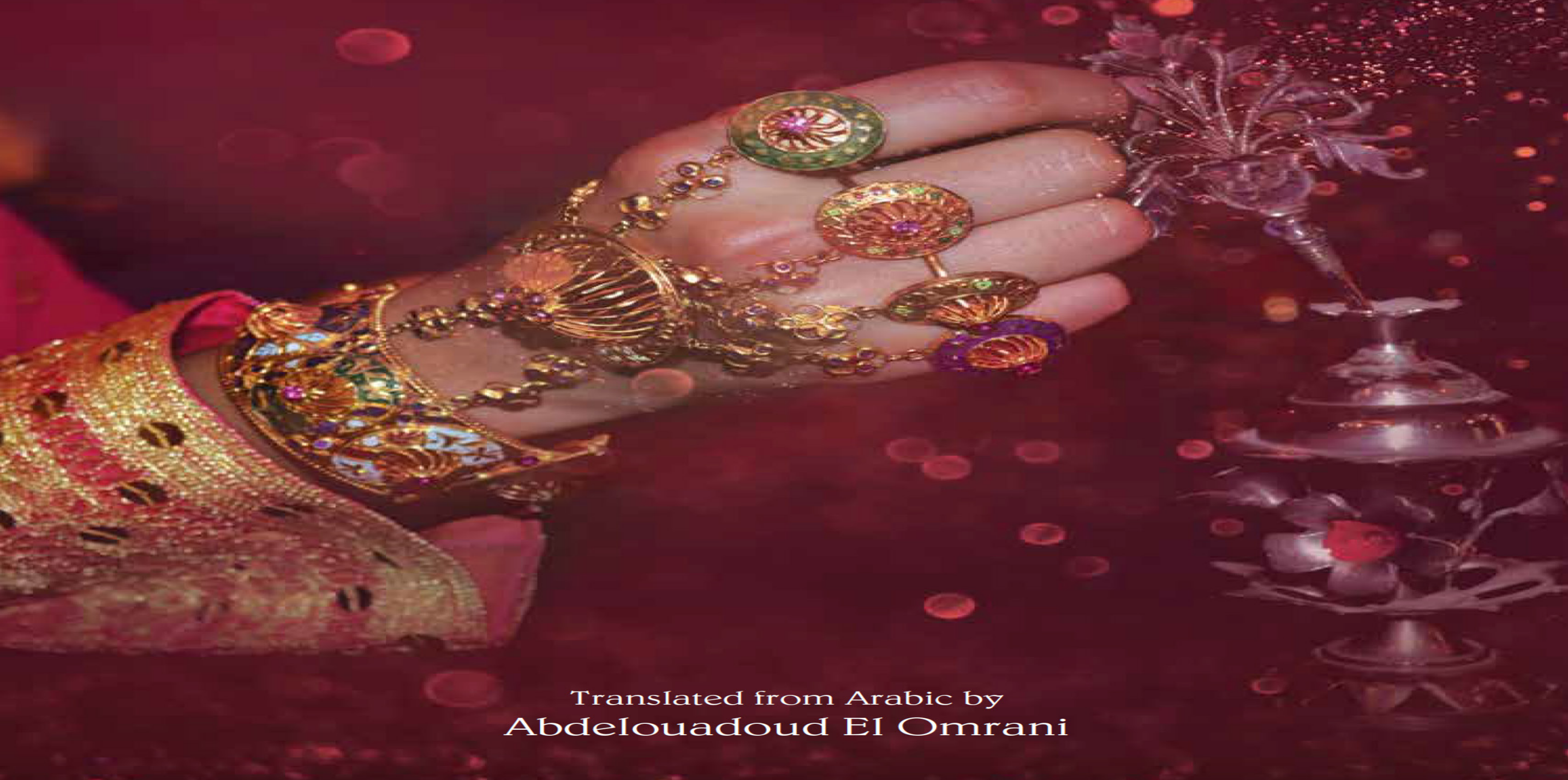


Marriage

Regulations, Customs and Traditions
in Qatari Society

Nora Bint Nasser Bin Jassem Al Thani



Translated from Arabic by
Abdelouadoud El Omrani



Department of Cultural Research & Studies

ISBN:

Marriage in Qatar, Its regulations, customs and traditions
in Qatari society
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Translated from Arabic by Abdelouadoud El Omrani
Doha, 2015

Original Title:

Al-Zawajj fi Qatar, Nora bint Nasser bin Jassem Al Thani

الزواج في قطر

Cover, book design and graphics: Nora bint Nasser bin Jassem
Al Thani
Photos by Abdelhakim El Omrani

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Presentation

Marriage is often poetically called in Arabic Farhat Al-Hayat, or life's joy. It is a crucial event that signs the end of a lifecycle and the beginning of a new one.

In this book, Sheikha Nora bint Nasser bin Jassem Al Thani addresses the marriage in Qatari society in her quality of a specialized researcher, using methodological investigation and tools of analysis that give a reliable credit to her work. From the social education during childhood through puberty, she investigates the preludes to marriage in folkways and culture. She focuses then on all steps of marriage from the engagement stage until the wedding night and the first morning habits.

This multicolored, multifaceted book is a passionate journey through Qatari tangible and intangible cultural heritage that deserves its place in personal and public libraries. In our efforts to expand the spectrum of readership, this work has been translated in English and in French as well.

Sheikha Nora bint Nasser bin Jassem Al Thani deserves our deepest thanks and recognition for her outstanding endeavor. We wish that her work will enrich the corpus of publications related to heritage and folk culture.

Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kawari
Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage

Dedication

I dedicate this book to every Qatari woman that preserves her deep rooted identity in the age of globalization.

To knowledge Seekers:

It is not only a book restricted to the narrations of the ancient traditions related to the Qatari society, but it reflects the role of the Qatari woman and her real struggle within the scope of the future vision.

Through social investigation, the book demonstrates that women have never been marginalized in the Qatari society, and that they have permanently played crucial roles in all aspects of life.

Noora bint Nasser bin Jassem Al Thani

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Introduction

Introduction

Human societies have not witnessed easy and secure alternative systems in exchange for the family one, as they did not understand marriage through a unique significance or a defined and final pattern. Although marriage bears several meanings among different people, and has several patterns in different social cultures, in Arab Gulf society it bears a single meaning and has a unified form.

Marriage in our countries is in no way a private affair, as it is not an individual choice or a totally personal decision. It is primarily a public matter, a familial choice, and a collective decision. The family nucleus involved in the son's or the daughter's marriage extends to reach the clan and the tribe, and may even stretch and widen to involve the community at large. It remains ruled and managed by social prevailing rules, criteria, and cultural values.

This study addresses the issue of marriage and family in our Qatari society, as it tackles a number of related issues and topics, either because they affect it or are subject to its impact.

The importance of the study appears in its focus on observing, registering, and documenting the marriage and the family system in Qatari society through its historical changes and its course from the past to the present, from private to public, and from local to global.

Despite the rapid cultural and social changes and the depth of economic and political transformations, we cannot easily draw a dividing line between the old course and the new trends. In fact, as for issues related to marriage and family, the past is still embodied in the present and extending towards the future in a distinguishable way. Qatari youth regard themselves as part of the world youth but with many distinguishing features that are still clearly alive in the field of relationships and family interactions. Thus, the study addresses in the First Chapter the Qatari social upbringing process as a prelude to marriage and analyses its role in preparing and habilitating children

to puberty and maturity, and in particular the role played by popular folkways and games in this vital process.

Upbringing refers to the process through which individuals acquire patterns of behavior, criteria and trends, types of knowledge, skills, and potentials that allow them generally to be members that are able and prepared to the expected roles expected in their community.

In reality, society is the large cultural environment where a human being lives and gains his culture during his lifecycle stages (child, teenager, adult, and then elderly). Through these stages, culture moves – via acculturation and social concord – from the previous to the successive generation; and this applies to popular literature, arts, folk games, customs and habits, as well as knowledge, beliefs, concepts, and perceptions.

During childhood, for instance, the child gains his/her own culture through social education process, i.e. the concepts of “manhood” (masculinity) Rojoolah and “womanhood” (femininity) Onoothah, as well as the related behavior's patterns, the future roles dedicated to the male and the female, and the preparation and training through folk games, tales, stories, symbols, meanings, proverbs, and songs. Through this acquisition, the child gets prepared after a while to override the childhood stage and engage in the manhood, facing thus, marriage.

In light of this, the Chapter displays these successive life stages and the vital social and cultural related processes.

In the Second Chapter, the study deals with marriage preferences and types. It focuses in particular on the popular cultural significances supporting early marriage and internal or familial one, as well as those discouraging delaying the age of marriage and the external or foreign one.

The Qatari environment played a role in raising the value of marriage; the nature of economic activities (pearl diving, fishing, and grazing) imposed the availability of manpower in numbers that would allow the good functioning of these activities. Thus, early marriage was one of the means to achieve this goal.

Simultaneously, the Bedouin nature imposed in most geographical areas of Qatari society **the necessity of the familial marriage of first grade** (paternal and maternal cousins) **so that the tribe would maintain its cohesion, name, fortune, and power.** This habit is still alive today, and we can easily note the rise of its rates by reading the census of marriage contracts nowadays. The customs and habits that evaluate the early marriage of the young men and women are prevailing too, and most of the marriages are concentrated in the age group 17-21 for young women and 22-24 for young men.

Other traditions such as Tahyeer (availability), Tasmiya (naming), and Wahba (gift) do support early marriages too.

In front of these justifications of early marriage, there is a wealthy cultural heritage related to prohibitions of late or delayed marriage for the young woman and the young man – particularly the young woman – in traditional Qatari society.

The study presents in the Third Chapter the engagement stages and their current arrangements, and the recent relationship nowadays between the fiancé and his fiancée in the circle of family, relatives, and acquaintances.

In fact, marriage starts with an engagement. Although many practices, folkways, and special celebrations surround this stage in other Arab societies, in the traditional Qatari society engagement was never a separate or a long-lasting event, and there are no particular celebrations or arrangements pertaining to it. It is marked by the agreement between the two families - mostly brothers, sisters or cousins – followed by the marriage contract Al-Malka (or Al-Milcha), and the marriage itself, all happening in a week, or a month at most.

Nowadays, we notice that engagement and its related folkways and celebrations spread in Qatari society due to changes and cultural exchanges with their varied tributaries.

Thus, this Chapter addresses the customs and traditions related to the first engagement in Qatari society in ancient and present times. It includes the terminology and local words indicating the liaison process such as the engagement and its stages, the first appearance of the term, the practices, and the preferred age of marriage for

the young man and woman. The Chapter presents also old Qatari traditions and customs precluding to marriage such as

the liaison between the two families by means of a promise to marry the boy or the girl when they grow up, the Tahyeer (availability), Tasmiya (naming), and Wahba (gift) and the related conditions and practices, the arrangements pertaining to such liaisons, their prevalence in different social environments, and the extent of changes occurred in present times.

In the Fourth Chapter, the study focuses on dowry and bride's trousseau, and on arrangements and belief practices accompanying them.

The subject of dowry and bride's trousseau represents an intermediate stage in marriage's habits. It is in fact preceded by the engagement and followed by the wedding. There are many practices and habits that revolve around it and reveal consistent differences between past and present times, countryside and city, poor and rich social classes, and large and small families.

Given the fact that marriage is a start, a new life, and the foundation of a new family, it requires a number of arrangements and requisites, each bearing a specific nature. Marriage comprises indeed rich elements from the heritage that are self-imposing and whose effects reach the extended original family and the new-born nucleus ones. Many parties are involved in the trousseau, extending thus the circle of the folkways and the exposure of the social notoriety. This stage includes also some habits that reflect the status of the woman from the man's point of view, such as ornaments with costumes and jewelry offered by the groom to his bride. These habits reflect also aspects of changes affecting Qatari society as a whole.

Dowry completes this stage and comprises a number of elements related to heritage. In fact, it is an indicator showing the extent of similarity and dissemblance among environments, social classes, and professions... The value, amount, and type of dowry vary according to the different environments, economic activities, modes of payment, seasons of payment and marriage. On the other hand, dowry is an indicator of the degree and kind of changes that occurred on marriage habits, Qatari society, and culture in general.

These are issues that will be addressed in this Chapter through the explored elements.

The study reaches in Chapter Five the theme of the wedding night, its procedures, and the accompanying preparations and celebrations.

Wedding, Ors in Arabic indicates the marriage celebration; it is also called Laylat al-Ors or wedding night. Its date is agreed upon by the bride's and the groom's families. This night is always preceded by celebrations and events that differ according to communities, cultures, and marriage habits. Arabs use mostly Laylat al-Ors to indicate the night during which marriage is consumed.

In Qatari society, Laylat al-Ors indicates in the present, as in ancient times, the bride and the groom's marriage. It is noteworthy that the term Ors and its linguistic derivatives are the most common terms in the various regions, classes, and historic periods. Thus, it is said Arrasa for (he got married), Ors (marriage) of the daughter of a person with the son of another one, or Laylat Ors "wedding night" of a given person. Two other terms are used for subsidiary customs related to marriage: Zeffah and Dakhla. Zeffah is used to name the moment the groom's family, friends, and neighborhood accompany the groom while coming from his parents' house to his own bride, surrounded by relatives and friends chanting songs and playing drums (Ferkat Arrezzafah).

In reality, each step and procedure of the marriage preparation comprise a number of essential steps, and each step in turn comprises many details, elements, and cultural patterns. Some are specific to the bride's family, others to the groom and the bride themselves. They begin with the general preparation for the wedding night of the bride such as the primary embellishment: bathing and perfuming; and for the groom: bathing and shaving/hairdressing, as well as celebrations that occur for these occasions.

In the Sixth Chapter, the study records and follows customs and special beliefs related to Dakhla and Sabahiyya, i.e. First Morning and the accompanying steps such as the bride's embellishment, the scheduled banquets, and the significant codes.

Dakhla is the effective start of the new married life. It constitutes

a transitional step in both married persons lives through the direct encounter face to face of the groom and the bride for the first time. It includes progressive behavioral patterns step-by-step to create sociability after dreariness, affection after apprehension and fear, and confidence after anxiety of the unknown.

Popular beliefs encourage the groom to perform some practices after Dakhla such as prayers and requests in order to ask God for success in the new life.

The successive morning called Sabahiyya is considered the effective start of the marriage parties and the bride's embellishment. Feasts are celebrated immediately after, and they include lunch and dinner parties, congratulations from the family and the neighborhood to the newly married, and possibly some presents to express the joy of the consumed marriage.

The Seventh Chapter tries to sum up the general aspects of the Qatari lifestyle today with its constants and variables from the perspective of the phenomenon studied in the book.

This field study relied of course on the group of informants who dwell daily with the marriage event today, and who have acquired a direct daily expertise. They have abundant information that is not available to other transient data collectors or temporary observers working on a related research. These informants helped in presenting a detailed image of aspects of constancy and change occurred on marriage habits during past times through their active involvement, to a degree that we may describe them as "Witnesses to the Times"!

The informants were (8) men and (12) women whose ages vary between 40 and 80 years, and divided into seven main professional groups in the public or the private sectors. It is noteworthy that these professions are closely related to marriage habits. A number of field data collectors, men and women, took part in the work and relied on observation, oriented interviews, voice and photographic recordings. This helped in collecting and filing fieldwork data of the human Lifecycle.

Acknowledgments...

Nora bint Nasser bin Jassem Al Thani

Chapter One: Socialization, an approach to marriage

- Folkways and initiation of children to marriage
- Popular games and preparation of children to marriage
- Relationship between males and females before puberty
- Qatari family and children's puberty

Folkways and initiation of children to marriage

We will present in this section the role of popular heritage in allowing children realize the meaning of the term “marriage” and raise their awareness of this system and its concepts. We will limit the study here to folk arts – such as stories, proverbs, songs, sayings – that the family reiterates in presence of the children to explain the functions of the marriage in the social, economic, and religious domains. We will rely on the ethnographic data that informers collected from Qatari society.

Ethnographic data indicate that Qatari society is divided into human groups with different life patterns: First, the Bedouin community living in the desert and relying on grazing and nomadic life following water and pasture; then the urban community settling on seashore and relying on handicrafts, trade, pearling, fishing, and shipbuilding. The urban community includes also the townsmen living in urban settlements in the hinterland – including the Qatari Ruling Emiri Family – and practicing trade and some other economic activities.

In light of this ecologic environment, marriage would start in fact since childhood. The Bedouin community was indeed quite simple, practicing shepherding while its members lived under tents. There were in this community no separations; men would see women and vice-versa in tents or while grazing camels and sheep. In the urban coastal community, members would share happy and sad ceremonies; and when someone needs help in training his ship to be maintained, offered, or painted, he would seek the assistance of the neighborhood to pull it out of the sea. On the other hand, people would meet five times a day in the mosque for prayers and gather during the evening in Al-Majlis around a cup of coffee or tea and the (old and young men chatters). Al-Majlis in those times constituted the unique entertainment and interaction place between members of a single neighborhood in absence of modern communication media such as television, radio, cinema etc...

Al-Majlis in close concert with other Qatari society traditions participated in making childhood the first step of marriage. It occurred in the following ways:

Al-Majlis is the meeting place of community members, an entertainment means, and a learning place where the child would learn manhood, good manners, and commitment. A man would meet there his counterparts and see his young children around... Considering the close relationship, the direct acquaintance, the strong ties, and the sharing of all aspects of life and its attitudes, a man would say to another: "what would you think about marrying so-and-so to so-and-so?" It is inappropriate that a man asks for a husband for his daughter since the daughter's father and the son's father meet regularly in the mosque, during prayers, in Al-Majlis, during travels, and pearl diving. The two parties know closely the values and good morals of each other, the proverb says: "plants' qualities come from the seeds' qualities: Like father, like son."



Social traditions have helped in reaching an early agreement about marriage – as soon as childhood – through familial marriage, and in particular between paternal cousins, and sometimes between maternal ones too. This is particularly true in the traditions related to Tahyeer or availability since early childhood. No one will come to ask in marriage a paternal cousin if her cousin has reserved her

from marrying. The cousin may also marry her against everyone's will since he is her cousin and benefits according to the prevailing traditions, from the priority to be her husband. In fact, this priority right is no longer existed in recent times due to many reasons such as the spread of education, urbanism, etc.

"They declare indeed that a given girl is available to a given young man; the information is spread among all people and through all houses."

There are many folkways that reinforce the idea of marriage and smooth its understanding by children. This occurs through everyday life situations and in some occasions when the boy obeys his parents' orders, plays a given role in family, during circumcision or religious feasts such as Eid al-Idha (Sacrifice Feast) and Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan). Parents, especially grandmothers and mothers, are proficient in good prayers in favor of children, both boys and girls. Girls benefit from a greater amount of prayers since they seem more obedient than boys (they will also have a greater need of good prayers later) and because they bear the family honor. Mothers and grandmothers would say:

"The girl has to safeguard herself and save her honor. The girl ends marrying, and a woman without children is like a palm tree with no dates." And "May God allow me to see your children in the future!"

Each time we perform a job at home, they would tell us good prayers and wish us to have good children and a happy married life. When the girl is around ten years old, there is a multiplication of messages coming from her mother that would show her the ways to marriage and its traditions

When the girl is old enough and her hair is long, she comes to her mother to comb her hair and take care of it. In these occasions, the mother would start saying: "You are the share of said young man who will marry you" and she says the name of her fatherly or motherly cousin... The mother would add: "May God allow me to see you in the Happiness House".

We can note in this case a certain insistence to make sure that the young girl is aware of the necessity of the early marriage and its related habits.

The folk **proverbs** come in turn to highlight the importance of the marriage traditions among children; they strengthen them indeed and focus in particular on the preference of cousins' marriage in the familial marriage. Therefore, proverbs are told to children – girls and boys – to strengthen the preferred cultural trend “The beauty of a cloth is when it is repaired with the same original tissue”. Proverbs advise also to respect social balance when choosing a partner and encourage sons and daughters to take into consideration the social status, i.e. choosing a partner with an equal status (neither lower nor higher): “The long dress will exhaust you”.

The mother strives also to teach her daughter the housework and train her well since the age of seven. At this age, the young girl “performs half of the house duties... She washes clothes while holding her brother on her back or in her arms.” In some cases, the young girl serves her father while her mother does not know about that. An informant said:

“I have served my father since the age of ten... I used to prepare his clothes, his falcon hunting accessories, and his food. He even shared some of his secrets with me, and all that helped me when I got married... People usually call the woman that is good with her husband and in her house “Sena'a”. My mother used to tell us that the active dynamic woman brings happiness, and the proverb says: “Lively people bring life, and dead ones (meaning lazy) add to your sorrow”.

The **folk tales** were an entertaining mean for both adults and children; in addition they had an educational role through the representation of the society's culture and by inspiring social respect in daily behavior as a kind of social discipline. Some stories narrate how to preserve female cousins and suggest that marrying them is better than marrying foreigners. Before sleeping, the mother or the grandmother would tell children tales that support marrying relatives. One of these tales is about a paternal cousin who loved his first cousin but had to travel abroad during a conquest. Back from his journey, he asked about his cousin and they told him that she died... An old woman informed him that she did not die but was forcefully married to a foreigner... What he saw in the grave was just a lamb that was slaughtered and buried to let him believe that his cousin died. The man went to his uncle and told him what he knew and requested to know where his lover was because he insisted to marry her. It is a tale that supports the marriage

with the first cousin and the insistence on that even if the uncle hides the marriage of his daughter with a foreigner.

There is another type of folk tales told by adults to young children and aiming to teach social discipline, they have an educational value. Children are told about the tale of “Assahera Hemarat al-Gaylah” (the Witch that is the Snap's Donkey).

Collected field material indicates that the grandmother – in most cases – is the person in charge of narrating tales to children for entertainment, education or raising awareness. The nature of Bedouin and urban communities as well as the spread of extended families favored the grandmothers in playing this role without competitors.

One informant says about this educational role played by the grandmother:

“She would sit with the girls in the house's courtyard after the night prayer and tell them some stories and tales about diving, rain, cold, and mushrooms (symbols of spring).”

In the countryside and rural areas, the grandmother would intimidate girls of men before marriage, indicating them as “wolves”; this is aimed to save their honor and protect it telling them in verses:

“My daughter, wear off the wolf that may bite you with his fangs, You should know that wolf's fangs have no remedy.”

It means that if a woman offers herself to a man without marriage, she deserves death. The grandmother would compare the condition of this woman to a cooker (Burma or Lajhala), if it is broken you cannot repair it. Men, she would say, are different since “they bear their shame”.

Tales and stories related to stepmother are means of upbringing and facing married life in different ways.

In a first version, such tales and stories point to the abuses of the stepmother in upbringing the children. She would oblige the children – daughters in particular – to be at her service and to take care of the house and its requirements. Thus, the daughter plays

the wife's and the housemaid's role quite early, usually when she is nine or ten years old. She would wash, cook, collect wood, clean the house and raise young children... In such case, the stepmother would be keen to avoid them early marriage. All this justifies what an informant reported about a young woman who knew about the coming marriage of her father with another woman and who sung:

*My stepmother... My stepmother! Go away and be gone,
You took my father, may you never feel happy!!
On the same note, a folk proverb about the young woman who is living with her stepmother states about being orphaned (fatherless):
"To be orphan is better for her than to have her stepmother as her guardian".*

In a second version, the stepmother is sympathetic towards her stepchildren and cares about them before having her own children. After that, her attention focuses exclusively on her own children, she neglects them and may even be harsh towards them. She would not encourage the marriage of her stepdaughters in order to have them at her service and the service of her children.

The role of the grandmother and the mother in preparing the young woman for marital life: this role is remarkable in Qatari community – in past times – and in all human societies generally. This reflects the system of folkways used in upbringing young girls. Thus, when she is seven or eight years old, her mother would teach her cooking, washing, cleaning, and would accompany her in all steps of housework telling her:

"Come dear help me... Do this with me... Do as I do... Come dear and do the housework... Do it this way!"

At this age, the daughter plays also her mother's role when she gives birth, performing all housework instead of her. During the post-natal period, the daughter takes care of her father washing his clothes, preparing his meals. This is true for rich and ordinary people; if the father has Al-Majlis to receive guests, she would cook for them, and if he is an ordinary person she would cook for him. This shows how the young woman is trained to serve the family and Al-Majlis, depending on social status, and how folkways and customs support this role.

On the other hand, the grandmother is in charge of bringing the young woman up and preparing her for marital life; the grandmother is indeed the first and the last reference regarding the marriage of young men and women. She knows the genealogy of the family of the person that wants to marry or that is wanted for marriage. The proverb says: "He who is older than you one night has a knowledge of one year more than you."

In addition, the grandmother educates the young girls and teaches them prayers, ablutions, and decent behavior after puberty.

This role is more evident in the extended family. The grandmother starts in the morning by holding al-Tawa¹ and calling her grandchildren; they would gather around her and listen to her advises. She would then accompany them to al-Halal (sheep, cows, dromedaries, and goats), call each goat by its name, talk to them and to their offsprings, and exude ewe's milk while children follow her with interest. After that, the grandmother would go to shake milk in Laska (a leather container where milk is stored and shaken until it coagulates).



Preparing / Making "Laban"

The children would help their grandmother shaking Laban² one after the other and learning thus this role dedicated in future for the young woman. The grandmother would encourage them and reward the best of them by placing a piece of butter over Laban that the winner would drink.

¹ A Circular iron tool used to bake bread by moving it rapidly on both sides

² Fresh milk is shaken until it acquires a sour and pleasant taste. Kind of buttermilk

The grandmother would also help her daughter by paving the way of her grandchildren for their future married life. The mother would say: "My dear, you will go among people whose house is different from ours, you will have to order everything in house"; she would stand with her in the kitchen while acquiring her knowledge and say: "Woman must do everything the right way..."

The mother has more rest when her daughter grows. Proverbs say: "Who has no daughter should look for one", and "The daughter is the mother's friend and keeps her secret". The fact that the mother relies on her daughter since her childhood would prepare her for married life later.

Folk games and preparation of children to marriage

Folk games are part of children's entertainment activities; furthermore they have an educational and a preparatory function for marriage and future life. The field materials show the diversity of these games according to Qatari social environments. There are games from the urban and the coastal areas, and others from the countryside and the hinterland. Games are also different according to gender: males and females.

Girls' games

They consist mainly of "Barrooy³" and "Medood⁴", i.e. dollies and puppets, usually made by the mother for her daughter or even made by the daughter herself using material available in her environment. An informant says about the game of the bride and the groom: "Young girls collect bones of goats, chicken or bustards to make a male and a female puppet. They would cover the bride's face with Battoola⁵ and her head with a scarf called Mlifaa⁶, and put a white Ghotra and Egal made of black threads over the groom's head. They would then create a space similar to their room and decorate it with Doosheq⁷ and Misnad⁸ made of piece of unused small pieces of cloth."

³ A game played by the girl with here girlfriends

⁴ Puppets made of young goat and chicken bones

⁵ Piece of a given cloth hand-made and covering the face of Qatari women immediately after marriage. its cover the nose and part of the face

⁶ Head cover made of black fabric and extending to fall on the back of the woman. it is 2 to 2.5 meter long

⁷ Long white cotton fabric

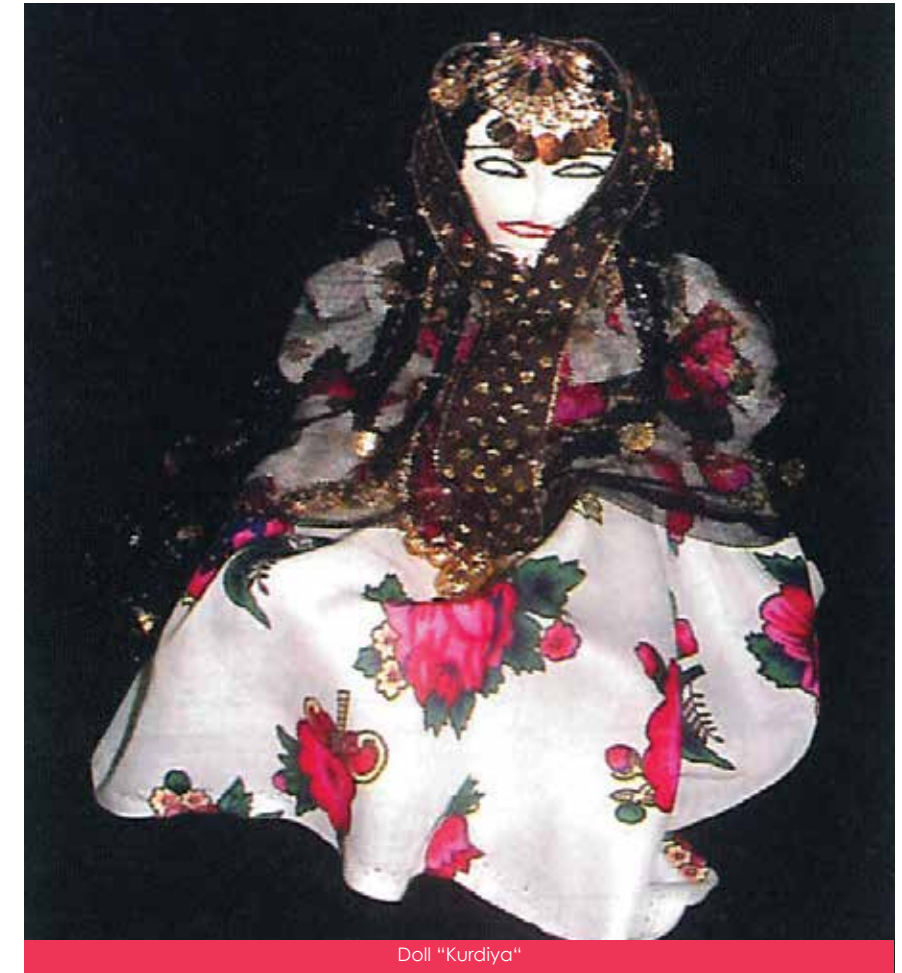
⁸ Pillow



The young girl and her friends prepare a small area dedicated to them and their dolls and puppets; they divide it into a kitchen with kitchenware and a sitting space. Young girls would then play theatrically the role of married women or housewives and speak in the name of the dolls about daily life events and situations. They also use Barroos as the support of their theatrical games representing social events and ceremonies such as feasts and marriages. Some of them play with another kind of doll called al-Karradi⁹.

Young girls adopt these games in the Qatari environment in general. The mother in turn prepares her daughter for her future role of spouse and housewife. She would help her make a bed for the baby; it is made of wood and called al-Mennez. Young girls gather to play these games representing the traditional family and dividing the jobs among them: house cleaning and productive activities such as poultry and animal farming, dairy productions etc.

