SOME SOCIAL ASPECTS OF BEDOUIN SETTLEMENTS IN WĀDI FĀTIMA, SAUDI ARABIA

MOTOKO KATAKURA

Wādi Fātimā (Fig. 1) is a wādi, a dry river valley located in western Saudi Arabia between the holy city Makka, 30 kilometers to the east, and the seaport city Jidda, 75 kilometers to the west. This wādi area was important as a settlement even back in Prophet Muhammad's time, and critical as it seeks to face the

Fig. 1 Wādi Fātimā Area

[Diagram showing the area with labeled cities and roads]

1 I have sought throughout to render the original sounds in as accurate a way as possible, though the spelling of various terms may vary from some forms in popular use; for example, the reader will notice that “Mecca” has been more precisely rendered as “Makka” and “Koran,” “Qurān.”

As for the transliteration of Arabic into English, I have omitted that tā’marbūta and prefixed hamza and the article is always expressed in “al-.” The letters of the Arabic alphabet are transliterated as follows: (a), b, t, th, j, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, g, f, q, k, l, m, n, h, w, y. The first letter of the alphabet is expressed in vowels only: fatḥa (a) kasra (i), or damma (u).
changes and crises of entering the Technological Age.

Ahmad al-Siba‘ai mentions frequently in his *Tarikh Al-Makka*\(^{(2)}\) that up to and through the Ottoman era, Wādi Fātima, or Wādi Mur as it was then called, was often the scene of battle because of its strategic importance for travel, water, and agriculture. Even today, though modern vehicles have only recently begun to replace camels and donkeys as the major means of transportation, one living in the area clearly senses the evidence of mobility in the community.

For centuries, abundant springs have made this area a prosperous one, supplying the adjacent desert with the water needed to make agriculture possible. Through out history, many Bedouins have come to Wādi Fātima, some of them simply to pass through or visit, but many of them settle here for a period of time or permanently. The population here has always represented a microcosmic picture of the nature, needs, and aspirations of the Arabian bedouins as a whole.

The author of the present study made a research work on socioeconomic structure of this crucial area, living in Saudi-Arabia between September, 1968 and August, 1970. Altogether thirty-two visits were made to the area, the average visit lasting four or five days and with some of them stretching out to fourteen days in length. I was able in this time to avoid the one-sidedness which shortness of time might have produced.

It was my desire to become as much a part of the culture and life of the people as I possible could. I wore the local costumes with a veil and *‘abāya* (which will be explained later) and sought to speak their language in their own manner. When I entertained them in my home, I very properly received the males and females in different rooms and served them separately-prepared meals. Actually, my being a Japanese married woman stood me in good stead.

in this regard. While a Western visitor might have found a great deal more hostility than I did, as a Japanese I could immediately share with the village women the Asian feelings of hospitality, politeness, and conservatism. Such a custom as removing one’s shoes at the threshold of a home came as naturally for me as for my Arabian hostesses. Further, it should be pointed out that the society with remnants of matriarchal factors pays a high respect to a married woman and especially to a mother with children (I have two). With the exception of the belief that a woman should not speak to a man I sought to adhere to their conversation, to relate to their needs as I could, and to go about my research as unobtrusively as possible.

This is only a small part of my comprehensive research work on Wādi Fātima, reporting the general picture of its social aspects. It is hoped that this data will prove useful by providing readers with information which has been absolutely scanty.

I. Types of Population

Basic to an understanding of the socioeconomic structure of Wādi Fātima is an awareness of the transitional and fluctuating character of its bedouin population. The term “bedouin” derives from the plural Arab word badu meaning “desert people” (the opposite is the hadar or “town dwellers”) with the singular forms of badawi (a male desert inhabitant) and badawiyah (a female desert inhabitant). As the terms are used in Saudi Arabia, they can carry two different kinds of connotations. The nomad in the desert will proudly refer to himself as a badawi, knowing that only with great fortitude, awareness and courage can a man survive in the harsh and unsympathetic desert. However, the nomads who have more or less settled in established communities say that they are no longer badu but that they have taken on more advanced means of livelihood, the use of modern products, and many of the civilized ways of their neighboring city dwellers. In a broader sense, however, the life of these settled ones is still closely related to the desert, and we shall use the term “bedouin” in this broader sense in this report.

Three types of bedouin peoples may be found in Wādi Fātima: (1) the Complete Bedouins, nomadic groups whose livelihood depends upon herds of camels and flocks of ganam (sheep and goats); (2) the Semi-Bedouins, who, dependent upon agricultural activities or recently working for factories in cities and less
interested in raising large herds and flocks, may either settle down permanently
or at any time resume the nomadic way of life; and (3) the Settled Bedouins,
living in villages or hamlets with permanent masjid (mosques) made by clay and
engaging primarily in agricultural activity for a living.

Besides the Settled Bedouins, two other kinds of settled residents live in Wādi Fātimā. The 'Ain 'Aziziya water company employs a growing number of la-
borners, mainly from the neighboring 'Ataiba tribe, who fill jobs primarily as
truckdrivers and motor-keepers. Also, as of May 1970 there were some 521
foreign-born residents working in Wādi Fātimā (approximately 400 Yemens, 64
Palestinians, 28 Jordinians, 8 Egyptians, 5 Iraqis, and 4 Sudanese),
filling primarily professional positions, such as teachers, mechanics, agricultural
technicians, social workers, engineers, medical personnel, political and judicial
officers, clerks and secretaries, and shopkeepers.

A kingroup is a group of persons who can trace their ancestry, by blood and /
or marriage, back to a common parentage. This social unit is a very important
one in Wādi Fātimā, as well as all over Saudi Arabia. An individual generally
settles among kinpeople, enjoys a sense of social security from this group identi-
fication and is guided in many of his social customs and contacts by kingroup
traditions. The inhabitants of Wādi Fātimā belong to mainly five tribes.
(1) Ashrāf (Quraish), (2) Harb, (3) Liḥyān, (4) Shyūkh, and (5) Khuza‘a. In
this section, we wish to also discuss the Muwalid though this is not the same
category.

A group of the Quraish tribe who are descended from the Hāshim family
of Quraish tribe, feel themselves to be the most honored of Muslims because
Prophet Muhammad came from the Hāshim family; they were given the honorary
title Ashrāf which derives from shrufa (to be highborn, distinguished) because
of this distinction. Members of the Ashrāf maintain social contact only with
their own tribespeople and with members of the Shyūkh who are also honored
Muslims and Khuza‘a tribe who are original tribesmen in Wādi Fātimā and
considered well-bred ones. In physical appearance, they are generally short in
height, slight of build, and graceful in proportions. Many members of Ashrāf
have left the area in recent years to live in Makka, though some return to villas
or cottages in Wādi Fātimā to enjoy leisurely weekends. Still, over one-third of
the population of Wādi Fātimā are descendents of these honored ones. The
sub-group of Ashrāf called Banu Hussain make up the villages of Abū Sh'aib
and Abu 'Urwa, al-Mana‘ama settled at al-Riyān, al-Mubārak, al-Trfa and

70 ORIENT

The Harb tribe settled in Wâdi Fâtima much later than the other four tribes though it makes up the second largest tribal percentage of residents in the area (Slightly under one-third). Many Harb tribesmen came to Wâdi Fâtima to find work as agricultural laborers.


The Lihyân tribe settled down in ‘Ain Shams living on small-scale agriculture and ganam. After their spring which was once owned by a woman named Shamsa dried up in 1965, four artesian wells were dug by several capable bedouin tribesmen. Today, they have become Settled Bedouins, raising only donkeys and a few ganam. Because of a rather rigid social solidarity within their tribe, it is said that they have never had a split. They are extremely faithful to their shaikh and respectful of Kubâr (elderly persons). Both the women and men are strikingly good-looking, and especially the beauty of their women is widely-known. Once I had a man from another tribe ask me, whisperingly, “Is it true that the ‘Ain Shams women are so beautiful?”

Members of the Shyukh group are proud of their Ansâr(3) kinship, a name given to the people of the Khazraj andAws tribes who in the seventh century aided Prophet Muhammad in his journey (hijra) from Makka to Madîna. One group of descendents of Ansâr called Zayny came to Wâdi Fâtima from Madîna some 350 years ago and bought a piece of land which is now located around the village of Daf Zayny. Succeeding generations spread out from this land, settling near what are now the villages of al-Jadîda, al-Qasr, al-Khamaima and al-Murshediya. The sales contract (wa‘thiqat al-Shîra) for this land, now

(3) The word ansâr generally means “followers,” but here Ansâr is used to refer to the followers and companions of Prophet Muhammad who helped him when he was persecuted by the wealthy pagan merchants in Makka and when he migrated to Madîna.
rests in the hand of Sheik Ahmad Abbass Zayny; this document was especially valuable when King Faisal sought possession of the land in Wâdi Fâtîma. Most of the Shyûkh tribesmen are quite tall with a sturdy, even stocky, body type. Though not known for beauty as members of the Lihyân tribe are, these people enjoy a social standing as esteemed as the descendants of Ansâr and they are hospitable and, sociable.

The Khuza‘a tribesmen are original inhabitants as mentioned earlier. They are very stocky and sturdy in appearance. The women, as their proud ancestor, Fâtîma might have had, have very husky and rather deep-pitched voices, and many of them act as midwives, circumcisers, and even some become merchants in the cities, disguised as men. As, presently, a minority tribe, the Khuza‘a tribespeople live in Daf Khuza‘a.

