Women and Gender in a Lebanese Village

Women and Gender

THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

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Women and Gender in a Lebanese Village

Generations of Change

By

Nancy W. Jabbra

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This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Rose Mkhayyil Shehadi Jabra and to all the women who worked so hard all their lives, with loving and generous spirits, for their families, the village, and themselves. Without them, al-Firzul would not be what it is today

And to Joseph Elias Jabra, who left us too soon

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

One day in 1973 I was chatting with a middle-aged lady, Sirriyyi, who told me, in discussing the changes that had taken place in the village since her girlhood, "*mā baʿadnāsh fillaḥīn, ṣurna mitmadnīn*" "(We're not peasants anymore. We've become civilized (urbanized))."

It was a profound comment, indeed the overriding theme of this monograph. That theme, put simply, is a contrast between the past and the present, between then and now, between a subsistence farming existence and a middle class way of life. My main theme has three subthemes which together detail the transition between past and present: 1) increased integration into the nation and the larger international arena; 2) economic change; and 3) barriers to change. I develop my theme of transition, of change, through the lens of women, men, and gender. And I ground my analysis in a place, al-Firzul,[1] a Melkite Greek Catholic village in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

According to Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "The presumption that spaces (the authors refer here to the notion that a culture is tied to a society, to a place) are autonomous has enabled the power of topography successfully to conceal the topography of power.... [I]f one begins with the premise that spaces have *always* been hierarchically interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected, then cultural and social change becomes not a matter of cultural contact and articulation but one of rethinking difference *through* connection." "But by always foregrounding the spatial distribution of hierarchical power relations, we can better understand the processes whereby a space achieves a distinctive *identity* as a place" (1997: 35–36).

Arjun Appadurai (1986) also had something to say about place. For him, "... place is so much in the foreground of the anthropological consciousness that its importance has been taken for granted and its implications have not been systematically explored. Whatever else might be in dispute, the idea that culture is a *local* dimension of human behavior is a tenacious and widespread assumption." ... "Places (*i.e.*, particular areas, locations, cultures, societies, regions, even civilizations) are the objects of anthropological study as well as the critical links between description and analysis in anthropological theory"

1 This is its real name, but I have disguised or omitted the names of the people whose stories I have told, and mixed up the names of patronymic groups. In this monograph, I have referred to it as a village (*ḍayʿa*), following the usage of its inhabitants.

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(1986: 356–357). In terms of the analysis by Gupta and Ferguson, these places, these cultures, are those already defined by the topography of power.

The "typography of power" is a framework for understanding, rather than a causal framework. It is "petit" theory, not grand theory. It is "power over," rather than "power to." And it is operationalized by my three subthemes of change: 1) integration; 2) economy; and 3) barriers.

Integration refers to connection, first of all to vertical connection, as the phrase "typography of power" implies (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 35–36; Burbank and Cooper 2010). However, there exists horizontal connection as well, namely, transnational links of various kinds, including, but not limited to, migration (see Tastsoglou 2019: 1–2, N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra 2005, Clifford 1997, Hyndman-Rizk 2011, Karam 2007, and Peleikis 2003); mass media, including social media (Maisel 2013, Abu-Lughod 2002, Sakr 2001, Askew and Wilk, eds., 2002, Coleman 2010, and Government of Dubai 2014). Al-Firzul has had ample experience with both vertical and horizontal connection.

Economic connection has both a negative aspect and a positive aspect. Joseph Stiglitz (2002), and numerous feminist critics, such as Marchand and Runyan, eds. (2011), Benería and Sen (1982), and Alison Jaggar (2001), have offered critiques of vertical economic connections variously termed international development, globalization, or modernization. There appear to be fewer treatments of what might be termed positive aspects, but see Bloom *et al.* (2017). On the whole, al-Firzul's experience with economic connection has been positive.

Finally, there exist barriers or impediments to sociocultural, economic, and political change (which includes occupation and invasion), to the transition from "then" to "now." These barriers would include hybridization (Nederveen Pieterse 2015, Halliday 2002, Burkhalter 2013, and Volk 2000), by which those exposed to change may transform new ideas or practices in innovative ways; resistance, for example, by violence (Goldstone et al. 1991, and Home 1978); or by ignoring or essentially compartmentalizing new ideas (Abu-Lughod 2002; and Mohammed 2011: 37–42); and institutions, particularly religious ones (Doumato 1991, and U. Makdisi 2008: 103–137); but also state infrastructures such as transportation networks (Moghadam 1998), and laws (Sugita 2010, M. Khalaf 2010, Farha 2015, and Shehadeh 1998). Al-Firzul has a long history of resisting hostile forces, but its reaction to new cultural forms has been mixed. Some have been accepted, some rejected, and some hybridized. Lebanon's infrastructure and institutions have had a profound effect on the village's experience, and in some ways a negative effect on women.

Al-Firzul occupies a particular space in what we today call the Bekaa Valley. That geographical space has indeed had a profound effect upon the

development of its people. It has provided security, water, fertile soil, and a clement climate, all of which have enabled it to survive and flourish. However, it is evident that one must move beyond geography to its history of invasions, attacks by hostile forces, occupations, imperial regimes, the French mandatory regime,[2] and its post-colonial status within today's economic and political-military arena, and the state of Lebanon and its region, in order truly to understand where it is today and how it got there, to understand its place. In other words, we need to know its context, its typography of power.

In their survey of work in Arab-majority countries carried out by anthropologists, Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar stated that "… anthropologists should push their analyses of religion in the region beyond the dominant paradigms. It is noteworthy that little anthropological work exists on Christian or other religious minorities in the region …" (2012: 545). They added that, "Work on Lebanon would benefit from greater focus on areas other than Beirut, as well as on the interrelationship of Beirut to the rest of the country" (2012: 539).

Finally, they addressed the subject of women and gender in some detail, but I highlight one major point here: "… they (that is, recent works) integrate concepts – for example, propriety, kinship, the economy, and the state – that were viewed as separate domains…. In sum, work on gender now attends to power in multiple scales and forms" (2012: 543).

A brief review of the anthropological literature on Lebanon confirms their observations on Middle Eastern Christians and on communities outside of Beirut and its suburbs. Confining myself to monographs, I found only two on Christian communities: John Gulick (1955), on Munsif, an Orthodox village near Byblos; and Sima Aprahamian (1989), on Armenians in Anjar, across the Bekaa from Zahle and al-Firzul.[3]

Turning to monographs written on communities outside of Beirut and its suburbs,[4] I noted the following early studies (apart from the ones I listed above): Michael Gilsenan (1996), on research carried out during the early 1970s in Berqayl in the Akkar; John Gulick (1967) on Tripoli; Dawn Chatty (1974), on pastoralists in the Bekaa; Cathie J. Witty (1980), on Hadath Baalbak (Bekaa);

2 I refer here to the League of Nations mandate held by France from 1923 to 1941. Although not a colony *strictu senso*, in many ways it functioned as one.

3 Given the dominance of Christians in Lebanon's politics and economy, the paucity of monographs by anthropologists on Christian communities in the country is indeed remarkable.

4 These comments are not meant to overlook the importance of several recent Beirut-area monographs, such as those by Lara Deeb (2006); Lara Deeb and Mona Harb (2013); Joanne Nucho (2016); and Aseel Sawalha (2010).

Judith Williams (1968), on Haouch el Harimi (close to al-Firzul); and Anne Fuller (1961), on Buarij, also in the central Bekaa.[5]

Post-civil war studies made outside of Beirut include Michelle Obeid (2019), on Arsal; Zeina Zaatari (2003), on southern Lebanon; Anja Peleikis (2003), on Zrariye; Elizabeth Saleh (2014), on Kefraya; Suzanne Joseph (2013) on Bedouins in the Bekaa; and Munira Khayyat (2013), a truly hair-raising account of life along Lebanon's southern border. About half of all the monographs on communities outside of Beirut were based in the Bekaa, but only that by Sima Aprahamian dealt with Christians, and only Judith Williams, Anja Paleikis, and Zeina Zaatari studied women and gender in any detail.

My own dissertation (1975) is the only work with which I am familiar that was written on women in a Christian village, one which is located well outside Beirut's orbit. The present monograph employs some of the results of research I carried out for my dissertation, but it is a new work. It places change in the village into the larger "topography of power."