⁹ A toy made of cloth filled with cotton. It is embellished with black hair and its eyes and nose are drawn with black pen or embroidered. It is then clothed to appear as a girl. Teelah

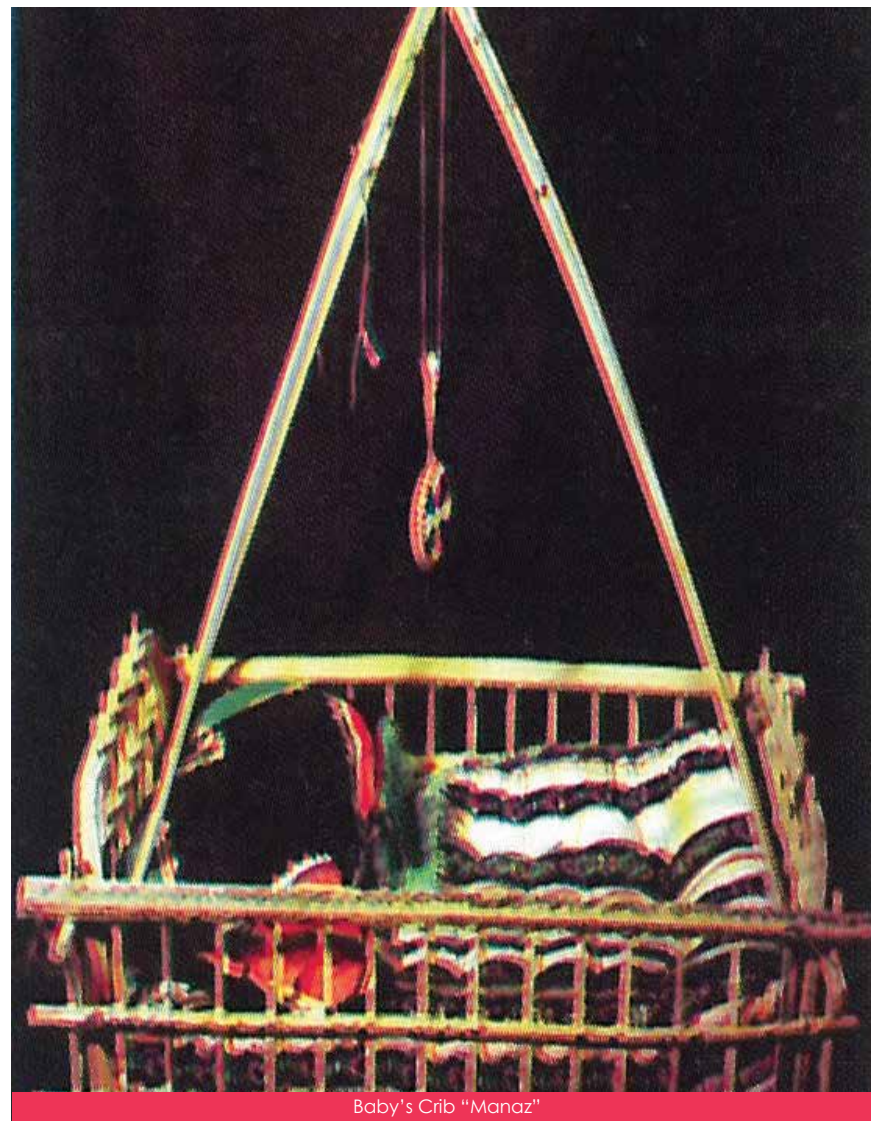


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Young girls used also to play over the ground with pebbles, beads, and oysters. In addition to these games, those living in coastal areas would go to swim in the sea and build sand houses along the shores.

In the Bedouin environment, young girls would play with Barrooy dolls too. An informant says: "The mother makes a dolly or a puppet for her daughter by crossing two wooden sticks, putting a kind of small

pillow on the top of the longer stick to create a face. She draws two eyes, a nose and a mouth to give the appearance of a dolly's head. After that, she puts on it clothes such as Derraa and Sheela, and prepares a cradle. Then, she teaches her daughter how to put her dolly to sleep. This is how the young girl learns to take care of her baby."



Baby's Crib "Manaz"

Boys' games

It is a collection of games played by boys with girls or played exclusively among boys. It is noteworthy first that such games are adapted to the gender (males) and prepare them to their future roles. Second, they are different from an environment to another: coastal areas (fishing and diving environment) and internal regions (urban or rural where the sea does not play a determinant role). Marbles are among these games and are called Teelah¹⁰. It relies on the existence of playing companions; the boy plays with his neighbors and relatives and does his best to win and collect consistent numbers of marbles. He would thus beat his competitors, take their marbles and go back home proud and happy showing what he has personally won.



Sea Games

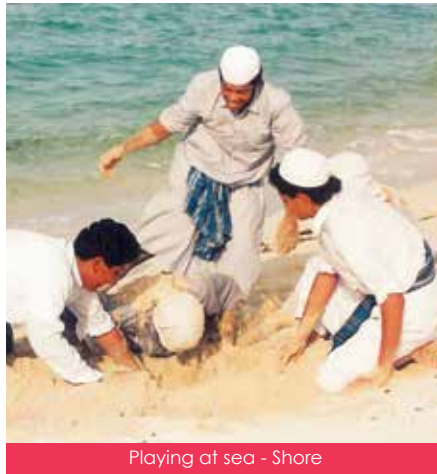
It is clear that such game develops in the boy the spirit of effort and the search for success, a behavior that is encouraged by the father.

In coastal regions, the most spread and famous games are probably what we may call: sea games, i.e. those games that are related to the sea and represent a miniature copy of the main professions practiced by adults. Al-Kashtee is one of these games that consists of a wooden body made by the boys in the shape of a ship to which they attach a sail and tie with a rope, and place in water to float and navigate. Boys play also the game of diving in the sea that

is clearly connected with the diving profession and pearls search inside small seashells. They imitate for example al-Tabbab in the diving team as a kind of professional training. In fact many adult divers played these games when they were children.



A Group of Kids Playing by Sea Shore



Playing at sea - Shore

Other games practiced along the beaches consist of building sand houses; once these fragile constructions are covered by sea waters, children would place stones on the top of them and stand over them.

It is noteworthy that these games have disappeared completely nowadays and remained only in the memory of old informants. Instead, they were substituted by electric, mechanic, and electronic games (PC games, music instruments...) TV and radio programs attracted children's interest with their wealth of topics, stories, tales, cartoons, and puppets. Using sound and image, these programs play the same role as the one that was once played by traditional games with more attraction and excitement. But their goals are sometimes different.

⁹ small marble ball made of variety of colored glass

Relationship between males and females before puberty

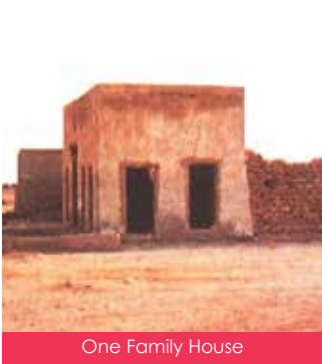
We will address at this stage the relationship between parents and children and between boys and girls in the Qatari family in the past. We will review the folkways that are followed in bringing the children up in regard to the sleeping areas, the sleepers' gender, and the age at which children are separated during bedtime according to their gender. In fact, important changes occurred in lifestyle and quality influencing these folkways; we will therefore review the folkways in the past, and successively we will pinpoint the changes.

Sleeping area:

In the past, urban Qatari houses were different in their size, furniture, and divisions according to the social class of the family. There were therefore three different levels of housing. The first was inhabited by upper classes and consisted of an Arab house built with stones, presenting a large courtyard with several rooms around it, and occupied by a single family. The middle class lived in a medium-size house built with stones too. It is comprised of three to four rooms, and each nucleus family occupies a room opening on the courtyard and equipped with a Meeded, that are toilets. The house of the lower class is made of a single room or two where the whole family lives and to which a Meeded is attached and dedicated to the parents and another one is external.

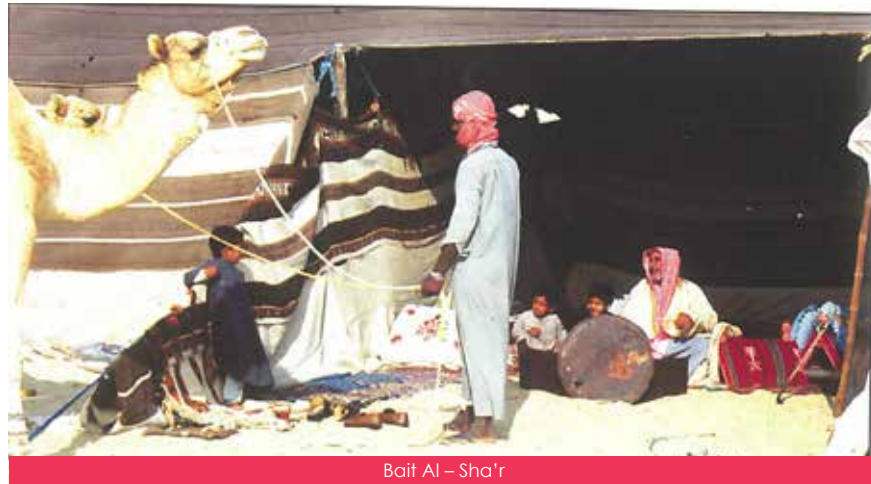


Extended Arabic House of Family



One Family House

Bedouin houses are tents or Booyoot al-Shaar made of sheep wool and goats hair; they are dedicated to men with a separation in the middle to create an area for women. This curtain is also made of wool and woven by Bedouin women.



Bait Al – Sha'r

Notwithstanding the differences in social status, the members of a single nucleus family used to sleep in the same room and organize the available surface accordingly. There were usually no sleeping beds, but straw mats (for lower classes) or cotton blankets (for average and upper classes).

"Each has his sleeping area and sleeps in a given direction; the grandmother in a direction, the father and the mother in a direction, and the children in another one. They would repeat the saying: only the tomb is narrow."

During the summertime, the hot season, men would prepare an area that is elevated over the ground that they call Sheem or Areesh "where they sleep after placing their blankets during the night in order to have a cool place." The mother would clean the house-floor and extend the straw mats on which she places the cotton blankets for the children; each one sleeps then in his dedicated place.

Or "all the children sleep together in a collective sleeping area that covers the floor... They have blankets under them and others covering them; their father and mother sleep in a dedicated side. Sometimes, they also sleep in the courtyard near the room's door."

Families usually place the parents sleeping area in a side and the teens area in the opposite one; in the central area, they prepare the sitting area with a carpet "Zooliya" and pillows. This sleeping equipment is generally taken away when the family members wake up in the morning, and the mother would extend it again in the evening, but children may also do it themselves. When it is sleeping time, the family turns the light of the oil lamp off. Oil lamp is called Seraj or Fanar and is "a small petrol container with a wick that burns."

Describing the house, an informant says:

"It is made of one or two rooms. Each married man and woman have one room while the kitchen is collective."

Today there are large villas and houses and huge palaces. There are rooms according to the number of children, bathrooms with cold and hot water, beds with blankets, modern furniture, electric light, gas and electric appliances, and all modern technological equipment. This is the case in urban or Bedouin areas, along the coast or in the hinterland.

Separating children from parents during sleeping times

The house's characteristics obliged the whole extended family to live in a single house divided among the nucleus families, each one having a room. There was thus no separation between children and their parents during sleeping times as in the present. Around one meter or less separated the sleepers who occupied the same room. The parents used to sleep in a side of the room, around one meter far from them there was the young children sleeping area, and in the opposite side the older children occupy their area. Usually, children remain near their parents until the age of five; they are then separated but remain in the same room if they belong to the lower classes. Among middle-classes, they would sleep in the second section (the area separated from their parents one by a curtain) and during summertime "they sleep in the roof". The upper classes usually dedicate separated sleeping places for parents and for children. When children grow up, they usually sleep in Al-Majlis or in the dedicated area.

Field data show that children were quite simple in past times, boys would accompany their fathers in the sea and for diving; once they are sixteen or seventeen years old, they get married. Therefore, they do not spend a long time with their families and they marry quickly. The same happens with girls, once they are twelve or fourteen, they marry too, and the period spent with the parents is therefore not long. In turn, the period of separation of the children from their parents is relatively short. These folkways have changed in present, and children are separated from their parents at the age of two or three years – or even before – and each member of the family, boy or girl, has his own room.

Informants agree that the separation between gender starts at the age of seven and may extend until ten. When the young woman is ten years old, she is separated from young men, but it happens also that such separation occurs at the age of five.

“Girls would stay with their mothers all the time except during sleeping hours.”

“In bed, girls sleep with their mothers or their grandmothers...”

If the place is small and does not allow the separation between genders, then the grandmother or the older sister would sleep with them.

In the Bedouin environment, the whole family lives under the tent that is divided into two areas, one for males and the other for females; sometimes each gender have their own tent.

In the summertime, they stay under tents divided into two parts as indicated above; therefore, there is a complete separation in bed between males and females. Following this early preparation to separating males and females, there is until today a full separation between men and women in real life, although such rigid and rigorous practices face pressures aiming to change them.

Qatari family and children's puberty

There is a set of folkways related to the maturity of children within what is called puberty, a preamble indicating the end of childhood and the entrance into adulthood. The family is indeed the nearest and the most capable to follow up the puberty of the children through

well-known signs and signals, in addition to the accompanying behavioral changes. We will thus review the way in which the family looks at puberty and how it faces it, as well as the aspects of change in the dresses and accessories of female teenagers...

Puberty signs are multiple and divided into external visible signs and internal hidden ones. This is true for both sexes.

The age of puberty

The age of puberty varies from a society to another, whereby environment plays probably a decisive role, since hot climate fosters early puberty. Young man enters puberty when he is fourteen or fifteen at most. He becomes a man and joins the men in main activities such as fishing and diving. He enters the world of diving gradually learning its main positions: Tabbab, Radheef, Seeb, and Ghees at the end of the cycle. An informant summarizes female puberty saying:

“The age of puberty of young girls depends on their temperament (blood temperature); those who have a hot temperament reach it at the age of 9 to 12, cold temperaments between 14 and 15 years old.”

What is meant by “blood temperature” in this case is probably the effect of environmental factors and the physiological nature of the body.

The father used to monitor his boys when they reach puberty and advise them about the code of conduct. The Metawaa, a scholar in religious sciences, advises the children about purification and ablutions.



Motawa'a teaching little girls the Quran

Traditionally, when the young man reaches adulthood, he tells his father that he wants to marry. The father would then advise him explaining that marriage is for those who can sustain themselves: "those who live from the sweat of their brows." The mother in turn takes care of her daughter orienting and advising her about what is to be done regarding the marriage; she explains that she should reveal her secrets exclusively to her mother or her older sister. On the same level, the Metawaa, a woman scholar, would guide and orient the girl - if she learns the Quran - about purification and ablutions. It is noteworthy that such traditions have changed because of modernization and school education; children are more aware about puberty and know its accompanying signs.

Behavioral changes of the young man and how family faces them

It represents the maturity of the personality and self-development, proofing that the young man is entering adult's world and is starting to bear roles played by men such as working, participating in family spending, and following up family matters... But facts indicate that Qatari society in the past trained the child to attend Al-Majlis of adults "at the age of five, six, or seven where he would study Koran. It was indecent for a boy to stay among women; he would enter women's gatherings only if his father sent him..." At this age, the boy gets used to attend Al-Majlis. The mosque and Al-Majlis were places where he would learn. At puberty, he would be separated from girls because of his continual presence near his father gaining expertise to substitute him later.

Notwithstanding the age of the young men, Al-Majlis played a preparatory professional function for children. At the age of seven, the boy would accompany his father to Al-Majlis to listen to adults' conversation while sitting in last rows with his fellows. Considering the prevalence of the diving profession in the coastal regions of the Qatari society, conversation focused mainly on diving and diving stories. The boy would listen and learn. Some fathers decide to take their children with them during diving journeys once they feel they are mature; it happens when sons are around ten years old.

"The sea teaches him the Tabbab's craft, and he becomes Tabbab." After puberty, the young men would work permanently and start to ask for marriage.

Behavioral changes of the young woman and how family faces them

The behavior of the young woman changes when she reaches puberty, she becomes shy and feels she is not a child anymore, she would also feel that she has grown and is mature. She faces more discipline and is not easily allowed to go out. One informant diagnoses this change saying:

"At the age of puberty, the girl becomes shy and refuses to encounter with foreigners, when she sees a neighbor, she hides; she does not play anymore with boys. Now, she knows that she is a woman and she is responsible for her house and her family, and she feels it is indecent to go out of the house unless she goes out with her mother to her aunts houses."

The mother starts to address her and advise her to preserve herself and take care of the house duties. This appears in the young woman's behavior while her mother tells her that she has now grown and is a woman, and puts other restrictions at adulthood.

"She is not allowed to stay with women or to leave the house unless to the Metawaa or to bring water. But these restrictions annoyed the young woman in urban areas, and she would try to break these ties by moving fast and violently; she would climb the wall or scale to the roof to speak to her female friends."

These facts demonstrate that the mother felt she was the first chief of her daughter “while men’s eyes stood behind her.”

The prevailing rule in the past, whether in urban or Bedouin areas, is that the mother is responsible for her daughter and the father for his son. This implies that the mother was fully responsible for the behavior, the education, and the refinement of the daughter, as is the father for the son; “therefore at the age of adulthood, the mother is responsible for her daughter.”

There is no objection to the marriage as soon as the girl reaches the age of maturity; in this regard, an informant confirms: “When the girl reaches the age of maturity, she does not refuse the demand for marriage.” In some cases, the girl would marry before the age of maturity, and when she reaches it, the marriage would be consumed effectively. This means that the daughter’s marriage was the main preoccupation of the family, even if the marriage occurs sometimes with retroactive effect.

Conditions in rural regions were quite the opposite of those in urban ones. The girl would graze the family’s dromedaries or sheep and meet other shepherds (girls and boys). Girls used also to collect firewood from the countryside; they were expert in grazing and firewood collecting thanks to the experience gained when they were young and accompanied by their mothers. They were able to perform hard tasks as they have learnt from their mothers. A camel-herd mother for example is able to ride her dromedary and graze in the desert; when she feels the pains of childbirth, she would give birth, cover her new-born with a cloth, and go back home riding her camel and holding her child... The same occurs with the shepherd... “she would graze, give birth, and ride back home holding her baby.” Young girls learn from their mother qualities such as patience, firmness, and burden bearing while preserving simultaneously her honor and her virginity.

In this environment, mothers and grandmothers played the role of educational and ethic orientation advising girls how to preserve their “honor”. They would narrate Hazawee, i.e. tales inspired from the nature of their environment in order to transmit the ethical content to the girl. The following is one of these tales narrated by an informant:

“The grandmother told us there was in ancient times a girl who used

to graze sheep in the countryside and that no one educated her in her stepmother’s house. A man saw her once and approached her gently with nice words until he got from her what he wanted. After a couple of months, she became pregnant and feared the reaction of her brothers; she wanted therefore to test the reaction of one of them. One windy evening, she lighted the oil lamp, and stood near the open door saying: it’s windy and the wind is fertilizing! Her brother who was an intelligent knight understood the meaning and answered: if the wind is fertilizer, I am a killer! In the following days, he followed her secretly and realized with no doubt what she has done. He asked her to accompany him to bring water from the pit; and while she was overlooking the pit, he pushed her and let her die in it. When people asked about her, he said she had a serious health issues and has passed away. This is the reward of those who offer themselves to men.”

Urban and Bedouin upbringing include several warnings directed to young women before marriage. In the countryside, the mother advises her daughter and orients her. When she hears his voice, she would warn her from the playful man who falls in love, telling her in wise poetic verses:

“Hey wolf howling and growling in this direction, I wonder if these are sounds of hunger or glee,

Hey wolf, do not lose your majesty by chasing gazelles amidst the desert!

My daughter, wear off the wolf that may bite you with his fangs,

You should know that wolf’s fangs have no remedy, and when someone comes to ask your hand, he will then change his decision.”

This means that when a man used you, there are no remedies, and when someone wants to marry you, he will change his opinion once he knows about what happened to you.

Aspects of change in the young woman’s dresses once she reaches adulthood

The dresses: when her daughter is mature, the mother is keen to let her wear Al-Bukhnag¹¹, cover her face, and put Al-Abaya. Covering the face of the young girl before marriage has at least two functions:

¹¹ A cover for head and breast different from the one used to cover only the head, it is embroidered with gold threads and has different shapes, covering completely the breast. It is usually made of black cloth covering the back and reaching the knees. The Bukhang of bedouin women is also black but void of any ornaments or colors.



Al - Bukhnag

First, it protects her face from weather's vicissitudes and from men's and women's glances;

Second, it is an announcement meaning that she has reached adulthood.

The proverb says: When she is twelve, cover her face, and when she is thirteen, marry her.

Ethnographic material indicates that young women – in urban and in Bedouin areas – have to wear Al-Bukhnag with a Serwal to protect them; thus when they play or run, they are not uncovered. Most people in Bedouin regions would put a Burqa¹² on girls' faces at the age of eleven. These strict traditions and folkways would impose decency on young women.

¹¹ A cover for head and breast different from the one used to cover only the head, it is embroidered with gold threads and has different shapes, covering completely the breast. It is usually made of black cloth covering the back and reaching the knees. The Bukhang of Bedouin women is also black but void of any ornaments or colors.

¹² A Face cover made of cloth with two openings for the eyes. Its length varies from a tribe to another. It may have one or two layers, and may look as Niqab



Seewal



Burqa'

It is noteworthy that young women's dresses are subject to continual criticism if they do not comply with social requisites and criteria; such criticism is usually directed to the mother. That explains why she is keener than her daughter to enforce the power of traditions and folkways in a small harmonious community where relationships are direct and primary (face-to-face). The proverb says: "If you want to marry a girl, ask about her mother."

Traditional culture stressing on hiding young girls from matchmakers and foreign families has encouraged accepting to marry them without requiring particular physical conditions. They were judged only according to their origins, their housekeeping skills, their morals and education. In those times, beauty would come at the end of the scale of social requisites and criteria.

It is clear that such traditions have changed nowadays in Qatari society in cities and in the countryside. Young girls are free to wear whatever they want from modern dresses imported from Western countries without complying with their social status (married or single). They follow thoroughly fashion through different communication media. Nevertheless, Al-Abaya continued to be the Arab Gulf traditional dress until today, with remarkable additions brought by international fashion houses.



Beauty Accessories

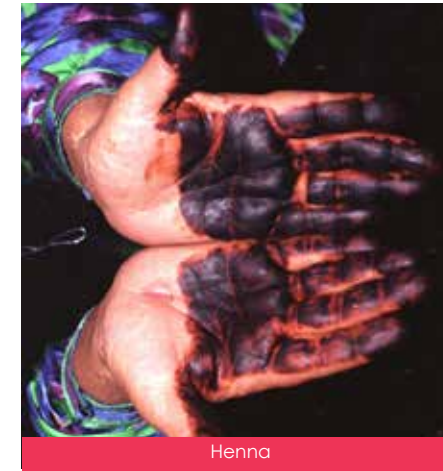
Beauty accessories: Folkways and traditions defined women's beauty accessories before and after the marriage. They allow some types of accessories in given times before the marriage whilst allowing married women all types of beauty accessories. All kinds of personal daily hygiene were of course permitted to the young woman, she could also go to the Ajjafa¹³ (hairdresser) to take care of her hair, dying it with Henna, cleaning and combing it carefully. Hair was the most important and required beauty parameter for young women.

But traditions and folkways would limit the use of perfumes, Kohl eyeliners, and Henna to the minimum and in given occasions such as Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Edha. If a young woman uses beauty accessories during ordinary days, her mother would admonish her: "It is a shame to use Kohl and perfumes, you are not married and these are for married women." If she is obliged to use Kohl in ordinary times, her mother would advise her to put it during the night, saying: "Kohl during the night is for healing, and during the day is for beauty."



Ajjafa

¹³ A lady hairdresser specialized in hair care. She is also called Mashata; she combs the hair and dyes it with henna. She is a professional whose craft is hairdressing.



Henna

Beauty accessories allowed for young women during special occasions were mainly Henna ornaments. During Eid "Wash her hair, comb it, and dye it with Henna". But Henna tattoos on her hands were done during the night; the young girl would sink her hands in Henna and is not allowed to draw decorations and ornaments.

In reality, such traditions have also been changed nowadays; beauty accessories are permitted to young girls before the age of puberty, before and after marriage. Beauty accessories are today part of their handbags and their bathrooms, in addition to the use of modern European perfumes in all rural and urban regions, while such ornaments were in past times exclusively limited to Kohl and Henna.



"Kohl" Powdered Eyeliner

If beauty accessories were regulated and restricted in ancient times, it is due to the fact that people had a natural innate lifestyle, and accessories were seen as a kind of distortion of women's natural innate beauty and an appeal to men's greed.

Community and the preparation of those who reached adulthood to play adults' roles

This paragraph addresses the relation of Qatari folk culture with both sexes' future and how it prepares them to face it through traditions and folkways. It is centered mainly around the economic preparation of the future and how to face it, the advices and recommendations addressed by the mother to her daughter before marriage, and the

social concepts and perceptions related to masculinity. It is known that the main components of this culture have changed while some others are still alive and persistent until our days. We will in fact focus on past times and we will point then to some contemporary change landmarks. This reflects the nature of culture and its relation to the prevailing economic activity in the society. The economic activity that prevailed in Qatari society in ancient times was mainly diving. Traditions and folkways related to economic independence and preparing it were different according to the family social status and class in both rural and urban areas. We will shed light on them in relation to both sexes: young women and young men.

Economic preparation of young men

It is a process that starts at the age of seven when the boy goes to work with his father or another person. He is usually oriented towards the prevailing professions of the times: diving and trading in urban and coastal regions; grazing and trading in rural regions. The family is keen on earlier education of the boy "so that he gets the required expertise and gets used to the value of Beezah (money)... And as the proverb says: the most important for a tree is the act of planting it correctly (i.e. the good start is the base of success)."

In coastal areas where diving is practiced, the young boy starts to ride the sea at the age of seven to work, get a wage and sustain the family, usually with his father. This depends on the social status of the family and the father's profession.

If the father is a ship captain, Nookhadhah, the son will be working as Tabbab; if his origins are humbler he will be employed as Radheef on the ship.



Journey of diving

The financing system during the diving season was managed in two different ways. The first was called “Al-Ghees Asselfi” or loan diving, relying on credits allowed by the ship captain. Divers would live money to their family for spending during their absence (on to three months). There were two kinds of captains, one that goes on his ship with the divers and is called sea-captain Nookadhah Bahr, and another who stays on land and is therefore called land-captain, Nookhadhah Barr. The second system is called “Al-Ghees Tesqam” or loan in nature; it is based on “rations of dates, coffee, cardamom pods, rice, and sugar” left by divers to their families during their absence. There were many diving seasons such as Al-Ood, Al-Ghees Al-Segheer, and Al-Raddah.

When the young boy joins the diving team, he is allowed to have his “Glatah” as the others; it is his share of the diving revenues and may be compared to the share or part in profits. These shares were distributed according to recognized percentages and according to professional traditions. There was a share for the ship (compared to rent cost), a share to its owner (sea or land-captain), a share to Al-Mejdemi who is in charge of receiving orders from the captain and relay them to mariners, a share to Al-Skooni who is the steersman, a share to the diver, a share to Al-Seeb, and another to Al-Redheef. These shares are usually divided giving three shares to Al-Nookhadha, half-share to Al-Redheef. Such shares may increase or decrease according to current traditions and efforts required. The share of the young boy is thus defined and he usually spends his income to sustain his family saving also some money for his personal

use and his future marriage. In other cases, the young boy “spends all his income to help his family, and in turn he is helped when he is about to marry.”



Diving for Pearls



Pearl

During wintertime in urban and coastal regions when the diving season is over, young people “would go to the Sahara countryside to collect wood and tree remains and sell them; they also transport water from water wells on donkeys and sell it to people”. Young people are accustomed to rely on themselves in gaining their wages. They usually spend money on their families and offer his whole income to his mother or his father without keeping anything for himself. In return, the family would cover the expenses of his marriage and his living. Financial independence was not clearly defined before marriage, but it gets better defined after that.

In countryside and rural areas, the boy would accompany his father in grazing sheep and camels until he learns how to take care of his herds, collect wood, travel and buy. In this case, the father would dedicate an ewe to his son to encourage him in constituting a capital that would help him in future times. Trading was another profession practiced in land; young people would learn from their fathers how “to buy dates, rice and coffee and sell them.”

Economic preparation of young women

Anthropological data show that the young woman was not accustomed to prepare any trousseau to be used in her future house. If conditions were propitious and economic resources allow it, preparation and trousseau were gathered after marriage. Economic conditions were extremely harsh among the majority of the members of the Qatari community.



Embroidery

In some particular cases, the young woman participates in her trousseau and in the preparation of her future marital life; such cases differ from the urban to the rural milieus. In urban environments, when the mother is able to sew and make embroideries, her daughter learn this craft from her; "the aim of this education was to satisfy economic needs."

It is known that women gather daily in urban milieus during the afternoon and they have a basket called Jefeer¹⁴ where they keep their sewing and embroidering tools. They sew clothes and young girls help them in this task. Those who are gifted among them make embroideries. Mother sewers teach the craft to their daughters. After a while, the young woman would make her own Darraa and Seraweel, she would also embroider clothes with metal threads, Zaray and linen threads. She makes also embroideries on towels and pillows with colored threads called Madrasa



"Mesnad" Large Embroidered Cushion

In families where mothers do not know these crafts, which are extremely rare, young women would learn them from their aunts or cousins; she would then prepare some objects that she needs for daily use.



Making the Sadu

In the countryside, the young woman would learn from her mother other crafts such as Sadu, spinning wool, Hallab and dairy production. There were also Bedouin girls able to make clothes and utensils for themselves like "Laashariyya, Rewag, Hijab, and Fleej" which are all used for the constituents of the tent such as Gawatee and Fawassel.

¹⁴A container of different sizes made of straw and curved where women store their sewing tools and that is easy to transport and move

Rural women learn also how to dye leather; they were able to produce Saqee, shoes and a baby cradle called Meezeb. They make also leather purses and Acca¹⁵, a kind of butter container.



Meezeb

¹⁵Container made of goat or lamb's leather that is carefully washed and dyed. It is used to store butter from goats or sheep. It is closed from its upper side with a leather thread.

Chapter Two: Marriage preferences and types

- Preferred age for marriage and its justifications
- Criteria of partner's choice
- Familial / Internal marriage among kinship
- External marriage
- Folk culture and the delayed age of marriage.

The preferred age of marriage and its justifications

Ethnographic data show that Qatari families were eager to marry their children when they were young. The young man would marry as soon as he reaches puberty, and the young woman could marry even before reaching it. Young persons would marry between 16 and 20 years and the folk saying states: "Whoever reaches sixteen, marry him!"

"When someone reaches twenty or twenty-two years and is not married yet, they say that he is old and unmarried, or that his bones are dry and he is not married yet."

But the class status is a decisive element concerning the age of marriage: high classes encourage early marriage since they have the economic means and the expenses of the marriage; when the young man asks for marriage, his father would cover his marriage expenses. In addition, when the father is wealthy, he has Al-Majlis and his son would attend it since the age of five or seven, interacting thus with men and listening to them. His personality is shaped; he learns useful sciences and acquires the behavior of a man, able to take his own responsibilities. In this case, he would marry when he is around the age of seventeen or eighteen without having to cover any expenses or bear any additional responsibilities.

"When they see that the young man is reckless (unstable) and frivolous (not patient and not able to concentrate) they advise to marry him with a young woman who is older than him in order to teach him wisdom... They say that the wife calms the man, and that good and wise wife improves her husband and brings wisdom to him."

Families insist on marriage because they want to preserve ethics and honorable behavior; they are convinced that marriage is a protection against vice. This trend is inspired from Islam that invites youth to build Muslim virtuous families.

To have or have not was not considered a shame; the shame was reaching the stage of puberty and remains single. Therefore, as soon as young men have revenues, they have to marry.

"Since he has a profession and works, he is a laborer and his request for marriage may not be refused... The community does not allow him to get older and remain unmarried as is the case nowadays with people reaching twenty-five or thirty without marrying."

Rich families help young men who have no financial means to marry by providing their help because the early marriage of a young man is a great value encouraged by community; the proverb says "Marry them and help them financially" and "Young people will get older and will build homes." Marriage is also a shared collective social responsibility. Families and neighbors help the young man wishing to marry. The religious motives stand undoubtedly at the basis of this social concern and sustain its continuity.

It is noteworthy that in Qatari society late marriage was not mocked or criticized although early marriage had a great value encouraged by community. In fact, people consider that there are surely uncontrolled reasons that account for this delay such as: sickness for example or inability to cover marriage expenses and support its burden. They say that "marriage delay is only due to sickness or may be to the absence of those who can help the groom or to the fact that the groom is in love with a young woman who has been promised to someone else, and he is waiting that she is freed from that engagement that lasts too long."

Religious feelings such as the belief in destiny and God's will appear when people note that young men do not marry; but in Bedouin culture, it is accompanied by a soft reproach. Some would tell those who refuse to marry: "Unfortunate single man, you will not go to Paradise; sterile flocks go wandering in the pastures."

Rural and urban areas have similar reactions in considering the reasons and justifications of late marriage. Late marriage in countryside is very rare because of low expenses, the man's need to a woman that helps him in his harsh life, and the spread of the "marriage of exchange between two families" and the marriage between cousins that does not require any expenses or trousseau and is effective just through the marriage contract. The average age

that is considered late for marrying in the countryside is between 25 to 30 years old. When someone is late in marrying, people would say: "Perhaps that he does not want, perhaps that he has no means, or perhaps that his family owns nothing. Some remain unmarried until thirty, and some reach even forty before getting into marriage."

But the nature of the Qatari society shows clearly the effects of religious commandments in accelerating the marriage in order to prevent youth from deviation; this is true in both rural and urban communities.

