of a male ego. This is to demonstrate how suckling kinship was included in the Qurʾan (original graph, redrawing, and copyright 2011 by Fadwa El Guindi).

prohibits unions and suckling milk turns consanguineal kin into suckling kin, restricting the spouse pool in contexts of endogamous marriage and polygynous unions.

Instead of the perspective that considers suckling breastfeeding, mothering, mother-child bond, or nature, this field-based study concludes that suckling is kinship and is about prohibition. Women's milk creates prohibitions against marriage. There are two specific *suras* explicitly identifying *maharim*, prohibited unions (both charted diagrammatically in El Guindi 1999: 86, 99). One of them is reproduced here in Fig. 5.

Suckling converts strangers to kin, or kin by birth (consanguines) to suckling kin, thus adding new calculations to determine relations. It constructs prohibitions against marital unions. It creates a new terminology. It is noteworthy that the producers of the substance that counters genealogy, women's milk, are also the managers of the resulting suckling relations and the owners of the memory tracing them. Oral kinship knowledge is crucial when it comes to forging marital ties.

In conclusion, just like "Mind" and "Nature" constitute a necessary unity according to Bateson (1972), I argue that kinship in its three forms is a necessary unity of integrated domains that together link nature and culture, the feminine and masculine, the corporeal and the social, life and death, and much more. These integrations unfold through my current research on Arab kinship.

Other than balance between structure of genealogy and process of milk and marital links, there is the balance of the feminine and masculine procreative imagery of womb and groin and a balance of elements from nature and elements from culture: women's milk and agnatic genealogy. Heterosexual marriage is pivotal to Arab social systems. Men are incomplete until they marry and women reach maturity by marriage. Procreation and progeny provide immortality, consanguinity is preserved in perpetuity through genealogy, marriage links agnates bilaterally, and women's milk constrains marriage choices, pushing endogamy to its outer limits and keeps the system alive, well-fed and working.

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I owe my love of kinship to Henry Selby, whose book (Buchler and Selby 1968) on kinship remains a classic, and I write this article feeling strong gratitude to him. Henry taught me that kinship is not only central to anthropology, it is pivotal to human society and real fun to study. He is right.

feeding or narrowly as a relationship between a child and a suckling woman.

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The Spiritual Path of Devotion

The Vīraśaiva Perspective

Dan A. Chekki

I

The religion and philosophy of India, with a focus on the goal of God realization, suggests three main spiritual paths, namely the path of devotion (*bhakti*), the path of knowledge (*jñāna*), and the path of action (*karma*). Among these, the spiritual path of devotion involves passionate longing for the great Divine from one's whole heart and a passionate outburst of loving devotion towards a personal God. This emotional approach to God has a widespread appeal to a large majority of devotees. It is considered to be the most natural way to make our body, mind, and heart directed towards God, and it implies commitment, loyalty, love and respect, reverence, and worship oriented towards God.

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