The muwalid (second-born) were originally Africans brought into Saudi Arabia as slaves. Well-to-do bedouins used to possess many slaves. However, after King Faisal abolished slavery in Saudi Arabia in 1966, they became all free-men. However, most of them stayed with the same family who possessed them, having nowhere to go. Today they work as agricultural laborers and are quite poor, yet they are often invited to visit and eat with other neighboring tribespeople, though their social acceptability does not include intermarriage. Because of the emphasis in Muslim teaching on all men being equal, all jobs and educational opportunities are open to the Muwalid people, even to the extent of following political careers.\(^{(4)}\)

II. Definition of “village”

The Arabic word for village is qarya (plural: qurâ). The people of Wâdi Fâtîma use this word rather loosely to refer to any gathered settlement, though there are settlements in the wâdi of many different stages, kinds and sizes. The settlements of the Semi-Bedouins are of very recent origin and may or may not develop into permanent ones. There are settlements of ‘Ain ‘Aziziya water company employees, of agricultural workers, and of farmers and landowners. These qura may include as small as five tents or houses and as many as 600 houses.

After deliberate observation of each settlement in Wâdi Fâtîma, I considered that the term “village” might find a more objective use if we define it in our study as a gathered settlement in which the inhabitants have become established

\(^{(4)}\) One of the presentday officials of the Saudi Arabian government is, in fact, a muwalid.
to the extent of building a masjid (mosque) out of clay, stone or cement(5) and having their own maqbara (cemetry). This means that the residents are determined to settle permanently and there are at least forty men in the settlement since this number or more are required by Islam when the people gather at a mosque on Fridays to observe zuhr prayer, the most important prayer of the week.

There is a definite rise and fall of villages which can be observed in Wādi Fātima. Many deserted ruins in the wādi provide visible evidence of villages or settled communities which existed there in the past but which were deserted by their residents for various reasons. At the end of the 1950's and through the 1960's when many of the springs dried up, there was an increased movement of people, some tribes becoming nomadic again while other people went to the cities to find jobs with newly-established companies. Some villages were divided, some were absorbed in other villages of the same kin group. Even today many settlements in Wādi Fātima show the potentiality of soon becoming villages by my definition, while others may move out to cities or once again return to the nomadic life.

In the villages of al-Khalas and Abu Husāni, when the owners sold their springs to the ‘Ain ‘Aziziya water company, all of the inhabitants engaged in agriculture left; after a year, the laborers employed by ‘Ain ‘Aziziya formed their own villages here. Villagers at Sultāna also left when their spring was sold to the water company. Because of severe climatic conditions, fluctuating water resources, increasingly modernizing influences, and a history of mobility in the area, the rise and fall of villages and settled communities can be expected to be a continued characteristic of Wādi Fātima.

A list of the villages, by my definition, existing in the wādi in June, 1970, has been recorded in Table 1, giving the village name, estimated population, estimated number of houses, estimated age of the settlement, main tribal group in residence, and tribal origin. Of the thirty-one villages existing, all are agricultural settlements except for the three ‘Ain ‘Aziziya workers’ villages. Al-Qushashiya is formed by agricultural workers for a government farm, and by workers of ‘Ain Zbaida, a branch company of ‘Ain ‘Aziziya which began supplying water to Makka in 1969.

To estimate the total population of Wādi Fātima is a very difficult problem,

(5) Even the Complete Bedouins will make a simple place of prayer called majid or mashhad enclosing the small piece of land by pebbles, soon after they set up their tents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Village Name</th>
<th>Population (Estimated)</th>
<th>Number of (Estimated)</th>
<th>Area of Village (Estimated)</th>
<th>Main Tribal Group</th>
<th>Tribal Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hadda</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>al-Rikani</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Muhamadi</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sarwa'a</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>al-Mafalja</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>al-Murshidiya</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>Banu Musa'ad</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>al-Khāaima</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Shyukh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>al-Jadida</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Banu Salim</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>al-Ṣamd</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Banu Salim</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>al-Qasr</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Banu Salim</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>al-Brābir</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>Mu'abadi Bushri</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>al-Bahrīn</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>Sada</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>al-Duh al-Sāghir</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>al-Mafalja</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>al-Duh al-Ḳabīr</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>al-Mafalja</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Daf Khuza'a</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>Khuza'a</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Daf Zaynīy</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>Shyukh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bushūr</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bushri</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Abū Sh'aib</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Banu Hussain</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>al-Jumum</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Harb</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Abū 'Urwa</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Banu Hussain</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>al-Burg'a</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>Banu Hussain</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>al-Ṣam</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>Banu Hussain</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>al-Mundasā</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Liḥyān</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>'Ain Shams</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>al-Khaif</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>al-Rwajh</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>al-Tundub</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yamani, Bushri</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Abu Husānī</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>‘Ataiba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>al-Khalasī</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>‘Ataiba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>al-Quhasiliya</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yamani, misc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>al-Dubba</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hazmi</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>al-Turfā</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>al-Ma'ama</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>al-Riyan</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>al-Ma'ama</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>al-Mubārak</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>al-Ma'ama</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Villages are listed as they extend northeast through Wādi Fātima from Hadda to al-Mubārak.
2 A — Ashrāf, H — Harb
3 An ‘Ain ‘Aziziyah village for laborers
4 A government farm village for agricultural laborers
Source: Survey by the author

Table I Villages existing in Wādi Fātima, June, 1970

74 ORIENT
because of the different types of Bedouin population living here, because of the general mobility of many of the subtribes, and because no official census information has ever been taken. In Table 1 I have tried to give estimates of the number of residents and households making up the thirty-one villages (by my definition) existing in Wādī Fātimā in June, 1970. By this figuring, I have come to the totals of 19,165 residents and 3,754 households making up the settled communities of Wādī Fātimā. Of these residents, I would estimate the following breakdown; Quraish tribesmen-30%, Harb-30%, Liḥyan-15%, Shyūkh-10%, Muwalid-5% and others-10%.

III. Dwellings

The dwellings of the bedouins of Wādī Fātimā follow a distinct evolution of construction, as Complete Bedouins become Semi-Bedouins and then Settled Bedouins. In Figure 2 are pictured the different kinds of dwelling, which include: (1) bayt al-sha'ar or khayma, a tent woven of wool; (2) 'asha or hut constructed of palm leaves, twigs and straw; (3) sandiqa or tin house made from unfolded and flattened tin drum cans; (4) murabba or the mud or clay house and (5) Bayt simint or the cement house.

Though the outward form of the dwelling may vary as just described, it should be noted, however, that the interior design tends to remain constant in the tent and the clay and cement houses. (The palm hut and tin house are more-or-less temporary quarters often used by agricultural workers who live in very cramped conditions.) Both the tent and the clay and cement houses provide divided interior quarters for the men and women, yet also in both instances the bedouins use the outside; just as the Complete Bedouin often sleeps outside his tent on the sand under the stars, so the Settled Bedouin also will often sleep out under the sky in his sand garden, cut
off from the world only by a simple mud wall 1.4–1.7 meters high. Though
a rest room or water closet may have been added to the sand garden of

Fig. 2 Different Types of Bedouin Dwellings
the permanent dwelling, the bedouins consider this facility a low priority in their house-planning.

In Figures 3 and 4 are pictured two floor plans, one sketch is of a Complete Bedouin’s tent and the other sketch is of a Settled Bedouin’s clay or cement house. In the tent, which may measure 10 meters by 3 meters, the male and female quarters are divided by a hanging rug which generally acts as a screen curtain. Another curtain hangs along the back of the tent, while
the front side and ends are left open except on the occasion of bad weather such as sand storm or torrential rain. Neither the Complete Bedouins nor the Settled Bedouins ever add an additional room onto their interior design. The rug dividing the two quarters is generally hung so that several inches of space are left at the top, bottom and sides; thus ventilation of air is possible and also a woman may reach her hand across if she should want to receive or give some coffee or other request. Both quarters contain long masnad cushions for reclining, which lie on large rugs. The female area will contain a coffee pot, an incense burner (bukhūr), kitchen utensils which are usually simple, a long box for storing clothes (sundūq), a weaving loom, and a manual sewing machine. The women weave by hand the cloth for the tents, clothes and their rugs, some of which are sold commercially; and they consider a manual sewing machine to be an essential possession. Outside the tent but nearby are located the fold for the ganam, made out of thorny salam branches, and the stick fence which encloses the area where the girba (large leather bags used to hold the water supply) are kept, protecting them from domestic and wild-animals. The cooking is done outside the tent. They usually eat on the round flat mattress made of palm leaves.

In the clay house, the arrangement and contents of the interior quarters are very similar to that of the tent, except often built-in-shelves are provided and the ventilation is obtained through triangular holes called tāga left in the wall of the quarters, placed about 15–16 cm above the sand-level and allowing breeze to come into the areas. When the sun at midsummer is the most scorching and the heated wind comes into the room, they fill the holes with rugs. The sand garden is circumscribed by a mud wall, generally two meters in height, and with two separate entrances left for men and women. The garden provides a cloistered area where guests may be received in the evening.

When guests come, in the center of the sand garden a rug is generally laid down with masnad cushions. The garden also provides a comfortable bedroom under the twinking stars or the beautiful desert moon. A sdr tree (ziziphus Spina-christi)(6) or palm tree often gives a little shade during the day while nearby lamps provide light in the evening. The water is now stored in shisha, clay vases which hold much more than the girba, and also in water pitchers shriha. Birds and animals are kept both inside and outside the garden, near the mud wall, on which hay is often placed.

(6) Nabk is another name for this tree.
IV. Religion

Many bedouins have moved into Wādī Fātimah because it lies so near to the Holy City of Makka and because they also are able to continue their beloved and traditional desert way of life. Especially inhabitants of the Khuza'a, Ashrāf, whose ancestors were the early settlers of this area, feel honored and proud that they live on the doorstep of Makkah al-Mukarrama (the Holy City of Makka).

In many ways the religious beliefs of the Wādī Fātimah Bedouins are the ties that unify them with the other tribes, communities and cities of Saudi Arabia. When Ibn Sa'ud subdued all of the tribes under his rule in the 1920's and 1930's, his most influential tool and effective weapon was the Islamic faith, and more specifically the Wahhabist reform.