It is clear that Qatari community was eager to see people married as soon as possible and that marriage was a collective responsibility. The family helps those willing to marry and encourages those who are hesitating, insisting to see them married and helping them fulfilling it. Multiple economic and social factors lie behind this insistence; people needed support from their children in form of work-power in a community of fishermen and divers along the coasts, and shepherds in the hinterland.

But Qatari society has witnessed many changes that have affected the family system and transformed it from the extended family type to the nuclear one with a trend towards economic independence from the larger extended family. This had in turn impacts on the marriage and its customs; marriage has become indeed the responsibility of the individual and not anymore that of the group or the family. The economic progress and change have also led to the foundation of governmental institutions that facilitate the marriage such as marriage or housing grants. In addition to these facilitations, economic institutions, such as banks, offer loans and financial assistance to young people who would marry. Therefore, governmental institutions have substituted the extended family in helping young people in the marriage process.

Ethnographic data confirm such changes. The young man "who wants to marry in the present has just to take a loan from the bank." The age of marriage of young men has changed very much too and it varies today between twenty-two and thirty years old in most urban and rural areas in Qatari society. This is due to the education system that requires many years of study, and the young man ends his university studies at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. These new customs are confirmed by modern ways of life in the choice

process itself of the partner. "Young men in the past had no particular conditions to abide by. The family knows he is a hard working person and would accept him as a husband of their daughter; financial means, whether abundant or limited, had no real importance, the most important was to see the couple live happily, and man behave decently... In the present, families require that he should complete his university studies, owns a house and have money."

The situation of the young woman is not much different. Families are keen to marry their daughters as soon as they reach puberty or even before. Late marriage is not good for the family reputation. Time of engagement should not last long. The proverb says: "If it lasts too long, the young woman will remain single at the end."



Optimum Age of Marriage

Therefore, ethnographic data confirm that young women used to marry quite early, and even between 12 and 14 years old.

The perfect age to marry for a young woman was at 14 years old, as soon as she reaches puberty. It happens sometimes, that they marry at the age of 12 due to the popular belief that "marriage is protection" and that a young woman "has no choice but to go to a young man." "So when a young man knocks the door, visits the family of the girl, has the dowry and a craft, the families immediately accept, even if the young woman did not reach yet the age of puberty."

There are other reasons that explain very early marriages. In some cases, the young woman is famous for her outstanding qualities: she may be an expert on managing her house; she may look older than her age, and has a good reputation and behavior in the house of her family. Women would talk about her and she may become the attraction of the neighborhood that would push their sons to ask her for marriage. In other cases, a man may contract a heavy debt and find himself unable to pay it back; he would accelerate the marriage of his daughter to free himself in return from the debt.

The phenomenon of early marriage is not totally exceptional. It occurs in urban as in rural areas, in northern as in southern regions and it happens between relatives as in marriages with foreigners. In fact, early marriage is a norm and not an exception.

A young woman does not marry at a later age unless there are reasons that impede her although many young men are asking her for marriage.

Among these reasons is when she is "reserved" for her cousin, has a physical defect or suffers from an illness. In some cases, young women suffering from these defects find husbands. In this matter, religious beliefs play an important role; believing in God and in fate leads people to accept these situations as "Maktoob", i.e. the fate from which one cannot escape. To accept the fate is a kind of worship. "No one would talk about these defects in a negative way; it is destiny and fate... If a person knocks the door wanting to marry the girl, they welcome him and marry her... That's destiny and fate." In other cases, she may be "reserved" for her cousin but she does not want to marry him and he refuses to free her; she gets older

and would not marry. This dramatic situation is depicted by a young woman “reserved” for her cousin, but she dislikes him, and does not find any solution to free herself but to pray:

*“I am reserved to my cousin,
May his life end soon!
May he drink the viper's poison!
And suffer more evil!”*

The same situation of early marriage is witnessed by orphans, poor young women and uneducated ones. When a young man asks to marry this type of person, he is accepted since the families are frightened that in case of refusal, he may go to another family, and the young woman's marriage will be delayed.

The very early marriage is also due to the absence of laws that define the legal age of marriage to which people comply. In absence of such laws, very early marriage remained a social custom that denotes the exceptional status of a given family in Qatari society; it is supported by a great corpus of popular beliefs and folkways from the Qatari culture expressed in sayings such as: “Marriage is the protection of young women” and “When she reaches twelve years old, cover her with a burqa, when she reaches thirteen years old, marry her!”

When a man comes to the mother of the girl and asks her daughter for marriage, if she appears reluctant because the daughter is too young, society puts pressure on her through popular proverbs such as:

*“Marry them and help them gain their living”;
“See her sons and daughters when you are still alive”;
“Free their father from their burden”;
“Young woman has no choice but her husband”.*

Some could say: “Do not prevent her marriage when so many young men ask for her hand, she will end having none.”

But early marriage has also many evident disadvantages such as the change in the young woman life when she moves suddenly (and unnaturally) from childhood and becomes a housewife and a mother that faces stepmothers. Early marriage deprives her also

from enjoying her youth while she is still young. But from another side, it has some cultural manifest and latent social functions; it preserves the reputation of the young woman in a closed community, supports tribal alliances and strengthens family cohesion, and ensures the economic future of the young woman when her financial move from her father to her husband.

When a mother hesitates to marry her daughter due to young age and lack of experience, women of the community encourage her to do saying: “You don't have to worry for a young woman; she is welcomed in her father's house and very well behaving in her husband's.”

Justifications for the preference of early marriage

In the past, early marriage was considered a preferred behavioral pattern in the Qatari culture in both urban and rural regions. Therefore, it is related to many popular values, concepts and knowledge imposed by the nature of rural and urban life, and dictated by customs and traditions. The Qatari environment and the prevailing economic activities have added special features to it. These facts are true for both the young woman and the young man's marriage, but Qatari traditional culture allows greater importance to the early marriage of young women. We may understand this fact through the following justifications:

Preserving the young woman and her honor (in the first instance, the honor of the family) through early marriage and trying to help her if her husband is not financially independent, in order to maintain the continuity of the marital life;

Alleviating the family financial burden, particularly in very large urban families with limited income and in Bedouin families with harsh economic conditions! Such families adopt early marriage, especially if the husband is rich. In such cases, the husband covers all the family expenses in sign of respect towards his wife. This is explained in the proverb that says: “Who loves me loves my mule and the ornaments of my head veil”. Such marriage will enlarge the acquaintances of the family and strengthen its prestige, especially if the husband has a high social status;

The acceptance by the family of the first demand of marriage that comes, presented by her cousin or a foreigner, because it fears that

the occasion will not come twice. Members of the family fear that if they refuse the demand of the first who asks their daughter for marriage, it is possible that no one will come after him and ask again;

The required financial benefits for the family through the dowry brought by the young man such as gold, money and merchandise (rice and flocks), particularly in middle-class rural and urban families. The informant reports that "A piece of gold would ease the mother's living conditions; if she is in need, she may sell it, otherwise she would keep it as a saving for her daughter";

A young woman would marry at an early age to enjoy the benefits of her youth too. Those who do not marry young women are mocked: "You married a contrasting old woman!" Customs, traditions and marriage values invite to marry young women when they are fresh and dynamic in order to help their husbands in life and reproduce children for them;

Early marriage may be a good choice and even a must. It fills the free time of the young woman. In the past, she used to work in house, and house burden was limited – in urban and rural areas – leaving her plenty of useless free time. So why shall she remain in this situation without marriage? One informant says: "In the past, young women had nothing to do; no study and no jobs, there were no schools to keep them occupied";

It trains young women to rely on themselves and to face reality's problems. Early marriage in such cases makes a change in the way of life and behavior; young women rely on themselves, adapt to their new lives and become independent from their original families. They would perform any job that gives them an income and helps their husbands. "In the past, some women -in need- used to go in the morning to wealthy houses to offer her services such as washing, house-keeping and cooking... At noon, she would come back home with a lunch to share with her children... Whatever they give her to satisfy her needs and those of her family. They say: She counts on herself whether others know or don't know about it... Other women make clothes and sell them, others sell drinks in the market or collect food (dates) and sell it". In rural areas too, a woman that faces hard times relies on herself so that people don't know that she is poor. "If she does not find any income, she would go to the countryside to collect wood, burn it, sell charcoal and cover thus her expenses.

They say: 'some women are worth ten men' and 'some women are better than thousand men'... They say also: 'Marry her according to her workshop (i.e. craft) and not her miserable house' and 'A girl from good folks is a jackpot'."

To have children at an early age; her children will thus help her when they grow since they are a kind of fortune and capital for her and her family. In wealthy families from high social classes -especially for women-, early marriage would help her in assisting her children with her own money so that the husband would not monopolize it, and children would support and sustain her.

An informant said: "This allows her to guarantee an income for her children because men are not reliable... She should not give him her money; if he has nothing she would give him, but if he has, she should not"... The poet says:

Save your money so that you are not in need for others, when you face hard times, it will cover and sustain you.

Customs and traditions also encourage the early marriage of the young man; this is also justified as follow:

Fathers have children quite early; this allows them to see their grandchildren in turn; the (married) son who has children early too may educate them and take care of them. "When a man marries early, his son is fifteen years old when he is himself thirty two" still young and strong; they say: "Children of young people are for youth, and children of elderly people for disappointment". It is traditionally advised also to marry early in order to enlarge the family and provide it with additional power, prestige and population. When young men and women marry and have children, the size of the family grows and it gets stronger. They say: "When children grow up, houses are populated".

Early marriage of the young man is protection and **prevention for him from deviation**, as well as a way to preserve his family's reputation. The prevailing economic activities would also encourage the young man's early marriage.

Early marriage is righteousness for the young man, since his righteous woman would push him to act correctly and look for livelihood; as they say: "The wise woman makes the wise man".

When marrying at an early age, the young man acquires a sense of responsibility as he has children and his family grows, he would then manage his own affairs without relying on his mother and father.

Early marriage will help him also get his economic independence and rely on himself. An informant explains this masculine independence saying:

"He is separated from his father and is a real man. He starts to think about the future and to have objectives... Before marriage, some do not abide by work engagements, but once they marry, they would accept any job whether a mariner, cook or coffee server because they feel their responsibility."

But changes occurred on these traditions in rural and urban areas as well, due to modernization and cultural contact with other communities. Therefore, people look differently to women, and there is a prevailing tendency to encourage their education and give them the opportunity of employment. Thus, their role changed too. And although modernization includes changes in economics, politics, education, healthcare, habitat... etc. The most influent field of changes on marriage traditions is in education. The young woman spends nine to twelve years in the compulsory educational system, in addition to six years of childhood before going to school; she is therefore around eighteen years old when she completes secondary school. Most of the young men go to universities at that age -even if they marry before ending secondary school- and marriage is postponed until they have a university degree, usually at the age of 22 to 24. It is evident that education stretches the pre-marriage phase, and marriage itself is delayed. The young woman acquires a different view of family life and is more able to support its responsibilities.

This explains why informants in the present praise education now, especially of girls, and they say: "Nowadays, the young woman goes to school and marries once she has finished her university studies. No one looks at her age and the most important is that she is educated and fine". Informants say also that "women conditions

in the present have changed: they study, attend the university and obtain their degrees. Some marry immediately after that, others get their degree and do not marry until they have a job, at that point: Yes, they marry immediately".

We have to stress that education is the greatest mission in changing the way in which Qatari society looks at young women. Therefore, people consider that education is a warranty of the young woman's future and a security in her future married life in case she faces troubles. Thus, a new condition is imposed by fathers when accepting the demand in marriage from his stepson and his family; it consists in allowing her to finish her studies. "Today, they impose on them (those who demand in marriage) to let her finish her university studies, since it is possible that her husband would neglect that. She has to guarantee her future." New social, economic and cultural conditions imposed changes in customs and traditions related to marriage in Qatari society as compared to pre-modernization, in order to suit these new conditions. Rural areas are not different from urban ones in such changes and in these new conditions. Traditional culture of grazing and diving societies has sometimes absorbed this modern culture, it amended it in other occasions and even rejected some of its components in other cases within the framework of a cultural adaptation of the genuine with the contemporary, the local with the inbound, and the traditional with the modern.

Criteria of partner's choice

Anthropological data entirely indicate that the prevailing pattern of marriage is mainly a relative familial one. It is the parents' responsibility to make the choice for the young man and the young girl as well. The latter is not consulted and their role is therefore limited to accept the family decision and the parents' point of view.

Marriage is then a parents' initiative, their choice and their arrangement. The deal is often made since early childhood even if such behavioral patterns have different forms among which:

Tahyeer (availability), Tasmiya (naming), and Wahba (gift)

These are cases of parents' choice for their children's future marriage; it may be from inside the relatives (Tahyeer, i.e. making available among cousins), through Tasmiya, i.e. appointing and naming a person to someone from outside the relatives, or through

Wahba that is a gift to an eminent person such as the Sheikh of the tribe or of a different tribe.

These habits were prevailing in past times in rural and urban communities in Qatar, and some are still spread (such as Tahyeer). In this last case, a young woman is "made available to her cousin, and nothing can break, in any case, this agreement except through the consent and the permission of the cousin". She is then at the disposal of her cousin whatever is her beauty and her natural qualities. Saying and proverbs explain this necessity "He marries his cousin even if she is older than him", and "We marry our cousin who will treat us right", and "The beauty of a cloth is when it is repaired with the same original tissue".

Marriage from outside the kinship

Even in such case, the young man or woman has no choice: the mother would choose for her son a young woman - whose qualities she likes - from their neighborhood. Once women's choice is finished, decision and credence are made by men so that actual marriage would take place.

It is noteworthy that the responsibility of decision-making varies according to geographic regions and life patterns. In Bedouin areas, it is in the hands of the father, while the mother decides in urban ones, and the decision is equally shared between them both in semi-rural areas such as small villages disperses half-way between the city and countryside.

The young man has a reduced field of action that may be seen when he takes the initiative to disclose to his mother his willingness to marry in order that she would in turn talk to his father. Such initiative or disclosure is a way to avoid embarrassment, especially if he intends to marry someone else than his cousin. "If her father and her mother are known, and her origins too, i.e. she belongs to a good family, they would visit them and ask their daughter for marriage." The choice may come from the young man "who may have seen her playing for example, or during some ceremonies such as Meradah (collective women songs) or during Eid celebrations (songs performed by young women expressing their happiness during Eid) that are reserved for young girls and young women... As he may also have seen her when she has brought something from her mother to his, or she may be his neighbor and he has fallen in love with her".

Only in such rare cases, it is possible to observe a choice in both familial and from outside the kinship marriages.

Customs and traditions in the past did not allow at all the girl the right to choose her partner, even if some young women only could make a "hidden choice". Some informants relate that "young women did not have at all the right to choose" and there is a saying that states: "the silence of the virgin is her decision".

She has no decision before marriage but after it, she would decide through "Tumoooh¹⁶" or "Zaban¹⁷", and in urban areas through "Za'al" leaving her husband, then asking for divorce.

Tumoooh [meaning literally ambition] is considered a sign of courage of the Bedouin woman who would use it if she dislikes the young man, because he has been imposed upon her, because she loves someone else or she wishes to have a better life. The woman's Tumoooh does not affect the reputation of her family, and many women spent nights outdoors or sought refuge under the tent of the tribe's Sheikh because they refused a forced marriage. Some would remain unmarried all their life after Tumoooh when husbands refuse to divorce, while others get immediately their divorce and men rush to ask them for marriage.

The poet elevates the prestige of such free and dignitary woman:

I just want the woman who has Tumoooh,

The woman who refutes her man.

If Tumoooh is a Bedouin phenomenon, in some urban areas the young woman is given a chance to express her refusal to marry a cousin or anyone else. Refusing him after the wedding night would lead to divorce and Za'al, and they would say "Such woman Aeefah, i.e. does not like him". But these are all decisions that are taken after marriage and not before.

¹⁶ TumooH refers to the evasion of the young Bedouin girl the night of her marriage if she is obliged to marry someone she may dislike.

¹⁷ Zaban refers to the asylum of the young woman to the house of a person with a good reputation or prestigious position among his people such as the Sheikh of a tribe who would protect her and solve her problem. It is not allowed to assault her and her host is in charge of finding a solution by visiting her parents and inviting them to meet in his house and find a consensual solution with the help of generous gifts from the Sheikh.

In general, Zaban refers to a person who committed a crime and seeks refuge near another person who has a prestigious social status in a way that he would free him from being sentenced or from retribution using his courage, his generosity and his reputation. Practically, Zaban starts when the refugee -man who committed a crime or woman subject to forced marriage- enters the Sheikh's house (tent) and touches the pillar of the tent, even if the Sheikh is absent and only his wife is there, until he comes and redeems the refugee with his money and life considering him/her under his protection as long as he/she does not leave the place (sphere of influence). No one may harm him/her all along his/her life unless he/she leaves the place and moves away from that protection.

If he/she seeks refuge near a person in a given tribe, the protection lasts one year after which he/she moves under the protection of another one.

Internal marriage among kinship

Marriage among kinship was in the past a compulsory pattern for all. It was necessary to comply with it when marrying one's children, males and females alike. It has become nowadays an optional pattern that goes along marriage with people from outside (the kinship group). Such change in customs and traditions was followed by another change in the characteristics and features required in the future spouse and the preferred features of their families too. These are a sum of connected rings in the changing chain of the Qatari society as a whole. Ethnographic data reveal many of these aspects through multiple pieces of evidence.

Preferred level of kinship

Kinship is usually at the forefront when choosing a spouse for the young man or woman; but kinship includes levels and categories that customs and traditions deal with taking into account some kind of arrangement and priority: the paternal cousin is in pole position, therefore cousins marriages are the most spread and requested level whether in urban or rural areas, in past and modern times, and for the young man and woman alike.

Informants ensure that families are fanatic about their cousins saying that: "Blood yearns for the uncle's daughter and the young man is fanatic about her". That is why the family used to say about its daughter at the age of marriage: "She has no choice but her cousin. Whether she goes up or down... she has just her cousin... and they would not marry her to a foreigner".

Such zeal is stronger in Bedouin regions where fanaticism in favor of cousins is even more evident. Among the witnesses, an informant narrated that "a brave Bedouin woman, daughter of men (from honorable origins) was in age of marrying and a foreigner asked her for marriage, he was from another tribe reputed for its courage. She had half-cousins (paternal only) who did not demand her and informed her about the marriage demand from the foreign tribe. She said in verses:

I desire a brave man from that tribe

But although brave, they are tough.

I prefer someone from my kinship,

Even if he is a shepherd of sheep and camels,

I would take my stick from time to time and kick him,

He would not tell anyone and no one would know about our games." Another informant relates that "there are young women who were promised to their cousins who live far from them and want to bring them there; as the young women refused to move, they refused in turn to free them and did it only when the women were old with gray hair. At that point, they told their brothers: now, they are old and useless, we will free them."

The maternal cousin ranks in second position after the paternal one in familial marriage. In this case, the mother is often willing to marry her daughters to her nephews, the sons of her brother or sister. Talking about such preference, an informant relates the story of "a young woman who was promised to her paternal cousin and her family wanted to marry her to him while she was in love with her maternal cousin, so she sung:

I am promised to my cousin,
May destiny takes him away,
I want my maternal cousin,
May destiny brings him to me!

In third position of preference, there is the maternal cousin i.e. son of the aunt, then the paternal cousin that Bedouins call "weld am kfa" (meaning distant cousin). The preferences of the young man go "first towards his paternal cousin, his maternal cousin (from his uncle, then his aunt), and the cousin of his father (from his uncle, then from his aunt), his father's relatives and his mother's relatives". Kins are preferred and that explains why a young woman whose hand is asked by a foreigner said:

I don't eat apples; they are sweet and entertaining,

And I don't marry a foreigner; he will depart and leave me alone.

Although internal marriage among kinship is the common marriage at the first place in Bedouin areas, Bedouins have another kind of marriage known as Zawaj Al-Badal or "exchange marriage"; in this case, a young man marries a young woman from his family or his

tribe on the condition that his sister marries in turn a young man from the other family or tribe. Through such marriage, the destiny of both brother and sister is sealed together forever in marriage and divorce: they would marry simultaneously and divorce simultaneously for any reason or conflict that may arise to one of them notwithstanding how things are going with the other.

Bedouins accept this kind of marriage in case the young man is Asnafi, who is a generous man with all noble qualities that are usually appreciated by women. Some practice "exchange marriage" because they love deeply each other or to reduce marriage costs.

Preference in marriage is thus given to the cousin notwithstanding his financial status or his profession even if he is a simple Tabbab. During diving times, Tabbab was the lower profession; he would be able to save some money for two consecutive years to be able to marry. Trousseau was not a heavy burden in those times, and the standard of living would enable a family to live a whole year with a small sum of money.

There are therefore cases that are different from the internal marriage among kinship; they have their own preferences although they are few. Preferring a foreigner to a kin may have different justifications among which:

In order to get rid of the person she was promised to (Tahyeer): a wealthy or powerful person is preferred in this case to the cousin to whom the young woman is promised, whether the marriage is successful and continues or fails and is stopped through divorce. The spouse lives with her husband the foreigner until divorce occurs, after that she is free to marry whom she wanted and is not bound anymore by the precedent promise of marriage with no interference of her cousin or someone else. In this regards, an informant relates: "We have women who were given (i.e. freed from their engagement and promise of marriage) by their cousins to powerful and wealthy persons, usually looking for high social status through their future children". It is evident in this case that the foreign husband is a mean to get free of the marriage promise and receive the permission of the cousin.

Earn financial returns through the marriage with a foreigner; the young woman's family accepts indeed the marriage with a foreigner

only when “they look for a descent or money; people in ancient time had good intentions” and if a Sheikh or a governor wishes to marry their daughter, he would usually offer money and crops (dromedaries, sheep and goats) to her cousins as well as weapons, and they would accept to condescend.

The young woman in some cases has no cousins or kin, and may thus marry foreigners to her group.

To avoid disadvantages and complications that may arise from internal marriage among kin through the marriage with a foreigner. There may be in fact some disputes and problems among relatives, and internal marriage among kinship may worsen these problems. Bedouin environment expresses in the best way through folk proverbs and concepts how to avoid such marriages. “Your relative is your challenger”, “keep flesh away from flesh”, “relatives are a burden”, “relatives are scorpions”, “go far away and come back safe”.

Ethnographic data show that these traditions and customs are changing presently in urban and rural areas, and in large and small families. New criteria prevail over kinship today, and mainly financial status: after preferring “the good man, people prefer today the rich one, opening the doors thus to problems”.

Family preferences in choosing the bride

Qatari society is accustomed to the traditions and customs of marriage among kin decided by relatives; they choose the bride according to their own preferences. Due to the small size of the traditional society and the prevalence of its family aspect, relatives used to choose according to the following traditional criteria: Good origins and healthy roots of the bride. The families in this case inquire about the mother first of all since she is the person who educated her daughter and shaped her personality. The proverb says: “if you want to hug her, ask about her mother. The good mother has a direct impact on her daughter who imitates her in everything “the ship goes according to the instructions of the skipper”. The aunt has also an effect of her nephew: “the girl is attracted by her aunt”, and “most girls are descendants from their aunts”.

Expertise in housework: Families and the groom's mother in particular, are keen to make sure that the bride is skilled in housekeeping. They

visit the bride's family and get to know her mother and relatives. In urban areas, they require the expertise of the bride in housekeeping and her ability to manage all house matters; the feature of “housekeeper” is at the forefront of the desired qualities. Families are keen to have a young woman who is “a housekeeper... doing her duties and managing her house”.

In rural areas, families prefer the young woman whose mother is “dhafrah” (quality-oriented and genuine); they would say about her: “she is dhafrah and descendent of real men”.

Nowadays, origins are not compulsory as they were in past times, the young woman is not anymore a housekeeper since she hasn't been educated on that “girls do not care anymore about their houses” and they rely fully on servants. Physical beauty is more important and even fairness and moral qualities are secondary as long as she is beautiful. Beauty is the young woman's key to success. Education and employment are also required qualities today: “They want first of all girls who went to school... How long did she study and how long she has been working... If she is not educated they will not marry her; her education adds to her qualities”.

This is true in urban as in rural areas “they want young women who have been to school and who have an employment”.

Young men have participated in turn to this change when they started choosing themselves their future wives without any significant interference of their families.

Ethnographic data show clear differences between the ancient image of the young girl and the modern one; they reveal modern standards and new customs and traditions. In diagnosing the ancient and the new situation, an informant says:

“In past times, when you look at a girl, you don't see any kohol (eye-liner) in her eyes;

Today, young women use lipsticks, beauty accessories and look elegant;

In the past, young women would never stare at your eyes, there was decency;

Today, young women stare directly at your eyes, they look at you as You look at them;

In the past, when you see a girl, you see signs of decency and shyness".

Esthetic qualities: they were quite simple in the past; families would express these qualities in a single word: "she is sweet!" (heleewa), or even "God refined her creation" meaning that she is physically acceptable. But although the esthetic criteria may be important for the young man, for his mother it cannot have the importance of the ethic criteria or the professional one, i.e. housekeeping.

Family preferences in choosing the groom

The cultural and social reality of the Qatari society indicates that a young woman cannot live alone or rely on herself; she has to live in the shelter of a husband, a father or a brother. Therefore, customs and traditions would impose on families an accurate selection of the groom and an informed decision. Since change occurred in all social, economic and cultural aspects of life, criteria of selection and acceptance have changed also according to times.

In the past, family would accept to marry the daughter if the groom is "a good man from known descendants who make his prayers and fear God, that's the most important!"; it is also good that "he has a job, practices pearl-diving, is a shepherd, is honorable, generous, good-hearted and brave... They say: he is equivalent to other men." When a man has these qualities, families would accept to marry him since their daughter would be under the protection of a man who will feed her, cover her and protect her. But "if he is unemployed and relies on his family, they would refuse to give him their daughter".

In present times, the criteria of selecting a groom have changed; New criteria appeared and old ones are not valid anymore.

In the old criteria, it was required to know the origins of the groom, especially his mother, including her qualities and her ethics. This is due to the existence of macro-families and the young woman would live in multiple micro-families in a single house ruled by the mother. Today, the mother is not anymore an element of assessment, since people know "that the mother has no powers and the groom will live his parental house with his bride to live in an independent house".

A new criterion of preference appeared also, and it is related to education that was absent in past times; "people are attracted by educated men". Employment is also a new criterion that is taken into account in people's preferences. "If he is educated and has an employment, he would be able to safeguard the young woman and protect her". Wealth is also a very spread criteria nowadays when selecting a groom, and rich people are largely preferred. The prevalence of the financial sector in the choice of the groom has led and informant to this trend: "Today, anyone who knocks the door may have the approval of the family to marry their daughter without inquiring about his origins."

A new variant appeared in the field of choice and preference of the spouse/husband; it is related to the fact that concerned young woman and young man acquired an important role in choosing their partner. Their families have then to validate their choice and accept it. Ethnographic data show the spread of this pattern nowadays: "The one that is loved and chosen by the young man is in fact accepted by the family as long as both want to marry themselves." Education as well as modern means of communication (telephone) played a crucial role in strengthening this trend. An informant says about the family preferences in choosing the groom: "Today, the choice is made by telephone... You cannot answer the phone..." She means that most talks are held among young men and young women and there is no way for the mother to enter this field that remains foreign for her. Mothers get involved only once the agreement between the two parties has been reached.

External marriage

The external marriage refers to the marriage with someone who does not belong to one's relatives; he/she may be from within one's own rural or urban community, from outside the village or the town, or even from abroad. In reality, such marriages appeared in the Qatari society since ancient times due that some families, for miscellaneous reasons, prefer to marry their daughters to a person from outside the family circle. It started with exchange marriages among some tribes and then became more flexible and tribes could marry from other tribes or give their daughters to them.

One of the landmarks of the external marriage (within the same community) is the union of the Bedouin young woman in the city. Here is a Bedouin whose family married to a city dweller but she

could not adapt to city life and urban environment, and complains about it to her brother:

My brother, I am fed up of the urban living,

Fed up of living among wilds, and I want to quit the city houses.

Another Bedouin young woman from Deira Al-Harmaliyya who got married to a man living in the urban area of Dareen in Al-Gateef, the regions in Saudi Arabia (Eastern Province) longs to her Bedouin region. She refuses her husband people and says:

I want no Dareen and no Al-Gateef,

I don't want this region and its dwellers;

I want speedy dromedaries that would bring me back

To Al-Harmaliyya and those who live there.

It is noteworthy that this kind of marriage is related to kinship, since some members of the tribe live in the countryside while others from the same tribe settle in towns. Ethnographic data confirm this trend and show that people from northern and Bedouin area in the Qatari society marry their daughters in Doha; the same is also true with Doha inhabitants who marry young women from the Northern area and who are from their families or acquaintances. This trend increased even more after the rise of the emigration from countryside to urban areas following modernization.

Nevertheless, there is a certain opposition to external marriage coming from fathers, mothers and a fringe of young people themselves. They say that "Good charity begins at home" and that "marriage among kinship prevents spinsterhood". "If I marry a woman from outside, you do the same and others too, what about our women? (I.e. who will marry them?) Who will marry our women?" Marriage among kinship allows the parents to have quickly news about their daughter "and to get in touch easily with her if something occurs; as it is easy for her to reach her mother, her father and her family". In addition to these reasons and these advantages, informants cite other reasons in favor of the marriage among kinship such as "the fact that the family-in-law has a major

acquaintance of the young man's of the young woman's family and does not have to face travel expenses."

The change extended and reached the marriage with foreigners from outside the Qatari and Arab society with effects on the social and cultural structure. This fact is true in the overall Gulf societies after the recent oil boom.

External marriage is generally a historic old phenomenon in Gulf societies and is a consequence of communications and economic activities, since there is a prevailing nomadic life style in Bedouin regions, land trading (summer and winter caravans for example), and maritime trade in the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. Pearl-diving related activities played also a role in external marriage as did trade in marriages with people from India and Zanzibar. This kind of close-and-far marriage was also developed thanks to kinship with Arab Gulf families from Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Emirates, and Kuwait.

It is noteworthy that this external marriage with Gulf countries citizens is not a fully alien marriage (from outside the kinship circle), but is a marriage among kinship to a certain extent since it is related to near and far family ties that regular or interrupted. The Arabian Peninsula society was in fact a single community during the advent of Islam; it has preserved these ties until the arrival of British settlers that have divided it into emirates, entities and countries. These units became states after the independence with their own political and geographical landmarks. Therefore, the single tribe was divided into sub-classes, each depending from a different state. It is evident that the Arabian Peninsula inhabitants constitute dispersed large groups united by common inherited relations, and tribes grouped by unique tribal connections and belongings, divided only by political borders. This explains why Qataris young men marry their female relatives and kinship in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Emirates. The same pattern in external marriage is true through commercial activities.

We observe that this kind of internal/external marriage is spreading in our days. This trend is not based on kinship factors, but is also due to many other reasons among which: expensive dowries and relatively high marriage expenses in Qatari society, the refusal of young men to marry their paternal or maternal cousins, rise of educational level,

social and geographic mobility, economic independence of youth, and contacts with other neighboring societies.

Marriage with citizens from other Arab countries

As Qatari society witnessed an economic energetic boom, it witnessed as well a cultural change in marriage customs. The oil boom was accompanied in fact by an overture on the external world – including some Arab countries – and a contact with other societies through travel, tourism and studies abroad... The cultural and social infrastructure was thus ready for change. This had led to an increase in marriage rates with people from other Arab countries, especially Egypt and Syria. Among the reasons that stand behind this type of Arab marriage, there is:

The fact is that some Qatari citizens were not attracted by marrying a member of their family, but have agreed to do it in order to please their parents; as a result, the marriage did not last. After the divorce, they would marry again a person from outside the Gulf region, usually from Egypt or Syria where they chose themselves their partners and decide autonomously to marry;

In some cases, Qataris get older without marrying, or lose their wives and need partners to take care of them and their children. Qatari women would not accept to marry men in such situation. An informant says: "When a man is old, or divorced, or widow and wants to marry, when he has children, is old and does not find a woman who accepts him, he looks abroad and marries a foreign woman... an Egyptian...";

As a consequence of the external marriage, the Arab woman would visit her family with her sons and daughters; it happens that a son wants to marry a member of his mother's family or his mother suggests a marriage with one of her nephews or even a person from outside the family, and the son agrees;

Travel abroad, openness to the external world, and the relatively reduced cost of the external marriage compared to the marriage among kinship and the internal marriage in Qatar have also led to the rise of external marriage and the speed of their conclusion;

The travel of youth to study abroad at the universities in some

Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon gave them an opportunity to meet their future partners.