I chose to study Christian women in a rural community for a number of reasons. First, second-wave feminism was just beginning to affect academic research when I started thinking about carrying out fieldwork in Lebanon. Second, there have not been many monographs written by anthropologists on Christian communities in the Arab-majority (or that matter, in the larger Middle Eastern) region. Third, although there are several monographs based on research in the Bekaa, many of them are not recent. Moreover, I have linked my village-based observations to Beirut and beyond. Deeb and Winegar (2012) referred to the integration of propriety, kinship, the economy, and the state into the larger field of power relationships in recent works on gender. In addressing those concepts, I have added religion (in this case, Christian), education, and work to the fields of power. In her review of the literature on family in Lebanon, Zeina Zaatari (2018) noted two lacunae, namely the results of the war on family life, and the links between economics, rituals, and weddings. I have addressed both of these extensively.

In surveying the literature on women in the region, that is, outside of Lebanon, I found that much of it is on women in urban settings, or on feminist organizing (for example, Soraya Altorki, 1986; Evelyn A. Early, 1993; Arlene Elowe Macleod, 1991; Eleanor Abdella Doumato and Marsha Pripstein Posusney, eds., 2003; Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., 1998; Dawn Chatty and Annika Rabo, eds., 1997; Makdisi, Jean Said, *et al.*, eds., 2014; and Valentine M. Moghadam, 2013).

5 Her study, based on fieldwork carried out during the late 1930s, provides a good comparison with my own interview information on the inter-World War period.

In focusing instead on rural women, I am expanding our knowledge of women in the region.

This monograph began in the early 1970s when I was a young Ph.D. candidate newly arrived in Lebanon. At first I lived in the dormitory for boarding teachers in the local convent. However, after a few months, the nuns and I no longer got along well, probably due to differences in expectations; they viewed me as akin to the teachers, but I saw myself as a graduate student carrying out research. I then moved in with a local family, parents of a student colleague from my graduate school. I was happier with them, and found myself closer to village life.

I was able to engage two research assistants, one of them a son of the family, Rashīd, the other, Marie, a young woman related to them. I engaged him at the start of my fieldwork, and took her on during the following spring. They made introductions, accompanied me everywhere I wanted to go, told me about their lives and those of other villagers, helped translate, helped administer questionnaires, and brought me into village life in myriads of ways.

I attended every event I could, and visited and spoke to everyone, from children to old people, female and male. Of course, I learned the most from the family I lived with. Through them, because kin relationships connected them to much of the village, I became acquainted with all manner of lives and personalities in al-Firzul.

While I was in al-Firzul, conditions in Lebanon, in the region, and in the international arena were moving rapidly toward the convulsions of the civil war of 1975–1990. I was too busy and too focused on my work to notice much of what was going on. In brief, though, while the rich in Beirut lived well, ostentatiously, much influenced by *mores* in France and the United States, at the same time a "belt of poverty" encircled the city, inhabited by refugees, notably Palestinians and Shiites from the south of Lebanon, and poor Lebanese (Kassir 2010: 427–430). The cost of living was rising and jobs were scarce. Numerous protest groups demonstrated their dissatisfaction with economic and political conditions, not to mention the Palestinians' situation. The political class argued among themselves instead of cooperating for the benefit of the country (Traboulsi 2007: 156–183).

The two events I could not fail to notice both concerned the role of Israel in Lebanon. Coming back from the airport after picking up my parents, in Lebanon for a visit, we passed through the funeral procession of the three Palestinian leaders killed in an Israeli commando raid in April, 1973. My assistant admonished us, "Don't look." Some months later, during the October War, the Israelis attacked Egypt and Syria. I vividly recall hearing the military jets and watching the bombs falling along the Lebanese-Syrian border.

I left Lebanon for the United States shortly after the end of the October war, and wrote my doctoral dissertation. The Lebanese civil war broke out in 1975 and I was not able to return for many years.

When I finally returned for a visit, in 1995, I found a much changed Lebanon, a much changed village. I knew that I would need to describe the changes that had taken place between 1973 and the subsequent times I returned to Lebanon, in 1995, 2000, 2001, and 2004 through the present (2020). I was able to take a second census in 2004 to compare to the one I carried out in 1972–1973. I knew the same individuals and families, and could follow them up. The middle-aged had become old, and the young had become middle-aged. Many old people I knew had died, and there were new children, new immigrants to the village. The village economy and layout had totally changed. As I went back and forth, I began to notice changes, in culture, kinship, education, work, organizations, and gender symbolism.

My relationship to the villagers also changed. Initially, I was a young single woman.[6] After returning from Lebanon to write my dissertation I married an emigrant from the village, a political scientist residing in North America, thereby acquiring numerous new relatives. As I returned to Lebanon several times, bit by bit, *shwayyi shwayyi*, I transformed myself from *ajnabiyyi* (foreigner) wearing scandalously short skirts to member of a respected village family, wearing longer skirts now. I am no longer one of only three people with a graduate degree. *Shwayyi shwayyi*, what had seemed a strange environment became familiar.

What insight have I gained from so many years? I have seen a lot of change. This means that I am able to see sequences, connections, meanings, and possible causal links. I "get it" more and more now, because I have become, or almost become, a Firzliyyi. And yet, I am still an anthropologist, viewing the village through doubled vision. Yet another paradox is that I have come to view villagers, more and more, as individuals with varying motivations, so my understanding of situations, meanings, and connections is rather more inductive than deductive.

I find it hard to fix my descriptions into a sort of eternal "now," life at only one point in time, a single "ethnographic present," when everything is changing in front of me all the time. My view of the village is of a flowing river, hard to grasp, impossible to attach to a single moment. I see the past and the present, and I know there will be a different future, almost but not quite taking place in front of me.

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6 At that time, as now, a social distinction is made between unmarried women, particularly young ones, and married women (N. Jabbra 1980).

In 2004, my husband became the president of a large American university in Lebanon, so I have been able to use its research facilities and visit the village whenever I want. Also, because technology has advanced so much since the early 1970s, I can telephone, text, or email someone to follow up on a piece of information or interpretation, without taking that long trip over Dahr al-Baidar. I am able to consult websites, social media sites, and online news to supplement connections with individuals. Last, now living in Beirut, I find myself connected to Lebanon's wealthy, powerful, and cosmopolitan elite.[7] That connection helps me to understand al-Firzul's place within the topography of power.

Indeed, I came to understand that well. I witnessed the troubles in spring, 1973,[8] followed by the October War. I tracked the civil war from Nova Scotia, Canada. Former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated in February, 2005, and throughout the following summer further assassinations and attempted assassinations took place, mostly targeting journalists and politicians. In July, 2006, the Israelis invaded, and I was evacuated to Cyprus on a Norwegian freighter. I was in Beirut during the protests against the increasingly weak economy which began in mid-October, 2019. SARS-CoV-2 came to Lebanon in February, 2020. An explosion at the port in August, 2020, caused widespread damage throughout Beirut. The port, including the all-important grain elevator, was destroyed, raising the price of all imports, including most food and pharmaceutical products, and adding further economic stress to most of the population in the country. The aftermath of the explosion led to further protests, this time put down harshly.[9] Al-Firzul has experienced all of these events in numerous ways. They have affected my research and writing.

During the civil war years, I taught at a Canadian university, and became involved in ethnic studies, beginning with research on Lebanese immigrants to Canada.[10] After 1990, teaching, administrative, and other responsibilities kept me from working on my current project full time. Hence, my ethnographic present is in fact several presents.

---

7 According to Watson, this elite is variously termed the "Davos culture," the "faculty club culture," or simply "cosmopolitans" (in my judgement, the most appropriate term) (2004: 143–145). They tend to be more comfortable with each other from whatever nation-state they may derive than with their non-elite compatriots. I should add that in a small country the president of a major university is a public figure. Moreover, fundraising requires socializing with potential donors, and meeting with political leaders is necessary for advancing university programs.

8 For a detailed description and analysis, see Dahl, 2006.

9 See Saghir, 2020, for an analysis of the events of 2019–2020.

10 Resulting publications include N. Jabbra 1983; 1984; 1991; 1992; and 1997.

My theme and subthemes, of the past and the present, integration into the nation and the world; of the economy; and barriers to change are developed throughout the book. My chapters are organized by subject, so the relative emphasis on the theme and subthemes varies among chapters.

My sources of information have varied by chapter. The ethnographic staples of participant observation, formal and informal interviews, photography, and collection of documents and ephemera were basic. Local narratives, interviews, documents, and photographs I collected took me back in time well before the 1970s. In Chapter 2, I also relied on secondary sources. Chapters 3 and 4 are based on the censuses I carried out in 1972–1973 and in 2004, as well as on participant observation and interviews. Chapter 5 is based mainly on interviews. For Chapter 6, I utilized participant observation and interviews, supplementing them with videos of weddings and first communion ceremonies prepared by local professional videographers. Chapter 7 is based primarily on interviews.