Wahhabism originated in the second half of the eighteenth century with a teacher named Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab; and though he and his followers referred to themselves as Muwahhidūn (Unitarians), the term Wahhabi and Wahhabism are now used to refer to his followers and his teaching. Shaykh Muhammad advocated a strict return to the essential teachings of Prophet Muhammad and of the Qurān, and his revival grew out of a study of the zealous, fourteenth-century Hanbalit scholar, Ibn Taymiya, who carried on while the shaykh was studying in Makka, Madina, Basra and al-Hasa.

Prior to Ibn Sa'ud's uniting the Arab tribes, the territory had long been divided into a multitude of small principalities, the control of which had been a constant cause of warfare between the lords of the walled towns and the bedouin chiefs. Although Shaykh Muhammad had his enemies, he was received with welcome at the town of al-Dir'īya, located 11 kilometers northwest of Riyad. The Saud family had ruled over al-Dir'īya for several generations with a reputation for justice, courtesy and honor. Though Shaykh Muhammad died in 1792, Wahhabism remains the official faith of the ruling house of Sa'ud and is still the guiding doctrine of the Saudi Arabian's Islamic teaching.

The major religious observances of the bedouins in Wādī Fātimah consist of (1) the practice of daily prayers, (2) the fast held during the month of Ramadan, and (3) the pilgrimage made to Makka during the month of Dhu al-Hijja.

There are five daily prayers observed: (1) al-fajur (the dawn) prayer, offered as or just before the sun rises; (2) al-zhr (the noon) prayer, offered right before
the midday meal; (3) al-'asr (the afternoon) prayer, offered around 3–4 p. m.; (4) al-magrib (the sunset) prayer, offered just before or as the sun sets; and (5) al-'asha (the supper) prayer, offered after supper and before the bedouin retires.

Generally all men over 7–8 years of age come to the mosque for the 'azhr prayer. After prayer, they exchange information and enjoy sociable conversation. Young boys generally start praying earlier than young girls because they learn how to pray in school and also they observe the prayers at the mosque. Women seldom visit the mosque in Wādī Fāṭīma, although sometimes a special women's quarter is set aside for them for prayer. Most women pray in their houses or tents or in their sand gardens. The most important prayer service at the mosque is for the Friday al-żhr prayer.

Often the bedouins very casually observe their prayers. When it is time, a Muslim may stop what he is doing and kneel very simply in the sand or on a cloth mat generally measuring 50 centimeters by 100 centimeters or on a prayer carpet. Not only in the Wādī, but also in the cities, all stores are closed, traffic stops, and radio and television programming is interrupted for thirty minutes during the prayer times. The muwazzan (prayer-caller) who chants his cry regularly for the al-magrib prayer traditionally used to time his call for sunset prayer by observing the setting of the sun; however, now he generally follows an alarm clock in his quarters, set by Arabic time announced on the radio. The only other prayer which the muwazzan normally announces is the al-żhr prayer at Friday noon.

After the bedouin’s day has begun with sunrise prayer, he will work in the fields until the noon prayer time. Then after prayer and the noon meal, his heaviest meal of the day, he will avoid the afternoon heat by resting. After midafternoon prayer, he then returns to the fields to work again until just before sunset. After sunset prayer, he will generally have a light supper and shortly after his supper prayer retire. Most bedouins in Wādī Fāṭīma go to bed early because the nights are very dark, their only artificial light coming from small, dim fanūs (oil lamps.) Only infrequently will the farmers observe a schedule that calls for them to water their fields at midnight. Most of the people, as well as the animals, are awake before sunrise.

The men sometimes offer their prayers together in the field, one of them announcing that he is going to pray and with the others bowing behind him and joining in. Their cleansing ritual is usually only the simple rinsing out of their mouths and then spitting on the sand. The women seem to pray less frequently than the men. Those women whom I questioned told me that women going
through their monthly period or just having given birth to a child should not observe the prayers. Some women appeared to neglect the prayers out of laziness though the majority seemed to be quite religious and faithful.

In 1959 in Bushur the masjid was built by most of the villagers donating small gifts of money, ranging from 10–30 rials ($2.40–$7.20) a person. The total cost of the clay mosque was 1,000 rials ($240). Then the sheik and other influential men of the community recommended to the Ministry of Pilgrimage and Endowments what persons with a good respect, ability and voice in the village they would choose to be the imām (prayer-leader) and mwazzan (prayer-caller). The imām at Bushur is paid 260 rials ($62.20) a month and the mwazzan is paid 50 rials ($12.00) a month.

Ramadān is called the shahr barak (blessed month) in Wādi Fātima. During this month of fasting, the Muslim should not eat, drink nor smoke from daybreak to sunset. However, after sunset the bedouins may take sustenance and most of them are ready for a heavy meal. A favorite dish which they often prepare at this time is sambūsa, a nourishing and rich fried cake made of cheese and meat. Actually some bedouins told me that they gained weight during Ramadān even though they fasted during the daylight hours. However, because they cannot drink water nor eat during the day, it is difficult for the farmers and laborors who work out in the hot fields to maintain their normal level of productivity. Especially when harvest times fall within the Ramadan month the fasting is a difficult matter. Some of the wealthy Muslims in the cities sleep during the day and then stay awake at night so they can still eat as they want; others spend the month traveling abroad as the traveler is exempted from the necessity of fast.

Actually, when I asked the bedouins if they looked upon the Ramadan month of fasting as a time of hardship, they said, “no, because everyone from king to beggar shares in the observance. Also, we remember once again how the poor man suffers, and besides we can eat and drink after the sun sets.” The bedouins here feel a genuine sense of religious excitement and democratic participation with regards to the fast.

The bedouins also feel a spiritual resurgence during the pilgrimage month of Dhu al-Hijja. Again, it is a national and democratic observance, as all Saudi Arabsians, whether rich or poor, merchants or farmer, male or female, dressed in simple white cotton towel-like clothing,(7) make their annual holy visit to Makka.

---

(7) For a pilgrimage to Makka a man will wear two simple pieces of white cloth, one to cover the upper part of the body and one to cover the lower part of the body. He will wear
Many Settled Bedouins in Wādi Fātimā still retain their tents and keep them in good condition so that they are ready for the annual pilgrimage to the Holy City. A person who has made a pilgrimage to Makka is given the title Hajj (or Hajja, as the female form), and almost all of the people in Wādi Fātimā, with the exception of babies and small children, fit in this category. Because I normally wore the black ʿabāya (gown) and ṣarāha (black veil) which Muslim women wear and because I knew Quranic verses and spoke Arabic, some bedouins assumed that I had been also to Makka and called me “Hajja mona” (Mona was the Arabic first name given to me).

When a boy or girl reaches the age of seven or eight, the child is taken by the parents for his or her first pilgrimage to the Holy City. Of course it is an exciting experience for the young child. Although according to Islamic teaching, women should not normally cover their faces with veils on their pilgrimages, the young girl from Wādi Fātimā at her first holy visit will wear a simple white cotton cloth veil made specially by herself or her mother.

V. Festivals

Two important festivals are celebrated every year in Wādi Fātimā, ‘Aid al-Banāt (Girls’ Festival) and ‘Aid al-Hajji (Pilgrimage Festival).

‘Aid al-Ftūr (breakfast Festival), held every year after the fasting month of Ramadān (the ninth month of the Islamic calendar), is called ‘Aid al-Banāt in Wādi Fātimā. This celebration lasts for the whole Shawwāl (the tenth month of the Islamic calendar).

On the first day of ‘Aid al-Banāt all of the men and boys of the village gather at the foot of a mountain to offer the prayer of faJR. The women and girls remain at home to pray, and afterward they dress up in new clothes which they have sewn during the month of Ramadān. Going out, they greet each other in the village, saying, “‘Aid Mubāraḵ” (“May the feast bring you holy reward”) and “Kul sana antum tāiybīn” (“May every year bring you good health”).

A female leader for each ‘Aid al-Banāt called shaikhat al-‘aID, is chosen from the majority tribe of the village, and this woman is generally one who has suffered a...

nothing else, not even the srwār. A woman also will simply wear a white dress covering her whole body except for her face. Actually at pilgrimage time is the only opportunity which the men see women’s faces freely, although pious people should not gaze at members of the opposite sex. All hair on the body should be shaved off for the purpose of religious cleanliness.
recent illness or who is so very poor that she cannot generally offer parties for the villagers. At sunset, all of the girls of the village, chaperoned by the shaikhat al-‘aid visit the villagers’ houses. At each threshold, they will sing songs and collect a contribution from the married women. The amount given ranges generally from 1–10 rials (20c–$2.00), according to each family’s financial status.

In the village of Abû ‘urwa, the girls visit the houses in two separate groups, one for the girls, aged from 6–11, and one for the girls, aged from 12–over.

On the last day of Shawwal, the shaikhat al-‘aid gives a party for all of the harîm and banât of the village. She can use the money collected earlier to prepare for this party, though any sum which remains unspent she may keep for her own use. The people say that in this way they cheer up the muskin (the poor) and show sympathy for them. This tradition could be noted as a kind of “social security” program in the villages, though the secondary tribes of any village are not included.

Relatives who have moved out of the area to cities like Jidda and Makka are invited back for the party. At the gathering, girls dressed up like brides dance with their hair hanging loose; generally it is proper for a girl to wear her hair in public only pulled tightly around her head.

Another custom of the Girls’ Festival is al-‘adwa (provocation game). A number of harîm will get together and sneak up to a house. They will begin reciting a poem in fun which is called al-jakar, teasing the woman of the house, accompanying themselves with a jîr (a kind of musical instrument). Hearing the commotion, the hostess of the house will appear at the door and will respond, in kind, to the poetic teasing. The conversation might proceed as follows:

“Oh Fâtima (hostess’s name), why are you hiding inside?”
“For Allah’s sake, I am not hiding inside!” (She appears at her threshold.)
“Oh Fâtima, your veil is falling!”
“No, ‘Atiga (tormentor’s name), this is the natural way.”
“Oh Fâtima, you are careless!”
“For Allah’s sake, I am not careless!”
“Aren’t you able to say any more, Fâtima”
“No, I am not incapable.”
“No pardon on you then!”
“No pardon is necessary!”