Marriage with citizens from other foreign countries

The trend towards abroad in the customs and traditions of marriage goes from a tribe to another tribe, from rural to urban areas and vice-versa, from Qatari society to other Gulf societies, other Arab societies, and Asian communities (Iran and Asia). European and American societies constitute a fully new trend.

Marriage with foreign women within the known world has its reasons that encouraged it, but the new cultural and social structure helped the opening on a totally new world. Many reasons are behind the spread of this mixed marriage:

Trade played a crucial role in marriages with foreigners (from India and Iran for instance). Trade encouraged the marriage of merchants with foreigners; he may leave her in her original community and see her according to his travels, or bring her back with him to Qatar. "In past times, people would travel to trade, sell and buy for months... Some of them know that their partners have daughters, and the exit of their friendship is the marriage with their daughters";

Pearl-diving activities obliged mariners to be absent for a long time from their local communities. They use to dive along the coasts, among which Iranian shores, and would marry with women from the same island. A woman declared: "My mother is Persian and my father from Qatar, they married when he was a pearl-diver and settled on the coast";

Ethnic roots of some groups played a significant role in mixed marriages, particularly from Iran and India. When a pearl-diver marries an Iranian woman or a merchant marries an Indian and bring their wives back to Qatar, these women usually encourage their sons to marry their relatives. On the other side, young women born in Qatar may marry a young man from Iran although she grew in Qatar and does not know anything about Iran except that it is the birthplace of her father or her mother. This is particularly true with non-Arabs who settled in Qatar in the forties and the fifties of the twentieth century...;

Some old people (widows or poor people who did not marry or did not have children) opt for a marriage with a foreigner (from India for example), they would go there, marry and then come back to settle in Qatar;

Study travels to Europe and the United States are another reason that participated in the spread of marriages with Europeans. Informants say in this regard that "many young men who went to study abroad came back with their wives and founded a family".

Folk culture and the delayed age of marriage

We will address in this section the role of folk etiquette in delaying the age of marriage for both the young man and woman. It is well known that popular etiquette is one of the most powerful means for man to adapt to his living conditions and a wealthy source of expertise and knowledge inherited by generations through the times. Popular etiquette is a summing-up of human experiences through times and a cognitive corpus in different environments and regions, including various social groups and classes and incorporating different situations lived by man in all daily life matters: work and entertainment, greetings and courtesy, sermons and warning, enticing and intimidating, moving and settling, production and consumption and so on... Therefore, popular etiquette is not just a matter of entertainment and amusement and is not the product of free-time as much as it is the container of different life requisites and necessities. Ethnographic data concerning marriage habits provide some popular literary genres such as wise sayings (popular wisdom), folk proverbs and poems. These constitute all in all part of the folklore that has an impact on a person's behavior and thought through the social educational process from childhood through youth and adult age. The process goes along man's life through his life cycle and ends with his death. Man learns and acquires novelties as long as he interacts with others and lives in a community.

Folk etiquette in general encourages early marriage and offers psychological support for those whose marriage is delayed. It is a paradigm in folklore nature since it encompasses all steps of life, the good and the harsh ones, with its happy and sad events in their variety and diversity.

Therefore, ethnographic data point to the fact that the community denounces a young man's late marriage; his friends, relatives and

acquaintances ask with surprise: "Why didn't you marry, you're getting old!" There is a trend to marry before getting old and losing forces.

Concerning the young woman, in the urban and Bedouin areas alike, the unmarried is called "Anes" (spinster), especially if she is over 20 years old and is still unmarried. An informant précisés: "In

the past, they would call her spinster Anes if she is over twenty years old and unmarried". Ethnographic data provide explanations or rationales for late marriages: a spinster is usually a young woman who faced impediments preventing her from marrying. She may be "reserved" for her cousin for example and may not marry anyone else. A foreigner would never dare marry her without a previous authorization. In other cases, she is waiting for her good luck. Speaking about spinsterhood in the past, an informant says: "In the past, a spinster has been usually a girl 'reserved' for someone and who cannot marry although she is good and pretty; she ends with God's help by marrying someone."

Folk etiquette comprises many popular proverbs about the marriage of the young woman. Proverbs insist on early marriage and encourage it in many ways; they advise to avoid late marriage as much as possible: "Marry them and support them financially". In this case, the meaning is directed to the young woman's family that puts strong conditions to the extent that the groom is unable to abide by them. It is an invitation to take the initiative and hurry up their daughter's marriage, help her in covering the financial expenses and avoid delaying the marriage. The Messenger of God PBUH confirms this meaning when he states: "The most blessed women are those whose financial burden is the lightest."

In fact, literary folk content reflects the religious belief in God's will and what He reserves to the human being as good or distress; people call it sometimes "Naseeb or Kesmāh" i.e. destined share of life. This basic belief is spread equally among rural and urban communities. The belief in this destiny explains many social phenomena and facts in addition to the acceptance itself of the person who demands to marry. The delayed marriage of the young woman is then justified by her Naseeb and Kesmāh.

There is a firm belief that everything is predestined to human being

and that he has only what God has destined for him, whether it's in an early or a delayed marriage. This explains the proverb spread in urban communities: "No leg or foot is involved, God distributes livelihoods", and the other one famous in rural ones: "Do not think it is a matter of leg or foot, God distributes livelihoods". This is evident in some Bedouin cultural witnesses; according to some Bedouin informants: "Some young women are ugly and lazy in their houses, but their husbands elevate them among women. Others are pretty and smart and from good parents but has no chance with men. It is not a matter of beauty but just Kesmah wa Naseeb."

When your fortune stands up, it buys and sells for you,
And when it bounces back, poor you!
It is all dependent on God's assistance to the young woman.

On the other hand, folk etiquette reflects social life situations and their terms according to their nature (good and evil; acceptance and refusal; measure and excess; happiness and misery...) Proverbs as we have seen provide a religious explanation or justification through Kesmah and Naseeb in case of late marriage, but they provide as well replies and expressions that are said on such occasions. Therefore, a mother whose daughter did not marry yet would quote folk proverbs to answer a question about this matter: "We refused the bad guy, and we did not find the good one". She points to the fact that it is necessary to be sure about the qualities and capacities of the person demanding her daughter in marriage. Not all those who come are good, since all may demand in marriage, good and bad ones.

It is noteworthy that the philosophy behind folk proverbs incites early marriage and refuses to delay it unless it is not time yet or that the young man is not worth to marry the young woman.

Hence, it is not a shame that the young woman remains unmarried since its 'fate' (Naseeb) has not doomed yet, she just awaits and may catch a man who deserves her. The folk proverb says in this regard: "She waited and married the best man". The young woman's fortune in marriage may be early or late according to Kesmah and Naseeb.

Such folk proverbs express no concern about the girl who does not marry as long as she does not find the right man. It in an indirect ways

of stressing the importance of making the best choice and waiting the necessary time until the right person knocks the door and ends by marrying the daughter. Therefore, Bedouins say: "Virgins staying at home rather than an unhappy marriage".

It may also happen that the young woman finds quickly her man and marries, but it ends with separation because the man does not

respect marital life or neglects his wife and her rights. Ethnographic data show that marrying or not has equal results in such cases; it seems better, therefore, that young women remain in their parents' houses and do not marry. It is noteworthy that literary expressions such as proverbs and vernacular poetry related to these situations are concentrated in Bedouin regions more than rural ones. Rural culture is rather an oral one, and there is a prevalence of literary creations in poetry, narrative, popular wisdoms and folk literature. A Bedouin informant says in this regard in verses:

It seems that marrying or not became equal

So staying in my parents' house would be better and safer.

The major burden of late marriage is not supported by family, but the young woman herself has a part of responsibility since she is a member of said family. This explains why some young people adopt certain behaviors believing that would bring them luck and accelerate their marriage.

Ethnographic pieces of evidence pointing to such behaviors related to marriage traditions show that young unmarried women would scrub their feet with the bride's feet in order to catch luck and marry quickly after her, God –they believe- would easily let them encounter their future men. On the same pattern, they also dye their hands and feet with the same Henna used by the bride. Such practices are spread in Bedouin as well as urban regions. Informants relate proverbs and folk sayings confirming this trend and such practices. They would address the young woman telling her: "Put your foot on mine, and hopefully what happened to me would happen to you too". The young woman wishing to marry may express herself such desire: "I use her Henna (the bride's), God willing I will follow her path". Some also addresses the young woman wishing to marry: "Sit next to the bride; you will get contagion from her". Such practices may be

expressed as wits and jokes, they express optimism that brings luck and marriage through the bride's blessing when they say laughingly: "Sit next to the bride to get contagion from her". Some consider that such practices are only meant as jokes and an optimistic expression with no religious belief behind them. Some young women use poetry, wishes and prayers directed to God. A Bedouin spinster says in this regard:

O God Who delivers livelihoods from the farthest houses,

A stupid divorced woman and not an old one who dies lonely!

There are in reality other practices and tickles directed to the bride such as entering her bedroom, using her perfume, sitting on her bed and even near the groom in order to catch the blessing of the ceremony, and wishing it would spread and reach the unmarried too. Such practices may start as fortuitous events at the beginning, and with time they change into a tradition or a belief and become part of the cultural texture itself.

Chapter Three: Engagement stage and its arrangements

- Engagement: the word, its etymology, and its formulation
- Engagement stages
- Engagement barriers
- Matchmaking in engagement
- Acceptance and announcement
- Time duration of the engagement and conventional practices
- Relationship between the fiancé and his fiancée

Engagement: the word, its etymology and its formulation

Qatari customs and traditions, in the urban and rural environments alike, have used the term Khotouba (engagement) or Khotba (engagement) and its derivatives to refer to the young man's family proposing to the girl's family in order to discuss about their marriage and agree about this engagement without following any procedures or making any celebrations or any ritual practices.

Therefore, the engagement and betrothal matter does not last more than 3 weeks at most. To sum it up, "a handwritten letter is sent either with a woman matchmaker and a man representative in case the girl lives in a remote area. Otherwise, the father, the mother or the eldest sister goes straight away to propose to her".

Among the expressions used to describe the agreement or the engagement process is "such and such got engaged", "such and such proposed to her", "such and such people proposed to us", "such and such family came to propose to the daughter of such and such", "such and such asked for such and such's hand", "such and such became the son in law of such and such", "such and such proposed to such and such, he asked for her hand from her father, he's going to propose to her, or he gets engaged to her", "they are coming to propose this night, it means people are coming to propose to her", "such and such family proposed to our daughter", and sometimes the Bedouins say "such and such became affianced".

It is worth mentioning that the word "engagement" is derived from the verb "to engage", "to get engaged to such and such girl", that is to say to propose to her. For instance, when we say that such and such proposed to such and such we mean that he asked for her hand and it is said: he went to propose to someone and eventually got married. "Engage" and "got engaged" are words used by Arabs in the pre-Islamic era to say that they got married.

In fact, the terms "engagement and betrothal" are used to refer to asking a woman's hand for marriage in colloquial use- because the suitor or his guardian used to deliver a sermon in front of the bride's family on this occasion. If there is approval, they set a date in which the suitor along with his guardian, father's brothers, mother's brothers,

brothers and some of the revered persons in his neighborhood to the fiancée's house. If all people are present, the suitor's guardian strikes up the conversation. He first praises the fiancée's guardian and her family and commends her moral qualities and her family origins. Then he asks for accepting to marry the suitable fiancé to her. The fiancée's guardian accepts the proposal and responds to the praise in kind and then the engagement will be announced in front of all the audience.

The term of "engagement" is still used in the Qatari society to date. However, it took a new content stemming from modernization and the changing conditions that the Qatari society has gone through in general. In fact, the engagement traditions with their new contemporary and modern content appeared in the seventies in Doha the capital, and then they started to spread out in the rest of the Qatari cities and the rural areas. Indeed, cultural exchange with the Arabic society such as Egypt, Palestine and other countries has contributed to their spreading, this is in addition to travelling, tourism and the media which have disseminated and supported it. Currently, engagement includes celebrations, invitations and offering material tokens which show engagement such as the betrothal ring, gold and many other valuable gifts. Moreover, nowadays the future groom can see his fiancée, talk to her on the phone and even go out together, etc.

In reality, the expressions that used to be said during the engagement period had the same content in the urban and rural areas alike with some minor differences. Besides, there were expressions used among women (for instance, from the young man's mother to the young girl's mother) and the same thing applies to men, from the young man's father to the young girl's father. Then, the young man's mother goes to the young girl's mother and says to her family: "mother of such and such, we came to get closer to God and to you".

Most often, this conversation takes place between relatives, neighbors or the inhabitants of the same neighborhood. Almost all people know one another. At times, the mother chooses a friend from the area and the latter goes to the young girl's mother to check the matter.

What is common is that the initial arrangements and agreements are women's affairs. They are the ones who talk about the idea of engagement and betrothal. They are also the ones who postpone the reply till consulting men. In turn, the man consults the woman and gets advice from others. He gives his opinion to his wife who in turn would tell the young man's mother. Then, the father (young man's father) visits them again to agree with the young girl's father about the engagement in a serious or official way. Thus, engagement is mainly women's affairs. However, men have the last say in giving the consent.

Informants unanimously agree that the marriage customs of the Qatari society did not include a long period of engagement-which prevailed in other Arabic societies- and engagement did not have the same meaning as nowadays. They also unanimously agree that the engagement period did not exceed one month, whatever the reasons. Usually, the engagement ranges from one to three weeks following agreeing to get engaged. The reason behind speeding up marriage and not delaying it is its simple procedures and the fact that the families of both fiancés know one another quite well. They are relatives in the first place and that it is easy to arrange the preparations required for marriage, including the house and the room. Indeed, some would use the furniture available at home, while others are married by their fathers and live under the same roof with the extended family for good or for some time till their financial conditions improve and they no longer depend on the family. Then, marriage is governed by the religious rule: "The sooner, the better". Thus, they follow this rule and the proverb which says: "The longer the period, the worse. That is to say, if the engagement period is long, there would be no wedding.

In reality, in the past, engagement did not include stages as is the case now. It was a set of successive steps started by women and finished off by men and then the wedding would take place.

Engagement stages

Informants unanimously agree that if the young man wants to get married he first talks immediately to his mother about his desire and at times, he would talk to his father and most of the time the offer is made directly by the father. In the first case, the mother conveys the idea to the father and then steps are undertaken. The father and the mother would act each in a different manner. Indeed, the father

goes to his brother in the house to tell him about the matter, while the mother goes to women, to the young girl's mother in the house and tell her about the matter.

At times, the engagement is directly conducted with the father and after his consent, he asks the mother to prepare her daughter for marriage without taking their opinion into consideration and this was the prevailing case in our ancient societies.

Field studies show that the economic conditions of the family are a determinant factor in achieving the son's desire to get married. In fact, if the family is wealthy and has the materiel means and income which would enable the son to get married, it would speed up the engagement and marriage within two weeks or even less. If the family does not have the means and is poor, it would ask the son to wait and work hard in order to get married. In this context, a female informant said: "if the son's family is well-to-do, it would look for good people and ask for their daughter's hand, and if it has limited means, the son has to toil, work hard for the dowry and things that they need to cover the marriage expenses".

If the son wants to get married from outside the family, he would tell his mother about his desire, then the first steps are undertaken to arrange and prepare for the marriage.

From another perspective, the wealthy class in the urban areas would send the young girl's family a letter (a message) or a representative (a matchmaker) to get the answer about the engagement of one son and after getting the answer, the young man's father would go to the young girl's father and ask for her hand. Then, the wedding date is set. Given the simplicity of life at that time, the wedding would be celebrated within one or two weeks at most after getting the answer.

Formerly, engagement has no other objective except that of getting married as soon as possible. In fact, customs would allow the fiancé neither to see his fiancée nor to talk to her and not even get to know her. Field studies confirm that no sooner "did the man get engaged, that he got married. They would give them at most a week's time and the most important is decorating the room (Khilla) because he had limited means".

Thus, the engagement period was too short in the past as it did not exceed one week. It might last for three weeks. After approving the engagement, the family prepares itself, if it "would build a room or other place for the newlyweds, it would ask for two or three weeks till they finish, and then the wedding is celebrated".

Formerly, the Qatari society was based on intermarriage and this was mainly the decision of the man, while getting married from outside the family especially in the coastal and urban areas depended on women and matchmakers to check the matter with the young girl's family and know the arrangements till men would meet and agree about the marriage. Then, there is Al-Milcha (signing the marriage contract) and the wedding. And all this does not exceed three weeks at most.

Tradition has it that in the rural areas the young man's father goes to the young girl's father and after greeting him he says: "O, father of such and such, we would like to get closer to God and to you... We would like to propose to your daughter such and such to our son such and such". Then, the father welcomes his proposal and they all agree immediately about Al-Milcha and the wedding dates. In other circumstances, the young man's father pays a visit to the young girl's father to ask for her hand to his son. He refuses to drink coffee and says: "I would not drink your coffee unless you say yes to what I request. Then he says to him: "Cheer up, we accepted your request. Drink your coffee with us. I accept your request."

However, different customs related to choice and marriage prevailed in the rural areas. This is obvious through the accounts of some informants. In fact, these areas used to be a theater for hunting, trade and land trips for the wealthy from the urban areas. That is why the man either single or married- used to go hunting and thus got acquainted with the countryside men. Maybe he would frequent them for some time and then go back married to one of their daughters. And thus, such marriage was made without celebrations or procedures in the past.

Sometimes, engagement is made through letters if the suitor has a great position. He sends a letter to the young girl's father through his representative, asking the hand of his daughter. The young girl's father would reply verbally through the same representative.

In urban areas, either the mother and one of her relatives or neighbors would go to the bride's family, "greet them, stay at their home, drink coffee and say: we came to ask for the hand of your daughter such and such for our son such and such. They wait for their opinion. They would say: at the blessed hour, there is goodness, God willing we will consult the father (her husband) and then we would answer you". Most of the time, the matchmaker-who plays an important role in bringing both families closer- goes to the young girl's. She checks the matter and sees the daughter. This is in addition to the information she already knows and her previous experience with her and others. She then tells the young man's mother about the final answer. The mother conveys the whole matter to the father. Then, he goes to the young girl's father and together they agree about the wedding, Al-Milcha and all the arrangements.

Relying on the matchmaker increases in the urban area given the bigness of the city and that people do not know one another very well. Thus, they need an intermediary in this field. Besides, the need to resort to a matchmaker increases whenever the girl gets older. In reality, checking including the checks and tests it requires, is an act carried out by the matchmaker and differs from one environment to another and according to the knowledge degree. If the girl was from the relatives, the neighbors, the Fareej or the Hella, she is of known origins, qualities, characteristics and apparent physical features.

They know and saw the girl since she was born as she played therein. Thus, there are no checkups and no suitor representative in the professional manner as known. Moreover, what is prevailing is kinship and intermarriage. However, if she is from a remote area, the role of the matchmaker is necessary. Thus, checkup and verification become all the more necessary to closely check the girl's qualities because she is unknown to the suitor's family, taking into consideration that the principle of non-mixing between both genders prevails in addition to the difficulty for the suitor to see his fiancée.

In urban areas, relying on the checkups, the representative or the matchmaker makes sure about the girl's qualities in her house. They choose a woman to keep track of her in her house, talk to her to see her way of talking, her height, she touches her hair and if she knows how to welcome her guests, if she is active or not. The suitor's mother also tries to make sure that the fiancée meets the conditions

of a good housewife. She asks someone to check secretly on the fiancée if she knows how to cook and clean. Then, she comes back and says: she is a good wife like her mother. The reason behind this evaluation is to check that the girl is physically fit, has good morals and behavior so that the suitor can feel comfortable after marriage because he only sees her at the wedding night.

Informants stress the importance of these accurate tests and checkups to avoid the unavoidable. Some people see that they have never heard about deception cases in marriage given that there is checkup and verification. However, they heard about a story of cheating of another kind. The female informant says: "We heard once about someone who came to ask for a girl's hand from her family and they welcomed him. He gave them gifts and he chose the girl and then they married him her sister. The latter was too old and he divorced her".

Field studies show that the common custom is that the young man's family takes the initiative and not the girl's. The father, the son or the son's mother or his female relative is the one who strikes the conversation concerning the engagement and "checking-up". However, there are cases where the girl's family takes the initiative:

If a neighbor, a friend, or a relative of the girl's mother hears about a family looking for a bride for their son and she cares about the two parties or one of them, she says: "you can see the daughter of such and such. She is a good woman and you should not miss her, for reminding is beneficial for the believers." In cases of love and kinship between some relatives and especially "if she is their only daughter and dear to her mother, the mother goes to her sister or brother and says to them: "The daughter is yours, you deserve her and do not let outsiders marry her". And maybe proverbs substantiate and encourage adopting this attitude. As the proverbs go, "Marry your daughter and not your son and "Marry the girl and take care of her". And in the cases of outsiders, if the father happens to have more than one daughter, and he knows a good man who wants to get married but he cannot afford for the wedding expenses, he is manly (brave), who will protect the girl and care for her, then the girl's father visits him, has a talk together, knows what goes in his mind and suggests that he marries one of his relatives or hints at his consent through a relative or a friend of his".

The second case is "Wahba" which is usually made by one man to another whom he knows quite well, and he may be a high-ranking man. Then, he admires his character and qualities; he wants to get closer to him. Thus, he says to him: "O, Mr. such and such, your wife is in my house".

In reality, nowadays, such customs have significantly changed. As a matter of fact, engagement is only made when the young man and his family know the girl quite well, and have seen her before either on a wedding ceremony, a party or at home. The fact that wedding ceremonies are held in hotels has contributed to it. On the other hand, if the mother and her daughters want to see the fiancée, they pay her a visit at home. The latter prepares dinner for them and shows hospitality toward them. Once the engagement takes place, the party is celebrated-the latter is a new practice for the Qatari culture. In this party, they give dinner for the suitor's family and close relatives as an honor to him and to his mother. Besides, modernity has played a role in changing the customs of choosing for wedding and engagement. Formerly, they used to rely on matchmakers in the urban areas while they currently rely on the phone, schoolmates and co-workers. Indeed, at times, agreement and choice can be made through phone calls. They send something to the girl's family or they send a trustworthy woman who talks with the mother. If they agree, they would say to them: May God bless you! If they refuse, the mother invents excuses that the girl is engaged to one of her cousins, she wants to pursue her studies, she is still young or someone has already asked for her hand. On the other hand, if the young man is mother or sisters want to check the qualities of the girl, they see her at school or faculty. At the same time, the choice criteria have equally changed. Before, in the rural areas, they used to prefer the girl who knows how to cook and takes care of her house and the good young housewife who cooks well in the urban areas. Nowadays, beauty has become the criterion. People compete over the beautiful and they do not care about the fact that she is a good housewife and then problems emerge after marriage. Maids currently substitute women in doing the housework. That is to say, they do the household chores and thus a woman's vices are not detected.

In addition, the customs and traditions governing it have changed. The first feature of change has to do with the suitor and his fiancée's age. Indeed, the fiancée's age has risen from 18 to 20 and maybe

to 24 after graduating from university. Besides, the suitor's age has risen to 30 on average. The second feature is that the young man chooses for himself and by himself given the conditions of education and financial independence and the change in trends and values. Moreover, he relies on new kinds of matchmaking in engagement given that he is sometimes able to see the girl and talk to her on the phone. The third feature is the long period of engagement, which is meant to facilitate the wedding preparations. At times, this period may reach one year. The fourth feature consists in the engagement ring, the jewelry and the valuable gifts during the engagement period. Such things did not exist before. Therefore, the customs of squandering money and luxurious consumption have taken precedence over simplicity and traditional moderation in engagement and wedding as a whole.



Engagement Ring

Engagement barriers

Engagement may be subject to some barriers and impediments that lead to rejection. Among which we find the following:

Tahyeer (availability), its conditions and how to undo it

Tahyeer (availability) is a social custom which prevailed in the Qatari society in its various areas, and social classes and especially in the rural areas (countryside). It stands for a kind of strong bond between the young man and the young girl since their birth. It is like an engagement to be husband and wife according to the agreement between their families or fathers together.

Tahyeer can only be made "for the uncle's son" (father's family). As a matter of fact, the uncle's son (father's family) is worthier of his cousin (to make her available for him), "even if she gets older, he marries her. If she does not like him, (he will not undo the Tahyeer even if her hair turns gray). None can marry her only after matchmaking and interference..."

There are many local words used to refer to Tahyeer. The girl is said to be available, reserved or Makroua' to say that she is going to be her cousin's wife even if she gets older.

In rural areas, the cousin makes his uncle's daughter available, and Tahyeer is according to the degrees of uncle hood. If the young man is a direct cousin, he has precedence. But if there is no direct cousin, then the son of her uncle (the brother of her father from the part of the father only) and he is followed by the father's cousin. Thus goes Tahyeer in the direct or lineal kinship, then the indirect kinship and especially between the cousins (father's family) mainly and no one else from the other classifications of parentage.

Some informants compare the Tahyeer process to Al-Milcha. It is like a documented religious contract that can neither be revoked nor undone whatever the circumstances except in case of the young man's consent and tolerance. Tahyeer does not need any introduction. Since "the girl's birth and that she happens to have a cousin (father's family), even if he is 10 years older than her, her destiny is linked to his and all people know that".

What is important is that the social customs and traditions used to impose Tahyeer and acknowledge it whether it is made by the young man's family or not, and whether it is done orally or not.

At times, Tahyeer is made following an outsider's proposal to the uncle's daughter, and then he intervenes and says that she is made "available" for him and none can marry her but the cousin.

At times, if the family happens to have three or four daughters and someone proposes to them, then the issue of Tahyeer is different. The father says to his brother: "such and such and such and such are yours except for the third". If her uncle refuses, then problems will arise and the brothers may boycott one another. If the uncle

accepts, the third will be untied and the first and the second remain tied and available.

Ethnographic studies show that Tahyeer prevailed in the urban and rural areas alike. However, it was less important in the city than in the countryside. Tahyeer has prevailed in every place and community. In this case, the desire of the young girl and the differences between her and her cousin- or the person who made her available in general- are not taken into consideration. Besides, according to traditions, rarely can she oppose or reject it. Under some circumstances, there is a need to conciliate the cousin to make him accept to give up marrying his girl cousin and her Tahyeer.

What shows the tragedies of Tahyeer is that one of the rural girls does not want to marry her cousin who made her "available" for him, and then she declares that she got older and she is still available for him. Then she would say:

My cousin has made me available	God gave him Tahyeer
My chest has appeared	I am no longer young
God gave him Tahyeer	

Another one says when he proposed to a rural girl that he is far away from her after being "made available" to her cousin. Thus, he was deprived of her like a child is deprived of his mother's milk following her death.

I have a girlfriend who has been made available

Her love has got the best of me

She is so dear to me, why should we be separated.

He cried and did not know that he would leave her

He cried till he no longer wanted to be breastfed

He can no longer enjoy the joys of life

In fact, Tahyeer was like a "registered or documented contract". Thus, it can be untied only through begging, intermediation, gifts and many acts of kindness. That is why there were many ways to

untie Tahyeer in the past in the urban and rural societies and untying Tahyeer takes various names.

Indeed, in the urban areas, Tahyeer and its untying is easier than in the rural areas and this can be done at times through interventions and intermediation. Thus, a high-ranking man in the neighborhood goes to the cousin and says to him: "Such and such, we came to you and beg you to untie such and such... or they say to him: "we ask you to set such and such free", then he would untie her. In the rural areas, if the cousin is asked to untie his girl cousin, at times he accepts, "the cousin accepts to untie his girl cousin through making her available to one of his brothers or cousins once again and thus she remains "a hostage".

Among the examples proving this is that one girl refused her cousin's Tahyeer and said "I won't marry him whatever the price" and he said: "nobody will marry my girl cousin (threat)... And the day he accepted to untie her, he said, I would only make her available to my cousin. And people would go to the cousin and say to him: "your cousin girl does not want to marry you and every year she gets older." And as the proverb goes: "marriage without love is like a dead person without a coffin" and if you married her she would run away and he married and eventually she ran away".

Among the ways to untie Tahyeer in the countryside, we find for instance "Al-shara", that is to say, one of the brave and affluent men would go to the cousin whom his girl cousin refuses to marry, and would buy her freedom through his weapon "rifle" and some cattle. In this case, it is said that such and such was bought by such and such from the one who made her available".

Another means to untie Tahyeer in the rural areas is "Al-zaban" and "Al-tamouh". In fact, one girl does not accept to marry her cousin and then she would go to the tribal Sheikh before her marriage or on her wedding night itself without consuming the marriage, and without her family's knowing. He would untie her Tahyeer through giving a present to her cousin such as an arm, "a riding animal" (horses or camels), cattle (sheep or goats) or money.

In reality, "Zaban" is no longer present in the current time due to the appearance of the State power and the social constraints imposed

by the official means such as courts, the law, the police and the other modern official institutions.

The second means to untie Tahyeer in the rural areas is "Al-tamouh", that is to say the bride would run away on her wedding night and go to a certain house or resort to the desert. Then it is said that such and such is a "runaway bride" (she hates her husband) and the poet says: "I only like the runaway bride who hates men". Even society does not blame her for such a behavior, it rather shows her courage and she will immediately be engaged after divorce.

It is noteworthy that Tahyeer has currently undergone some changes in general given the spreading of education, the fact that traditions have allowed some extent of freedom in taking the marriage decision (for the boy and girl alike), getting married at an older age in general, each one of them has come of age, becoming aware of the health problems related to consanguine marriage, this is in addition to the role played by modernization in disseminating external marriage customs as well as the role of the modern means of communication, etc.

Tasmiya (Naming): tying and untying it

While Tahyeer is confined to the uncle's daughters and can only be untied through agreement, intermediation and begging, Tasmiya is made among relatives (uncle and aunt's daughter from the mother family) and among non-relatives (acquaintances, neighbors and friends).

On the other hand, there is a great amount of freedom allowed by customs and traditions to revoke and untie Tasmiya upon the request of one party without intermediation, agreement, or repercussions.

Tasmiya is made by mothers of the same family. For instance, one mother who is too close to her sister says to the latter that her daughter is her son's fiancée since early childhood. Thus, Tasmiya is made since then and such and such girl is named for such and such young man and marriage may be concluded or not when they grow up".

One of the examples showing that is what a female informant from the north area said to her brother: you have four daughters and none of them is engaged to my son, all of them are engaged. Knowing

that his wife is pregnant, he says: if the baby inside my wife's belly is a girl, it will be your son's fiancée. But if God deemed it and my wife gave birth to a girl and once she grows up and so does your son, then he may not want her. She said: look my son, I want the girl and if you want her, trust in God and go ahead to ask for her hand because you are worthier of her as she is named to you since early childhood. If you don't want her, we'll look for another girl. The son replied: :no, I want her and we asked for her hand. Thus, the Tasmiya here is between uncles (mother's family) and not the uncles from the father's family. It is also done even if the mother is pregnant, and she gives birth to a girl.

Tasmiya can also be between friends of both sexes. For instance, when the woman gives birth to a child, and she has a close friend, she says to her: "my friend, my daughter is for your son", "or may God make such and such for such and such. The same applies to male friends. "If a man has someone who is dear to him, he says: "hey, such and such, your son's wife is in my house and calls her name." Therefore, the parents determine their children's destinies through naming them to persons to marry them –either from relatives or outsiders. However, if the children refuse, nothing binds them. Everyone goes his own way.

Thus, both Tasmiya and Tahyeer are long periods of engagement. Tasmiya is a pre- engagement while Tahyeer is a "current" engagement known by everybody. However, the engagement must be renewed when the children grow up. Therefore, the mother, the father and the family must go to ask for the girl's hand and say: "we want such and such girl for our such and such son". Her family replies: "you are welcome, cover her with a cloak and take her, we have nothing to disagree about, no greed and nothing...the girl is with her family... the mother says: you are welcome, the girl is yours".

There are no various ways to unbind Tasmiya as in the case of Tahyeer, and freedom is guaranteed for both parties. So if one of them does not like the other, or there is a disagreement between the relatives, neighbors, or friends, the engagement is revoked voluntarily without laying the blame on either party, nor a party clinging to the other. It is noteworthy that Tasmiya customs have equally changed as was the case with Tahyeer customs.