I would like to add a note on language. Arabic has two forms, a phenomenon called diglossia (Ferguson 1959). The written language, Modern Standard Arabic, *al-fuṣḥa*, is more or less the same across the Arabic-speaking world. Lebanon, although tiny, encompasses numerous versions of Levantine spoken Arabic, the *dārij*. Al-Firzul's dialect is that of the central Bekaa valley as described by Fleisch (1947–1948).[11] I conducted my work in a mixture of that dialect, French, and English. My extensive use of French in the following chapters reflects the continuing influence of France upon Lebanon. For transliteration of Arabic, I employed the system used by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, adapting it where appropriate to the local dialect. I used *qāf* where local pronunciation substitutes the *hamza* sound, to distinguish it from the actual *hamza* (glottal stop). For names of places and prominent persons I used the most frequent spellings.

11 It seems that many Lebanese consider this dialect comical (Nader 1962).

FIGURE 1 Sirriyyi with her brother, John, and son, Salem, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 2
Al-Firzul, 1972
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER 2

Al-Firzul in Context

It was and it was not, a long time ago.

Traditional beginning to stories

• • •

We should honor the martyr Barbara. She left her father, and became a Christian. He got angry, and asked her, "how do you want to be killed?" And she replied, "by the sword of the unbelievers."

From a poem about Saint Barbara's martyrdom, which is said to have happened on a local hill

• • •

When nations are at war, keep your head down.

Lebanese proverb

• •
•

Philip Hitti began his masterful *Lebanon in History* by invoking the inscriptions carved in the bedrock at the mouth of the Dog River (*Nahr al-Kalb*) by successive conquerors, starting with the Assyrians in 1300 BCE and ending with a commemoration of the departure of the last French troops in 1946 (1962: 3–10). These inscriptions reveal the "topography of power" in the history of Lebanon and of al-Firzul.

"Power over" is the principal theme of al-Firzul's history. Beginning with the Romans, if not earlier, it has been subject to numerous invading and conquering forces, involved directly or indirectly in numerous wars. During the nineteenth century, its people had recourse to arms to protect themselves. During the civil war of 1975–1990, villagers resisted through preparation for self-defense and avoidance of direct involvement.

The horizontal dimension of connection is apparent through emigration to Beirut suburbs and abroad. Another important horizontal component is in part related to emigration, namely the mass media and use of social media.

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Last, of course, there are the multiple connections of roads, railroads, and communications networks to Beirut and the rest of Lebanon.

The economic aspects of connection have had mainly positive results. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, French projects of road and railway building, cadastral surveys, and state building laid the foundations for economic growth. After World War II, with the development of market farming, disposable income increased, and villagers were able to attain a comfortable middle class existence. Even the civil war, dreadful though it was, created new economic opportunities for the village.

Al-Firzul lies at an elevation of about 1,000 meters, with hot, dry summers, and chilly winters with snow or rain. Grapes and cherries are its principal crops, although today's economy relies heavily on services. The earliest local settlement known probably dates to Canaanite times.

It is located along the main highway not far from Zahle, the district capital, in the central Bekaa valley of Lebanon. During the 1970s about 2,004 persons, approximately 357 households, inhabited the village. Today, there are about 2,217 inhabitants occupying 609 households.[1]

The original village settlement is located in a vale hidden from the plain by the surrounding grapevine-covered hills. A perennial stream comes out of the mountains, passes through the village, and eventually joins the Litani River. Behind the village, and along the streambed, are orchards of cherries. Today there is what Farāzli[2] call "the second village,"[3] a substantial settlement along the main highway, the entrance road, and increasingly among the vineyards all around.

Via mountain passes, the village is more or less equidistant from Beirut and Damascus.[4] On the north, the Bekaa opens into the Syrian plain near Homs, located on an ancient east-west route. Although the Bekaa is closed on the south by a rugged and complex hill system, there has always been relatively easy access to Palestine.

Al-Firzul is part of the Zahle electoral district, which has the responsibility of electing a seven-person delegation to the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies:

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1 These figures are based on censuses I carried out in 1972–1973 and again in 2004. Both were *de facto* censuses, including everyone actually residing there (except for the resident nuns and priest, domestic servants, and migrant workers), and excluding those registered in the village but actually residing elsewhere, whether in a Beirut suburb or abroad in the diaspora.

2 Farāzli is the plural of Firzli, meaning a resident of al-Firzul or a person descended from the village.

3 It is not a separate municipality, though.

4 Fifty-eight kilometers from Beirut, fifty-three to Damascus.

two Melkite Greek Catholics,[5] an Antiochian Orthodox Christian, a Maronite, a Sunnite, a Shiite, and an Armenian Orthodox Christian. Thus it plays its role in maintaining the confessional system whose foundations were laid in the mid-nineteenth century by foreign powers.[6] Ties of kinship and patronage link villagers to local-level politicians and to the bureaucracy in Zahle. These links ease routine bureaucratic transactions for villagers and add to the political capital of the politicians (N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra 1978).[7]

As a village, it is linked to the Melkite Greek Catholic diocese based in Zahle. Its priest and nuns belong to the Basilian Salvatorian order, a Lebanese order based in Dayr al-Mkhallis near Sidon. As well, because it has been part of the Catholic Church since the early eighteenth century, it is linked to Rome. Members of Roman Catholic religious orders still teach at schools they have established in the area, schools attended by village children.

1 Before the Nineteenth Century

Al-Firzul is located along the Yammouneh fault which runs along the western edge of the Bekaa, for millenia providing spring water to several villages. Human settlement in the village is doubtless ancient, although there are no traces of it until the Bronze Age. Near the perennial spring at the head of the valley stands *al-Qasīs wal Qasīsiyyi*, a carving in the bedrock of two figures, a horseman and another person holding a bunch of grapes. The figures are very likely Canaanite.

Roman armies incorporated what is now Lebanon into the Roman Empire in 64 BCE.[8] Its cities, for example Tyre, exhibited the same features as Roman cities everywhere: fora, temples, theatres, water and sewage systems, rectangular street layouts. Phoenician[9] merchants exported Lebanese products such as cedar wood, purple dye and textiles, olive oil, wine, and grain to Rome and

5 Melkite Greek Catholics, in Arabic called *Rūm Katulīk*, constitute the overwhelming majority of the village population. As the largest single denomination in the electoral district, they are able to dominate local politics. In the 2018 election, a man from al-Firzul was elected to the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies.

6 The description of the local political system here and in Chapter 5, Gender and Community, does not take into account the new electoral law of 2017. The election held in May, 2018, was the first election to be run following the new system.

7 See also Nucho (2016) for details of how the system functions in a Beirut suburb.

8 Hitti 1962: 185.

9 Phoenicians and Canaanites were basically the same. The former were a maritime people organized into city-states, and living along the Mediterranean littoral. The latter lived inland, for the most part agriculturalists or transhumant pastoralists.

other parts of the empire. The entire Bekaa region was an important grain-growing region in Roman times.

Down in the old village center remain a few large stones from a small Roman temple, most of which have been taken for use as house foundations. In nearby villages, Niha, Temnine al-Fawqa, and Qsarnaba – and of course in Baalbak – may be found more impressive Roman temples, and throughout the Bekaa the Romans cultivated crops and left the remains of their buildings.

Christianity came to Lebanon during the Roman period. Al-Firzul itself appears to have become Christian during the fourth century.[10] Next to the spring are the remains of what seems to have been a Christian monastic community, with a church partly built into the bedrock, and caves for its inhabitants, most of which were probably Canaanite tombs repurposed as dwellings. The villagers used to call them "stables" (*ṣṭablāt*) for their appearance, although in fact they are located too high on the cliff to have been used as such. Up in the vineyards villagers have found Byzantine stone sarcophagi, which they term "animal troughs" (*maʿālif*).

When the Arab-Muslim armies defeated the Byzantine army at the battle of Yarmouk (near Busra in modern Syria) in 636 CE, thus conquering Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine (Hitti 1962: 239–243), al-Firzul was incorporated into the Islamic empire. For much of the Arab-Islamic period, it was ruled from Damascus, capital of the Umayyad dynasty. During the Umayyad period (660–750) Anjar, some kilometers to the east, was the site of an important trading town. After the conquest, much of Lebanon's population became Muslim, and the Arabic language replaced Canaanite as a spoken language.