Hearing al-jakar, the neighboring women will rush to the scene of the
commotion, often even without dressing up or tidying up their hair. They will say, "kalam shab" "Stop your babbling!" Then the hostess who was being teased will smile and invite her visitors into her house. Her neighbors bring in tea and coffee which they have prepared and after enjoying incense, they have refreshment. Sometimes one of the women will dance, whirling faster and faster, until finally she falls to the sand with dizziness and exhaustion. The other women will form a ring around the dancer, goading her on in her frenzy by saying, "On, on..." and "Don't fall down yet, not yet, not yet!"

Because of this custom of al-'adwa, during the festive month of Shawwāl, they will keep their houses clean and keep tea and coffee ready. Also, women put rose water or eau de cologne on their dresses during this period.

Men celebrate 'Aid al-Banāt only for four days. The number of sheep slaughtered for food on each of these four days is based on how many villagers plan to kill animals for the celebrations. If twenty villagers out of forty each plan to slaughter a sheep, then five sheep will be killed on each of the four days. Men out of each household gather together to slaughter and cook the food. After serving meat to the women, the rest is taken by the men who gather together and sit in groups of ten each.

Because Wādi Fātimah is located so close to the holy city of Makka, every month of Dhu al-hajji (the twelfth month) all of the villagers of Wādi Fātimah, including the small children, plan to make the pilgrimage. Unlike the distant Muslims who can only afford one pilgrimage during their lives to Makka, the religious residents of Wādi Fātimah can go to the holy city very easily.

The men of the villages also often go to Makka for temporary work during the holy month. The women often remain in the villages to care for the fields of vegetables and look over the animals while the men are away. Also, a woman during menstruation is not allowed to make a pilgrimage to Makka. The women will visit the fields every morning and every evening, which they never do regularly except sometimes in newly-settled bedouin communities.

After supper both the harim and banāt put on fresh dresses and gather together. Making a circle in the sand garden, they enjoy the acting out of a very popular romantic legend concerning Kais and Laila by two members of their group. In this story, which the bedouins claim is a true one of the Banu 'Uzra subtribe, Kais falls overwhelmingly in love with Laila so that he finally becomes mad. The two women disguised as Kais and Laila dance together as passionate lovers, exchanging candies or coins from one's lips to the other's. The other
women in the circle meanwhile sing the ballad, including:

“Oh Kays, oh Kays...

“Oh tays, oh tays (word for a male goat, used often to tease a man)...”

“All the men have gone on pilgrimage.”

“Why do you only remain?”

And then addressing Laila, they sing:

“Oh, gazzāla (a beautifully graceful deer, often associated with women in Arabic poetry), oh beauty....

“Why do you not sit in your house?”

The women enjoy such singing and dancing through the month of the pilgrimage. In the village of Abū ‘Urwa the women compose two circles instead of one and the two groups compete with each other.

The Pilgrimage Festival is a time traditionally when persons who have quarreled during the past year come together for reconciliation and purification. They will visit each other, saying, “Min al-‘aidin” (let’s come together from the day of festival) and the other answering, “Min al-salimīn” (“To live safely”), “Bi‘auda inisha allah” (“I hope you return with God’s will”), or “A‘ada allah alaina wa alaikum bikhair wa al-salama” (“May God return this occasion bestowed on you and on us welfare and peace”).

VI. Clothing

There is a verse in the Qurān which reads, “Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them,”(8) “And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms....”(9) One can quickly observe that the bedouin styles of clothing do generally cover almost the entirety of the body, with the exception of parts of the face, the hands, and sometimes the feet. However, their clothing is very practical also in that it shields the body against the scorching sun and blowing sand as well as religiously guarding against sexual promiscuousness. Only sometimes in the fields one can observe that men have tied their thawb or wdniya around their waists, so that they may work more easily,

(8) Qurān, sūra (ch.) XXIV, āya (verse) 30.

(9) Ibid., sūra XXIV, āya 31.
and exposing the *ṣīwār* and legs.

Although the clothing style and hair style of the male bedouin traditionally differed from tribe to tribe, today they all almost look identical. The traditional costume *wāniya* (See Figure 5, Bedouin Clothing, sketch A) is generally

![Bedouin Clothing](image)

(A) Traditional male *wāniya* and *ahrūm*. (B) *Thawb* tied around the waist so a laborer can work. (C) *Thawb* normally worn, with *ahrūm* and *shutṭajā*. (D) Plaid *futā* of Yemeni origin. (E) Woman’s *ʿabāya* for leaving the village. (F) Woman of Ashraf tribe. (G) Mother and son of Harb tribe in Wadi Fatima. (H) Woman of Harb tribe of Shamiya. (I) Woman of Ataiba tribe. (J) Young girl kneeling in a *smāda*. (K) Elderly woman of Wadi Fatima at home.

![Fig. 5 Bedouin Clothing](image)
BEDOuin SETTLEMENTS IN WÄDI FÄTIMA

worn by elderly men and only worn by the young men when they attend festivals or wedding parties. Most men now wear relatively-modern thawb (See Figure 5, sketch C), although for relaxing many men have taken up wearing the fanila (T-shirt) combined with a plaid or colored fûta (skirt, See Figure 5 sketch D), which is Yemen origin.

The basic parts of a bedouin man’s attire are the fanila, srwâr, dokka, and thawb or wdniya. The fanila looks like a sheer T-shirt, is usually cotton but woven sometimes from sheep wool, and is generally worn as an undergarment. The srwâr are white shorts either worn under the robe or exposed sometimes when men are working in the fields. The srwâr is held in place by the dokka, a cotton cord extending around the waist. The elegant thawb or the traditional wdniya are then worn as outer robes, extending generally to the ankles in length. While all the Complete Bedouins wear the fanila, most of them, and all children, do not wear srwâr which they feel interferes with urination.

The male headdress includes the kufiya, ahrâm or qutra and shuttâffa. The kufiya is a small white cap always worn, even when inside the tent or house. The ahrâm, generally white though sometimes with red or black stripes, is a headcloth 1.5 meter square which is draped over the kufiya. The shuttâffa, a sturdy double black band fastened at the back or side and with two small hanging tassles, holds the ahrâm securely on the head.

The hizâm is a belt often worn and used for carring money as well as a gun and / or dagger. The fûta, generally a plaid, square piece of cloth draped easily around the waist and originating as a style from Yemen is seen frequently in Wädi Fâtima. The Complete Bedouins sometimes wear also a sidriya, a colorful buttoned vest; however, this piece of clothing is not seen too often in the Wädi. Visiting dignitaries, officials, or wealthy persons can be seen wearing the mishlaha, a robe including rich embroidery, when they go out.

Generally the people of Wädi Fâtima go barefoot in their dwellings or in the villages. For long walks, however, they put on sandals made of sheep or camel leather. Also light rubber sandals made in Japan have recently found a market in the Wädi.

The clothing which a woman wears in Wädi Fâtima often displays characteristics which indicate the tribe to which she belongs. Their general style of dress has a long tradition, and at first one is tempted to think that it is not affected by any change of fashion. However, elderly women in the Wädi told me that the style of bedouin dress has changed over the past centuries. There does seem
to be an influence that occurs sometimes between various tribes. For example

though the Harb tribe woman's clothing style derives from the area of Shāmīya,
a village 80 kilometers north of the Wādī, it has recently taken on some
characteristics of the tribes in Wādī Fātimā among whom they have settled.

The basic parts of a Bedouin woman's attire generally include the sidriya,
srwāl, dakka, and thawb or fustān. The sidriya is a an underwear like a blouse
made out of guaze, often including skilled lacework and held together in front
by a chain of generally gold buttons (zurra) which can be removed when the
blouse is washed. The sidriya which functions as a bra, is always white in color,
is worn by all women, and is a very practical garment. It absorbs perspiration,
is inexpensively made, is easily washed and dried and can be conveniently loosened
for breast-feeding. The white sometimes plaid trousers worn by all women are
called srwāl, and they are held in place by a dakka, or white cord extending around
the waist. The female dakka differs from the male dakka, however, in that it
includes a narrow, 0.6 m long apron extending down the front in order to hide
the part of her thighs. The women wear the dakka pulled and tied very tightly,
for to do otherwise is a sign that a woman has loose morals. The thawb is an
anklelength, loose, wide tunic worn only by the married woman; it has full arm-
length sleeves which hang to the ground. The thawb comes in many different
kinds of colors and sometimes has beautiful flower motifs or palm trees embroi-
dered in a scattered fashion over the surface. The unmarried girl wears a fustān
instead, a long dress sometimes plain and sometimes also embroidered.

The women generally braid their long, uncut hair with a strip of gauze
interwoven in the braids, then fasten them in a circular fashion on the top of the
head. The braiding, called maharma, serves the practical purpose of keeping the
mudawwara, or headdress, in place. The mudawwara, a piece of cloth generally
around 1.2 m×2.4 m, is draped over the head from the left shoulder to the
right shoulder, then pulled across the lower part of the face, over the left
shoulder and around the back, to be tucked securely in on the right side. The
gauzelike material used to make the mudawwara is very light and soft and delicate
to the touch. A married woman may let her hair hang loose on occasions, though
generally she always wears a mudawwara over her head when leaving her dwelling.
An unmarried girl should never show her hair. The sharshaf is an outer scarf
of gauze or silk worn only by married women. The smāda, worn only by unmar-
rried girls up from the age of around thirteen years, is similar to the mudawwara
except that it is much longer than wide. When the smāda is wound around

88 ORIENT
the girl’s body, it gives a sort of bulging appearance, and often a tail of cloth is left to trail along behind (See Figure 10, sketch J). Theburg’a are curious decorative masks worn by some tribeswomen particularly of the Harb and ‘Ataiba tribes. Sometimes richly decorated with pearls, coins, metalwork, and cloth, these masks leave only slits open for the eyes to see through.