Wahba (gift): its meaning and its conditions

Wahba is the gift or the present that one party gives to the other for free. It means that the father gives his daughter as a gift to a man to marry her, and most of the time; the latter is a high-ranking man- like a tribal Sheikh, one of the respected people in the urban areas or one of the ruling family's Sheikhs.

Like Tasmiya, Wahba occurs between acquaintances, friends, and neighbors. Wahba custom was widespread in the rural areas among the tribes and rather limited in the urban areas. Wahba is usually executed at the marriage age for the girl while the man is rather aged. As we have mentioned, he is usually a tribal Sheikh or a respected man among the group. Moreover, as such, Wahba is quick to be executed. It is also issued for the aged men as a token of admiration to the person for his generosity, morals, social status, noble birth and good manners with the girl's father.

Wahba targets the highly ranking persons in a way to reinforce noble birth as a means to raise the gifted girl's family position and her children later on. One of them says:

I wish my father endowed me to the Sheikh

We would spend the night together and then he'd divorce me

However, the contemporary social and cultural reality shows that this custom has changed in the Qatari society and so do the Tasmiya and Tahyeer customs "because peoples' nature has significantly changed." Formerly, they used to name and make gifts given that a person is very dear to them (great love between them).

Matchmaking in engagement

The marriage customs and traditions in the Qatari society encourage in general intermarriage and mainly cousin marriage (uncle and aunt's sons), second degree relatives, then the third degree (from inside the tribe). Rarely is the marriage made from outsiders (especially in the urban and coastal areas). In all cases, the families used to know one another very well and the social relationships were close, strong and direct in addition to the small size of the community and the clarity of the collective tribal structure. In light of this social and cultural nature, marriage was made without an intermediary or a matchmaker in the rural areas. However, they used to rely on a

matchmaker in the urban areas and that's because of the relative variation of the groups, the large size of the urban society, and the professional diversity for men (hunting- diving- trade- ship building- making fishnets) and for women (hairstresser- midwife- quack doctor- shop assistant- seamstress- maid). Thus, talking about matchmaking in marriage is mainly related to the urban areas in the past as well as nowadays.

On the other hand, intermarriage has spread out along with Tahyeer, Tasmiya and Wahba, which has in turn reduced the role of matchmaking in concluding marriage. What is worth mentioning is that engagement from within the relatives definitely depends on men (that's to say the marriage agreement concerning the young man and the girl is made from their day of birth or early childhood) whereas, marriage from outsiders depends on matchmaking, mainly the matchmaking of women such as the mother, the aunt (the mother's sister), the aunt (the father's sister) and the eldest sister. This is what prevailed in the urban areas in the past. In addition, matchmaking in marriage among relatives differs from that among outsiders.

Matchmaking among relatives:

Referring back to the widening network of kinship relations between tribes in the Arabian Peninsula as a whole, borders of some countries separate between people belonging to the same tribe. Formerly, they used to be separated by distances. However, kinship relations were strong and became stronger through intermarriage in the rural and urban areas alike. Thus, in the countryside, the brother strikes the conversation with his brother about marrying his son to his brother's daughter, or the woman strikes the conversation with her sister concerning marrying her son to his cousin girl. This was the case when marrying the aunt's daughter (the father's sister) and the uncle's daughter (the mother's brother). Men's meeting plays a major role in the process of choosing and agreeing and so does Al-Kaada (women's meeting). This is in addition to simplicity nature which used to prevail in the rural and urban life in the past. In this respect, an informant says: "you have none but your family; you send them to the family from which you want to ask for their daughter's hand and either they refuse your proposal for one reason or another or they say to you: " you are welcome".

Actually, some of the features relating to intermarriage traditions,

choosing and striking the conversation with the parents about marrying are still present nowadays even though they have undergone some change. Thus, the intermarriage rate has decreased as well as Tahyeer and Tasmiya phenomena in addition to the disappearance of Wahba and the increase of choosing a fiancée from the outsiders. Furthermore, both the young man and the young girl have won some kind of independence in choosing their partners and taking the decision thanks to education, financial independence, modern means of communication, landlines as well as mobile phones and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS).

Matchmaking among outsiders:

This kind of matchmaking increases in the urban areas in general as traditions allow for such kind of external marriage from other groups in the same Fareej (area) or from another Fareej. The first steps begin when the son strikes the conversation with his mother concerning marriage. Then the mother resorts to the matchmaker who used to play a major role in facilitating marriage affairs. Here, the matchmaker exposes the girls of the Fareej, their qualities, their social and kinship origins, their desired characteristics and then the mother agrees to choose one of them. Here, the mother sends the matchmaker and the latter comes back with the news. If the girls was made available to her cousin, or named to one of her relatives or neighbors, the mother would forget about her and together with the matchmaker would look for another girl. Most of the time, the matchmaker has something **up her sleeve given that she knows a lot of names, issues and then she would bring both parties close so that they agree together and get married.**

In fact, the matchmaker has many ways to know the girls, their names, their families and their qualities. Thus, she resorts to the Mutawâa for instance and says: "I have a girl and I want you to teach her reading and writing". She replies: "welcome". The matchmaker would see the girls and say to them: "May God preserve you. Who are they? The Mutawâa says: this is the girl of such and such and the other is the girl of such and such. She says: have they been your students since a long time ago? She says: they have been my students since a long time. I learnt and taught". Then the matchmaker would go to the suitor's family and tell his mother about the girls or girls whom she knew about at the Mutawââs and would nominate one of them for marriage and says: "I have seen her and she is perfect. She is a pious girl from top to toe".

Another way used by the matchmaker consists in going to houses without restraints and happens to know who is there thanks to the nature of her work. She is either a hairdresser who brushes and combs girls' hair, a midwife who helps women in labor and takes care of them after giving birth, a maid who works in houses, or a tissue and ornaments merchant. Thus, she knows the girls and sees them at home. She makes sure about her moral and physical features. She

stays with her, talks and listens to her voice, touches and feels her hair, knows her height through asking her for water and says to her: "May God bless you and greet your mom". "Deftly, she would unveil her". The matchmaker is also keen on knowing every detail about the girl given that she asks about everything and every secret. After the engagement, the son's mother would pay the matchmaker in cash or in kind according to their conditions. She used to get from three to five Rupees. Others would give her food which consists in rice, dates, flour and others. Some other people would give her pieces of tissue (untailored pieces of cloth) while the affluent people would give her gold jewels or a silver riyal. In reality, this kind of reward is not compulsory and does not have a determined value or amount. It depends on the conditions of both parties and one of them.

Field studies show that the matchmaker is a wise, reasonable and kind woman who likes helping and serving others. She enters every house and therefore all people respect her, want to befriend her and win her affection. She praised many a girl who eventually got married. They also say about the matchmaker: "if she loves you, she will praise you and if she hates you, she will criticize you".

Therefore, all people are keen to win her love and affection. She is so dear to many women that they commission her to bring and prepare the dazza.

If the above shows that winning the matchmaker's affection is agreed upon by the informants, however, there are various views about her. She over-praises and thus, she is too kind. Others see that she is obtrusive. Therefore, if ever she enters a house, the girls will avoid her "because they know her... No sooner did she get in, than they would keep away from her and if ever they stand up, the family recommends that they do not reveal their features to her...They advise their daughters not to open the door for her when they are

outside the house not to be on her own with the girls". However, the mother welcomes her with respect and hospitality because she is a good intermediary. As for the girls, they are afraid of her because they used to fear getting married as they marry at an early age and may not know that they are going to marry.

Nowadays, matchmaking has witnessed some change given that modern means have invaded traditional matchmaking even though some female informants confirm that matchmakers do still exist. However, some of them practice matchmaking secretly or they do not want to become known. Others state that they practice this job and whoever wants to ask for their service can reach them and obtain it. Moreover, the phone has become a direct means of communication between the young man and the girl. They talk on the phone and discuss about marriage. In this respect, one of the female informants says: "Nowadays, the girl and the young man each other, they talk to each other and consulting the father and the mother comes later". That is to say both parties agree about the marriage's details and parents have only to approve and sign. It is then a reality which confirms independence and taking decision without consulting the family. Indeed, education, work and the phone have contributed to this change. Equally, women's work has contributed to it given that girls have become their co-workers and happen to mix with them and know them well. Thus, they choose one bride for their brother or son. Therefore, women have themselves become new matchmakers who only provide their services for the family surroundings and relatives.

Criteria for refusing the suitor

The Qatari cultural reality shows that refusing the suitor has to be convincing and indirect to avoid embarrassment. That is why the family would take the young age of the girl as an excuse at times, or would invoke Tahyeer or Tasmiya other times, that someone else has already proposed to her before the suitor, or that destiny has not wanted it yet till God ordains it, etc....The girl's family relies on many criteria to refuse the suitor among which we find the moral criteria, personal behavior, age, social class, kinship degree, noble birth and origin, and color, etc....

Ethnographic examples showing these criteria in the marriage traditions in Qatar earlier are so many. They are as follows:

Moral criteria: in this case, the family refuses the suitor if his morals are not good or "he has a dirty past, or his family is filthy and the mother says to the suitor's family that the girl is for her cousin, she's already engaged or she's still young". As the proverb goes, "Better keep away that from which no good is expected".

Personal behavioral criteria: for instance, the suitor "is not religiously committed, he doesn't pray, or he doesn't have a job (unemployed) and he is a burden on his father who gives him his pocket money or if he is stupid, not a reasonable person". As the proverb goes, "There is no use locking the barn door after the horse has bolted", that is to say refusing now is better than an acceptance followed by remorse. Besides, they refuse the suitor if he is mean and here the saying is of no use because "there is no point talking about it when the damage is done".

Social class: the family sees to it that the suitor is not from a lower social class...They do not use to take into consideration his education and money. As the proverbs goes "marry your son to a girl from a noble birth and your daughter to a wealthy man", that is to say, ensure that your son marries a woman of noble birth and that your daughter marries someone who has good social and economic conditions so that she does not feel deprived. To account for the refusal, another proverb says: "that which is not ordained by God is a kind of predicament", which means that "you may dislike something while it is good for you".

Kinship criterion: This is a decisive marriage rule. In fact, priority is given to relatives and not to outsiders. Thus, in the countryside, kinship marriage from first degree prevails. If ever a suitor comes from outside the family from a remote area, he is not approved... They say: "he is neither from our family nor are we from his... his race is not ours". In urban areas, as the proverb goes: "the garment shall be stitched using the same yarns".

Noble birth and origin criterion (social origin): if the latter has not been met, the girl's family refuses the suitor. "Formerly, if the person is not of noble birth and origin, none will accept him even if he is going to shroud the girl in gold". Ethnographic studies confirm this through being patient, enquiring about birth and origin and not taking things at face value till the reality of things is unveiled, as the proverb goes: "all that glitters is not gold", that is to say appearances are

deceptive, they are a kind of deception that is easily revealed and thus truth is known.

However, nowadays, these criteria have changed. Indeed, new criteria, which keep up with the openness and the new economic reality, have superseded them and taken a material aspect. "Currently, compared to the past, life has changed and marriage has become governed by different new criteria". Formerly, the family used to make sure that the suitor belonged to "a good family and is someone who respects marital life, cherishes his wife and treats her well"... "Currently, they look for a suitor who has a house, a job, who is educated (university graduate) and well-off". Thus, nowadays, more often than not noble birth and origin are no longer important. To justify their stances, some people say: "the origin lies in the wallet...He who has money is of noble origin".

Acceptance and announcement

According to Qatari customs and traditions, it is the man who makes agreements, gives his word and promise, and keeps to it. He is the one who assumes the results at last. This tradition is derived from Islam given that men are the protectors and maintainers of women and a woman is only married through her guardian. He is her representative and spokesman, whether he is the father or someone who substitutes him. Tradition had it that engagement is men's affairs and not women's. In all cases, it was the father who either accepts the suitor as a fiancé and a husband to his daughter or refuses him.

According to the Qatari customs, in the countryside and urban areas alike, it is the father's opinion which matters when accepting the suitor who proposes to his daughter. Without paying heed to the dynamics and dimensions of consultations, discussions and inquiring about the suitor, etc..... It is the father who has the last say and the daughter does not have any decision in this respect. "The only opinion which matters is that of the father" and "the daughter's opinion is that of her father".

In case the father is dead, the Qatari customs and traditions already determined the person who substitutes him to approve the suitor and the girl's marriage. The uncle tops the list. In this respect, the popular saying says: "The mother's brother is far and the father's brother is the guardian". That is to say, the mother's brother is rather

distant and the father's brother is closer and he is the one responsible after the father immediately or substitutes him after his death. "It is the father's brother who knows the men... and chooses the good man for his niece... He is the one who replies and informs them of his approval as if the father were present, thus the uncle has the father's status".

Then, the eldest brother comes after the father's brother to assume guardianship, which consists in approving or refusing the suitor. Then the grandfather comes and the mother's brother (uncle).

Ethnographic studies show that the classification of guardianship degrees and priorities is not fixed. It is rather characterized by flexibility and is governed by kinship considerations, good relationship and love and following up the conditions of the family after the father's death. That is why some informants say that as far as nieces' guardianship is concerned, in many cases the mother's brother is better than the father's brother. As the proverb goes, "Ask about the mother's brother, you will find him attractive". Origin is important. In this respect, the poet says:

I am like my uncles (mother's brothers) like the spears

And I am like my uncles (father's brothers) till dates fall down.

That is to say, the boy inherits bravery from his mother's brothers and hard work and assiduity from his father's brothers and "from good seeds comes good fruit". That is to say, the fruit is the spitting image of its seed. Besides, the Qatari proverbs praise the mother's brother, as the proverb goes: "He is the nephew of his uncle; he is in the market and all people calling him by his name". Highlighting the role of the uncle in molding the nephew's character, another proverb says: "To know the boy, ask about his uncle (mother's brother)", that is to say if you want to know the boy quite well, ask first about his uncle, his qualities, his behavior and then you will know him well. Mostly, the boy takes after his uncle.

The grandfather is ranked third as far as the girl's guardianship is concerned. "If she is an orphan and has a grandfather, the latter is responsible for her". If the orphan girl has an eldest brother, he is her guardian in this case. Sometimes, he is ranked fourth as far as guardianship is concerned. If she happens to have no guardian at

all, her guardian is the Sheikh at the time of signing the marriage contract. The latter would talk to her "from behind the wall or the curtains, he talks to her to know if she accepts or refuses the suitor". In reality, the orphan girl will not find difficulty to have a guardian in a society based mainly on kinship and where intermarriage and immediate strong relationships prevail. Doubtless, she has uncles (mother's brother and father's), aunts' husbands and grandparents, etc.

It is noteworthy that the rural environment is different from the urban one as far as consulting the tribal Sheikh about engagement and marriage. Some rural female informants say that formerly the girl does not marry "until the father consults the tribal Sheikh about the matter... Some even used to sign the marriage contract at the Sheikh's. He is an experienced man since his position among men". Such consultation also takes place in the urban areas (every person needs someone older and wiser to be his guide and supporter in life). As for announcing the engagement, the Qatari society did not use to grant it much attention at all. Indeed, there were no celebrations at all as is the case nowadays. After consent about the engagement, the young man's mother would spread the news to the family and neighbors.

Formerly, "giving consent" was itself a sufficient announcement about the engagement and most of the time they used to show their joy through fixing the marriage date in the near future. And this is in turn an announcement of the engagement prior to marriage.

Field studies show that engagement, Al-Milcha and the wedding were successive steps which would last no more than one month at most in the Qatari society in the past in the countryside and urban areas alike. It is noteworthy that the suitor would see his fiancée only on the wedding night and thus, the Qatari society did not use to pay much heed to mutual gifts as is the case now.

Informants agree that the engagement was not celebrated and the suitor did not use to see his fiancée or pay her visits and maybe, he did not even know her, nor had he seen her before.

Even the fiancée herself might not know that someone had proposed to her, given that the daughter does not have an opinion and her opinion lies with her father. She might also know the date of

the wedding only when she is taken to the Maaris (husband) while she does not know about it. Among the customs of engagement in the Qatari society in the past is that the boy's family does not bring whatsoever with them when they go to the girl's house to propose to her. It is uncommon that they bring gifts and food to the bride's family, "maybe they would not accept". Most of them confirm that the customs of giving gifts in the pre-marriage period are new, as the Qatari customs in the past only knew about the Dazza, which is the bride's trousseau.

At the current time, as an important step among the marriage's steps, engagement has great importance and it is celebrated and announced in the presence of the joyful guests. At times, engagement is celebrated at the hotel where a popular musical band plays music, and the fiancé and his family bear the expenses of this celebration. Other times, the celebration is limited to both parties' families.

Besides, nowadays, Shabka has become a major part among the engagement customs since the seventies and especially with the beginning of modernization in the fields of education, work, communication and economy. Shabka consists in a ring or a necklace and a ring each according to his means. The fiancé's mothers and her daughters together with the fiancé go to the bride's with sweets and mixed nuts and some others may give Jihaz which is an amount of money" according to the agreement.

Moreover, the Shabka has become a prelude to other subsequent cultural changes. Indeed, after the engagement and giving the Shabka to the bride, the fiancé sits with his fiancée; they talk together and agree about preparing to marital life. Some female informants say that there are great differences between the former bride and today's bride in light of the many modern preparations, the lack of shyness, the fact that the bride already knows her would-be husband, she happens to talk to him prior to marriage and she even sits with him which was not the case in the past. Thus, marriage is no longer dazzling to him and the bride is not new to him. Informants confirm that the Qatari society did not use to have these customs. They were rather brought from Arabic societies due to cultural exchange and getting married to foreign women. It has become part and parcel of the social-cultural fabric of life. They have become ingrained in it and followed by the sons of the rural and

urban areas alike, and from all the various social classes in order to get acquainted and further consolidate love and good relationship.

Time duration of the engagement and conventional practices

Formerly, the ethnographic examples show that the marriage customs in the Qatari society didn't determine a long period between the acceptance of the groom, Al-Milcha and the wedding. As we have always mentioned, this period ranges between one to four weeks depending on the circumstances of the house preparation, Dazza and affording the wedding expenses and its requirements.

This period was not known as "the engagement period", instead, it was called Mohla which means taking one's time and waiting till the wedding takes place. The followed rule in all urban and rural areas was that they speed up the wedding just after the approval of the groom. Popular etiquettes support such customs. According to the Qatari proverb, if the engagement, Al-Milcha and wedding periods get longer, problems will arise. It says: "the longer the period, the worse". Moreover, the popular conceptions and practices play a role in speeding up the wedding.

In fact, the reason behind having the above-mentioned Mohla is to build a place or a room for the spouses. Thus, they have to wait till the construction finishes after one or two weeks at most due to the simplicity of the building and life itself. Indeed, Mohla can last till the father's coming back from diving. Otherwise, "the sooner the better" as the female informants say: "they propose to the girl, after one or two days they sign the marriage contract and consume it in the same night or week...they sign the contract in the mosque and drink coffee in the men's meeting. Then, they consume the marriage...As soon as they sign the contract, they celebrate the wedding".

On the other hand, signing the contract requires the wedding directly and if ever there is a delay, it will not be acknowledged by the current customs.

However, these customs and conceptions have been subject to many changes, for instance the engagement period has become longer than before in order to prepare the trousseau and the marital home and because they live in remote places. Moreover, the bride for instance may study at university. Thus, as a condition her family postpones the marriage till she graduates and therefore

the engagement period gets longer. Nowadays, the girl “buys things for herself, prepares herself and thus needs time before getting married”. Furthermore, the young man signs the marriage contract long before the wedding due to the new modern economic reasons which came at the same time with change. For example, he submits the marriage certificate to the official bodies to get the “marriage aid” and housing from the State. Therefore, getting benefits from the State such as housing, endowments, and premiums played an important role in changing marriage customs.

Relationship between the fiancé and his fiancée

Formerly, there was no relationship between the fiancé and his fiancée in the Qatari customs of marriage neither in the countryside nor the city because the engagement period was short. Thus, there was room neither for relationships, nor visits nor going out etc. Informants agreed that the suitor is not allowed to visit his fiancée's house, neither to see her and nor to talk to her even about marriage.

However, if the suitor is the fiancée's cousin, he is allowed to go to her house but cannot see her. He cannot see the women either whatever the circumstances. Customs and traditions support the fact that the girl should not appear before men since her early social upbringing.

Moreover, formerly customs and traditions didn't allow the fiancée to visit her fiancé's family because she “doesn't leave the house at all even if she gets engaged”.

However, nowadays, the relationships between the fiancé and his fiancée represent a vivid example on the extent of change witnessed by the marriage customs and even in the Qatari culture in general. Ethnographic examples show that the suitor, at the present time, goes to his fiancée's house and pays regular visits whether he is from the relatives or an outsider. He sees her, sits with her and talks to her most of the time because the conceptions and traditions have changed. Moreover, currently, customs allow the suitor to go out with his fiancée and vice versa. There are also other examples that show that some people used to cling to the customs and traditions prevailing before modernization. Neither the fiancé sees his fiancée nor does she see him either.

Chapter Four: Al-Mahr i.e. Dowry and bride's trousseau

- Al-Dazza and its constituents
- Al-Milcha
- Dowry and its conditions
- Furnishing the spouses' house

First: Al-Dazza and its constituents

The jihaz (the trousseau) in language means all the bride's needs.

Before Islam, the father used to own the dowry and buy all his daughter's needs. In upper classes, the father bought all the needs of his daughter including jewelry and sent them in a procession to her husband's house. In Islam, the woman used to buy with her dowry, which she owns, all her needs. If she belongs to the rich class, the father buys her the trousseau from his own money. These customs remained for ages with some differences in form, traditions and environments.

Ethnographic data proves a difference between two terms common in the Qatari community. They are relating to marriage habits especially the bride's needs. The first term, the Jihaz, in the Qatari culture generally refers to valuables like gold and money that belong to the bride, and such valuables are sent with her besides other needs to complete the wedding ceremony.

The second term is Al-Dazza, a set of physical requirements needed for the wedding and the ceremony presented by the groom to his bride. Al-Dazza comprised gold and clothes and some house needs called Khorj el-Beit or Al-Matbakh (the kitchen) such as rice, sugar, slaughtered animals...etc. And consequently it belongs to the whole family of the bride. It is one of the Qatari customs that are turning obsolete.

In the Qatari community, the terms Al-Dazza and seyak are very common. Al-Dazza is what the groom sends to his bride at her family house before marriage. This is different from the dowry agreed upon by the two parties and comprises clothes, jewelry, gold ornaments, perfumes and Khorj Al-Matbakh. In addition to the dowry, the term Al-Dazza is common in Doha only, the capital. However, the Bedouin areas and the rest of other Qatari areas use the term Seyak. When they refer to the contents of Al-Dazza, they use the verb Sakou (meaning sent) and other verbs. One can say Bedouin areas use the word Seyak and urban areas especially the capital city use Al-Dazza. Data from field research prove the dominance of the word Seyak, and other similar or derivative words in the Qatari Bedouin

community, where people pronounce it “Souk or Seyak”. The groom used to say “Ah ya Rassi” (i.e. Oh my head), a euphemism that implies his suffering and perhaps incapability towards the high expenses of marriage.

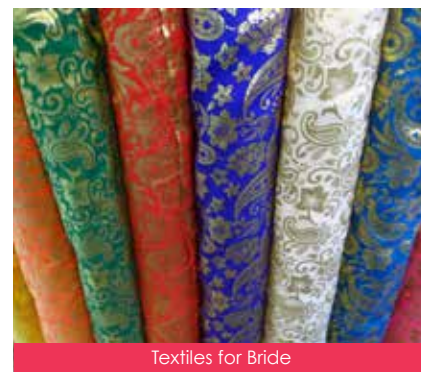
The word Seyak has historical origin in Arabian communities. The dowry, at the Arabian Peninsula, represented a price for the woman charged by her father or guardian and dubbed as Nafaga (all what is paid from the man's money that blesses this money and increases it). Also the dowry in Bedouin communities was derived from the economic nature and the dominant economic activity. It usually consisted of a number of camels led by the groom to his fiancé's house, and was called Seyak. The number of camels was estimated according to the social level of the woman and her beauty. In urban areas, dowry was paid in cash.

Despite this, Bedouins sometimes used the term Al-Dazza to describe wedding utensils and needs. And when they refer to the contents of Al-Dazza, they use the verb “Saqou” and other derivatives of the word (saquo Al-Dazza i.e. sent it). Maybe this is due to the dominance of urban culture (The capital city's culture) over the culture of suburbs and remote areas (The culture of the desert) as well as the role of modernity in speeding the change of values, trends and customs.

Remarkably, the word Seyak is still used nowadays though its meaning has slightly changed, i.e. no camels or sheep are being rendered. That has been replaced by money and jewelry.



Cloth of Dazza



Textiles for Bride

Al-Dazza consists of:

Jasawy: Containers of cloth that include (12-15) dresses and from which bras and pants are made. This is in addition to twelve floral

gowns that are named with different names such as kaf elsabaa, zend elabd, doset elbasha, bo merfa'a and elawari. There are two containers of veils and two/three of white men's clothes. There is also a number of Abayas, Beshts and groom's bed cover, and the majority of people send bed covers with Al-Dazza.

Perfumes: Including Oud, Dehn Elsandal, Dehn Elrazgy, Dehn Elward, Dehn Elmashmoum and a kilo of Oud and a big pack of Crocus.

Trinkets: Including Marya, Martaasha, Maara, Neck trinkets –Ganoub and Mashmoum that are hair trinkets and “The Dinar” put on the head. Besides, there are the rings (Elmaramy and Elshawahed) and bracelets including “Ashmilat Hab Elheil and Akhous” and waist belts trinkets. Trinkets are not all put in Al-Dazza. The groom's family, however, come with some of them like the Marya, Martaasha, the belt and Hab elheil, and only one piece would be hers and the rest is borrowed from other ladies, the bride puts them on for her embellishment and then they are returned to them after the wedding. Sometimes the rich send a representative to Bahrain to buy the new gold jewelry of modern designs. Gold is put in a special box together with the dowry, called Bashtakhta¹⁸, used by rich people only.

¹⁸ A Persian word that means the tightly closed box. It is an iron box, rectangular or small square in shape with a lid divided into sections to contain valuables. It has belts that meet from the top to ensure tight closure. Some pronounce it Bashtakhta and more often “Mashtakhta”



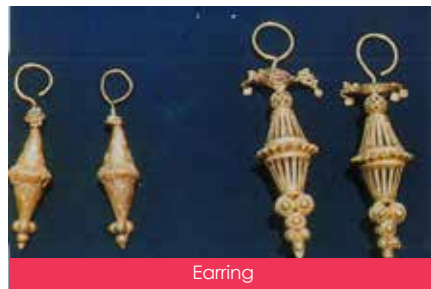
Mishtakhta



Bishtakhta



Jewellery and Gold



Earring



Textiles for Bride



Textiles for Bride



Textiles for Bride

It is noticed that the trinkets and jewelry were basic elements accompanying Al-Dazza or Seyak in the past and nowadays, with some obvious differences.

First, trinkets in the past were called "Sogh Elors" (wedding package) or "Sough Elarous" (Bride's package). Now diamonds replaced gold as gold has lost its stature for the bride.

Second, trinkets in the past were exchanged throughout ladies on their marriages through borrowing, when the spirit of cooperation prevailed. And so the gold was not totally the bride's. She owned some and borrowed most. Now, gold, diamonds and pearls presented to the bride are all hers and borrowing that stuff is unacceptable.

Third, trinkets in the past were only 3-5 gold pieces in the middle class, 1-2 pieces for the poor, and trinkets usually to certain traditional types like: "Hab Elheil, Bengar, Khodour, Madaed, rings, Martaasha, Martahash, Marya, Maara, Sheghab or Taragy (ear rings), Hama (on head), Nayra, Mashmoom, Mahabes, Maramy (the master rings), Bokafein and Nickles.

Currently, trinkets are limited to few types, and took the shape of integrated sets (for fingers, wrists, ears and chest) and are mostly made of diamonds as gold is rarely seen in Al-Dazza... etc.

The fourth difference is trinkets in the past were unconditional. Their details and types were undefined. That was left to the custom of the groom and his family. People of the desert, however, would agree on trinkets especially in a forced marriage. Tough conditions were set to financially incapacitate the groom and save the bride of that marriage. Now, the lady goes to the market and picks what she likes. These trinkets cost 30-60,000 Qatar riyals. Add to this the dowry that reaches 60,000 riyals or more, and may reach 400,000 in some cases. The phenomenon of spinsterhood can be attributed, even partially, to such extravagant dowry.

Khorj Al-Matbakh or pannier: consisted of food and beverage and the ingredients for preparing them. It included sackcloth of sugar, 2 sackcloth of bread (rice), a sackcloth of flour, a box of tea, a large metal tin of dried dates and a tin of butter and coffee. They

were kept in the yard. That, besides the slaughtered animals, varied according to the financial status of the groom's family.

Al-Dazza now is sent to the bride's house and the ladies of the home receive it in the attendance of neighbors and close relatives. Some of it is distributed among the bride's relatives, friends, neighbors and acquaintances.

The contents of Al-Dazza are put in large and medium metal boxes. The contents of Al-Dazza vary according to the class and financial status of the groom's family and the customs of the groom's family.



Earring



Textiles for Bride

"Generosity is one of the world's traditions, and the rich man's furniture is plentiful and expensive".

It is worth saying that these customs have seen changes in the desert and urban communities. Some have changed in form (furniture, perfumes and clothes). Others changed in content like the bride choosing her wedding needs herself and alone. Also, the emersion of "moakhar elsaddak" is highlighted: (a deferred amount of money to be paid by the husband to his wife on a potential divorce or collected by the wife from husband's fortune after his death. This amount is stated in the marriage contract). This applies in the Bedouin and urban areas alike. Those two sub-cultures are heading towards constructing a unified integrated culture which shares the basic topics and differs in some details.

1/1 - Al-Dazza selection

The available Ethnographic data proves that the groom's family, especially his mother and sisters, select Al-Dazza and specify its content. They buy and send it to the bride's house.

"The groom's family chooses and sends Al-Dazza to the bride's house".

The bride's family, in most cases, has not interfered in that process in the past or now. The bride's mother, however, might be given some choice based on an agreement with the groom's mother and sometimes his family. That agreement takes places via a mediator or direct communication. The majority prefers setting conditions and the proverb goes "It is better to set conditions".

Obviously the girl (bride) had not played any role in selecting Al-Dazza, or defining its volume or nature. Even managing it was in the hands of the family and the permitted role was decided by the groom's mother, not the bride herself. The mother-in-law selected the gold and trinkets. This behavior was not strange at that time for reasons such as: girls got married in young age and marriage was the responsibility of the family and girls and boys only had to get married with their extended family. Another reason was that Al-Dazza was not tiresome, rather was simple in the Qatari community. Add to this the fact that every side cared to satisfy the other, and this is clear in several proofs relevant to the mediator in transferring Al-Dazza in the past. The female mediator used to say to the bride's mother after Al-Dazza arrival:

"The groom's family wants nothing but your satisfaction... and if there is something missing, you have to say"

That's why selecting Al-Dazza was easy; agreement upon it was simple, transferring it smooth and the reaction towards it calm. Selection habits have seen some change, notably a wider role of the bride in choosing Al-Dazza "The groom and his family discuss with the lady after Al-Milcha¹⁹ whether she wants gold or money to buy her needs."

Other changes relating to Al-Dazza and dowry include the fact that circle of selection is now focused on the bride and groom-- they choose, define and buy-- together or individually- what suits them and what they like. Remarkable too, the selecting process is now more focused on the would-be husband's house equipment like furniture. The proof on a widening woman's participation in decision on selection and opinion is that the groom tells his bride for example:

"Go, choose and buy what you want and bring the invoices." Oral narrators say about Al-Dazza "Arabs got rid of it. They mostly request money. The bride buys her needs."

2/1 – The preparation of Al-Dazza

The Qatari community customs has always preferred early marriage. These customs reflected on the process of early preparation of Al-Dazza though their duration varied according to social classes, environment (Bedouin and urban) and profession (diving, grazing and trade ...etc). There is a long term preparation and a short term one. This preparation is focused on the groom's family, not the bride's, unlike other Arabian societies.