Around 1,100 the Crusades began, and there were, in all, some nine Crusades over the next two centuries. As Hitti reminds us, the Crusades were a global event: "Viewed broadly, these so-called Crusades were but an episode in the long process of action and reaction between East and West which began with Darius and the Greeks, continued through the Byzantines and Moslems and lasted till the present day" (1962: 282). Crusaders entered the Bekaa and attacked Baalbak, exacting tribute, early in the 12th century (Hitti 1962: 286–287). Along

10 According to the website maintained by the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate in Lebanon, Archbishop Saint Berdanos established the see which contains al-Firzul in the fourth century (www.pgc-lb.org/english/Church3.shtml#Zahle, accessed 19 June 2009). At that time Christians in the Bekaa were what we would today refer to as Byzantine Orthodox. The local narrative of Saint Barbara's martyrdom is set in the early Roman Christian era (N. Jabbra 2009a). Al-Firzul, in fact, was the site of the bishop's see until the eighteenth century.

the coast the Crusaders built castles and established or re-established towns.[11] Trade from the eastern Mediterranean littoral to Europe was substantial.

From 1521 to 1580, Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent granted to the Venetians, the French, and the British special commercial and judicial rights, in what were called the Capitulations agreements. These enabled Europeans to dominate local economic affairs and ultimately political affairs as well (Hitti 1962: 362–364). In 1622, the Vatican established the office of the Propaganda Fide to promote missionary activities throughout the world (Khater 2008: 421, 424–425). By the eighteenth century the Jesuits were active as missionaries in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. Their activities resulted in al-Firzul's becoming Melkite Greek Catholic.

French Jesuits established one of their major Lebanese bases in Zahle, building a church which stands to this day, and founding a school which still exists. They built a dairy farm at Taanayel and a winery in Ksara; both are still operating, although the Jesuits no longer own them. They actively proselytized in the region of Zahle and al-Firzul.

They sought to alter what they viewed as incorrect or lax religious practices and beliefs on the part of local Christians, including the Byzantine Orthodox. Eventually there ensued two factions, one favoring closer ties with Rome and the adoption of Roman Catholic practices, the other preferring their traditional practices and beliefs.

In 1724 pro-Catholic Cyril VI was elected Patriarch of Antioch (which included Lebanon). The Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople intervened, placing his candidate in the position. The result was that Byzantine Christianity in the Levant split officially into the Antiochian (or Byzantine) Orthodox and Melkite Greek Catholic communities (Haddad 1965: 148–151). The Archbishop of al-Firzul, Eftimios al-Fadel Maalouli, belonged to the pro-Catholic faction, and al-Firzul thereby became Melkite Greek Catholic. In 1868, al-Fadel transferred his seat from al-Firzul to Zahle (Gouraud 2008: 303, 306).

2 The Nineteenth Century to the End of World War I

Jesuit records from mid-century show that local Melkites resisted pressures to adopt Latin practices in lieu of their own, although they eventually added some holidays and celebrations (notably Corpus Christi and First Communion

11 Most of the Crusader states were ruled by French dynasties, so it is evident that French influence in Lebanon began during the period of the Crusades.

observances) (Kuri 2001: 83; 1991: 11).[12] Since then, though, numerous individuals in al-Firzul have adopted Latin practices, such as devotion to Saint Rita, an Italian. And in the church in the Lower Quarter, Saydit in-Niyāḥ, prominently placed may be found a copy of Murillo's 1678 Immaculate Conception.

The Jesuits hoped to alter women's lives in the area. In a letter from 1836, Fr. Paul Riccadonna described the Jesuits' project of building a school for girls in the Zahle area (Kuri 2001: 204). The girls were to be instructed by pious women in religion and home economics. He commented that "*Le triste comportement de ces femmes libanaises … nous a fait penser à quelque moyen d'y porter remède…. Le désoeuvrement, la mollesse … occupent une grande partie de leur temps*" ("The sad comportment of these Lebanese women … makes us think of some means of obtaining a remedy. Idleness and laziness occupy most of their time …").[13] The only solution, he concluded, was to strike at the root through education.[14] In mid-century, the Jesuits established a school for girls in al-Firzul. The two teachers were still in their teens, and taught twenty little girls (Verdeil 2011: 411). This must have been a school for instruction in religion, and probably did not last long. It certainly left no obvious trace.

In mid-century several factors combined to create a series of conflicts within Lebanon and adjacent areas from 1840 to 1860, among them the increasingly overwhelming temptation inherent in the Capitulations agreements for the European powers to interfere in Lebanese affairs (Salibi 1965; Fawaz 1994). The violence was grim in many places, including Zahle. During the last war, that of 1860, al-Firzul's men joined the men of Zahle to fight the Druze, evidently acquitting themselves well (al-Maʿlūf 1977: 203).

There followed several attempts by the European powers, especially the British and the French, and the Ottoman government, to settle the conflicts

12 In Lebanon, Roman Catholics are referred to as Latins. At present, the term has nothing to do with the Latin language.

13 I have no idea why Lebanese women should have been characterized as lazy and idle, because at the time most of them had to work very hard. Perhaps this characterization was one of those created in advance of actual observation, but which colored perceptions. I rather suspect that the trope of the Oriental harem (the lounging odalisque) was alive and well in these characterizations. Moreover, as de Groot (1991: 111–114) has commented, views of the inferiority of non-European women were used to justify imperialism, in this case by the French. At the same time American Presbyterian missionaries espoused views similar to those of the Jesuits (U. Makdisi 2008: 196; Hooker 1845: 305–306).

14 From the information I have, it is not clear when, or indeed if, such a school was founded, or how long it might have lasted. If the school did exist, it is unlikely that any girls from al-Firzul attended. It could have been, though, a source of new ideas about women's role in society. In the end, however, it took affluence, not just ideas, to make al-Firzul's women into middle class housewives.

(Salibi 1965: 40–105). The last created, in 1860, through an agreement called the Règlement Organique, a semi-autonomous governmental system called the Mutaṣarrafiyya, which lasted until World War I, whereupon the Ottoman government assumed direct control over Lebanon.

During the period of the Mutaṣarrafiyya, Lebanon consisted only of the Mountain, forming a special zone protected by the European powers. The Bekaa, including al-Firzul, was not included.[15] Local narratives relate that the village was "burned seven times," for it remained under direct Ottoman rule, subject to raids by hostile outside forces.[16] There were also conflicts between wealthy and powerful Zaḥālni (residents of Zahle) and the inhabitants of villages such as al-Firzul. Village men acquired a reputation as fierce warriors, and under the circumstances they doubtless both needed and deserved that reputation. Whatever the truth of these narratives, it is certain that times were troubled and that fighting prowess and reputation were necessary. Despite raids by various predators, and the destruction of the village on more than one occasion, the villagers were able to remain independent. The fact that farmers continued to own their land meant that villagers could resist oppression and eventually become prosperous.[17] Al-Firzul became economically and culturally subordinate to Zahle, although remaining politically and socially independent. Moreover, its repeated destruction by Ḥarfūsh troops and other hostile forces meant that it remained smaller than Zahle.

During the nineteenth century Lebanon was increasingly integrated into the world economy. Lebanese mountaineers produced silk for French markets until silk became available from China and Japan beginning in the 1880s (Khater 2001: 46–47, 51–62). There was some silk production in Zahle,[18] and

15 Zahle, however, was included in the Mountain.

16 These included the Ḥarfūsh amirs of Baalbak, various walis of Sidon and Damascus, the amirs and shaykhs of the Mountain, and Bedouin and Kurdish tribes (Naff 1972: 85).

17 Al-Firzul's situation thus contrasts with that of nearby villages such as Ammiq, which was owned by the Sursock family (Tinory 1986), Haouch el Harimi (Williams 1968), Mashghara (Traboulsi 2004), and farther away in the Akkar, Berqayl (Gilsenan 1996). In these villages people continued to be oppressed by landlords, and remained less well off than those in al-Firzul. Afif Tannous noted that farmers who owned the land they cultivated enjoyed a much higher standard of living than did their compatriots who did not (1951: 12).