The bedouin women generally keep all of their gold fortune with them at all times. Besides their gold zurra (chain of buttons), they generally wear 4-5 gold bracelets on each arm, and sometimes as many as 10-20 on each arm. Sometimes they may store gold in their teeth, and if so they like the fillings located in the front of the mouth where they can be seen by others. (Several women could not understand why I had a gold filling placed in the back of my mouth, after I had returned from the dentist). Necklaces are sometimes worn and anklets also, which add their distinctive sound when the women dance. These anklets are intricately fashioned, often with tiny, geometric patterns.

The costumes, particularly of the bedouin women provide a striking contrast to the drab, monochromatic look of the desert environment. The rich colors of their robes — reds, oranges, blues, greens, purples, whites, yellows, and tans — create a beautiful impression particularly when the women are gathered together for a festive occasion.

VII. Life Cycle

i. Engagement for Marriage. It has been said that in the Islamic Arab world the arrangement of marriage is decided upon completely by the parents and that the prospective bride and groom do not meet each other until their wedding day. When I asked the people of Wādi Fātimah about their marriage customs, their answers coincided with this theory; however, after living among the bedouins, I found that the nature of engagement was actually not this way.

Long before a young person of Wādi Fātimah is married, he or she knows who all of the cousins and other neighborhood young people are; and they are able to identify each other well, at a distance. Until the age of seven or eight when the girls will start wearing the customary black veil and burg’a, the children often play together in the desert, their always-nearby playground. Even after they are older and they do not play together, the boys and girls will have contact with each other, for example, at the wells where they pump water to be carried back to their houses as one of their daily chores.
According to Arab tradition, the favoured choice for a mate should be a cousin in the family, and the various blood cousins are preferred in this order: (1) bint amm or ibn amm, i.e. daughter or son of a paternal uncle; (2) bint khāl or ibn khāl, i.e. daughter or son of a maternal uncle; (3) bint amma or ibn amma, i.e. daughter or son of a paternal aunt; and (4) bint khāla, or ibn khāla, i.e. daughter or son of a maternal aunt. The young person, long before marriage, has evaluated the desirability of his or her cousins as marriage mates and sometimes a person outside the family is preferred instead.

However, it is considered ‘aib (shameful or indecent) for a young person to look at persons of the opposite sex of his or her own age, so the young men pretend not to notice the young girls and vice versa. They may turn their heads aside when they pass nearby, and sometimes the young girls will squat down by the side of the road, hiding themselves with their smāda from young men coming toward them.

The young women seem to notice the goings-on of the opposite sex much more than do the young men, and they can see quite clearly through their drawn veils. During my stay in Saudi Arabia, my husband also was often invited to enjoy the hospitality of bedouin homes including young, unmarried girls. However, as is the custom, my husband was always directed to the men’s quarters and I to the women’s quarters for our meals and conversation. My husband was quite surprised to find that during our entire stay in Saudi Arabia never once was he presented with a single encounter with a young unmarried girl. Yet, all of my female friends had completely observed the manner and nature of my husband, and often asked about the “Japanese man.” They could describe my husband quite vividly.

When a young man wishes to marry, his father (or his mother or sometimes the young man himself) will go to the parents of the desired young woman and
BEDOUIN SETTLEMENTS IN WÂDI FÂTIMA

will ask them for the hand of their daughter. The father of the young woman then will customarily say, "Would you please wait for a while?" Usually in a week or so the girl's parents will return with their answer. Although the people say that parents should not consult with their daughter concerning her will in the matter, somehow mother and daughter always manage to communicate one with another and in practice the young girl's feelings are generally respected.

Though the answer is usually affirmative, while I was in Wâdi Fâtîma two of the six proposals which occurred during the two years of my research period there were turned down. One of these cases involved a girl who had lost her mother and had lived with her father for a long time. She preferred to stay helping her father and caring for the children of her elder sister than to marry an ugly cousin who had asked for her hand. (She is now approximately thirty-three years of age). The second situation involved the quiet working out of a childhood romance. When the ibn amm of one girl came to her parents asking for her hand, the girl was most unhappy because she had shared a feeling of affection with another cousin since they were very young. But this youth was her ibn khâl and held less esteem than one's ibn amm. The young girl pled with her father, "Please refuse the request for marriage! At least ask the parents of my ibn amm to wait awhile, for I have not recovered from the death of my younger sister who fell into the well." Actually, such an incident had occurred two years earlier, and such an excuse is always found somehow in order to soften a negative answer which must be given to a marriage proposal. The young girl kept making this excuse until finally her ibn amm married his bint khâl instead. Then finally her true love who had been working in a grocery in Jidda came to the girl's father asking for her hand and he quickly received an affirmative reply. Though their engagement was not formally announced until after I had left Saudi Arabia, I knew of their plans and so gave them some wedding gifts in advance. Both of them came to my home, though separately of course as propriety required, and both of them were overjoyed at the prospect of their being able to marry each other.

The most important aspect of the engagement is the mahr, or money which the groom's family gives to the bride's family. After a marriage is agreed upon, then the amount of the mahr is discussed. In a rural area such as Wâdi Fâtîma, the amount of the mahr remains more or less the same, and it is decided upon as a matter of formality. However, sometimes there are complications. I remember one, aged, somewhat greedy widow who asked for an extra amount in
addition to the customary sum, when she was asked for her daughter’s hand in marriage. The suitor almost withdrew his offer. However, the widow’s eldest son who was already married and quite prosperous as a truck driver, encouraged the suitor to accept the sum asked and agreed to help him pay off the extra amount.

Then the milka(10) (engagement contract) is drawn up. The fathers of the prospective bride and groom meet at the house of the imām accompanied by two male witnesses from both families. On the waraqā are written the names of the groom and of the bride, the date of the occasion, and the amount of the mahr. One copy of the document is given to the prospective groom and one copy is given to the prospective bride. This milka is very important, in fact more important than the actual wedding ceremony. In some cities, often sexual intercourse is formally permitted once the milka has been drawn up. However, in Wādi Fātima the groom and the bride still remain separated until after the wedding ceremony.

Islamic law prescribes that the engaged man must pay a mahr to his betrothed. There is no such thing as a dowery required from the bride’s side. The mahr is divided into two parts. The muqqddam, or first part, is to be paid to the bride at the time of the engagement. The muwahhar, or second part, is a sum promised to be paid to the wife in case of divorce. In case of the death of her husband, the sum is paid from his estate or by his family.

The amount of the mahr may vary from place to place and from situation to situation. In a small community such as Qarya Bushūr where people are closely related and know each other well the mahr is a relatively fixed and low amount. However, if the suitor is only a distant blood relative and the girl’s parents may have any doubts about the young suitor’s reliability, the mahr may be set proportionately higher. Sometimes two families will arrange for a cross-exchange of daughters in marriage; for example, the daughter of Family A may marry the son of Family B while the daughter of Family B marries the son of Family A. In such a double marriage, no mahr may be required at all.

In Bushūr the average mahr is 500 rials ($111), and this amount is also average for Wādi Fātima. In Daf-Zayny, 700 rials is a normal mahr, two-thirds of the sum paid at the time of the engagement and one-third contracted as muwahhar. A few wealthy residents of Daf-Zayny, influenced by the custom of higher mahr

---

(10) Ḍ‘ād al-Qurān or Ḍ‘ād al-Kitāb are more popular names for the engagement contract in many other Islamic countries.
in the cities, have proudly given 3,000 rials ($667) or more for their son’s engagements. The wealthiest mahr payment of which I know involved a rich sheik who owned much land and whose son had been a teacher in Makka for a long time. The mother of the girl sought by the sheik’s son did not want her daughter to move away to Makka but instead to settle near her, as is generally the tradition. Therefore, she requested a mahr of 6,000 rials, including a muqqddam of 2,500 rials and a muwahhar of 3,500 rials. Finally the suitor agreed that he would live one year with his new wife next to her mother’s house before they moved to Makka and also that he would pay the mahr desired.

In the village of Abu ‘urwa, the suitor must pay a sum called al-jariya (a female slave) as well as the regular mahr. An old custom required that the groom provide his bride with a slave to wait on her. However, since the Saudi Arabian government abolished slavery as mentioned earlier, the suitor now instead presents an additional sum of money, usually around 100 rials. However, the mahr in Abu ‘urwa is very low (never more than 300 rials) because of the feeling of trust among the people and also because of the tribal pride which they share as the direct descendants of Muhammad.

Generally speaking, the bedouins do not pay special attention to the age of two people wishing to be married. Many of them were not even aware of their exact ages when in 1964 it became compulsory for parents to register their children for school.

My research in the villages of Wadi Fātima revealed varying statistics for different communities, with regards to the average age of marriage. In Bushur the average age for girls to marry is 14 years and for boys 17 years. In Daf-Zayny the figure for both boys and girls is 20 years of age. In Abu ‘urwa the average age for marriage is 18 years for both girls and boys. In ‘Ain Shams the average age for girls is 15 years and for boys is 18 years.

In collecting this data for Wadi Fātima, I noticed the following. First, the more nomadic a bedouin community is, the earlier the children tend to marry. In more settled communities, the average marriage age is generally higher. Semi-nomadic or newly-settled people fall within these two categories. Secondly, the stronger the matrilineal traditions\(^{(11)}\) are that remain in a community, the older the children tend to marry. In villages like Abu ‘urwa and Daf Zayn

---

where the women have a strong influence and where the married daughter very
often settles down near her parents’ house (rather than near the residence of her
husband’s parents), the marrying age is later than the average age for the whole
Wādi Fātimah region.

There is no special attention paid to the fact if there is a large age
difference existing between a husband and wife. Elderly wives with younger
husbands are often seen, and one wife in Daf Zayny is 20 years older than her
husband. The blood relationship of two people in marriage is more important
than age similarity.

The wedding season in Wādi Fātimah is in late summer and early fall, es-
pecially during the period of October and November. There are three reasons
for this. Because the harvest of hurbiz (a kind of sweet melon) and tamr (the
date) is completed, money is available to pay for the mahr. Also during this
season, the nights are more pleasant than during the hot summer and are the
longest of the year. Then too, school are out for summer vacation until around
October, so that students and teachers are home to join in the festivities and also
to help with the preparations that are required for a wedding.