For the long term preparation, it prevailed among the lower classes in urban areas basically, and among the Gulf-related professions like diving and fishing, where the mother handled the early preparation for her son. She saved money from his income from diving for instance, "She buys him his needs: one or two pieces of gold before engagement... by the time he proposes or marries his beloved in one or two weeks and what he has saved money before." So the mother saves and prepares for her son's Al-Dazza when he starts earning money and that way the wedding party was never delayed more than three weeks after engagement.

Sometimes, some families "prepare the boy's Al-Dazza before engagement...clothes, gold and animals... so when their son is engaged, he gets married immediately." Simplicity dominated Al-Dazza in previous periods. Its preparation started as soon as the boy showed will to get married. Ethnographic data asserted that it was the mother, not the father, who took charge for the saving, preparation and furnishing. That proves the great role of women and their responsibility for family issues in the absence of men for successive months.

¹⁹ Al-Milcha means the drafting of the marriage contract (Translator)

Social life had had a great deal of social solidarity and cohesion. Lower classes had depended on long term saving, and cohesion customs which are Aaneya or Awany by which families helped one another in emergency events like marriage, death and crises. "People with low fortunes ask for awany for their son getting married... they are given two khelaq, an animal, food or money... the wedding takes place."

The lower classes in Bedouin areas did not do Al-Dazza's long term preparation, as in urban areas, but they prepared and saved for the boy a small asset like a sheep, a goat or any livestock. They assigned it to him together with its products. It would be directed to buy Al-Dazza when he intends to get married. However, what generally prevailed in the desert was the simplicity of Al-Dazza and preparations. It would be "a carpet, a tent and some food". The tent's requirements were crafted by women basically from the wool and fur of sheep, goats and camels. "The majority know the leather tanning". Some rich families were fast preparing Al-Dazza. Those classes depended on their professional women who worked for them preparing, carrying things and helping in the shopping and transferring Al-Dazza to the bride's house.

In fact, those customs have seen some change as Al-Dazza is no longer prepared earlier as ever. Al-Dazza no longer exists in its traditional form. Money has been preferred to Al-Dazza. The majority now present money instead. On the other side, Aaneya in the lower classes is no longer in the form of products, but cash.

3/1 - Aaneya

Marriage customs reflect many aspects of interdependence and social solidarity that dominated the Qatari traditional community. Among these customs were Aaneya and Nokoot which reflected the close relationship between individuals and groups. Aaneya, which a person gives to another in times of need like weddings, building a new house and repaying debts, etc. is an old custom: but is still present till now. It also spreads among male and female communities (the groom's family for instance). Moreover it is presented voluntarily, not upon request, or the one who needs it might demand it indirectly. Aaneya is requested by family members, folks and friends and from wealthy non-relatives.

Ethnographic data proves that Aaneya is presented by family members, friends and folks, if each was independent. However, if the folks are from one family, they present it collectively under a collective family name. In poor classes, they ask the wealthy especially the well-off, as the groom goes and says "I swear to God, I am getting married and I need Aaneya." At this time he is given an amount of money and the Aaneya varies to the kinship and acquaintance relationship. Most of the time, the Aaneya is given before the wedding, during the preparation of furniture by the groom's family and is dedicated for the young man's marriage.

According to customs, the Aaneya, given to the groom and his family at Bedouin and urban areas, had different forms. Sometimes it carried the footprint of the urban or Bedouin area. From the Aaneya aspects are: money and food (in urban areas) and in Bedouin areas it might be "slaughtered animals, carpets and food". But it was mostly animals...sheep". The custom of Aaneya is still common among Bedouins rather than between urban population. Noticeably, among Bedouins it is not demanded but presented in acknowledgement and the value depends on individual capabilities.

The following changes have been brought to the custom of Aaneya: After all participants in the wedding had to share and give Aaneya by personal initiative, men and women refrained from that practice unless requested by the groom or his mother, from the family and friends before sending Al-Dazza.

The groom's mother set a day to showcase Al-Dazza and invited neighbors and relatives, and this day had to be known for presenting the aaneya to female relatives and acquaintances.

Individual contributions had diminished in presenting aaneya and changed from an individual to an institutional form. The national government takes on this role now. There is a marriage aaneya and a housing aaneya thereby the government helps Qataris.

4/1 – Al-Dazza show

Ethnographic data indicates the presence of Al-Dazza organized demonstration in urban areas. Traditionally, in the Qatari community "if Al-Dazza was ornaments, the bride's family would say to the groom's family: May God grant you a happy face... God blesses

their marriage". Therefore, the groom's family sends a mediator (an adorable, dear lady) with Al-Dazza.

The bride's mother might ask for anything missing to complete it right away. But some families felt shy and voiced consent automatically, thanking the groom's family saying "No. You missed nothing. May God increase your wealth"!

After Al-Dazza preparation, the bride's mother showcased it via a **professional lady in Al-Dazza** demos highlighting it for family members and neighbors. She put it in the house's visitors room or any room and invited her neighbors and relatives and told them "This is X's Al-Dazza, see it before we send it. Some ladies with good traits might bring a box and put her aaneya then she is followed by the others... it might be cloth, gold and good things. Men help the groom. Someone brings an animal or two to be slaughtered; others might give him a sum of money. After the mother shows Al-Dazza to her neighbors, relatives and family, she collects it and puts it in boxes to be sent.

Al-Dazza was showcased in the past according to **certain arrangement of its contents**. Each section was put in a different place. It was showcased twice, first at the groom's house before sending it to the bride, and then when it reached the bride's house.

After Al-Dazza is sent to the bride's house it is shown again. Some rules were followed in the showcase of Al-Dazza: the bride's mother invited neighbors and folks to have a look on the arrival time. The show started by showing off the money and gold, a family member held the money and circulated it, or put it in the center so everybody could see it. They also say someone paid for the daughter of someone this sum of money, and then they are shown the gold and clothes. Then they say you are welcome to see Al-Souq (the market) i.e. the kitchen: bread, sugar and other stuff.

5/1 - Transferring Al-Dazza

Al-Dazza is transported in a big procession, led by a woman who is a close relative to the bride's mother, the bridegroom's nanny or a woman who once vowed to do that if she lived to see the day such lady got married.

In the upper class, the groom's mother would call one of her relatives and give her the gold and dowry in a box (The bashtahktah) to deliver it safely to the bride's house plus Al-Dazza carried by the women assigned with this mission. The time such stuff was taken out differed based on the type of marriage (either a monogamy or polygamy). The means of transport (women – camels – cars) varied according to the social class and environment (desert or urban community).

Many customs were followed in transporting Al-Dazza to the bride in urban communities. For instance, if the bride was virgin, Al-Dazza should be transferred in a huge festive procession, preceded by a professional folk female band like Asmaa Bent Harib. If the bride was not a virgin (a widow or divorced), Al-Dazza was not joined by a festive procession or folk band in most cases.

The time for sending Al-Dazza depended on customs, like favorite days Monday, Thursday and Friday. In a first marriage, Al-Dazza was sent to the bride's house four or five days prior to the wedding, accompanied by drums and festive songs. In a second marriage, however, and if the groom wished to hide it, he would send it a night or two before the wedding night with a man closely related to him or a trustworthy woman who keep it secret. And that person shall be well-respected on either side. In this case, such trusted person would hand the dowry to the bride's mother and inform her of the arrival of Al-Dazza. Notably, this person played a key role in the Qatari community in the past (in both Bedouin and urban communities). This mediator could be a man or woman. They would lead the procession of Al-Dazza and carry to transfer the viewpoint of the groom and his family to the bride and her family. S/he would be entrusted with the bag containing dowry and the jewelry to hand them over to the bride's mother. S/he or she would mediate between the two parties if there were any objections or comments on Al-Dazza.

Of the chants usually sang by folk bands (Asmaa Bent Hareb) and others in Al-Dazza procession:

Prayers on the Prophet	no God but Allah
Bless the groom	and give him happiness
Bless the groom	on his wedding night

Lower classes, however, performed and sang on their own and made "lawlashah and yabbab" (a joyous sound by resonating the tongue).

Ethnography indicates that the bride's mother invited her closest relative to the transfer of Al-Dazza, accompanied by the band and other women. When the procession arrived, they put zad (food and cooking supplies) in the hawy (backyard), while the bride's things were put inside the house. Then, her sister/mother would give her the keys of the bashtahktah which contained gold and dowry (money). Then the bride's mother offered coffee and fawalah, a popular item offered in most classes to Al-Dazza procession and offered on a sumaat (a nylon tablecloth). After having this, all women who participated in the procession would say good-bye to the bride's family and leave. After delivering Al-Dazza and before the women leave, the groom's mother would ask the bride's mother through the mediating woman if they need anything, confirming that the groom's family is ready to cover any shortfall. This meant showing good intentions so that the marriage would not begin with a dispute.

Second: Al-Milcha

In the Qatari community, the word Al-Milcha referred to the drafting of marriage contract and documenting the couple's marriage. The word and its derivatives are common in the day-to-day life and in talking about marriage. Examples include saying lailat al-Al-Milcha (the night of Al-Milcha), "somebody's Al-Milcha night", "she has her Al-Milcha tonight" or "it was her Al-Milcha with somebody". Notably, Al-Milcha is used also as an attribute to would-be husbands, i.e. "it is (man's name) Al-Milcha" as the man is responsible for the family and the house...etc. The usage for the lady goes like that "She had her Al-Milcha with (a man's name)" meaning her marriage contract was drafted. These words and their derivatives are common in Qatar and the Gulf communities at large.

However there is a difference between urban and Bedouin communities in their use of the word referring to Al-Milcha. All urban communities, as well as Bedouin ones, use the word Al-Milcha. But, in Bedouin communities, other words apply including contract or marriage contract. Thus people say "They are writing somebody's marriage contract tonight" or "the couple is writing the contract tonight". The expression "writing the contract" was mentioned once, which indicates the cultural influence of other Arabian communities.

Moreover, the words yaktob (write), kitab (writing) and al-kitab (the drafting of contract) have been used in Qatari wedding songs in the past and the present and in other Gulf communities. This is an example:

He is a young man

He is writing the marriage contract

In the Kuwaiti community, there is a song called "Kiss the bride": Kiss the bride.

They put pearls on her head

And brought her sabot to wear,

She refused and said: I won't, I don't care

I only want my brother
To write the contract with his silver pen

While my groom is sitting on his knees

And cannot wait to see me.

1/2 - The best times for Al-Milcha

Ethnographic data indicates that Al-Milcha was done directly before the wedding in the past, whether on the wedding night or a day or two days earlier. This was confirmed by the two narrators (the two marriage officials at the Sharia Court). They affirmed Al-Milcha (drafting the marriage contract) in the past was held in the four days before the wedding night. The wedding night was particularly held at the Khallah. Others related that Al-Milcha in the past was held based on an agreement between the parties: "When the agreement is reached, the groom's father, the bride's father and the brothers go to the marriage official at his house or he go to their house based on the agreement."

There were best times for Al-Milcha in the past, sometimes best months, days or hours throughout the day. All the months were convenient for holding Al-Milcha and wedding "all months are convenient and people may choose the months they prefer for Al-

Milcha and weddings other than the holy Ramadan and the hajj days of Dhu Al-Hijjah."

The best days for Al-Milcha in the Qatari community has been from the past to nowadays mostly Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. Thus Al-Milcha is mostly held on a Monday or Friday night. Weddings are preferably on Monday and Friday nights.

Notably, the best time for Al-Milcha was the evening especially after Maghrib or Isha prayers. In the past, the marriage official used to be the mosque Imam who leads the congregation in prayers. In most cases Al-Milcha itself was held in the mosque as well, after performing Maghrib and Esha prayers. People preferred evenings especially on moonlit nights, to take advantage from the light in preparations and celebrations, as at that time there was no electricity. This was due to two reasons: first, night-time was quiet and suitable for organizing big events away from the eyes' of others. A folk saying goes "Night-time is for rest and daytime is for work". This is derived from the Bedouin environment, where camels grazed throughout the day and returned to barns for rest at night.

The second reason was ensuring the privacy of Al-Milcha at night to prevent a potential spoiling the celebration and the entire marriage by others.

2/2 - The Place for Al-Milcha

The place for holding Al-Milcha varied according to class as well as environment. Al-Milcha was mainly verbal in urban and Bedouin communities (in modern times Al-Milcha started to be written and documented before Sharia courts). Hence, prior to and during the sixties, Al-Milcha was held in Al-Majlis (assembly), mosques or the official's house in urban communities. Within the upper classes of urban communities, Al-Milcha was held in the bride's father's Majlis and in other cases in Al-Khallah.

3/2 – The Proxy in Al-Milcha

Ethnography indicates the necessity of finding a guardian for the bride. This was common in urban and Bedouin communities in inland and coastal areas, and across classes and races. Basically, the father is the guardian of the bride, and if absent for any reason, the marriage should be postponed till he returned. If the father was dead, the elder brother would be the bride's guardian. If the bride

has no living father or a brother, her uncle would take over. The folk saying goes "The uncle is a guardian". If the bride lives with her mother and the mother's brothers, one of those uncles would be the guardian. If the bride has none of those, the sheikh would be her guardian. The mallaj or malik (marriage official) acted as guardian of a bride who had none. In the past, however, a girl would rarely have a guardian due to the close social ties. If the groom was away, his father or uncle acted as his guardian. The community was small and homogenous, and Al-Milcha was simple, easy and direct, held without long procedures. Now, the proceedings changed.

4/2 - The person who concludes the marriage contract

Ethnographic data indicates that the person who concluded the marriage contract in the Qatari community in the past was called "mutawa". This is different from the word sheikh which has a political significance in the Gulf community in general. Actually "malik" or "mumallik" are expressed by another word in the Qatari community (qadi or the judge), especially after the new regulations assigning the documentation of marriage contracts concluded by authorized mathoon in Sharia courts. Judiciary in Qatar used to be verbal until Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud became the Secretary of Sharia judiciary on 13/12/ 1359 Hijri (January 1941). He set the system for registering and keeping cases and court judgments. The Presidency of Islamic or Sharia Courts was set up on 1/1/1378 (Hijri – corresponding to 1958) and he was appointed president. The Presidency encompasses the Marital Affairs Office responsible for the conclusion and authentication of marriage contracts. A judge's daily work at this office was between Maghrib (night fall) and Esha (night) prayers except on Fridays. Hence the word qadi referred to the mathoon of mumallik or malik who finalized Al-Milcha.

There was also the mutawa or imam of the mosque who concluded marriage contract. People would either go to his house or the contract would be concluded at the mosque right after Maghrib or Esha prayers. In each village, there was a mosque with a mutawa who holds Al-Milcha in his house, the mosque or the bride's house. At Bedouin areas, the Chieftain wrote marriage contracts if no mutawa was available. The Chieftain played other roles also in marriage customs; he was consulted in engagements, weddings and agreements concerning dowry and Al-Milcha. Moreover, he helped resolve disputes on marriage and divorce.

Al-Milcha had not involved any celebrations. Congratulations and blessings said to the groom after concluding the marriage contract all involved wishing the couple happiness and good luck in their new life and praying that they have children. Thus people said to the groom "May God bless you both", "May God give you children", "Congratulations", "God bless you", "Congratulations for you Al-Milcha" and "May it be a blessed Al-Milcha". Notably, all the good wishes for Al-Milcha were said to the groom, his mother and his family. The bride and her family were not congratulated before the marriage.

Now, there have been changes in the customs of Al-Milcha; it is documented in writing and officially signed and approved. It is executed daily by a judge and carried out in a competent office at the Sharia Court building. This takes place between the prayers of Maghrib and Esha, regardless of level of wealth or education.

Third: Dowry and its conditions

Sadaq is one of the words used to refer to the dowry. It derived from sedq (honesty) which denotes the groom's honest and true desire to get married to the bride and his willingness to be generous with her. Sadaq means al-Mahr (dowry), which is divided into two types: dowry paid in advance and delayed dowry. Narrators call these two types: "present" and "absent" or "advance" and "delayed" dowry.

It was noted in the field data that the word sadaq was officially used to refer to dowry, as mentioned in marriage contracts in Sharia Court. People however do not usually use this word in their daily life, and use al-Mahr instead. The Qatari community used the word jihaz (or yihaz) which encompasses dowry, golden jewelry or money. The word al-Mahr was not used independently until recently. Hence, the word al-Mahr has become the most commonly used among people in their daily life.

3/1 - Conditions of Al-Mahr

In the past, al-Mahr did not have any significant conditions in the desert except in very rare cases. It was also inappropriate for a bride's father to set conditions for the groom, "the family should not set conditions. They should accept the man if he was good and never care for the dowry". In urban communities, however, some people used to put conditions. These conditions were related to

the customs and traditions of the social class and education levels. The bride's father would set conditions on the couple's house; for instance whether the couple should live with the bride's family. So some families would set conditions and others will not.

Field material indicates other cases in urban communities where the bride's family did not set conditions for al-Mahr and left this matter to the groom. They would say "It is a hint of your generosity". Narrators assert that such cases with no conditions were far more difficult than others with conditions even if such conditions were severe. In such cases there is confusion between extravagance (thus facing difficulty in preparing al-Mahr) and moderation (where the groom and his family are described as stingy). Narrators described such case saying "Some families who do not make particular requests confuse the groom's family who might pay very little and put extra responsibilities on the bride's family". In such cases, some grooms would consult the bride's family. It is notable nowadays that in both Bedouin and urban areas, families set conditions for the groom before accepting him. These conditions include al-Mahr, gold jewelry, a separate house, level of education, employment and others.

3/2 – Al-Mahr and its amount

Ethnographic data indicates that al-Mahr was set in the time between approving the engagement and holding Al-Milcha. Usually the bride's father or mother determined the amount, though there are differences between Bedouin and urban communities in this regard. In Bedouin areas, the mother specified her daughter's Mahr (dowry), its amount and how it is paid, and men did not interfere. In urban areas, however, men determined al-Mahr and made relevant agreements. Still women might play a role. Usually al-Mahr is determined directly after approving the fiancée.

In the past, Al-Mahr was low due to poverty and difficulty of living. In middle classes, it was paid in cash between 10 or 20 rupees. The amount of al-Mahr in rich classes, however, exceeded 50 rupees. Sometimes al-Mahr was denominated in silver or gold, and sometimes determined in toman (equal four rupees). If al-Mahr was 50 tomans, which equaled 200 rupees, Al-Mahr was fully paid and usually sent with Al-Dazza, or handed over to the father after Al-Milcha. The delayed dowry was rarely announced publically.

Ethnographic data indicates that Qataris did not request a particular amount for al-Mahr, while others used to request an affordable amount. Most marriages were among relatives (cousins) in addition to mutual marriages among families, that is why dowries were decent as affirmed by narrators.

The customs of al-Mahr have recently changed, now being mostly paid in cash. Also, most of it is paid in advance and the smaller part delayed. There is no great difference in the amount of al-Mahr between urban and Bedouin communities. The average al-Mahr now ranges from 50 to 70 thousand riyals, and might reach 150,000 in the middle class. It might reach 300-500 thousand and even more in the rich classes.

Dowries have turned too big now so young men are unable to afford it and spinsterhood has been on the increase. Excessive dowries are not new in our Arabian community—it is an old habit that appeared with Islamic conquests in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras. Some people even said getting a girl married was like selling her, because of the financial conditions and negotiations.

Excessive dowries and selecting grooms on basis of high pay made money in some cases the only factor in deciding for a certain groom. Qatari folklore points at this serious problem through proverbs like "No pain is like toothache and no worry the panic of marriage". This indicates how people got worried about marriage right from the earliest steps till the final ones, due to the entailed responsibilities and costs, including excessive dowry. To stop worrying, another proverb advises people to be rational and take the relative capabilities, circumstances and economic situation into account. Nobody can take up more than his capacity. The proverb says: "Extend your legs to the edge of the bed".

Excessive dowries raised huge official and public attention in the Gulf communities, to the extent that some countries interfered in determining the amount of mahr. Other countries called for rationalizing dowries and cutting costs by organizing collective wedding ceremonies for a big number of couples on the same day and place. Some Qatari tribes also determined the amount of dowry.

3/3 - Delivering dowry and spending it

The Qatari traditions asserted tolerance and simplicity in marriage, including dowry, its amount, way and time of payment. Ethnographic data points out that payment was based on agreement between the two parties.

In poor classes, the dowry went to the father. In middle classes, it was for the bride, with an intervention from the father. In rich families, it went to the bride with generous additions from her parents. In all cases, the bride took the gold of the jewelry and the father took the mahr.

In lower classes, the bride's family would take the dowry to use it in improving their living, and to refurbish their house and pay their debts. They might even use it in furnishing the spouses' house of one of her brothers. As they say "The girl's dowry is a family's living".

In the case of orphan girls, the mother would collect the dowry and save a part of it for the bride. Sometimes the bride's family would buy her a small house or a piece of land or invest the money in a profitable trade.

The current changes include:

Now the lady takes her entire dowry. She spends it on accessories, clothes and the wedding party, to the extent that some families may buy their daughter extra furniture. What the lady spends on her marriage might be over a double her trousseau. There are differences between generations in how the dowry is handled even inside the single family, especially when it comes to extravagance. Ladies nowadays are more aware of their legal rights and social commitments relating to the mahr.

Most of the bride's trousseau today is spent on the wedding dress and other dresses the bride wears during the ceremony. "The wedding dress is the most expensive and then comes the gift dress "tahwal").

Extravagance has been consuming most of the dowry, such as hotels, modern bands, banquets, extravagant invitations, gifts...etc. This leads into taking much loans and debts.

Fourth: Furnishing the spouses' house

In the past, the new groom did not have an independent new house. He always had an annex to his family's house or a separate room inside it.

In Bedouin areas, however, another tent would be built for the couple near family's tent.

But furnishing the house nowadays has seen major changes. Both urban and Bedouin communities in Qatar are on equal footing in furnishing the house. There are no longer basic differences between social classes in that. There is a tendency towards independent houses. Also the engagement time has become longer to give the chance for more discussions about the house and furnishing it with the tools and equipment.

There is also a role played by modernity and education in furnishing the house. Sometimes the lady buys some of the necessary needs of the house and for her own use, since employed ladies can contribute to furnishing the house.

Young people nowadays insist on keeping a distance between them and their families in furnishing the house. The wife chooses the type of furniture and interior designs and she takes her time choosing and furnishing.

Chapter Five: Wedding night and its procedures

- Special arrangements of the bride's family
- Bride's arrangements for the wedding night
- Groom's arrangements for the wedding night
- Parties and banquets during the wedding night
- Move of the groom to the bride's house.

Special arrangements of the bride's family

Invitation to participate in the wedding

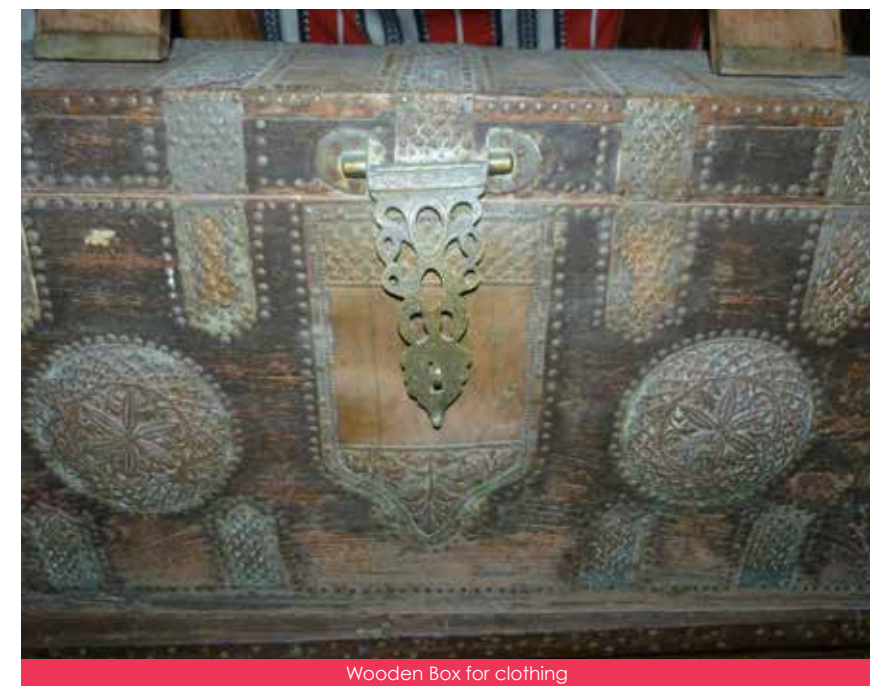
Ethnographic material indicates that invitation to attend the wedding primarily occurred in urban regions. It was mainly intended for residents of areas remote from the wedding venue, whether these areas are Bedouin or urban. Nonetheless, invitation to participate in the wedding was not required in Bedouin areas since everyone was involved in the preparations. As a matter of fact, both men and women were involved in wedding arrangements and preparations. An informant relating to this recalls, "Bedouins come to weddings without invitation. This also applied to people in urban areas. However, they now think differently. People living in the same neighborhood and relatives came to weddings without invitation once news of a neighbor's wedding spread. Things are different now. Invitation has become a necessity even if they share same walls. It is also required by family members and relatives."

As for women, neighbors and relatives were inured to frequent visits, and they all followed up wedding news and date. This is because kinship and social relationships in the past were close and strong at the local urban community level. It is noted that women of the neighborhood come and participate for a whole week prior to the wedding. However, and despite all these close relationships, the bride's family must send one or two women with whom they have ties of kinship to invite family members, relatives, and neighbors residing far and inform them of the wedding date. On the other hand, the groom and his father are both responsible for inviting men, the invitation is usually simple and it takes place at the mosque when gathering for prayer. For those not present then, a man, acting on the groom and his father's behalf, would be sent to invite them. Yet these traditional methods of invitation has changed to be more fashionable, as reliance now is more on modern tools, like a phone – in both Bedouin and urban areas- cards, and printed letters, which have all become the prevailing trend. Invitation to attend and participate has become more necessary, even if both share same walls or, as it is called locally, Toufa, as indicated by an informant.

Khella Arrangement for the Bride and the Groom

The second step in marriage arrangements is the preparation of the Khella, which is the room prepared for the bride and the groom to spend their first night together. Preparations start by cleaning the bride's house, removing garbage, leveling the ground, and covering it with sand, as houses in the past used to be built using gravel and clay. Khella is prepared and furnished one week or more prior to wedding night, and so the house would be similar to a beehive. If the family is affluent, they would buy Khella's supplies and accessories, which usually include Manather (mirrors), elegant fabrics, like Breisem, which is a soft fabric made of silk or nylon yarns, that is Murakhat, i.e. embellished, with embroidery, locally referred to as Zari, and expensive Zil, i.e. carpeting. Yet if the family belongs to the lower class, they will depend on borrowing from neighbors; "they borrow mirrors and carpets". Khella is prepared by covering the ceiling with bright-color fabrics, mainly red and green. The same is used also for covering room sides, fixing the fabric with nails. Once covered, mirrors, which are usually linear and have different names like "Bu Tawoos" or the mirror embellished with peacock drawing, would be hung.

Another type of Manather used in decorating Khella is the "Rummana"; an ornamented and embellished ball. All these decorative items used to ornament almost all Khellas are brought from India. The ground is then covered with Zil, and in one side of the room, the wedding bed or mattress is placed. The bed would consist of a number of mattress layers made of cotton arranged to a height that is similar to a regular bed's. Another option is to place a wooden bed embellished with fabric covers, where Sondooq Al-Mabeet; a box in which the bride's simple clothing items are packed, is also placed. A partition is then arranged, separating it from the rest of the room, made of Sari fabric, and is locally called "Qati"; i.e. the separator. The Khella finally would look very attractive due to ornaments, decorations, and bright settings. Once these arrangements are completed, the Khella would be closed until the wedding night, when it is opened to be perfumed by spraying perfume and perfumed "Mashmoom- basil; a pleasantly smelling green plant used for perfuming, especially in weddings". The bride spends around seven days in Khella, until it is time for "Huwal", which is the move to the groom's family house.



Wooden Box for clothing

1.3 Food Preparation

This procedure is related to the preparation of cooking ingredients and breakfast for the couple getting married. The Bride's mother and her female neighbors prepare and cull bread ingredients. The oven is also prepared for baking, and cooking pots are placed on cook stoves. It is noteworthy that families belonging to the affluent class recruit cooks as well as people to serve coffee for invitees and provide anything else to generously honor the men and attendees. But lower classes depend on their expertise and those of their neighbors and friends in cooking, helping, and preparing. The bride's mother prepares several desert dishes, among which is "Khabees"; bread roasted then grinded using "Raha- millstone" that is similar to porridge, and "Luqeimat"; is a dessert made of yeasted dough that is fried in oil after shaping it into small balls, served on a tray to women. Another dish is "Khanfaroush", which is grinded bread combined with eggs and saffron; the batter is then poured into circles and fried in a small amount of oil. Neighbors and friends usually help in preparing these sweet dishes... etc.

Bride's arrangements for the wedding night

Ethnographic material indicates that simple and secretive arrangements existed in urban areas to embellish the bride before the wedding. This process often takes place in the bride's family house, or sometime in her maternal or paternal aunt's house, especially if the bride is young and embarrassed to be seen by anyone. However, the family has another intention when sending the bride to a relative's house, which is to keep her uninformed of her marriage plans. The actual embellishment process happens the morning successive to the wedding: "They usually take her after the wedding night to bathe her, braid her hair, help her wear the embellished and embroidered 'Darraeyya- a long and loose dress embellished with embroidery worn in special occasions', the Nashl dress 'Nashl is a very loose dress that comes in different bright colors and is embroidered with golden yarns', and gold accessories". "A bride is only embellished the first morning after the wedding. On the wedding night, they take the bride and have her seated on a Zouleya; i.e. carpet, and they take her to the groom... the Zouleya is carried by four women; each woman carries one side, and they take her to the room, where the groom is waiting. They leave the room then close the door, leaving both inside." Sometimes parents may allude to the bride that her simple preparations, like bathing and wearing clean Darraeya, is intended only for a relative's wedding.

It was a custom for certain families in urban areas not to inform the girl of her marriage until one day prior the wedding, or may not even inform her at all. In such case, no preparations for the wedding used to take place to the extent that parents do not arrange for anything.

Nonetheless, there are other indications contrary to the abovementioned, confirming the bride's reliance on herself when she needs to beautify herself without assistant. "The girl is so poor. They give her a dress and ask her to clean herself and take a bath. Sometimes they apply Henna to her pretending to do this on the occasion of her sister's or a relative's marriage.

The same applies to Bedouin areas where the bride is brought to the groom's house in a procession without embellishment. As a matter of fact, traditions in the past did not give significance to embellishment before the wedding. Girls were not allowed to apply kohl (eye liner) or perfume before getting married. Once wedded, traditions would give her permission to do so, "A girl may not use Kohl

or perfume until she gets married...." These are similar to traditions followed in urban areas in terms of avoiding beautification before the wedding. However, there is a difference in the manner in which she arrives at the groom's house. In Bedouin areas, the bride is not carried by women, but by her brother or father who gives her away to the groom. Sometimes the brother or father accompanies her when she is given away, but without any embellishment. Yet, "the morning successive to the wedding night, the bride is taken, bathed, beatified, and dressed... They wake up in the morning, and enter her room one after another; this is when the bride looks her best; as beautiful as a full moon."

Actually those traditions followed in past times by the Qatari urban and Bedouin local communities have been changed.

A good example of changes to traditions is the existence of beauty experts and specialized centers that undertake the bride beautification mission, whether at her home or in the same center. "Nowadays it has become a requirement for girls to get beautified and embellished at the bride's family home. Coiffeurs are now responsible for bride beautification. Some bring the hairdresser home." This statement indicates the diminution of certain traditional roles, which hold and maintain heritage and transfer it from one generation to another. These roles include the role of Mashta, Ajjafa, Rgheeda or Hawwafa, which all refer to the women responsible for beautifying and embellishing the bride. As known, modern hairdressers do not pass on or maintain heritage.

Furthermore, Henna night has turned into a primary part in wedding traditions and celebration stages in Qatar's both Bedouin and urban communities. This is similar to Shabka (gold ornaments presented to the bride by the groom/his family) and the engagement ring." It should be noted that the occasion has its own set of traditions.