18 Leila Fawaz refers to mulberry cultivation and silk production in the early decades of the nineteenth century (Fawaz 1988). Alixa Naff does as well, although she characterized it as minor. The Zaḥālni made better money, she said, from raising grain to feed mountaineers engaged in silk production (Naff 1972).

family narratives I collected reveal the presence of a silk factory in Delhamiyyi near al-Firzul and Zahle.[19]

Following the collapse of the silk economy and the civil wars in mid-century, an exodus from Lebanon followed. By the 1880s, Lebanese were emigrating to Brazil, Argentina, the United States, and other states in the Americas. Emigration from al-Firzul came later, probably because of its distance from Beirut and the Mountain. Its earliest emigrants seem not to have left until the turn of the twentieth century.

In the early days, most of al-Firzul's emigrants went to Brazil, very likely to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and to the United States: Omaha, Nebraska; Mankato, Minnesota; Johnstown, Pennsylvania; and Brownsville, Texas. For whatever reason, emigrants to Brazil were seldom heard from again, but the connections between al-Firzul and its American diaspora remained strong.

The most popular means of earning a living in the early *mahjar* (the Lebanese diaspora) for women and men alike was peddling, either in cities or among farms in rural districts (N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra 1984; Weale 1988). Affinal relatives of mine engaged in peddling in Minnesota during the early years of the twentieth century. They made enough money from peddling to open a grocery store, then a liquor store. The move from peddling to business was a common pattern for Lebanese in North America. Many of their descendants still run small businesses, but more recent emigrants have chosen the professions.

There is evidence of transnational connection with al-Firzul through communication from emigrants to the United States who left before World War I. A photograph in my possession taken to commemorate a young woman's engagement in about 1915 shows her with her parents and other family members. She is wearing a beautiful Western style dress, perhaps her wedding dress, which must have been very expensive, plus long white gloves that buttoned over her knuckles.[20] The other women and girls are also wearing Western-style clothing, although the engaged girl's mother wears a light shawl loosely draped over her hair. The men wear Western-style jackets, but as near as can be gathered, the traditional *shirwāl*.

By 1863 a French company had completed a graded road between Beirut and Damascus, running through the pass at Dahr al-Baidar to the Bekaa, with a station at Chtoura, still a major crossroads town in the region. In 1895, a second

19 Because their father had sold most of the family land, a brother and sister had had to work there to make a living and restore their land holdings. The sister married a silk merchant and went to live in Beit Meri, but her brother remained, eventually to buy new property.

20 According to family history, one of her brothers had emigrated to Minnesota about ten years previous, while her fiancé's brother had settled in Texas. Very likely it was her brother who sent the dress in honor of the occasion.

French company opened a railway running from Beirut to Damascus via lower Zahle, passing through al-Firzul lands near the Litani River, and then through Riyyaq, northeast of al-Firzul. From Riyyaq a branch ran to Aleppo, Syria. The road and railway brought new goods into the area, enabled tourists to visit, and contributed to a growth in prosperity (C. Hage Chahine and N. Hage Chahine 2008: 275, 287; Kassir 2010: 115–121; Traboulsi 2007: 54). At first the train was a genuine novelty, moving like a "snake," said one woman. Later, villagers occasionally took the railway to Beirut, and a few worked for the company.[21]

World War I came to Lebanon and to al-Firzul. Food was scarce because the Ottoman authorities appropriated everything they could find to feed and support their troops, while the British and French organized a blockade. To make things worse, swarms of locusts came to eat everything in sight. The food scarcity was worst in the Mountain, where tens of thousands died from starvation and diseases such as influenza and typhus (Éddé, 2003: 93–100; Mouaouad 2003: 101–107; Nordiguian 2003: 168–175).

According to my respondents, the mountaineers, desperate for food, came down to the Bekaa, often to die despite eating anything even remotely nourishing.[22] They told me that in the Bekaa people had plenty of land, and never went hungry. However, because the Ottoman soldiers took their grain and slaughtered their sheep, the Farāzli had no food to spare. Several families of Maronite origin fled from the Mountain, settling in al-Firzul. Those families' residences were still marginal to the original village core area during the 1970s.

3 Post World War I to World War II

The Ottoman Empire was on the losing side of World War I. Following the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, decisions of the newly formed League of Nations, and the conference of San Remo in 1920, the Levant was divided into British and French spheres of influence. Lebanon and Syria fell to the French, and in 1919 the League of Nations granted a mandate to France over Lebanon and Syria. The following year France added the Bekaa Valley, including al-Firzul, and the coastal regions to Mount Lebanon to create Greater Lebanon, foundation of the current Republic. Lebanon remained under the French mandate until the end of World War II, including the period when France itself was under Nazi rule in the form of the Vichy government (Hitti 1962: 493–494).

21 The railway ceased operation during the civil war of 1975–1990, but traces of its route remain.

22 See also Fuller (1961).

The establishment of the French mandate did not change al-Firzul much at first. With the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, the village was reunited politically with Zahle. The French paved the main highway running through the Bekaa, and surveyed local land holdings.

Because the French did not put their resources into developing a public education system, religious institutions took their place (Thompson 2000: 78–80, 87–89). In al-Firzul, the village priest taught reading and writing to a few village boys, probably starting in the early 1900s. It was not until the 1940s, when the Melkite Salvatorian Sisters (*Ar-Rāhibāt al-Mkhalliṣiyyāt*) opened their school, that girls in al-Firzul had access to primary education in their hometown. Until then, girls received no formal education at all, remaining illiterate all their lives.

Village families continued to live by subsistence farming, relying on the staples of wheat and legumes, raising vegetables and fruit only for home consumption. To gain cash for items they could not produce themselves, they sold or bartered surpluses, or hired themselves out as day laborers. They kept donkeys, mules, and oxen for transport and traction, sheep, goats, and cows for meat and milk, chickens, a cat to hunt vermin, and perhaps a dog for guard duty.

Most families lived in joint households, inhabiting large houses where each son lived with his wife and children in a single room, the parents with their unmarried sons and daughters, all sharing the kitchen and sitting rooms.[23] The extended family lived on the second floor, while the ground floor was reserved for animals and storage, including winter food stores. There was an outhouse in a corner of the courtyard.

The house was made of plastered adobe, with a stone foundation, and a roof of logs and branches covered with earth. During the winter when it rained or snowed, someone had to go up on the roof to compact it with a stone roller to prevent leaks.

In the winter sitting room, divans made of plastered raised earth covered with rugs and cushions were arranged around the walls, and there was a fireplace for heating. During cold winter evenings the adults and their guests would sit close to the fire, keeping warm. For entertainment they played cards, and told stories and jokes. One by one the children would fall asleep on pallets laid on the floor, to be joined by the adults later on.

23 For details about house construction at that time, consult Kassatly (2000). Also consult Fuller (1961) for what seems to have been a similar mode of living at the same time.

4 World War II

During the time (approximately 1940–1941) when the British and Free French were fighting to expel the Vichy French, bombs fell on the plain where the villagers were cultivating lentils. Grabbing flour, bread, and olive oil, they fled to the mountains for safety.

After they expelled the Vichy French, British troops were stationed at the air base in Riyyaq, not far from al-Firzul to the northeast. Village men worked there from about 1941 to about 1944 to help support their families. The British soldiers gave one of the men working at the base the nickname "Charlie" (for Charlie Chaplin), because of his mustache and baggy *shirwāl*.

After the British dismissed the men because they no longer needed their labor, his friends put Charlie through a window because he was slim, took some items, including clothing, for their families, and bribed a guard. The guard gave them away, and British soldiers chased them through the fields. Finally they had recourse to *wāsṭa* (connections), and managed to keep the items they took.[24] Later, they put Charlie through a window again, this time to take grain and flour that the Vichy French had stored in the local convent.

5 The Post-World War II Period

With independence and the end of the War, the Lebanese formed an autonomous republic based on the French model which had been imported during the 1920s. In 1945 Lebanon joined the Arab League and the United Nations. Thus it began to move outside of the framework established by the French. Beirut remained the most important cultural and economic center in the region. A few young village boys left the village to seek higher education there.

Lebanon's elites made a number of agreements about the future of Lebanon's polity and economy. One of these embedded confessionalism throughout the political system. A second created a *laissez-faire* economy which relied heavily on services, to the neglect of agriculture and manufacturing (Gates 1998: 80–85). These developments contributed hugely to national conflict in 1958,

24 Anne Fuller related a similar account from Buarij in 1945, commenting that "The village men at this time were more adequately clothed than in 1937 (she carried out her original fieldwork in 1937–1938), largely in British army goods. They said they came by these through means best known to themselves" (1961: iv). Evidently the British army recruited men from several villages in the area.

1975–1990, and the abysmal situation evident by 2019–2020 (Gates 1998: 150–151; Saghir 2020). All of these had a great impact on al-Firzul.