Many couples plan to be married just prior to the month of Ramadān (the
ninth month of the Islamic calendar). Though this month is a fasting month
and weddings are prohibited during this time, the merry days of ‘Aid al-Fiṭr
which follow is a festival time which a newly-married couple may well look
forward to enjoying together.

ii. Pre-Wedding Celebrations. Usually the next day after the engagement
or within a week of the drawing up of the milka, the family of the bride-to-be
celebrates the qata‘a al-shitāra. For this occasion the girl’s mother prepares a large
cloth, almost always red in color and sometimes with flower designs embroidered
on it. Then without announcement, one day the mother will say to her daughter
very casually, “Darling, would you please get me the pot (or another object)
behind you?” When the girl has turned her back, the mother will throw the
red cloth which she has hidden behind her over the girl’s head. The daughter
will then scream lightly and cry aloud. Thus the official announcement of the
forthcoming marriage is made to the bride and to the village as a whole, even
though the girl and all of her friends are probably already aware of the fact. It
is important, however, that the girl cry aloud when the red cloth is thrown over
her; not to do so is regarded as a sign of indecency and of a girl who is too anxious
to marry. Once I saw a girl bite her mother's fingers, shouting “No, no...” when 
her mother threw the red cloth over her head.

When struggling with her daughter, the mother will cry forth a gatrūf (a high-
pitched warble made by a fast motion of the tongue),(12) a common expression 
of joy among Arabian and African women. The harīm(13) (married women) 
will come to the house to enjoy the struggle of the mother with her daughter, 
who pretends surprise that marriage lies before her. The harīm help the mother 
hang the red cloth in the corner of the male guest room of the bride's house, and 
the girl then confines herself behind the cloth screen. After hanging up the 
cloth, the harīm never go back inside the room for it is believed that they may 
prejudice the bride-to-be with regards to marriage and / or sexual intercourse.

Instead, unmarried girls of the village come to the engaged girl behind the 
curtain. They bring her meals and chat with her, and sometimes they sleep 
together. Even when the daughter goes to the hammām (bathroom), wrapped 
with a big sharṣhaft (shawl), she is accompanied by two or three of her companions. 
It is believed that she should not work nor expose herself to the sun during this 
engagement period; instead she should rest for her wedding day and her skin, 
undamaged by the sun, should present a beautiful complexion with the make-up 
of cosmetics that will be added. This period of confinement or engagement 
generally lasts one week, although sometimes the mother of the bride will decide 
that she would prefer a longer time, such as two weeks or so.

The day following qata'a al-shitārā, a dalla al-daifa (party for guests) is given 
for the elderly people of the village. The groom’s family prepares several sheep 
or goats, cooking the meat with rice and fat. The bride’s family prepares 
the tea and coffee. Held at the house of the bride’s parents, the guests con-
gratulate the parents of the couple soon to be married.

Two days before the wedding, another party called haduw is given by the 
groom’s mother, this one exclusively for married women. The refreshments 
served include coffee, tea, and halāwa (a small cookie made from rice powder 
and cornstarch). All of the harīm spend the evening at the house, singing gaily 
and dancing with their ringing hurhār (anklets).

On the afternoon before the day of the wedding, the mother of the engaged

(12) These trilling cries of joy made by the women are called zagharīd in Egypt and other 
North African countries.

(13) The original meaning of the Arabic word hurma (singular form, a married woman) or harīm 
(plural form, married women) is “forbidden, inviolable.”

Vol. IX 1973
girl will place on display all of the gifts which she has prepared for her daughter, for all of the harîm and banât of the village to see. Usually, she prepares two frâsh (large mats for sleeping and sitting), two mahadda (cushions used for reclining), 2–5 new fustân (dresses). Also there are gold bracelets (banajîr) and / or other jewelry, pearl rings (khâtîm lulu) and finally a new hope chest (sundûq). The closest relatives also often present gifts, such as srûr (traditional pants), dresses, dalla (Arab coffee pots) and fanaîjîr (Arab coffee cups). Since it is considered bad taste to pass any judgement on the gifts displayed, generally the visiting guests do not either offer praise nor criticism of the gifts.

On the eve of the wedding day all of the descendents of slaves in the village sit in a circle on red or pink cushions, wearing red robes. They enjoy the incense gumra, made of a mixture of gurfa (cinnamon), kurunful (red roses), and khulanjân (a kind of spice). In front of the incense burner are placed two trays, one for the mother of the bride and the other for the mother of the bridegroom. All of the harîm throw money onto the trays as gifts for the honored mothers, the sums generally ranging from 1–5 rials(14) per person. The amount which each person gives is related to the closeness of her friendship with the honored parents and / or to the obligation which is felt to return any similar gift which has been previously given. An elderly women announces the sum of the money thrown to the trays by each woman, and both mothers remember the amounts so that they can properly reciprocate in the future.

Meanwhile, the mother of the groom takes a round tray and places a glass cup filled with gumra in the center, with many lighted candles around the curve of the tray. Carrying this enchantingly-lighted tray on her head, she dances around the harîm and then takes it out to her son, the groom-to-be. His bachelor companions are given a pinch of gumra by the mother, which wishes them good fortune to get married each in his own turn. It seems that the boys of Wâdi Fâtîma are more anxious to get married than the girls.

iii. Day of the Wedding Party. On the first day of the wedding friends greet close relatives of the bride and groom by saying, “Mabrûk alaik” (congratulation to you) or “Mabrûk maamlim” (Congratulation to what you’ve done). And the relatives answer, “Allah yubâlik” (‘God give you the same good luck’).

The wedding party, which is generally scheduled to begin around evening,
is held in four separate places. The celebration for the *harîm* is held at the sand garden in front of the bride's house, and this is the largest of the four party gatherings. The other celebrations include one for the *rijâl* (married men), one for the *babât* (unmarried girls) and one for the *subîyân* (unmarried boy). It is the duty of the men of the village to prepare the food and coffee and tea for the wedding, and the task of the young boys serve it to the *harîm*. Free of responsibilities, the married women of the *harîm* enjoy singing and dancing to the *bandîrâ* (an instrument similar to a tambourine). Some wealthy families also bring in a professional *mutriba* (singer or entertainer) from the outside to perform at their wedding party.

The party held for the *rijâl* is more simple and customarily no entertainer is brought in from the outside. Perhaps because of this, I have often seen some of the men sneak over near the party of the *harîm* to record the singing or playing of the *mutriba* on the tape-recorder. After the meal has been prepared for and served to the entire population of the village, the married men gather for their celebration. Their entertainment generally consists of a poetry contest for which the men line up in two groups. Then a judge listens to the impromptu poems recited by various members of the two lines. The men enjoy this *mutaraht al-sh'âr* (poetry improvisation contest) very much.

The young boys generally dance around a campfire, carrying sticks on their heads and playing vigorously. Some, however, join the parties of the *harîm* and *rijâl* as they are needed to help serve. The *banât* spend their time with the bride behind the curtain, singing or chatting quietly. They are not allowed to sit with the *harîm*.

Next morning when the party of the *harîm* ends, a village woman or a professional woman from outside the village will come in to the bride. All of the *banât* leave, and the woman will prepare the bride's face with cosmetics and put *hinna* (a kind of dye mark) on the palms of her hands and on the instep of her feet. After the bride is beautified, the groom will come to her with the members of his immediate family (father, mother, brothers and sisters). They will praise her loveliness and talk for about 5–10 minutes, then leave. The bride, who generally feels a considerable amount of tension, is customarily left alone to take a nap if she chooses.

Around noon all of the *harîm* have their luncheon banquet. While the men

---

(15) In most cases the *mutriba* is a female singer or dancer; however, sometimes an artist who is a male eunuch is invited to perform before the female audience.
serve the luncheon which they have prepared, the bride changes from her white
clothes to a pink or red dress. After the banquet the groom comes to the bride
again, and this time he offers her presents, such as 50 rials or a silver bracelet.
This second meeting, called al-sabahiya, also is short, lasting only about ten
minutes. When the groom goes to see his bride, this is the only official chance
he will have in his whole life to see all the women related to his life; yet being
concerned about meeting his bride, he generally will go straight to her without
looking at the other women.

After the al-sabahiya, the bride comes out from behind the curtain screen
for the first time to join the harim’s party. She sits on the specially-made cushion
(frāsh) with her arms on the masnād (elbow cushion). Here she is entertained
by the singing and dancing of the village women and by the mutriba if a profes-
sonal entertainer has been hired.

At sunset, all of the harim leave the bride alone; the groom then comes in to
her, this time to spend his first night with her behind the curtain screen.

On the next morning, the bride’s mother proudly shows off the bloodstained
cloth to the neighbours as evidence of her virginity as well as the bridegroom’s
successful defloration of his bride.

iv. Post-Wedding Rituals. The next morning or within a week after a
couple is married, they move from the house of the bride’s mother to their new
residence. This house is usually built beside the house of the bride’s mother,
and thereafter they will never live with any of the parents again, even if one of the
parents eventually becomes a widow or widower.

When it is time for the bride and groom to go to their new house, they are
accompanied by their parents, near relatives, and the bride’s bridesmaid. The
bride hides herself with a shawl and holds a mirror and a Qurān as she enters.
Right at the entrance, the bridesmaid places some hinna on the instep and on the
bottom of her right foot.

For a week after her wedding, the bride wears a maʿābdy (black shawl)
and spends most of her time behind the shitāra or curtain screen. For a year,
or until she gives birth to her first baby, the young wife will only meet with her
husband and the banāt (unmarried girls). She will not have contact with any
of the harim, except for her own mother. She will not even see her mother-in-law.

When the first year has passed, the groom’s mother invites all of the harim
to tea after sunset. The groom and other men of the family light the bukhār
(incense) and prepare the coffee, tea and candies called mulau. All of the women sing and dance, playing the tambourines and ringing their anklet bells. It is time for the young married girl to meet the harīm.