2.1 Bride's Henna

Henna is considered a basic element in wedding celebrations, especially for the bride, not the groom, and both in past times and present. The change has also reflected its effect on Henna, making it more significant in present times. More shapes, tools and materials have been added to it, and so it has become more important in bride beautification procedures. Further, Henna constitutes a central

theme in many folkloric aspects, especially those connected to folk medicine and beautification. Collected field material has not introduced critical or many details about wedding Henna, but there is much elaboration here on bride's Henna and the various cultural elements it comprises.

2.2 Place where bride's Henna rituals are completed

Collected field materials indicate that the first and primary place in which the bride is dyed with Henna is her parents' house; a fact unanimously agreed upon by all narrators. The bride is dyed with Henna in her parental house, or as confirmed by a narrator, "They apply Henna to the bride in her father's house." The grounds upon which this unanimous agreement on the bride's family house being the place where she is dyed with Henna is built based on the fact that, in the past, the traditions of the Qatari community prevented girls from going out until after they get married. This is when the bride is dyed with Henna, but without tattoos, and most of the time only after getting married.

However, change has also affected these traditions. Nowadays, one can find Henna artists who are professional in Henna preparation, tattooing, and Henna-based bridal beautification. There are special shops and beauty salons with expertise in providing the service. The Bride now approaches beauty salons or coiffures for Henna application. They may also ask a salon to send Henna expert to service the bride at home instead of going to their shop. Consequently, it has become a tradition now for the bride to move to beauty salons, which have become venues for Henna application customs instead of the Liwan (bride's henna place).



Bride's Henna Place



Night Henna for the Bride

2.3 Preparation of Bride's Henna, Henna tattoos, and women in charge of dying with Henna:

In the past, the Qatari bride's embellishment rituals depended sometimes on environmental resources, like Wars (Curcuma), Mashmoom (Basil), and Henna, and sometimes on items brought from abroad, like rose water and perfumes.

Ethnographic material indicates that most women in past times used, prepared and dyed themselves with Henna. As such, they did not entirely depend on the Ajjafa (specialist in hair braiding), Khaddabe or Hennaya (both refer to specialist in hair-dying with Henna) when applying Henna to the bride. Indeed, Henna practices would be undertaken by the bride's mother, maternal or paternal aunt, or the eldest sister. Evidence for this is that men are knowledgeable about Henna preparation methods and Henna tattooing, despite the fact that it was not something a man would use.

Furthermore, ethnographic material concludes that, in the past, Qatari locals prepared Henna from green Henna leaves, which used to be left until dry, then grinded and kneaded with black lemon juice. The paste would then be left for a few hours to initiate fermentation, which is the last step before it becomes useable. Based on the foregoing, there was room for producing variant types of Henna; for example, the black tone of Henna, which was brought from abroad, and the second was the regular red Henna.



Henna Tree



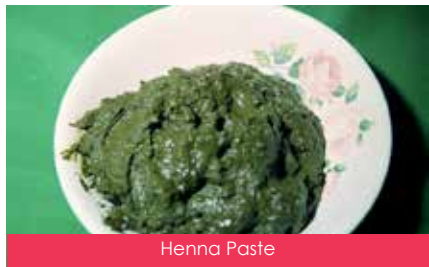
Henna Leaves



Dry Lemon used in the process of making Henna



Making Henna



Henna Paste

In addition, there were two types of tattoos; the first was used by little girls, like Tibaq and Aroos (tattoo patterns). Patterns were inspired from the environment and mainly comprised dots and lines drawn on palm and back side of hand to form palm trees, stars or moon shapes. Fingertips are also covered with Henna; the method in this case is called Taqmee' (i.e. dyeing fingertips and nails with Henna). The second type of Henna tattooing is Ghamsa; a method referring to dipping or dunking the hand in Henna without drawing dots or lines. This latter type is mainly used by older women. Yet, an exception to this classification is the Tibaq pattern, which was used by both little girls and women. The method entails positioning a piece of kneaded Henna on the center of the hand and closing the hand while the piece is still inside.



Henna Decorations



Henna Decorations

There were many Henna tattoo patterns that were popular in the past; for example, Saafa or palm fronds, Darb Al-Hayya or snake path, Qamar or moon, and Najma or star. An informant recalls, girls tattooed "Nakhla (palm), Bakra (female camel), Qa'ood (baby camel), and fingertips Henna dipping or Taqmee". The former patters were usually applied to little girls and women who liked these patters. Sometimes Henna was applied in a rectangular shape from the forefinger to the ring finger across the palm, with lines extending from the rectangular shape towards fingers. Foot tattoos are more visible and prettier; therefore, foot shape patterns and tattoos are called "Shafe'eyye" and comprise adding a dot to the heel.

It is noteworthy that all women know Henna and are able to prepare it, as it is commonly used. An informant confirms, "Everybody doodles on themselves; they all apply Henna." Also in old times, specialized women, who at the beginning were Ethiopian, handle the process. The woman in charge of dyeing the bride with Henna was called "Hennaya" or "Ajjafa" in urban areas, and "Khaddabah" or "Mashata" in Bedouin areas. Tattoos were done using matchsticks as drawing tool; a matchstick would be dipped in Henna paste, and then used to draw fine lines on hand or foot. Fingers were also used in the process.

Indeed, change has recently occurred in traditions. For instance, Henna tattooing has become a field of specialty that certain women are professional in, comparing to old times when Henna was a general practice handled by the mother, sister, paternal and maternal aunts, friend, neighbor, ...etc. on the other hand, nowadays chemical materials and dyes are added to Henna to colour it black or red. Moreover, ready-made "Barza" Henna dye is now available and girls can take to a Henna specialist who can apply it in different shapes and tattoos. Accordingly, Naqsha is no longer applicable to girls only, and Ghamsa is not limited to married women as in the past.

Bridal Henna Celebrations and Accompanying Chants

Collected field material shows that "Bride's Henna" is seen as key marriage tradition. But, contrary to current times, it did not enjoy major significance in the Qatari community. Besides, no independent festive night was designated to Henna, when comparing to currently prevailing traditions. As a matter of fact, no independent "Henna night" existed in past times. Further, it should be noted that cultural communication with the Bahraini community and other Arab communities played a significant role in bringing in and spreading celebrations held prior to wedding night, like Jalwa (a night in which the bride is dressed in green and women attendees sing special Jalwa songs) and Henna Night.

Most informants in urban areas confirm the absence of bridal Henna celebrations or designation of independent Henna celebration night. In reality, the Qatari community was inured to Henna application at home, and sometimes in private. Also the bride might not be informed of her wedding, or might not be told about it at all;

hence, she would be deluded by her parents who might inform her that she is being dyed with Henna for her sister's marriage or as a treatment for her hands.

Undoubtedly, Ethnographic statements, indicating the above Confirmation, vary between urban and Bedouin communities

Moreover, bridal Henna celebrations did not exist at all in the past, or, if any, they used to be simple domestic or familial celebrations, at the kinship or neighborhood level.

Another aspect of this celebration is the performance of Jalwa rituals on Henna night and two nights prior to the wedding. Some; however, may accept Henna night without performing Jalwa, but the night, in such case, is celebrated by folklore band performances. This practice is a consequence of cultural communication with the Bahraini community; therefore, it is not considered part of the Qatari absolute heritage. During Jalwa, the bride is dressed in green and leans also on green Dawasheq (mattresses) or sits on a chair. She is also covered with a green Khedar (veil) with embroidery work similar to the one used on her dress. Four women, each holding one corner of the veil, start moving it up and down while singing "Modest in her wishes... etc.", while the remaining women repeat after them. The leader of the four, who chants the poem, is called "Mutawaa". This is absolutely similar to the practices of the Bahraini community in the night they call "Tajleesah" or "Jalwa". Songs and praising chants sung in this night include the following:

Khadeeja's brought in procession today

On a chair, they seated her

Houris elevating her for the sake of Prophet Mohammad

Another chant sung during bride's Jalwa:

A wish among her wishes

Beautiful in its meanings

Embellished with ornaments and a crown

All my passions are for her

Supporting her is God, the Giver of all good

And Houris' elevating her

Prayers be upon Prophet Mohammad

As long as the sun rises

And upon his family and companions

As long as my moon weeps while hanging on the branches

The following is a folkloric song connected with bridal Henna:

Your Henna is now a paste, girl

Your Henna is a paste

When they give you a way to your groom

Will you be embarrassed?

Your Henna is all leaves, girl Your Henna is all leaves

When they give you a way to your groom

Will you be sweating [i.e. out of shyness]?

Actually, many changes have affected these traditions. The following lists aspects of these changes:

In old times, bride's Henna did not vary in shapes and tattoo patterns, and lacked extensive existence of experts in the art. All females were knowledgeable about Henna preparation and application-the proverb says: "Those who have Henna can apply Henna to their hands." In current times, Henna has acquired several tattoo patterns and geometrical shapes. Adding to this, there are now professional artists available in salons and hairdressing centers; yet, most of them are foreigners (Ethiopians, Indians, and Filipino).

Henna Night was not an independent night in the past; contrary to this, the practice used to be part of the wedding itself. Mainly, bride beautification rituals would begin after the wedding, not before it. Nowadays, an independent Henna Night is designated with celebrations that include a banquet serving and chanting.

Bride's Henna celebrations almost did not exist, yet, if any such celebrations would be confidential and limited to family members only. Contrary to traditions prevailing today, Bride's Jalwa was not widely spread in Qatari local communities. Presently, Jalwa is broadly celebrated, and Henna Night acquired its own celebration rituals.

3. Groom's arrangements for the wedding night

Weddings in the past were preceded by several celebrations; all in preparation for the wedding night. However, some of these rituals were practiced privately, like bathing, perfuming, and Henna dyes. There were also other preparations the groom was involved in; for example, "shaving", "bathing", "clothing", "perfuming", "censing" or "exposure to scented smoke". It is noteworthy here that these traditions are numerous and diverse in Arab and Arab Gulf communities in general.

Ethnographic material indicates that one of the primary preparations a groom would be involved in is the purchase of a new Ghutra (a square piece of cloth used to cover the head), Ogal (double circlet of twisted black cord), Bisht (spacious cloak made of gauzy cotton (for summer) or wool (for winter) and trimmed with gold thread), Ne'al (footwear), and "new Thobe (loose, long-sleeved, ankle-length garment)... etc.". Obviously, this step involves preparing necessary clothes for the wedding, which they can be either purchased as

ready-to-wear or sewed. This followed by Tahseen or shaving process. The groom would go to a barber who undertakes hair and facial trimmings. Yet, a groom might trim his own hair and beard. The third step is bathing; actually in some neighboring communities this tradition, locally referred to as "Subooh", was connected to bathing with friends and relatives in a water spring. A groom, however, from an area lacking water springs would take a bath at home, and this is the tradition generally prevailing in Qatari environment.

The groom would then complete his preparations by wearing the national outfit of Gulf area or Qatar, which is comprised of the white Thobe, Ghutra, Ogal, and Bisht. Here social class differences would clearly appear. People from middle classes wear reasonably priced clothes. This applies to Ghutra, Ogal, and Bisht. On the other hand, people coming from higher classes would wear "USA-made Thobe and Ghutra, purchased by the groom or his father, in addition to light and expensive Bisht".



Collected field material shows that clothes in summer are usually white, while the Bisht is black. In winter, the Thobe is made from wool, and the Bisht is red or black, completed with red scarf instead of the white Ghutra.

Another outfit-related tradition is that the groom in Badya (Bedouin area) often carries a sword and a rosary as a reflection of Arab's chivalry and Bedouin courage values, also religious beliefs and symbols indicating these beliefs.

After that, the groom would be perfuming with incense and Oud oil. Exposure to scented smoke is considered basic in folkloric heritage, and is used in weddings, births, or even death (censing the winding sheet), incantation (faith healing), or folk medicine... etc. as a matter of fact, this cultural element and the practices linked to it are increasingly spreading and advancing in today's Qatari community, indicating that this cultural element benefits from the change and acquires from it sustainability and continuity building blocks so that it is preserved from extinction.

In the following step of preparation, the groom sits in his father's Majlis along with relatives and neighbors to have lunch and to congratulate the groom.

The groom, accompanied by al-Rizafah; i.e. dancers performing a traditional Bedouin dance with swords, goes on a huge festive procession to the bride's house, walking if the bride's house is closer. They sit with him for a while, and then leave him with his family and friends, who later take the groom in another procession to Khella. At this point, a new stage would begin.

It should be stated here that the change which affected these traditions is mainly in form but not in content; contrary to the change which affected bride's preparations for her wedding, which included both form and content. Some of the change aspects include:

The **groom depends on himself in perfuming**, and has become less keen on having himself perfumed by his mother, or taking the Bisht from his mother or father when dressing as a sign of honor and respect as in the past. One, yet, cannot ignore that some of these aspects still exist, like mother's, sister's or grandmother's engagement in perfuming, although they are practiced with less keenness and commitment when compared to past times. This is mainly due to the family's presence at the hotel where the wedding is held; i.e. not at home.

A wedding celebration is held at a hotel now, unlike traditional celebrations which were held at home or Al-Majlis. "Wedding is now held at a hotel."

Folk banks which used to perform at weddings has changed and become singing bands or solo singers who perform in radio and TV channels. Some also bring dance bands to perform "Ardha and Razif" dances at the wedding, with participation from the groom, his family members and friends, and whoever wishes from invitees.

Compared to past times, wedding procession is no longer dependent on Rizafah. Nowadays, a parade of cars moves from the groom's house to the hotel and from the hotel to the bride's house. An example of presently prevailing processions are car parades at Doha Corniche, which can be seen at night on Thursdays, Mondays, and other days, when locals parade their cars and blare their horns.

4. Parties and banquets during the wedding night

Marriage traditions reflect the nature of community and culture; hence, they include elements envisioning desert and urban lives. Further, they comprise festive practices that reflect the conditions of the various strata of society. Indeed, local traditions include entertaining patterns that indicate the familial social and economic position, beside their ability to translate the nature of amicable kinship relationships. This paragraph discusses types of celebrations, their venues, duration, performing folklore bands, and most popular songs chanted in their occasions. In addition, it addresses means of neighborhood and family invitation for participation, types of banquets, their names and venues, as well as primary changes which have affected these traditions as a whole.

4.1 celebration types, venue and duration

In the past, the Qatari community was accustomed to holding more than one celebration on the wedding day. For instance, a celebration for women only used to be held at the bride's house, where women folkloric bands would perform. In the afternoon of the day following the wedding, another celebration would be held at the bride's house that starts from afternoon until sunset.

The other celebration used to be held at the groom's house in two stages; the first would be one night before wedding, in which they sing Samiri, Liwa, Habban, or Tamboura- all are old singing and dancing arts particularly performed in weddings. Dinner is served during this celebration. "On wedding day, a Razif dance (dancing with swords) is performed in front of the groom's house, and after dinner, members of the band walk with him in procession if the house

is close until they reach the bride's house." More than one party might be thrown at the groom's house the day before wedding, "especially if the mother of the groom had made a vow to trumpet in his wedding night." Also there might be two parties thrown together at the groom's house; one for men and the other for women.

It is noted that the groom's celebration is held in an open area outside the house, where sword-dancing, rifle, and trumpet performances can be seen. The groom is taken in a procession to the bride's house. After that they come back to the groom's house and continue with their celebrations, when neighbors and family members join as they wish.

Concerning the duration of wedding celebrations, it varies from one environment to another, from one social class to another, and in accordance with the groom and bride's circumstances. In most cases, celebrations continue for one week after the wedding in urban areas, and for three days in Bedouin areas. An informant recalls, "After one week, the bride moves to her husband's house. They would then say that the bride 'Sabba'at; i.e. a week has passed since her wedding', and so now she must be given a 'gift'. She moves to her husband's house". The celebration might also be for one day only, being the wedding night, and again in accordance with the groom's circumstances, who may "be in a hurry, coming from abroad to take her (the bride) at night and return with her to his country in the morning."

This applies to emigrant or external marriage cases either from another Gulf country or even internal marriages among kinship if political barriers parted this relationship, leaving each part a native of the different Arab Gulf country.

Folk Bands and Wedding Performances

In past times, marriage performances depended mainly on amateur or professional folk bands. In most cases, those bands would perform at weddings without invitation, under no condition and against non-negotiated fee- when comparing to currently prevailing situation. Ethnographic material indicate that the presence of these bands was extensive in the North, Khor, Smeisma, -Thkheira and old Bidaa (Doha now). Also their performances were consistent with the nature of Qatari traditions; therefore, there were women bands for

women- although some women bands comprised men- and men's bands for men.



Folk Band

Women folk bands mostly came from Khor and the Northern area. "They must have dinner; lambs would be slaughtered for them... They depended mainly on Nuqoot (monetary gifts), and did not set the conditions for fees... they relied on Nuqoot from invitees; each according to his/her financial capacity". "Now, they give them down payment of 3500-4000 Riyals, paid by the groom's or bride's family... the one who books their service". Nowadays, fee for women bands is somewhere between 15-25 thousand Riyals, besides other conditions.

Men's folk bands were also from old Bidaa, Khor and the North. This may be related to their settlement in Khor and the North after their immigration from African countries to Qatar. The reason may also be that some of them abandoned the diving profession- due to the changes affecting the career- and alternately got engaged in folk singing and dancing. It is noted that the activity of both men and women music bands concentrated mostly in urban areas. Contrary to this, the Bedouin were professional in dancing performances and group singing whether while working (pasturing) and in entertainment gatherings. Bedouins "clap, sing, and dance in weddings. They also recite poetry, and dance with words and rifles". The proverb says, "Bedouin's dancing is slow and languishing".

Men music bands played significant role in urban areas, particularly those specializing in Ardha, Liwa, and Habban dances (names of folk dances), among which were Salmin Johar band, Eid Bin Mjalli band, Faraj Al-Assiri band, Salim Bu Halloum band, and Suleiman Al-Sudan band. Examples of women bands include Asma Bint Mhareb band, Zyada Bint Miftah band, Fatimah (aunt Zyada) band, then Mubarak (Bint Fatima) band, Badreyya band, and Loolwat Al-Badi band. Ethnographic material confirms that the fee of Idda (the music band or what is called Daqqaqa or Taqqaqa) ranged between 200-400 Rupees for men's Idda performing for the affluent, and 50-100 Rupees if the family is of the lower class. Generally, no conditions were set for fee, no down payments were made, and the fee itself was not exaggerated. Indeed, bands used to consider the family's financial conditions or their inability to pay. Moreover, they sometimes participated without invitation or fee, depending only on Nuqoot.

Among the songs which women music band used to sing was a song entitled "Those who kissed the bride". The lyrics say:

You who kissed the bride, you who kissed her

You who placed pearls on her head

This is Hissa, celebrating her Jalwa, confer wealth on her

Departing her father's house, sixteen Ethiopians (accompany her)

The following is the opening verse of a song with religious touch, called "You who hear the voice":

You who hear the voice, send prayers upon the Prophet

The first is Mohammad, and his cousin is Ali

The above are only examples of many other songs. As for men, the lead singer would deviate from original lyrics to include the name of the band's chief, like in "Ya lel Dana or the jewel of the night" song, where Salem, chief of the band, deliberately mentions his name and says:

Ya Lel Dana, Ya Lel Dana

Salem, oh Salem, oh Salman

I ran across the Liwan (salon)

And the yard is crowded with boys

Oh Salem, oh Salman.

"Ban Al-Subh/Morning came into sight" is yet another song performed by women Idda, which used to chant verses of the song, while women attendees repeat each verse after them. The lyrics are as follows:

Morning came into sight... came into sight, oh

Morning came into sight, came into sight, appeared

But my love has not, oh

Oh, brunette, why have you come while feeling sad?

If camels felt tired, I would hold you myself

Oh, brunette, I am about to lose it

Yet love requires compassion not madness

The palm in our yard is blooming

You who dyed yourselves with Henna and started trumpeting

Yesterday, God knows how much I've dreamt about you

Yet dreams are not real, and my love has not come

In Bedouin areas, men gather in Al-Majlis and clap their hands and step

Their feet, sing and dance at wedding night. Both men and women did

Not have Idda, but they used to dance with swords and rifles in Weddings

A song they would sing:

Oh God, may it be blessed and joyful

The boy and girl's wedding

May she have a child!

And be guided left and right

Noqoot

This fee usually refers to a type of compliment and gift exchanging that obliges payback, even if it is given to Idda, not the groom or the bride. Nuqoot is attached to wedding celebrations, where there is singing, dancing, and effort to create joyful atmosphere for invitees. Folk bands lead wedding-related performances in both old times and present in order to maintain this heritage and preserve its sustainability over generations, despite the obvious changes which have occurred recently. This tradition prevails mainly in women's gatherings, especially at the bride's residence when celebrating wedding night.

Ethnographic material indicates that Nuqoot involved neither conditions nor direct pressures. However, the obligation to give Nuqoot and related pressure come from social background. Therefore, nowadays there is a chance to increase in value. In the past, finances were limited, and so Nuqoot was not perceived the way it is being perceived these days. Narrators unanimously agree that Nuqoot was one aspect of financial aid given by celebrating women to women of the music band members. Hence, they say, "The groom's mother gives Idda the groom's Nuqoot as support, according to the mother's financial ability, and without any conditions set". "Invitees would Nuqoot as a form of support to Taqqaqa each according to his/her financial ability so that the bride's family would not incur entire Idda charges."

As mentioned before, Nuqoot is exchangeable because it is similar to the gift in the manner that a gift must be given in return, even if the party receiving the Nuqoot is Idda. Nowadays they exaggerate in paying Nuqoot to the extent that it has reached unreasonable amounts. This urges some to agree with the band on a certain amount as an alternate to Nuqoot.

It is noteworthy that some Nuqoot phrases expose boasting and rivalry among people and families, invested by folk bands in their favor to realize the maximum economic benefit. Therefore, "Tempo, when receiving Nuqoot, must be fast in order to encourage others and draw their attention... unlike regular singing, when normal music beats are played." According to customs, a woman gives Nuqoot to Daqqaqa, and informs her of the young man or young woman's name, father's name, and family name. The Daqqaqa then say, "This Nuqoot is from so and so, son of so and so, may God keep their status unchanged; May God keep them honored... Play music as we have received good money (Bayad or whiteness here refers to purity), and they start boasting. When another woman pays Nuqoot in the name of her son or daughter, or the person on behalf of whom she pays the Nuqoot, the woman playing trumpet says:

Whose Nuqoot is this? It is Nuqoot

From so and so, son of so and so (the band repeats)

May God keep him honored, he's all pure and honored,

May God keep him honored.

May God protect him from any changes while still young,

And protect his family too, may God honor hi,

Those listening, send prayers to the Prophet,

May God honor him.

As a matter of fact this picture occurs frequently in women's gatherings when celebrating weddings, with participations from the audience in the form of dancing, singing, and expressing joy.

During the party, invitees participate with the band in their dancing and singing, especially the bride and groom's sisters. One of the dances which girls used to perform in the past comprised showing off long hair. They "toss" hair to display and boast their beauty, as that used to be considered the desired sign of beauty. It seems this ancient type of dancing, which is sustained in Bedouin areas, does not involve major body moves. However, the movement increases

or decreases according to the free space available in similar occasions.

Most famous tunes played for women in weddings include "Khammari." This type of music is designated mainly for old women who dance to the music while wearing Abaya (long loose dress). It is called "Khammari" because women who dance Khammari should cover their heads with a veil or Abaya or wears traditional dresses like "Nashl" or "Mukwar". Women dance slowly to Khammari. Khammari songs include the following:

O you who maintain arts, my body became slim, can't you see?

All because I loved some people , because of who I got lost

It is because I loved them that I became mad.

My tears roll down my eyes like rain dropping from the clouds.

In addition, there were other dances for men including Ardha, Liwa and Habban (Tanboura).

4.4 Wedding Banquets:

The Arab heritage includes many types of food on the different occasions and events, giving each type a name. For example, Walima is the food served at weddings, Imlas and Kurs are terms of food served on occasions of birth, Aqiq or Tamima is food served on the seventh day after giving birth to a child, Wakira is food prepared on the occasion of building a new house, Waqiaa is food prepared when someone arrives from abroad, and Qera is food served to guests in general.

In the past, wedding banquets in the Qatari society included four types:

Dinner banquets: Dinner served at weddings at the groom's house. In Qatari traditions, the family of the groom makes this Walima: "The groom's family should serve dinner to guests. Food could even be fish. Those who are financially capable would slaughter animals to prepare food. Food is served in Al-Majlis where the guests, relatives and non-relative, enjoy food. Also al-Rizafah joins in for dinner." An

informant also says, "The whole neighborhood and all the relatives everywhere are invited. They invite their relatives who may reside in Al-Thkheira and Al-Rweis. The groom may have relatives in Al-Khor and Dukhan. People of Qatar used to be one family. They arrived with their camels and stayed for the whole period of the marriage ceremony."

Also the bride's father makes a dinner Walima to welcome his guests according to his financial capacity.

Qera (locally pronounced Gra) is the food served in the morning of the first day of marriage. The bride's family prepares food at dawn. Anyway, this Walima used to be important in the Qatari society in particular and in the Gulf society in general. It is prepared very early and distributed to relatives and neighbors before 10:00am on the second day of the marriage. Additionally, meat and rice received as Dazza (dowry and gifts) are also redistributed. Changes have become clear in marriage ceremonies whether in Badia or in urban areas. Changes include, for example:

In the past, girls used to dance at women parties by showing off their hair. They toss their loose and long hair from one side to another. This was practiced in all Gulf societies. Now, girls dance with their bodies and the hair does not have a role anymore.

Traditional tunes like Khammari are rarely played as the demand for such songs is low. Now the demand is restricted to modern and fast songs. Also now people depend on recorded songs, tapes and professional singers brought from abroad.



Wedding

Fifth: Move of the groom to the bride's house

Ethnographic material shows that the groom's parade in the Badia was different from that in urban areas. In Badia, parade starts after the Maghrib (sunset) prayer as the groom and his family and relatives head to Al-Majlis and the tribe Sheikh sits in the middle.

"They have coffee and dinner and then start the parade after the Isha (night) prayer to the bride's house. When they arrive at the bride's house, they shoot bullets, announcing the arrival of the groom's parade."

In Urban Areas

"The groom's family and relatives gather in Al-Majlis of the groom's father. After they perform the Isha prayer, they start the parade holding gasoline lamps until they arrive at the bride's house. Also Rizafah accompany the parade to the bride's house."

In fact, everyone celebrated the groom's parade with Al-Rizafa. However, in some cases no ceremony is held in the groom's parade because the groom's family may not like to hold a ceremony or because of the sad conditions such as the death of a neighbor or a relative or in the case of remarriage of a man or when the groom is elderly.

The groom's parade normally consisted of the father, brothers, relatives, neighbors and friends. They walk to the bride's house. In urban areas, family and relatives accompany the groom. "The groom and his family do not go to the bride's house before they

honor their guests who first congratulate the groom and have dinner." "They then accompany him to the bride's house."

These traditions have been changed now after contacts with other communities. Changes include the following:

The ceremony of the groom's parade has become more complicated and obligatory. It is preferred that everyone, whether financially capable

or not, celebrates in a hotel, with popular music bands which receive approximately 10,000 Riyals or more to accompany the groom's parade to the bride's house.

After the guests have dinner, the groom and his brothers drive their cars to the bride's house. The father tells the guests: "We are going. Anyone willing to come is welcome. When they arrive at the bride's house, they enter Al-Majlis. They have coffee and then the groom's father sees them off and they leave for their homes." So the parade is not carried on cars. Before, people used to walk on foot with gasoline lamps in the groom's parade. Only the groom, his brothers, his friends and certain relatives participate in the groom's parade.

Now people tend to make simple ceremonies in which they serve dinner to guests without making a big party and without singing. This could be a revival of an old tradition when people did not celebrate the wedding "with music and singing".



Gasoline Lamp

Chapter Six: Dakhla i.e. wedding night and first morning's habits

- Entry of the groom to the Khella
- Arrival of the bride at the Khella
- First morning
- Embellishing the bride
- Reward from the groom to Ajjafa
- Features of change in the wedding night and the first morning's habits

In the Qatari tradition, the groom usually marched in a procession from his home to the bride's house. If the house was nearby, the groom walked on foot. In the procession, the friends and companions accompanied the groom sometimes to Al-Majlis of the bride's father and from there to the Khella. All those who took part in the procession entered the Khella with the groom. In the presence of family and friends at the Khella, those participants used to do some funny things such as wearing perfume and sitting on the groom's bed. They usually spoke to him saying: Two persons get married, and one thousand get crazy. After that, everybody had to leave and only the groom's father and brothers spoke to him a little before leaving too, wishing him happiness.

Then al-rgheeda would enter the Khella saying hello to the groom and shutting the door till the bride came in, soon.

Second: Arrival of the bride at the Khella

After the groom's family's leave the Khella, the father or eldest brother would ask the mother to take the bride to the groom. "Hey, let's give the man his wife." The mother would call the al-rgheeda who has the key of the Khella, enters the room and shakes hands with him, then closes the Khella till the bride arrives in along with three or four women carrying her on a carpet, then take her to her groom. Before that, they urge her to shout and defend herself. One story goes, "On her marriage night, my cousin (female) gave me a stake, but after all women were beaten by the stake."

The timing of this habit depends on the groom's arrival at the Khella. It could be at eight or nine at night, and often immediately after the Eisha (night) prayer, then the bride would amid celebrations.

After al-rgheeda closed the door of the Khella she had to stay overnight close to the door to answer any request by the couple, especially the groom. She allowed nobody to come close, even children. A usual warning to children was "Come close to the door, and dogs will eat you." The reason was to eliminate any inconvenience to the couple in a way or another.

Another difference in the traditions of marriage night stands on the social setting. In the desert, the men, usually the father or brother took up the mission of accompanying the bride to her groom. In rural areas women and the rgheeda did that. Al-Abaya was necessary

in the past as per traditions, and the bride used to wear Al-Bukhnag and Al-Abaya.

After the bride's arrival at the groom's room, she was never reachable before the time she went out to perform al-fajr (dawn) prayer next morning.

Ethnographic data indicate that the Dakhla (the first intercourse between the couple) took place during the celebration as invitees chanted and danced. The noise of songs and dance had to overshadow the voice of the bride. After taking the bride to the groom, certain rituals were keenly practiced in the Qatari society in the past as well as now, with almost no change. The groom had to make his wudu (ablution, i.e. wash for prayer) and pray to Allah to bless the wedding and the bride. Praying at the Khella is believed to bring in abundant blessings and open up a fresh life of piety and righteousness. The groom prayed alone and sometimes with the bride.

Initiating the sexual intercourse by the groom entailed firm expectations, as the couple becomes connected with the social and cultural conventions, concepts and values such as the keenness on staying together for long ... etc. So rushing the intercourse was necessary within the dominant social and cultural context.



Carpet

The first morning

Several words were used to describe the first morning after wedding

night including subhiya, subhiyat al-arous (the bride's first morning), subhiyat al-moaras (the groom's first morning), Sabahiyyat al-ors (the wedding's first morning), Sabahiyyat al-arous and Sabahiyyat al-moaras. Add to this isbahiyat al-moaras, isbahiyat al-ors and isbahiya. Such terms were common in Bedouin and urban areas alike.

There is a consensus however among narrators on lesbaha, a word referring to the gift the groom extended to his bride on the first morning before he exited the room. That gift tradition has been practiced at Bedouin and urban areas in the Qatari society among the rich and poor in the past and now.

Such tradition resisted change and has not been marginalized. On the contrary, it has been fostered, and varied with the addition of fresh offerings such as precious watches, gold, diamond and pearl artifacts, cars and cash of course.

Sometimes the groom gives the bride a cash sum to disburse to those who served them along with the lisbahiyya.

The first morning of the couple would start with them waking up with the following traditions:

Al-rgheeda awakens the groom at dawn to pray with his father and family, and then al-riyooq (breakfast) is presented to him. Breakfast consisted of khubais, balaleet, luqaimat, harees, shiniyali, aseel and khanfroush [traditional Qatari dishes], and sometimes a select of such delicacies. Then the groom goes out to prayer where his father asks if things went well.

Before getting out to prayers, the groom presents the lesbaha (gift) to his wife.

Fourth: Embellishing the bride

Several customs and rituals were practiced in embellishing the bride. A group of professional women, notably including the Al-Rgheeda to whom the bride gave up voluntarily, took care of such process.