The Lebanese military took over the base at nearby Riyyaq, turning it into an air base. The town was a major railway junction, and site of a factory for manufacturing and repairing locomotives, until the trains stopped running during the civil war. During the 1950s a sugar refinery opened in Anjar across the valley (Traboulsi 2007: 158). Some of al-Firzul's farmers, taking advantage of this opportunity, raised sugar beets for sale to the refinery. During the 1970s, some of these same individuals continued to explore lucrative economic possibilities such as renting land outside the village to cultivate vegetable crops using day labor.

In 1958 a brief civil war ensued in Lebanon.[25] As the crisis developed, it turned into an increasingly violent confrontation between Christians and Muslims, the right and the left, the government and the opposition. A significant development affecting all of the Bekaa, and causing considerable alarm in al-Firzul, was the union between Syria and Egypt to form the United Arab Republic (1958–1961). The Lebanese army lost effective control of the border. A delegation from al-Firzul, which supported the government and the Christians in the crisis, visited the military commander in Riyyaq to tell him that they were at his disposal, and asked what they could do to help. They sent provisions to the various Christian factions.

After the Iraqi revolution of 14 July, the United States intervened in Lebanon, sending in troops which remained until December. The United Nations stationed observer posts and checkpoints throughout the country, including the Bekaa. The villager who gave me this account vividly recalled the Hawker Hunter aircraft flying overhead. To the Farāzli, the presence of the airplanes meant that the Americans had come to end the war. This was what they understood: the war was over and the Christians had won. The resolution of the whole affair created a substantial amount of good will toward the Americans.

In the mid-1950s, electricity came to al-Firzul. At the same time, each quarter put in a water tank from which residents drew water. During the 1960s the municipality installed a reservoir from which water was piped to all the houses. The road into the village from the main highway was paved, and subsequently the streets within the village.

By the 1950s, a few farmers began to raise grapes and cherries on a commercial level and transport them to the Beirut central produce market. The early innovators had extra funds from remittances and wage labor, including working

25 For details, consult Gendzier 2006. My account focuses on the crisis as it was experienced in al-Firzul.

at the base in Riyyaq. These funds, possibly bank loans as well, enabled them to weather the unproductive years until the vines and trees could mature. They acquired new agricultural techniques. Moreover, they acquired the means to bring their crops to Beirut. One man brought back a small box truck after visiting his brother in Minnesota, and used it to transport his grapes over Dahr al-Baidar. The innovators got such high prices for their crops, LBP 10.00 (a lot of money then) per kilo, that the other villagers began to emulate them. The idea of market farming most likely came from Zahle, which had traded in grain with the Mountain since the mid-nineteenth century.[26]

By the 1960s, market farming had completely supplanted subsistence farming, resulting in a much higher standard of living because more cash was now available. Dates of new house construction and major improvements reveal that beginning in the late 1950s nearly every house underwent substantial improvements. Adobe houses were given concrete or plaster façades inside and out, new paint, concrete roofs, and concrete or tile floors. Windows were glazed, and iron grilles put in. One room would be divided into kitchen and bathroom, complete with water heater, shower, toilet, sink, and so on. New rooms might be added, or old ones remodeled, so that a house would have a *salon* suitable for receiving guests, and perhaps a bedroom as well. Many new houses were built beginning in the 1950s as well. Unlike the extended family houses of the past, where each room opened onto the terrace, these featured a central hallway with the rooms opening from it. Architecture changed to meet the needs of the growing middle class and its associated nuclear family form.

At this point, I should explain what I mean by middle class. As I see it, the term refers to income, attitudes, and values. "'Middle-class' describes an income category but also a set of attitudes.... An essential characteristic is the possession of a reasonable amount of discretionary income.... [the] middle classes ... have a third of their income left for discretionary spending after providing for basic food and shelter" (Burgeoning Bourgeoisie, 2009). Middle class attitudes and values vary across numerous dimensions, and across the world, but typically comfort, security, conspicuous consumption, home ownership, and education rank high. Discretionary income means, too, that a household can be supported by the income of only one person, thus freeing the other members from the necessity of engaging in productive labor.

26 Possible other sources include communication from relatives in the *mahjar*, the agricultural center opened by the American University of Beirut in 1953 and located about 20 km. northwest of al-Firzul, or the Jesuits' model farm in Taanayel.

6 The Village during the 1970s

During the October War of 1973, which involved Israel, Egypt, and Syria, as I drank coffee on my research assistant's terrace, I watched aerial fights above the Bekaa and saw bombs drop along the Syrian border. Even though Lebanon was not a participant in the war, the Israeli air force travelled through the Bekaa to attack Damascus and other Syrian cities (Traboulsi 2007: 182). At night we could see artillery flashes from Damascus's defense batteries over Mount Hermon. Gasoline was rationed, and the Red Cross held a blood drive. Nevertheless, life went on much as usual: children went to school, housewives did their work, and farmers went to their fields.

My 1972–1973 census results showed considerable diversity in sources of income. It was common for a household to have several breadwinners, including women. Also, any given individual might have had more than economic enterprise going at once. Agriculture was dominant, but many households derived at least some income from business, crafts, or wages.

About one-third of households relied exclusively on some fruit or vegetable crop, or on a combination of several. A substantial number of households relied totally or in part on guard duty or military service, making some product such as furniture, rent, unskilled labor, pensions, or clerical work. Quite a number of men worked as drivers.

Many of the occupations found were those which could be adopted by persons with little or no formal education or training. At that time illiterates could enter military service, and most skilled trades could be learned through an unpaid apprenticeship. One reason for the large number of military personnel was the presence near al-Firzul of the air base at Riyyaq and an army base in Ablah. Some military personnel rented in al-Firzul,[27] and a number of villagers also worked at the bases in various capacities. There were no factory workers for the simple reason that there were no factories in the area. A large number of the skilled tradesmen worked in the construction industry because construction was flourishing in al-Firzul and all over Lebanon as a direct consequence of the rise in standard of living.

All of the farmers relied heavily on grapes, while cherries were the next most important crop. They chose varieties that were popular, traveled well, or were ready early or late in the season when the market was not glutted. Some farmers had begun to experiment with new fruits to see if they would do well commercially. In the plain, on their own or rented land, some of the more prosperous and ambitious farmers planted vegetables for the market. Farmers

27 Because I did a *de facto* census I counted them.

sent their crops to the Beirut wholesale produce market located near Martyrs' Square (the Bourj) in downtown Beirut.

About one-half of village houses had three rooms, excluding storerooms, kitchens, and bathrooms: bedroom, winter room (*ūdit ash-shiti*, the family sitting room),[28] and *salon*. About one-fifth had two rooms; and about twenty had one room. The rest had four or more rooms. The *salon* was the fanciest room in the house, reserved for the reception of guests. In fact, furnishing the *salon* tended to rate a higher priority than expenditure to lighten or improve housekeeping. Increasingly, in other words, rooms had specialized functions.[29]

Standard of living could also be inferred from household furnishings. All but one or two houses had electricity, inside running water, and hard-surfaced floors. Each had a propane stove for cooking, and most had electric irons. The number of semi-automatic washing machines went up with every harvest, and electric refrigerators were common. The coffee mill was a close to universal small electric appliance, with the *kibbi* grinder (an early food processor) running a close second.

Although women had participated extensively in subsistence farming, the advent of commercial fruit growing freed most of them from all farm work except help in harvests on their families' farms.[30] Also, they could purchase ready-made staples and clothing. Many food, clothing, and household items were imported from Europe, other Arab countries, and as far away as China. Their work was much lighter than that of their mothers and grandmothers.[31]

Some families had telephones, although these were still linked to a central operator. Most households had radios, and a few had television sets. With paved roads, radio, television, plus emigrant visits, letters, and remittances, al-Firzul was more closely integrated than ever into national and international political and economic networks.

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28 So-called because in winter it was the only room that was heated. People gathered in the winter room during the day and evening, and slept there at night, taking down mattresses, pillows, and bed coverings from a niche in the wall (the *yūk*).

29 Andrea Rugh described a similar transition in a Christian village in the Damascus area. She noted that the change from multipurpose rooms to specialized rooms resulted from affluence (Rugh 1997: 173–174).

30 Women from poor families constituted an exception, working on others' farms. Sometimes villagers also hired poor women from other villages, or migrant workers from Syria.