The next day the bride will begin visiting each harīm’s house, one by one, going to perhaps two or three houses a day. It will take her a week or more to visit all of the harīm; but then finally she becomes an official member of the harīm group.

After her first Ramadan following marriage, the bride invites the harīm to visit her new residence to have a party to celebrate ‘aīd al-iftār. This first invitation is called the gaylā.

They say that forty days after the delivery, sexual intercourse is permitted again.

v. Divorce. In spite of the prevalent idea that only the husband in an Islamic society has the right to request a divorce, actually the wife also may instigate such a separation. In fact, in Qarya Bushur 48 percent of the divorces which had occurred among the present residents had been requested by the wife in each instance. It is possible for the wife to achieve a divorce, if she wishes, because parents and relatives are influential in supporting her spirituality after the marriage. If a wife divorces her husband, she can go back easily to her parents’ home. Also, the bedouins tend to regard a divorce as simply the cancellation of the contract of marriage. Divorce in Wādi Fatima is not an ‘aib (a shameful or indecent thing).

The shaykh of a village or a wahad kabīr (respected, elderly man) or a wahada kabīra (respected, elderly woman) will talk to a couple having difficulty to try and reconcile them. If the counselor does not succeed, then the two may be divorced. If the wife has requested the divorce, she cannot claim the muwahhar promised at the time of the engagement; however, if the husband instigates the divorce, then he must pay the girl the sum of the muwahhar as established in the milka.

For four months and ten days after her divorce, a woman is not allowed to leave her abode except to visit her closest relatives. During this period she wears a white gown and is known as hākima (a woman under the law) and the villagers say, “Hiya fi al-hakm” (She is under the law). On the last day of the hākima the divorced woman gives a party for the harīm of her village. Her male relatives, including the muwalid kill sheep and prepare them for the party. Should the girl not give a party, she is excluded from the harīm’s group.
The period of four months and ten days derived from an Islamic law based on the Qur'an in which this period is called 'idda (waiting period). This law serves the purpose of restricting the birth of illegitimate children after a divorce. The bedouins are not fully aware of the purpose of this law and simply consider it as one of their customs. Therefore, even an older woman of sixty or seventy years of age who survives the death of her husband observes the same custom, since, as explained earlier, the death of a spouse is considered as a divorce, namely, the cancellation of the marriage contract.

vi. Death. When a bedouin dies, close relatives or friends nearby will cry out and begin to wail. Although wailing for the deceased was forbidden by Wahhabism (16), this cry still is a kind of official notice in the villages of Wādi Fātimā that a death has occurred. People come to where the deceased lies, and friends bring a na‘ashi (a kind of bier) from their masjid (Muslim temple) where it is kept. The deceased is placed on the na‘ashi and immediately a mugassal (a man who washes male corpses) or a mugassala (a woman who washes female corpses) is called.

Murmuring a verse from the Qurān, the mugassal or mugassala then will wash the whole body, including the inside of the mouth, exactly like the washing ritual preceding the Muslim's daily prayers. In 'Ain shams, fluid taken from the spinal column of the deceased body and placed in a ibriq (a small kettleshaped pitcher) is used for washing the body. Altogether they wash the corpse seven times.

After the rite of washing the dead body has been completed, kafur (a kind of camphor) is painted on the body, and 'atr (a special perfume) is sprayed all over the corpse. All of the apertures of the body, such as the eyes, ears, anus, etc. are filled with cotton. Then a villager who can read and write inscribes a verse from the Qurān on the forehead of the deceased. If no literate person can be

(16) Anas bin Malik related the story of Prophet Muhammad who one day when he passed by a woman weeping by a grave, stopped and instructed her rather to fear Allah and be patient. Not recognizing him, she replied, “Go away, for you have not been affected with a calamity such as I have.” Later when she was told who the man was, she came to the Prophet and said, “I did not recognize you.” Whereupon Muhammad replied, “Meet calamity with patience.”

The Prophet Muhammad also said, recorded in another place, “The deceased one is punished by the weeping of relatives” (i.e. excessive weeping and wailing over a dead one). Also, he said, “No soul will be burdened with another's sins.” Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Sahih al-Bukhari Pakistan, 1970, vol. I, p. 208.
found, the friends will simply recite a verse from the Qurān instead. Next the body is wrapped tightly with white cloth. A second white cloth is either laid loosely over the wrapped corpse, if the deceased is a man, or hung in a mosquito-net fashion over the body, if the deceased is a woman, in order to hide the shape of the female body from public view.

After spraying rose water over the wrapped body and na‘āshi, four men carry it to their maqbara (tribal cemetery), generally located near the residential area. Other male relatives follow behind. Women never go to the maqbara, even when a husband or close relative is being buried. When the deceased is a woman, her father, brothers and uncles step down into the burial pit to receive the corpse. When the deceased is a man, any other men may receive the body. A husband whose wife is being buried cannot join the male relatives of her family to receive the body in the burial pit because at the moment of death his marriage contract is considered cancelled.

A dead body is laid on its right side and so that it faces toward Qibla(17). Through the night following the death, the family will keep a ḥanūs (oil lamp) and mabhara (a special incense) beside the body, because they believe that the soul of the deceased is still present in it.

After a death, the bedouins observe a three-day period of sorrow called ‘aza (in mourning). During these three days, they will refrain from listening to their radios, the women will not put on their kuhl (eye shadow), and the family of the deceased will be served their meals, e. g. coffee, dates and bread by their neighbors. Female members of the sorrowing family will wear white robes. The men will console them by saying “Salamat al-hatr” (May God give comfort to your sorrow) and women will say to them “‘Azam alla ajrkm” (May Allah increase your reward).

The first night of ‘Aza is called lailat al-wahada, (the first night) and sheep are slaughtered to provide food for the mourning family and friends. The third day is called qata‘a al-‘aza (end of the days of mourning) and again animals are slaughtered for a special celebration. On the fourth day also they slaughter sheep for a party. The eighth day after death is called al-thamuniya (the eight day) the twentieth day al-ashriniya (the twentieth day) and the fortieth day al-‘arbāniya (the fortieth day).

After the third day of ‘aza (mourning), the people in most of the villages of

(17) Qibla is the direction of Kāba, the holy shrine in Makka, toward which Muslims pray five times a day.
Wādi Fātima return to their normal pattern of living. However, in Daf Zayny, the villagers observe a forty day period of mourning after death. The graveyard is not a sacred place and is rarely visited by the bedouins. Wahhabist teachings forbids the Muslim to visit a graveyard for religious purposes; the Muslim should pray only to Allah and not to the dead nor saints nor even Muhammad. One can meet one’s loved one in afterlife. In fact, one can hardly recognize a graveyard in Wādi Fātima, except for the unusually tall salam trees which generally accompany such a place. The graves are not marked and drifting sand soon obliterates the signs of a recent burial.

The attitude of the people towards death is strongly related to the strict sect of Islam, quickly spread throughout Saudi Arabian area, and today is the prevailing religious force in Wādi Fātima. If you would ask a bedouin wife whose husband had just passed away why she does not visit his grave, she would probably reply, “Because there’s no value in it. The death of my husband is Allah’s will.”

vii. Birth. When a wife becomes pregnant for the first time, she tells no one except her mother and her husband, who advises her to drink goat’s milk for the baby’s good health. In earlier times camel’s milk was considered to be even better than goat’s milk. The wife begins making baby clothes out of a gauze material which her husband buys at the suq al-badu (bedouin market).

In each village there are generally one or two older women called dāya who serve as midwives when babies are born. In the case of difficulty in a delivery, a dāya can ask for the help of a hakīma (licensed midwife) from the Social Development Center at Jumum or from the hospital at Makka. In actuality, however the dāya, who has full authority in the situation, seldom asks for help from these modern facilities. Should a baby be born dead or the delivery be unusually difficult, everyone considers it to be the will of Allah. The wife’s mother, her aunts from Wahhabist Maqbara (tribal cemetry)
both sides of the family, and/or older women from the village are customarily present to help the dāya. The banāt or unmarried girls are not allowed access to the scene of delivery.

A pregnant woman gives birth to her child in a seated position, on a ṭtrāḥa (a kind of mattress) placed at the ḥazzāna (storage place) where candles have been lit. During delivery, the dāya grabs both hands of the pregnant woman. The umbilical cord is cut, and unlike in Japan, it is thrown away. After bathing the newborn baby in lukewarm water, the mother and child are moved to the gaʿa (a guest room). For her services, the dāya is usually given 10–20 rials by the baby’s father.

If a mother does not have adequate milk to breast-feed for baby, another woman from the same tribe is sought to suckle the child. If such a woman cannot be found, then the baby is given goat’s milk or even today sometimes canned milk.

For forty days after giving birth, the mother remains at home, resting, drinking yansūn water (water mixed with aniseed) and milk, and eating honey, goat’s meat, chicken and gatāf (a cake made of flour, goat fat, and honey). In Bushur a mixture of milk with ginger and salt is particularly favoured.

When the harīm of the village come to congratulate the mother of the birth of her child, they will greet her with “Mabrūk jak wald” (Congratulations on the birth of a boy) or “Al-hamd allah ala salamatiha” (Allah is praised by the mother who gives birth to a girl). The bedouins claim that both baby boys and baby girls are equally cherished. Also on the day after the baby’s birth, the father gives a party for the married men of the village at a place near his house when the child was born; it is not customary for men, even the husband, to go into a house where a baby was born. The rijāl sit in a circle on the sand and lay gifts of money, on a tray placed in the center for the newborn.