Al-rgheeda and her roles

Field research indicates the existence of several names for the persons who took care of the embellishment of the bride for the

wedding. The word rgheeda is the most common. An analysis of ethnographic data shows rgheeda (pronounced in Qatar: rgheeda) is derived from rugad (sleeping) as this woman sleeps by the door of the Khella to deliver any help the bride might need for an entire week. This is why the bride's mother was not allowed to visit her daughter's new house (on the early days) or spend a night there.

The rgheeda's role acquired more significance due to the fact that, in Qatari traditions (in the past), the bride's father had to spend the wedding night outside the home, maybe at Al-Majlis, and her mother was not allowed to visit her, or even to wear ornaments or new dress on this occasion. So the rgheeda played the mother's role at marriage ceremonies.

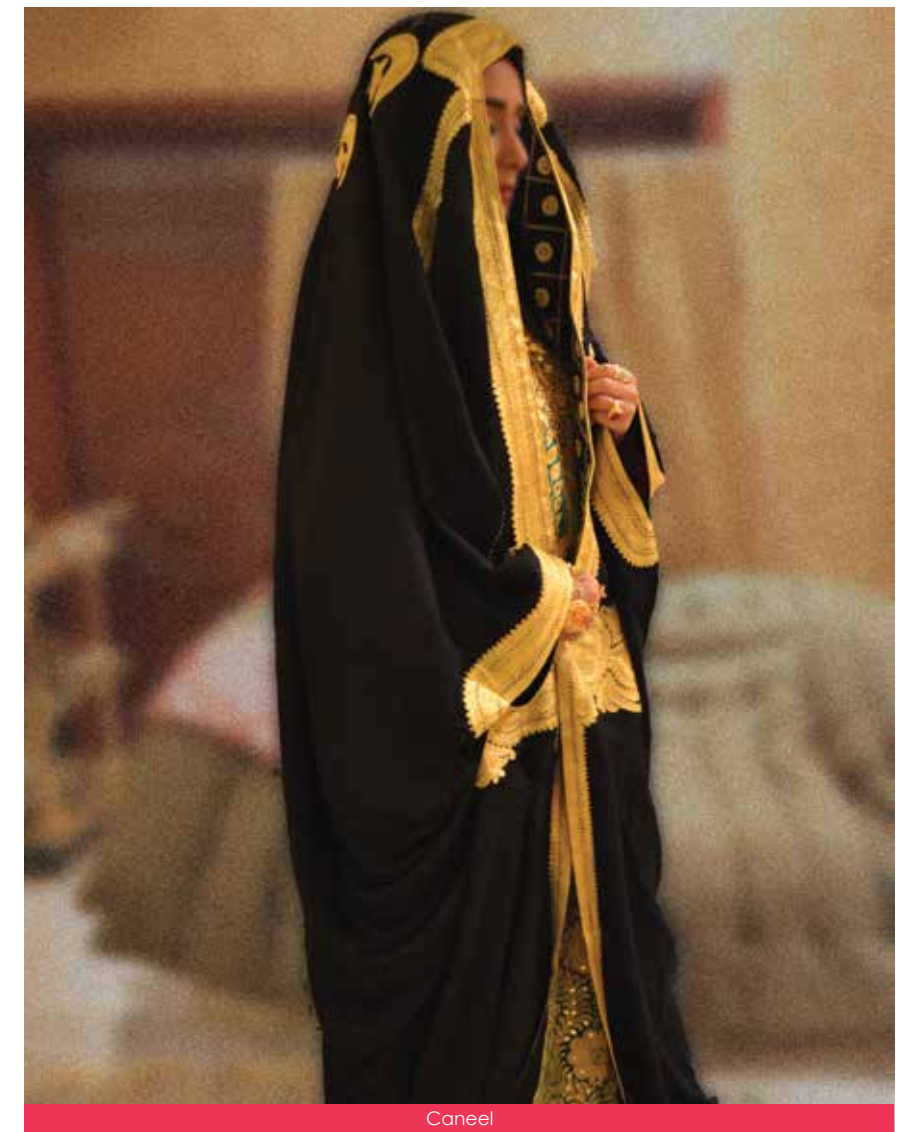
The roles played by the rgheeda varied significantly. Female narrators assert that Al-mashata (ajjafa) or any female servant who took care of the bride was called rgheeda.



Henna Decorations



Henna Decorations



Caneel

Combing and dressing the bride

Data indicate that in the Qatari society in the past the bride did not wear ornaments or the wedding dress, but after the wedding night, i.e. on the first morning.

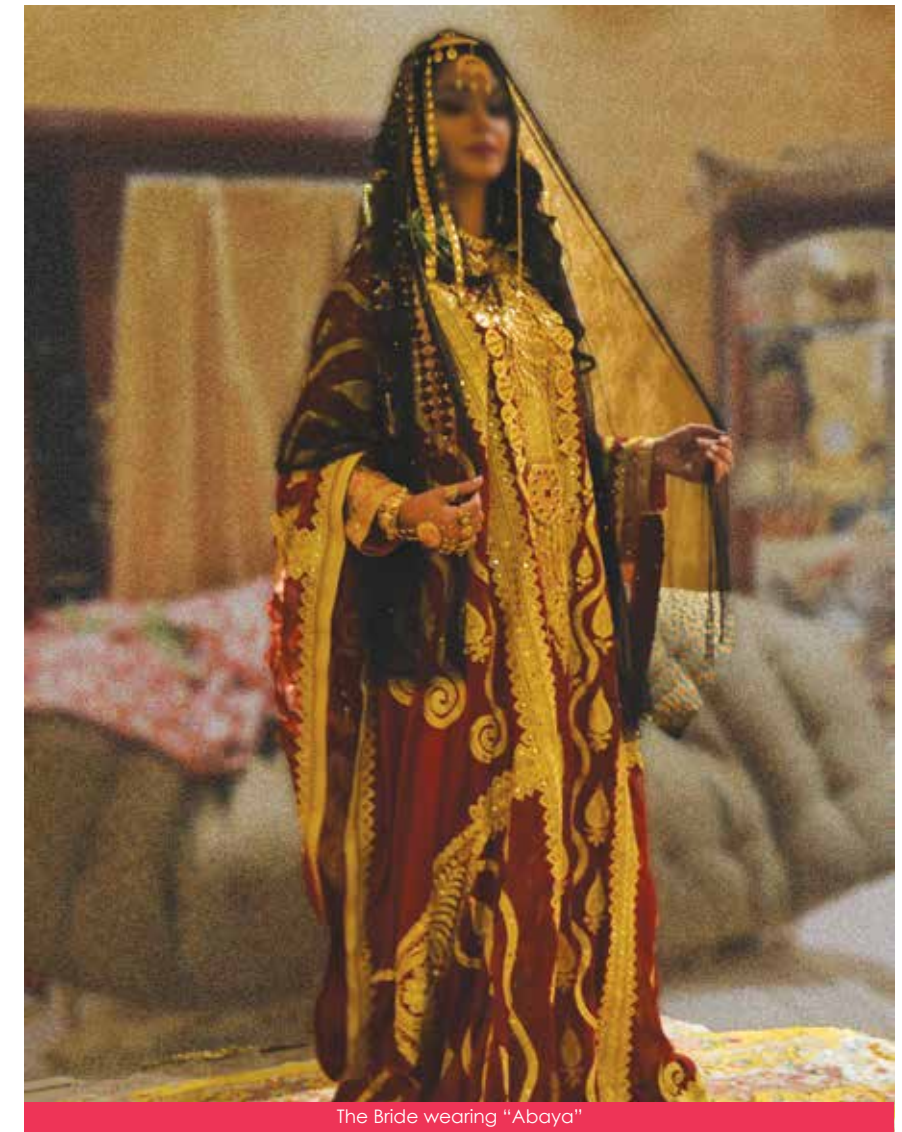
The ajjafa took on the bride after the groom's exit from the room, and accompanied her to bathroom. After the bride bathed, the rgheeda would comb her hair and put al-mashmoom al-akhdar (green plant with perfumed mint scent) and gold on her hair.

Remarkably, the *ajjafa* was a key person in the marriage tradition and the arrangements that preceded it by long time. She was a woman who mastered the use of *rushush* plant on the hair and styling (*taageef*) the hair in the traditional way. The hair was the asset of the woman in the past. So mothers took care of their own and daughters' hair since the age of nine or ten or even earlier. At this age, they sent daughters to the *ajjafa* along with a group of girls weekly for receiving hair care and sometimes the *ajjafa* came in to their houses.

Afterwards, the bride wears her dress. Social class differences were reflected in the bride's dress especially at urban areas. A bride of the upper class used to wear *Darraa Sari* and *Thobe Al-Nashal* and on the head a veil with gold ornaments, and she had to change the dress every morning. A bride from the middle class however would wear *Seroual*, *Darraa Jadida*, *Abaya* and *Thobe Al-Nashal*. She could also borrow a dress from rich neighbors. Dominant colors in the bride's dress were three: green, red and yellow, in addition to ornaments.



Caneel



The Bride wearing "Abaya"

Types of bridal ornaments



Bride's garments



Bride

The bride put on several types of ornaments in the first morning. Field data indicate that brides wore gold in varying ways across social classes and at urban areas. Ornaments were not necessarily owned by the bride. Some of them could be borrowed from neighbors based on a request from the mother. Sometimes neighbors themselves took the initiative and put their gold at bride's disposal. And very often dominant traditions obliged those who owned gold to contribute to the bride in compliment to the lady or her mother. And then the mother returned it to owners later.

An informant Ajjafa says that "they (the bride's family) requested the gold from me, not like nowadays where all people are rich (own an excess of everything)."

In effect, ornaments took several formats and sizes and were used to embellish all body parts including:

Head ornaments: Different golden artifacts that took the form of a closed, hollow circle on the bride's head. Several names were used to describe them in Qatar. One was Al-tasa, from which golden artifacts hanged, taking the shape of a crescent. It was studded with bezels hanged down to the back. The second type was Al-hama (or qisat al-saad or looh al-saad) from which golden chains and shapes hanged down to the middle of the back, and sometimes to the

shoulder only, and some of them were fixed on filaments of hair such as al-mashmum and jatub.



Hama /Head Piece



Jatub



Mashmoom Jewelry

Ear ornaments: earrings including shughab and gholamiat.

Neck ornaments including al-murtaishah that hangs from the neck on the chest and is one of the most expensive wedding ornaments.

Chest ornaments including al-muaari, al-marari and al-murtahish that hang from the neck with a chain covering the area between the chest to lower belly, and it contained interlaced gold circles.

Face ornaments including all face covers such as al-burqu al-riyasi or batula.



Maryia necklace

Ornaments for hands and fingers: were worn on the wrist such as asbanagir, lishmailat, hab-al-heil and madaid. Between six and twelve of such ornaments are put on hands. Other pieces included embroidered finger ornaments such as al-marami, al-mahabis, al-shawahid and al-kaf.

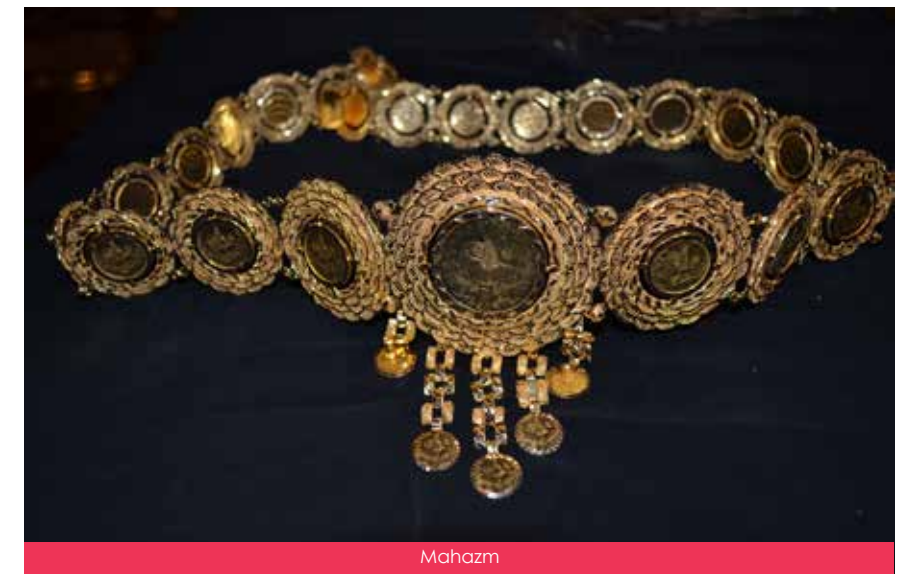


Al - Kaf



Bride Rings

Waist ornaments include al-mahazam i.e. a golden belt encircling the waist, in the middle of which hangs a circle of light and small intersecting chains decorated in different colors.



Mahazm

Wearing Perfumes

After the rgheeda finalized the bride's embellishment, including hair combing, dressing and putting on ornaments, she wore several perfumes. Wedding perfumes comprised two sections: perfumes of the Khella and the bed of the groom and those of the bride, including body and dress perfumes primarily:



Dehn al-aoud or sandal oil (has a liquid form too) is an old and expensive perfume that moved from a generation to generation. It has an adorable odor and was put on the back of the bride's ear-- a lovely perfume with various usages. It also includes Al-aoud Al-Khashab (Wooden Aoud) which has several types. It is burnt with the coal in incense burners (mabakhir) to air the bride's dress and hair. Its smell is charming and it exists in almost every home, and is shared with guests after offering them the due hospitality. A saying goes "After Aoud, no more stay (for guests)."

Amber: There is liquid amber used as perfume and was used as dehn al-aoud to air the hair and applied to the ears. It also comes in a solid form with dark gray color and that is the most expensive form of all amber and has the best odor. It is burnt with coal to impart the smell. It is used as a heart medicine too by adding a small quantity to a cup of coffee.

Dehn al-aoud has several forms the most expensive of which is the oil of Al-Taif roses that the bride applies behind the ear, and is not preferred for the hair as it conceivably makes the hair go gray. Sometimes it is blended with expensive dehn al-aoud with a small quantity al-ward as it has strong odor. This plant is used by men and women alike, but is more common among men.

Sandal oil extracted from sandalwood and has a strong odor similar to rose's oil although it has not to be used in abundant quantities such as dehn al-aoud.

Musk: it comes in liquid and dry forms. Liquid musk is used as a perfume and dry musk is ground and sprayed on clothes, and blended with aoud after grinding into incense (bukhoor) then used to air the Khella.

Al-Majmouaa (the group): a blend of pricey perfumes such as dehn al-aoud, amber and saffron used as a bridal perfume.

Dress perfumes include al-aoud, dafdoor and bukhoor. Al-rgheeda used al-mabkhara, a wooden, pyramid-shaped tool with four legs joined together by intersecting columns to air the bride's dress. Clothes are placed on al-mabkhara to pick odor after putting bukhoor on burning coal. Al-mabkhara was used also air the groom's bed cover. Liquid perfumes imported from India such as buteir and rafdoor were sprayed on clothes. That is practiced till now.

Bridal perfumes at desert areas include, besides al-aoud:

The civet (zabad) perfume is extracted from civet and is preferred for Bedouin women, especially for the hair.

Al-Mahlab: a type of seeds with good odor used by Bedouin women with a little of lafdoor to impart perfumed scent to clothes and rooms. Sometimes it is ground and sprayed on clothes. It is a favorite for Bedouin women.

The Bedouin woman also uses incense she herself makes, by blending powder aoud (agar) wood with white amber, sugar and musk, and crystallizing them into small balls to be dried and used as incense. Sometimes it was bought ready made from Al-Ahsaa region (Saudi Arabia).

Women in urban and Bedouin areas used these odors after marriage too, yet excessively on the return of husbands from hunting trips or journeys in general.

After the ajjafa finalized her embellishment work, she dressed the bride and accompanied her into the Khella. By then the bride would look as a different person. In front of bride's family, the rgheeda used to unveil the new beauty taking off head cover and showing part of the chest, and then eventually accompanied her to the groom again after he entered the Khella at noon.

Reward from the groom to Ajjafa

Field data show that the groom was not obliged to give the ajjafa, mashta or rgheeda money or a reward on the wedding day as this was the duty of the bride's family.

But in return for her role, the groom extended a reward to make the lady happy. The preferred timing for the reward was the day after the event, especially when she got busy embellishing the bride at the next noon. At that time, the groom would give a gift or reward that varied relative to his own social and economic profile, or when the lady poured coffee in the morning. Some grooms did not pay that. It all depended on capacity.

The bride's family delivered a reward to the ajjafa from Al-Dazza in the first place and a small sum of money depending on conditions , often a week after the wedding and before the bride's move to her in-laws' house (referred to as tahwal).



Bride sitting with ajjafa



Bride with ajjafa

Sixth: Features of change in the wedding night and the first morning's habits

Field data show that the steps and stages of the wedding day and next morning and the related practices have seen a change as follows:

The groom's gift was placed by him or his mother in his clothes bag to be ready next dawn to hand over to his bride. Failing to give a gift was a shame. But, now the groom sometimes offers the gift on the third day and if he failed to do so, then, there is no issue. The groom's family now may think they gave enough sending Al-Dazza and a car, jewelry and gold. The society no longer cares for the 'first morning gift.'

The couple used to wake up at dawn. It was shameful if the groom failed to catch up the dawn prayer with his father and family at the mosque. "Now see the couples. They sleep as though there was no wedding (last night). They sleep to next noon or afterwards.»

In the past, the groom had to be with his bride for the first seven days at noon and night times. He never missed these times except after seven days. If the bride was a second wife, he did not spend a night with the first wife except after the seventh night.

The embellishment of the bride has changed and the role of the rgheeda disappeared, now replaced by the coiffeur. Also diamond has replaced gold and modern fashion replaced traditional dress.

The traditional banquet has been replaced by the wedding dinner though the Qatari and Gulf societies attached great importance to this banquet in the past.

Conclusion

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Conclusion

Nowadays, the Qatari society is witnessing a set of quick changes due to the rapidness, interconnection, and spreading of global and local impacts.

Today, it is a sociality changing rapidly and deeply where investment, financial and international activities projects are extending and where interests, communications and international interactions have become stronger, and national programs for reforms, development and modernization are being established.

If ever the impacts of globalization seem to be obvious nowadays at the material level including goods, communications and technologies, the cultural impacts whether at the level of values, standards, ethics or ambitions are not far from emerging, spreading rapidly!

The systems of marriage and family are among the systems affected by this change. In fact, the systems of marriage and family with its institutions, foundations, priorities, arrangements, customs and traditions are no longer local, specific and constant. It is noteworthy that many marriage customs and its new practices have turned from unusual, distasteful, new-coming customs to attractive, sought after, and desired customs among the new generations in the era of satellite channels, "mobiles" and information.

In the field of marriage and family, we can tangibly notice that some traditional societal values and trends have gradually declined and new values and trends have started to emerge. Moreover, some cultural practices are on the decline paving the way to new secondary cultural trends trying to confirm themselves and know exactly what they want. Among the current changes, we find the change of youth values between men and women alike in their roles and priorities, in their choices and preferences and their concerns and interests.

Based on the reality of the current political, economic, cultural

and social changes in the Qatari society, we can determine the constants and variables in the phenomenon of marriage and family through the main following conclusions:

First: As the first social unit, the Qatari family still **performs its expected functions effectively**. Nothing can prove the efficiency of this performance more than the success of the Qatari family, to date, in carrying out the requirements of traditional social upbringing to the full.

What has helped to preserve the effective ability of the **traditional extended family** to continue and co-exist with the **modern nuclear family pattern** in most of the Qatari houses to date is the fact that the father and the mother do not bring up their children on their own. Indeed, the grandfather and the grandmother also contribute to this upbringing through tales, pieces of advice, sayings and proverbs and giving the good example.

Besides, supporting social units such as mosques, men's meetings, assemblies and neighborhood have equally contributed to strengthening the family role in instilling the prevalent cultural patterns in the new generations' souls and minds.

We can honestly deduce that in our society and maybe more than in any other one, the knowledge and skills or orientations, trends, relationships and interactions acquired by the children are only the product of **the integrated Qatari family**. Our society takes pride nowadays, maybe more than in any other thing - such as the continuity of values, ethics, customs and traditions and the deep-rooted identity and belonging - in the determination to remain as we are through the coming generations. A trend that is the product of the integrated Qatari family is characterized by solidarity.

Nowadays we can also deduce that the **Qatari social upbringing is no longer targeted totally at its determined traditional trends**: isolation and segregation between the male and female worlds, preparing and getting ready for the early marriage of the girl and the young man. In fact, nowadays, the Qatari society has its modern trends which clearly prioritize education and work for the girl and the young man on an equal footing.

Second: The images and conceptions about the male and female start at an early age within the Qatari family and in this respect, preparing and getting ready for marriage starts as well. As a matter of fact, songs, sayings and proverbs are composed; tales and commandments are recounted in the Qatari family to consolidate a set of justifications and preferences for kinship marriage and intermarriage through Tahyeer, Tasmiyah and Wahba. Besides, a set of economic practices and rituals support the features and benefits of early marriage and giving birth.

However, nowadays, the reality of the Qatari society shows that such preferences have witnessed slight changes in **such a manner that external marriage is no longer rare and getting married at an older age is not distasteful anymore for the young man and the young woman alike**.

Moreover, these facts show that the preferred age of marriage has risen due to the socio-cultural, scientific, educational, material and economic changes. Nowadays, marriage age ranges from 24 to 28 for the man and from 20 to 24 for the girl (and sometimes maybe more than that). However, such significant changes have not violated the general system of social and cultural values related to marriage and family. They have only **added innovations and developments**, which in turn have become acceptable and justifiable.

Nowadays, there is a general trend among the Qatari youth -male and female alike- to delay the marriage age as the latter may reach 30 years and even more in some cases. If the young man's new concerns and responsibilities account for this trend, it should also be understandable given the young girl's new ambitions and expectations.

This trend has also led to **new conceptions of the idea of "spinsterhood" as an ever-changing ancient concept confined to girls only**. The study has showed that during the last years, the girl's "spinsterhood" has been linked to the tribalism mentality of the families, insisting on intermarriage and making the girl available for her cousin (paternal cousin) and the impossible conditions for external marriage and intermarriage at times, tending to imitation and copying, boasting, then sticking to luxury, extravagance and consumption in the current time. All these are reasons and things connected to spinsterhood in the Qatari society formerly as well as in current time.

Thus, we can conclude that “spinsterhood” **is no longer that stigma-laden term that it used to be a few years ago.**

Nowadays, “spinsterhood” is only a residual concept of a changing traditional society, in which everything is changing, including the woman's self-conception, her ideas about her roles, taking the initiative to make her decisions and solve her problems, and her going ahead in shaping her ambitions and re-arranging her priorities.

Third: In the Qatari society, engagement facts show today that the engagement customs and arrangements are not the only things which have changed. Its authorities and traditional matchmakings have also changed.

The father is no longer the first authority for his daughter's engagement as was the case before. Thanks to university studies and higher education, the girl has herself turned **to become a source of the announcement of the engagement to the mother or sister**, just waiting for the consent or blessing. Besides, the matchmaker, the Rakida (the one who prepares the bride on her wedding night) or the hairdresser has disappeared **as a main intermediate in the process of searching, introducing, making acquaintances and making the couple closer** after using to play many roles, the fact which has made her have more than one name and play many a role in the engagement and marriage in the Qatari society years ago.

The young man no longer plays the major role in preparing for marriage given that many bodies and institutions help him in this respect. Among these institutions, we find the State which has provided new work opportunities, and the “land and public loan policy” and bank financing resources.

Moreover, the **preparations for the bride's trousseau show that its practices and significances** have considerably changed. Indeed, Dazza has lost many of its functions, components and traditional significances. They turned from cultural tokens or in kind items to material and tangible equipment. In the first place, we find the amount of money which increases or decreases according to the new significances. It is sent or paid on the spot to the girl to bear both meanings at the same time: Dazza and Mahr (dowry) together. The traditional Malej (the person before whom the marriage contract

is signed) has lost his traditional position. Formerly, the Malja used to be made in an oral manner and was based on consent, trust and blessing before the known persons in the girl's house or at the mosque two weeks or more prior to marriage (at times, it is made just before the wedding). The girl has no role whatsoever (she played almost no role) and she only gives her consent through delegation and representation or through silence. All this has taken a new documented official form through the State institutions and its judicial authorities and in the presence of the person concerned who shall give her express consent.

Fourth: Nowadays, the Qatari criteria for marriage choice change and tend to become more “reasonable” and “liberal” whether in terms of their characteristics and standards or their conditions and requirements.

While the traditional **criteria** used to be totally related to the family with its priorities, preferences and tribal or kinship connections to the extent that both the girl and the young man do neither have a say nor a choice, these same criteria are becoming more **realistic** nowadays.

Indeed, the choice and decision move from the family **to the persons concerned**, the young man and the girl. Most of the time, this move is done in a peaceful way. However, at times it is marred by some protests, acts of revolt and objections from both parties.

These new criteria concerning the preferences and new patterns gradually move away from kinship circle to draw near new circles epitomized in neighborhood, work, education, closeness and interest.

Nowadays, for both sexes, marriage epitomizes an opportunity or a new channel for **social dynamics**. Besides, “**Sense**” substitutes “Sensibility” in the process of one's own personal choice instead of a collective choice. It is determined by new **contractual** commitments and obligations and new marriage **conditions and requirements** that should be honored.

Among these new conditions we find for instance: the post dowry (in higher figures), the fact that the girl carries on her university studies, having one's independent housing as well as accepting the wife's work.

There are also other requirements which may preoccupy the would-be husband and wife's minds. They know about them thanks to the **new communication and interaction means** and to the openness onto the external world. Satellite channels which prevail in all Qatari houses as well as mobile phones glued to all ears play a major role in this change. They all show the growing trend among the youth to break free from the fetters and the burdens of traditional marriage requirements.

Fifth: Among the most important social change which **is currently affecting marriage and the Qatari family is the change of the Qatari girl/woman's priorities**. The priorities of the new generation girls concerning their subjects, items and arrangements are no longer the same as was the case a few years ago.

Among the important factors behind this change are modern education and the enabling ambitions related to it which are a main factor for social dynamics. Indeed, the Qatari girl is keen to pursue her education at a higher level, to assert herself through succeeding and her self-confidence in being seen in a different way by the husband, the family and society as a whole.

University education data show the ever-increasing development of the total number of female university graduates compared to the total number of male university graduates during the university period (see the Graduates Guide, 25th group of graduates, University of Qatar, 2002, pp 20), the number was 128 female students against 94 male students in the early years following the University establishment in 1974-1975, it went up to 1180 female students against 468 male students in 1980-1981, then it went up to 3783 female students against 1220 male students in 1990-1991 until it reached 5416 female graduates against 1700 male graduates in 2001-2002.

Education and university degree ensure that the Qatari girl will not be an additional economic burden on her spouse.

This growing number should not give those who will pursue their university education a wrong impression that it is limited to Great Doha city or the other cities and communities. It is rather an exhaustive change which has swept all society's regions, its communities, and collectivities including the countryside and the Sahara.

Although the rural woman faces the strong decision from her family and relatives concerning her university education or her free choice marriage, she has never wavered in pursuing her university education and winning the family and social stance.

Sixth: However, the decisive changes affecting marriage and family are related to the **changes currently affecting the way society looks to women** on the one hand and women's self-image on the other hand.

In fact, the Qatari woman **has understood** the system of social upbringing and the system of distributing roles within the family. This practice has been deeply-seated and continued for many decades. There were no real changes in favor of women. The woman, as a daughter, a sister and a mother, was a **dependent subject** and not an independent self. She is unfree and not endowed with a free will, she does not choose but they choose for her... She was a follower and not a leader... She receives orders and does not command. However, since less than a decade, the internal and external wind of change has started to blow on the atmosphere of Qatari women. Such a change was best manifested **in the field of education including higher education thanks to the efforts of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser**.

The educational factor has combined with the political legislative and legal factors in favor of women. All this has been duly registered in the Permanent Qatari Constitution. In fact, the Permanent Constitution has guaranteed to the citizens, males and females, equality in rights and duties as well as enjoying all the legal freedoms including freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of press and publishing, freedom of scientific research and freedom of constituting associations.

From now on, all these combined factors play an important role in the real changes taking place at the Qatari socio-political and economic scene for the benefit of women, allowing them to take part in public affairs and exert an influence.

The social facts related to marriage and family show that the woman can and really want to exert this influence on the family, work, and society in different degrees. Rarely does a Qatari university female graduate engage in an arranged marriage or one that is imposed

by the family and relatives. It is rare that she would not be involved in a decision or a choice relating to her marriage, her family life given that it is something which concerns her in the first place. Rarely are the Qatari family affairs run exclusively by the man "father". As a matter of fact, the mother/wife is keen to manage her house affairs and even if this is not carried out independently, it is at least done on equal terms with the husband/father.

Nowadays, the competition is over cooperation and equivalency and not over marginalizing the role. And if ever the battle of "marginalizing the role" takes place, it will be in favor of women, from now on, thanks to their excellence over men in education, higher qualifications, "strong personality" and the fact that society needs their contribution in making change and exerting influence. However, the Qatari women are the ones to deal with the main issue: to what extent do the Qatari women really want to change their own image?

This is a socio-cultural question having politico-economic connections: To what extent can women or (do they want) to take the initiative to change the prevalent socio-cultural patterns (hostile to them) into positive patterns encouraging their participation and respecting their capacities?

In the facts, women have given clear answers to the questions mentioned above. During the last decades, women have actively and efficiently participated in the building of the Qatari nation. They participated in municipal elections as voters and candidates, and occupied the highest positions in Qatar and outside such as their membership in the Committee on the Rights of the Children (CRC) in the United Nations. The foundation under the chairmanship of Her Highness Shaikha Moza bint Nasser of the Supreme Council of Family Affairs is a sign of the interest that the State and the society show towards the family whose traditional guardian is the woman. The first woman in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to be nominated Minister of Education is Mrs. Shaikha Al-Ahmad Al-Mahmoud.

In addition, one of the most outstanding achievements of Qatari women has been the world-class establishment of Qatar Foundation chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, and comprising some of the best universities such as Carnegie Mellon, Texas A&M,

Georgetown, Northwestern and HEC Paris universities!

Today, women are present in all sectors from law to literature and journalism, as well as airways companies, financial markets, medicine, tourism, sports, diplomacy and more.

Nowadays, the socio-cultural and politico-economic facts of the Qatari society show that the choices, fields and influences of women in the matters of marriage, work and participation in the public affairs remain, from now on, more than any other matters, open to all the local and global possibilities of change.

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This book is based on the innate, oral heritage and a field study of the Qatari societal, cultural events, most of which are extracted and collected out of the spontaneous speeches of contemporary grandmothers and certified resources via the documentation of the journey that the researcher lived in. This, in turn, enriches the human knowledge. As a matter of fact, this multicolored, multifaceted book is a witness to a past era through the Qatari tangible and intangible cultural heritage that deserves its place in personal and public libraries. In our efforts to expand the spectrum of readership, this work has been translated into English and in French as well.

Bibliography

Noura Bint Nasser Bin Jassim Al-Thani

- Since she graduated from Qatar University with distinction, she worked as a researcher in The Documents and Humanistic Studies Center, where she gained experience in research field.
- When she was student at Qatar University, she wrote a lot of researches where they were published in Al-Oma Magazine.
- She joined the Folklore Center of the Arab Gulf as a field researcher, then as scientific supervision and writing reports to spread Search.

She wrote a lot of researches:

1. Education in Qatar since 1951-1995.
2. Custom in Al-Morra and Al-Hwajer.
3. Traditional Medicine in Qatar, Cupping & Pediatrics.
4. Marriage Customs and Traditions in the Qatari Society.
5. Death Customs in the Qatari Society.

She also wrote a lot of books such as:

1. Doha the City.
 2. Accessories and Fashion of Qatari Women.
 3. Social History of Qatar Women.
- She participated on inputting the preparation and supervision of the Traditional Heritage in Educational Curriculum.
 - The Last Version of her book was in English & French Language, which was about Marriage Customs and Traditions in the Qatari Society published by Ministry of Heritage.
 - She is now working as a Director of the Department of Heritage & Identity Center, and currently working on a book entitled "Jewelry is a treasure of Qatar Women".