31 But still heavy by urban standards.

7 The Civil War

By the mid-1970s, a number of factors came together to impel Lebanon toward a major civil war.[32] In brief, the Lebanese civil war of 1975–1990 involved multiple and interconnected links among local actors, regional actors, and international actors. It caused immense destruction, death, injury, disability, a ruined infrastructure, and a ruined economy. When I first traveled through Lebanon after the war in 1995, the physical and metaphoric scars were evident everywhere. To this day many still exist.

The civil war came to al-Firzul.[33] During the early phase, 1975–1976, al-Firzul's young men formed a local militia, holding drills with military weapons, many of which they already owned. They invited some women and girls to train with them. My young woman research assistant sent me a photograph of herself and other girls dressed in military fatigues and holding weapons.

In 1975, fighting broke out between rival groups in Zahle. In 1976, the Syrians established a base there, and controlled the Bekaa Valley for a while before withdrawing. From December, 1980, to June, 1981, battles ranged in and around Zahle. At times there was heavy artillery shelling, and even bombing. Much of Zahle was damaged ("Syrians Attack" 1980; "Battle Continuing" 1980).

Bashir Gémayyel, the Phalangist leader, decided to build a military road over Mount Sannine toward Zahle (Fisk 2002: 187–189).[34] The Syrians, opposing this move, besieged Zahle, defeating the Phalangists and taking Sannine (Fisk 2002: 187–189; Gupte 1981: 1). Syrian checkpoints in the area remained until 2005, when the Syrians withdrew all their uniformed forces from Lebanon (United Nations, Security Council 2005).

In 1982, the Israeli air force bombed Syrian missile emplacements in Riyyaq (Kamm 1982).[35] Israeli ground troops advanced to a couple of kilometers south of the Beirut-Damascus highway, stopping at the behest of the United States (Friedman 1982). Along the coast, they went all the way to Beirut. Eventually

32 For an analysis of the causes of the war, see J. Jabbra and N. Jabbra (2001); Kamal Salibi (1976); Fawwaz Traboulsi (2007: 156–183), and Samir Kassir (2010: 427–511), for the situation in Beirut. See Samir Makdisi 2004: 41–42, 81–82, for the role of foreign money in the war.

33 This section emphasizes those episodes taking place near al-Firzul, and is not meant to be a complete account of the war. For accounts of the war, see J. Makdisi 1990; Gilmour 1984; and Fisk 2002. Etel Adnan's moving novel *Sitt Marie Rose* (1982) was based on an actual event which took place during the war.

34 An existing road ran from Zahle to Dhour Shwayr, thence to the Mediterranean coast road, but it passed through several Muslim villages. Gémayyel's project was intended to bypass these.

35 At that time, the Israelis were supporting the Phalangists.

they withdrew to the south, where they remained until May, 2000 (Orme 2000; Sachs 2000).[36]

Palestinian forces were allied with Druze and Sunnite militias. In 1983, after a split in Fatah (part of the PLO), factions fought along the Beirut-Damascus highway just south of the village. Later, after Yasser Arafat moved his headquarters to Tunis, Fatah units moved north to Tripoli (the Lebanese one) (Friedman 1983; "P.L.O. Rivals" 1983).

The Syrian siege of Zahle, the Israeli invasions, the fighting among the Palestinians, and the general violence which persisted in the region had their impact in al-Firzul. Some of that was positive. As businesses in nearby towns were closed or became inaccessible, more clients came to al-Firzul. The village became the main produce wholesale market for the Bekaa, shipping to Beirut and other parts of Lebanon. It still is.

There were also negative consequences. Syrian troops occupied buildings along the main highway, forcing residents to flee to the old village center. The soldiers used to demand that villagers drive them where they wanted to go. If a man belonged to the wrong political faction, he had to lie low. A woman related the story of the birth of her younger son during that time. She went into labor, but her safe passage to hospital in Zahle could not be guaranteed, even in a Red Cross ambulance. She went instead to a midwife in Riyyaq, delivered her baby, and returned home, with the Syrian tanks and troop carriers following behind.

In 1995 when I interviewed village women about the war, I received a variety of perspectives. First, I asked what caused the war: "Religious fanaticism." "The hunger for power. Every leader wanted to access ultimate power, and foreign nations were fooling all of the leaders with promises and lies, and the population paid the price." "Nobody really knows. It was all politics."

How did the war affect your life? "The war was a very hard thing." "We were here and the roads to Beirut were closed and we were constantly worried." "It was a terrible experience. There were bombs all over. We used to run and get our children out of school.[37] We lived in constant fear."

What were the consequences of the war? "The war didn't lead anywhere. It just caused a lot of casualties and victims, for nothing." "Before the war, people had more money, and even during the war. Now there is terrible inflation and

36 One village woman had married a man who lived in a southern village. When she traveled back home for a visit, she always had to wait a long time, standing in the sun, at the Israeli checkpoints.

37 Both in al-Firzul, and throughout Lebanon, an entire generation lost its full educational potential. UNESCO figures for the war years, although spotty, suggest a lot of fluctuation in enrollments across the country. See UNESCO, Institute of Statistics, Build Your Own Table.

people don't have money anymore." "The war took the country twenty years backward. It was a total disaster for everybody, and on all levels." "In general, it had very bad results. It did not lead us anywhere and especially for us Christians. We lost our men, our youth, our future, everything, our homes, and also our morale."

And finally, what did the war change in your life? "It changed a lot in me and in other people. Now you cannot trust anyone.[38] You live in constant fear, and you always say what if it starts all over again."

A few young village men joined the fighting in Zahle or Beirut. Most villagers, however, followed the advice of an old Lebanese proverb: "*Trōk ash-sharr; byitirkak*" (Leave trouble alone, and it will leave you alone). They also organized for self-protection.

Accounts from village men illustrate these strategies. "I left university for al-Firzul when the bombing started. We formed a militia to protect our village, composed of people from all political parties, and even those who belonged to none. The men in this militia spread to the mountains and roads to protect and keep the village safe. One day news came that everyone was to blockade a road leading to the village. A village leader heard the news that the village men were to attack the Palestinians and Syrians. He gathered the men and threatened to shoot anyone who went down to close the road. In this manner, al-Firzul was not involved in the war."

"In 1976, the Syrians came to the main highway below the village, so all those living there fled to the village proper. This also contributed to al-Firzul not being involved in the war. The young men who wanted to fight went to Zahle and Beirut. Our village was not involved in the war, unlike Zahle and Beirut. Here, the people protected the village. They brought what we needed for survival. Personally, I was not directly affected by the war because I belonged to no political parties."

"Here, there was no war, but the Syrians attacked and bombed the region. We formed a militia to protect the village. It had no political background; its purpose was just to protect the village. There were women in the militia. They were trained just like the men were."

"The Syrians took over houses and shops. We left for the village. For three months they attacked Zahle, yet they (the Zaḥālni) did not give in. You never knew when hell would break loose. For example, I would be going to work and the Syrians would stop us and force us to take them to places. However, I kept on going to work. My partners were unable to go anywhere because they belonged to political parties. I was the only person who could go because I

38 I heard this from a lot of villagers.

belonged to no parties. Al-Firzul was probably the best village in Lebanon because of the security provided in the village."

8 After the Civil War: The 1990s

A notable result of the Lebanese civil war was a huge increase in emigration, resulting in a huge diaspora population. United States census figures demonstrate this. In 1960, there were only 22,217 foreign-born Lebanese in the country, and in 1970, only 22,396. By 1980, the number had risen to 52,674, by 1990, there were 86,369, and in 2000, there were 105,910 (Gibson and Jung 2006: Table 3). The effects of the Lebanese civil war are clear. Similar increases were recorded in other receiving countries, such as Canada and Australia.

Families left al-Firzul for what they deemed safer parts of the world such as Canada and the United States. Most settled in Los Angeles, California, or New York City; and Montreal and Ottawa, Canada. A last destination was the Arabian peninsula, namely the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, Farāzli appear to view these as places to make money, rather than places in which to settle.[39]

They also moved to the largely Christian northern suburbs of Beirut, which grew tremendously during the war. Some of those who emigrated returned, but those in the suburbs stayed, returning to the village to visit on occasion.

Civil war-related emigration created increased transnational contacts for Farāzli. During the war and post-war years, through visits, telephone, social media, and email, individuals have been able to keep in touch with far-flung friends and relatives throughout the world (N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra 2005).

I did not return to al-Firzul after leaving in Fall, 1973, until I came for a visit with my husband and two adolescent children in summer, 1995. The following, modified from my field notes, shows how the changes appeared to me. As we came down from Dahr al-Baidar, more buildings were evident along the road, retail businesses, restaurants, a lot of traffic, a noisy chaotic rush with trucks and the sounding of horns.