On the seventh day after it has been born, a child is named by its mother with the help of her female relatives. The child’s maternal grandfather hugs the baby and whispers in its ear, “Allah akbar” (Allah is great) then he passes the child to its father who does likewise. The mother hugs the baby and whispers to it, “Yasmak Allah Muhammed” (Allah names you Muhammed). The harīm come to the naming ceremony, bringing gifts of 1–2 rials each. Those who happen to have the same name as the newborn or whose son or daughter shares the same name are expected to give extra rials or contribute a gown for the baby. As each one enters the baby’s room, she remarks, “Tsaly ala al-nabi thum takbar” (Pray on the Prophet and you recite God is Almighty) and then she kisses the
mother of the child, greeting her with “mabruk alaiki wa al-hamd allah al-salama” (Congratulations to you, thank God for your safety). Then the harim is entertained, as is custom, with incense and Arabic coffee and tea. Finally, the harim hugs the child again, saying “Masha allah thabark alla humma sali ala nabi” (What a nice creation of God! May God bestow His blessing upon her baby. May people pray for the Prophet). She kisses it on the cheeks and applies kuhr (eye shadow) around its eyes and forehead and on her own eyes, saying “Balaka” (The same good luck be wished on me). At Bushûr particularly the custom is followed of placing something turquoise or blue, such as imitation jewelry or cloth, on the baby’s breast, while a verse from the Qurân is recited. It is believed that this color will bring good luck to the child and protect it from evil eyes.

For a year and a half or sometimes two, the baby is fed only milk. When the mother wishes to stop breast-feeding, she will sometimes rub a bitter plant called samr or hot pepper on her breasts or sometimes she will leave her long hair hanging over them.

VIII. Medicine and Superstition

The bedouins of Wâdi Fâtima turn to modern medicine, folk traditions, and magical superstitions to cure their illnesses. Modern medicine has made inroads into this area, and many, especially the young and educated, ascribe the case of illness to mikrub (microbes); however, many also still attribute illness to jin (demons, invisible beings, either harmful or helpful, that interfere with the lives of mortals).

At the saidariya (health clinic) of the Social Development Center in Jumum, there are a Pakistani doctor, his wife who ministers as a mid-wife, an Egyptian nurse, and four medical assistants. A sick woman from some of the more liberated villages will not hesitate to come to the male doctor, although she will always keep on her veil and abâya (black gown). If she should need an injection in her hip or buttock, the female nurse will give it to her.

Some of the bedouins were not visiting the saidariya; however, they were eager to ask me questions about health. Especially after I helped nurse the youngest daughter of the shaykh of Bushûr back to health, people in the area urged me to obtain medicine for them from Jidda. One of the teachers there said that he would like to go work as a doctor’s asisitant in Jidda during his
### BEDOUIN SETTLEMENTS IN WĀDI FĀTIMA

#### Table 2 Jumun Medical Clinic Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease Categories</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chest diseases (cold, influenza, etc.)</td>
<td>2,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digestive disorder</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries or wounds (since the bedouins do not wear shoes, they often suffer foot injuries even though the soles of their feet are quite tough)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye diseases (trachoma, cataract, etc.)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENT (ophthalmia, nasitis, rhinitis etc.)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malnutrition (most of them children)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart and blood diseases (anemia, stroke, etc.)</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin diseases</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous breakdowns</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urinary diseases</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scorpion bites</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infectious diseases (including 200 cases of malaria, 100 cases of tuberculosis, and 50 cases of venereal diseases)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birhāţia (bloodparasite)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snake bites</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,055</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

#### Table 2 Jumun Medical Clinic Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Islamic Month</th>
<th>Approx. A. D. Month</th>
<th>Patients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajab, 1387 H.</td>
<td>August, 1967</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sha‘aba, 1387 H.</td>
<td>September, 1967</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan, 1387 H.</td>
<td>October, 1967</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawwâl, 1387 H.</td>
<td>November, 1967</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhū al-Qaדה, 1388 H.</td>
<td>December, 1967</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhū al-Hijja, 1388 H.</td>
<td>January, 1968</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muharram, 1388 H.</td>
<td>February, 1968</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safr, 1388 H.</td>
<td>March, 1968</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabia al-Awwal, 1388 H.</td>
<td>April, 1968</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabia al-Thani, 1388 H.</td>
<td>May, 1968</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumadi al-Awwal, 1388 H.</td>
<td>June, 1968</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumadi al-Thani, 1388 H.</td>
<td>July, 1968</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>15,100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics of Medical Clinic of the Social Development Centre
summer vacation so that he might learn how to help the sick people in his village.

In Table 2 are given some Jumum Medical Clinic Statistics, listed by disease and by month. Among the 14,055 patients treated during 1968 (1388 H.), the major problems were chest diseases, digestion diseases, injuries and wounds, eye diseases, and malnutrition. In the record of patients treated, month by month, between Rajab, 1387 H. and Jumadi al-Thani, 1388 H. (August, 1967-July, 1968), it may be pointed out that almost twice as many patients were treated during the summer months than during the winter months. The Social Development Center Clinic also told me that during 1968, 36 percent of all the children in Wādi Fātimā visited them, 31 percent of all the men, and 13 percent of all the women.

Though trust in modern medicine is steadily increasing, the belief in medical folk traditions more than often is retained at the same time. By folk medicine beliefs I refer to healing treatments which do not seem to involve magical acts but are rather based on a body of accrued, practical folk wisdom. One popular treatment, called kay bi nār, involves the laying of a heated stone or stick of iron on the area of pain. Though the skin is burned and a scar remains, the bedouins claim that the most painful diseases have been cured by this procedure. Approximately 60 percent of the people in Wādi Fātimā have a kay bi nār scar somewhere on their skin. Practitioners of kay bi nār generally receive 10 rials for one of their treatments. Once a man from Bushūr who had his shoulder broken in a traffic accident went to a kay bi nār practitioner in Shāmiya, 70 kilometers away from Wādi Fātimā, and his broken shoulder was completely cured.

For stomach and intestinal troubles, a treatment called hamyya is used, in which the patient refrains from food for one or two days and drinks only mint tea or brewed camomile. A man with diarrhea will brew for himself a tea of harmir grass, a plant which has such a bitter taste that camels and ganam refuse to eat it. When a person is bitten by a scorpion, the infected part of the skin is cut away immediately, using the tanjar (a short knife which both bedouin men and women usually carry at their waists). Raw garlic is placed on the area, a kay bi nār treatment is applied, and hinna(18) leaves are tied to the affected area. When I was bitten by a scorpion, this was exactly the treatment which I received and it was remarkably effective, even though the bite was quite serious.

When folk medicine does not work effectively for the people, then they

---

(18) Hinna is used for two purposes, (1) as a cosmetic substance and (2) as a medicinal aid, especially for fever.
generally think seriously about visiting the doctor for modern Western medicine. If they find the doctor ma fi faida (ineffective or not of interest), then they will go to a sayyid (male magic practitioner) or sayyida (female magic practitioner). The sayyid may say, “Apply the blood of ganam in a black and white fashion all over the sick person and he will recover”; or in the case of a toothache or scorpion bite, “Write or have written an aya (Quranic verse) from the Qurān on the sand and the pain will disappear.” If a family member goes majunūn (insane), he or she is immediately taken to the sayyid rather than to a doctor or a kay bi nār practitioner; the sayyid will often give the family a magic paper to use in brewing a tea for the majunūn person to drink. Sometimes the al-zār ritual dance is recommended. Here the sick person or a close female relative will begin to dance inside a circle formed by the women of the village, singing and clapping in a fast rhythmic tempo. Loosing her hair and with ringing anklets, she will whirl and jump and dance faster, until the bedouins say she is like qfrīta (devil). Finally, she will cover her face and fall down in the sand, and the people then believe that the spirit afflicting the illness will depart.

Many bedouins also believe in tamyma (charms). They will fill a small cloth bag with sometimes more than ten different kinds of strong incense (including, for example, mhlab, haltyt, subr, and halba) and will then hang it around the neck of a small child to protect him or her from scorpion bite and disease. Some wear a small-sized Qurān in a leather bag called hijāb around their necks, believing that such a practice will guard against calamity.

It is believed that if a woman kuhr (eye shadow) which belongs to a woman who has just given birth to a child she will be protected against eye disease. A woman who has difficulty becoming pregnant will often secretly visit the graveyard, leaving her pillow there. If she becomes pregnant after this visit and gives birth successfully, she will bring her child back to the graveyard annually until the child is grown. Nobody seems to know the reason why. But they simply believe it.

The sahar (colloquially called sayyid and sayyida in Wādi Fātima) still practice in all corners of the wādi in spite of the fact that the government authorities have officially banned such practices and the Social Development Center strongly discourages the use of them. Among the practitioners, the Setta min Yamāma (Lady from Yamama, the ancient name of Riyadh) and a sahar in Makka are particularly wellknown. Even intellectuals in the cities will sometimes consult with a sahar to try and find something that has been lost.
In any kind of society social progress seems to lag behind economic progress. This strong traditional social forces which are introduced here act to restrain any rapid socioeconomic metamorphosis in Wādi Fātimā. Entrenched tribalism, rigid value system, religious and folk beliefs all play major roles in determining how the bedouins here think, work, dress, play, socialize, celebrate, suffer, worship and die.

Because of limited space, the dynamic aspect of the society could not be discussed here but mobility and transition are primary characteristics of socioeconomy of Wādi Fātimā today, as the area moves from the past into the Technological Age. The increasing pressures of economic need have begun to make cracks in the traditions of social propriety. Social changes affect the status of the individual within the society who also in turn is an active part of his society.

While the bedouin still carries with him the traditional feelings of 'aib or disrespect toward certain types of work, his desires for cash, for security, and for material luxuries offered by the cities could not be overlooked by his practical mind. One can now hear the proverb “Sana'a bi al-ydi aman min al-faqar” in the Wādi, which means “A job by the hand is more secure than poverty.” This saying implies that manual job is not fully welcomed here but at the same time it infers that they are now realizing that even disgraceful job is better than poverty without any lucrative job.

However, we can not simply conclude that the economic needs of bedouins shall transform the social aspects of their life into the “modern” ones which we often identify as “westernization.” When we consider the modernization of this society, we should first understand its status quo, and only after that, we could foresee a kind of “unique modernization” based on the strong characteristics of the society, which are outlined in this paper.