We reached the sign for al-Firzul. Incredible. Almost the whole road was lined with buildings, most of them with businesses on the ground floor, residential flats on the upper floors. I saw gift shops, dress shops, produce businesses, general stores, a bakery, a fresh poultry shop, gasoline stations. Everything had a dusty unfinished look, "work in progress." I concluded that

39 In any case, they cannot become naturalized citizens, so settlement in effect would be only long term residency.

there were so many new residences and businesses because the young people I had known previously lived at home then, but needed new homes when they married. They needed jobs, too. Also, the war drove a lot of people and businesses from elsewhere into the village, because it was safe.

We arrived at the home of my parents-in-law in the evening, to be welcomed by a huge feast and many relatives. The old house had been renovated and enlarged. Some of the relatives played a guessing game: "Remember me?" I managed to recognize most of them after all those years.

Many economic changes were evident. The *service* (jitney) taxis were gone, for people had their own cars now. They used battered dusty vehicles on the farm instead of donkeys. The village no longer had a central telephone switchboard where a man connected lines manually. The only problem now was a scarcity of lines, so that some relied on cell phones. Every house had a television set. Many had desktop computers, but few had Internet access. There were, however, some public locations where one could log on.[40]

Sirriyyi's comment about becoming civilized, urbanized, then partly a promise, had now become reality. By the mid-1990s, al-Firzul's population had basically achieved middle class standing.

Household appliances were much improved over the 1970s. Electric irons now had thermostats and steam. There were automatic washing machines, clothes dryers, dishwashers, microwave ovens.[41] Purchase of these was meant to save women time and energy, but although they did save the women energy, housework tends to expand to fill the time available. On a shopping excursion I noted that a small self-service supermarket in Zahle carried a lot of imported goods (mostly American), such as corn chips, catsup (very popular on French fries), spaghetti sauce, shampoo, and cornflakes (also popular).[42] The upper story carried kitchen supplies such as plates and glassware, much of them also imported, typically from China. The Zahle Boulevard had scarcely changed, but the lower end of the town was much different, with a lot of highrise commercial and apartment structures.

Agricultural and domestic workers were extensively employed in the village.[43] The *Krād* (Kurds) came from Syria in the summer to work in al-Firzul and the surrounding area. About five hundred of them lived in the village in

40 Today the village has wireless access.

41 The supply of electricity was erratic. When the power went off, people switched on diesel generators. Today the village has a reliable source of electricity from the Zahle electricity company, but in other parts of the country, including Beirut, people still rely on generators much of the time.

42 Many of these items are now produced in Lebanon by local firms.

43 This entire section relies heavily on discussions with local respondents.

assorted spaces, spare rooms, old stables, garages, basements. Whole families came now, but left in the winter.[44] The Kurds looked distinctively different from the villagers, the women in long colorful dresses with headscarves, the men often with beards. The Kurds were paid USD 10.00 a day to work from 6:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Domestic workers were housemaids, at that time usually from Sri Lanka. These typically had a room in their employer's house. A Sri Lankan live-in maid received USD 75.00–100.00 a month. Employers had to pay the recruiting agency as much as USD 1,800.00 to obtain a maid. A daily maid got USD 10.00 a day for ordinary work. For heavy work she received USD 15.00–20.00 a day. Domestic agencies could be found everywhere in the area. One could also send for someone else's maid's relative. This was cheaper, but agencies were responsible if the maid quit before the end of her term (people say *harabit*, "she ran away"), or didn't work out well, so it was better to go through an agency.

9 The 2000s

In 2000 I learned more via interviews about the economic situation in the village. A local saying said much: "Do not fear what happens during the war. Rather, fear what happens after the war." Indeed, during the war people had plenty of money, and the country was very prosperous. There was no law enforcement, so a lot of illegal activity took place,[45] some of it involving villagers. Also, various outside interests contributed to the militias (S. Makdisi 2004: 41–42, 81–82). A considerable amount of money thus came into the country, so people were not short of cash. When the war stopped, some degree of law enforcement returned and much less outside money came into Lebanon.

A lot of villagers with businesses ran into serious trouble, and lost their businesses. Basically, a new generation of business operators was inexperienced, did not manage well, misspent money, and ultimately defaulted on bank loans. The majority of land-owning families experienced serious difficulties, too. Only a few were doing well, and many were barely making ends meet (Saadi and Hashash 2001; untitled (interviews with Zahle business owners) 2001).[46]

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44 Because they were such a transient population, and not even Lebanese, I did not count them in my censuses. I also did not count housemaids for the same reason.

45 This included drug production and dealing, arms importing, and importing other goods without paying duty. At that time, the government did not control the airport and ports; the militias did.

46 In fact, at that time, most households in Lebanon were experiencing a budget deficit, that is, they spent or owed more than they made. Only the top twelve percent, or those

Yet, despite the high prices of goods, people continued to spend, both in the village and nationally.

What contributed to the seriousness of the situation in the village was the fact that the principal local crops of cherries, almonds, and grapes no longer paid for the expenses farmers were incurring. Labor had become very expensive, as had the costs of pesticides and fertilizers. Drought and frost played a part in reducing harvests. Finally, competition from imported crops and produce, particularly from Syria, lowered prices (Iskandar: 2001a and 2001b).[47] The chaotic civil war in Syria, which began in 2011, closed off land transport of Lebanese produce to other Arab countries, resulting in further economic difficulties for farmers.

The businesses suffering problems in the post-war period were mostly related to agriculture. In the past, local farmers used to ship their fruit and vegetables to the Beirut produce market. During the war al-Firzul became the principal produce market for the Bekaa and some villagers became middlemen, taking a commission on what they sold. When agriculture suffered so did they. Another business involved the practice of *ḍamān*. In this, a farmer would sell a crop to an agent before harvest. He would earn less, but be spared the vagaries of finding labor, and of weather and market conditions at harvest. A lot of young men went into this business (that is, as *ḍamān* agents), but in order to do so, they had to borrow money. If they did not make enough, or borrowed too much, they got into trouble.[48]

The reduction in agricultural incomes damaged all of the local economy. Affected were retail businesses and local craftsmen such as electricians and plumbers. As well, young men and women had trouble finding good jobs (Khatib 2002).

A final factor affecting the economy was the devaluation of the Lebanese pound. Before the war USD 1.00 equaled about LBP 2.50. Immediately after the

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who managed well, avoided this deficit (United Nations Development Programme 2001–2002: 78).

47 The issue of competition from the import of cheaper Syrian produce still exists some twenty years later. The produce is smuggled now, but the effect is the same, and again al-Firzul's farmers have been dumping their products on the highway (anon. 13 July 2018. *The Daily Star* online).

48 According to personal communication from the late Musa Nimah, Professor of Agriculture at the American University of Beirut, and Patricia Sfeir, a rural development worker with the YMCA, an additional source of weakened farm incomes was a change in the practice of *ḍamān*. During the 1970s, bidders competed to make good offers to farmers. Later on, a monopoly raised the bids and thus reduced farmers' profits.

war, its value was about the same, but by December, 1990, it had decreased to LBP 790 = USD 1.00 (S. Makdisi 2004: 87).[49]

10 Conclusion

When we frame Lebanon within the topography of power, we note, first of all, that it has formed part of empires for millenia. Today, it is an independent state, but still dominated by post-Cold War international politics. War has been a prominent feature of those politics, as it was during the Roman and Ottoman periods. Empires, too, and the colonial and post-colonial experience brought cultural change – religious, linguistic, legal, and educational. Lebanon buys and sells on the international market, as it has for centuries. It is part of today's international communications nexus. Its people have traveled everywhere, and some have returned. Even those who have not returned communicate with those who have not emigrated.

Although the physical damage in the central Bekaa caused by the civil war is long gone, the social and economic damage continues. Adding to that, the 2006 bombings by the Israeli air force damaged vineyards in the village, and took out bridges across the country. It took some years to repair the high level Sofar bypass on the essential Beirut-Damascus highway linking the Bekaa to Beirut and the Mediterranean on the west and the Syrian border and Damascus on the east. The Lebanese economy was set back many years once again because of infrastructure damage, injuries, and deaths resulting from the invasion (for details of the results in southern Lebanon, see Khayyat 2013). In short, the connections between local political and socioeconomic cleavages on the one hand, and regional and international powers on the other are as strong as ever (Hersh 2006; Sherry *et al.* 2007; United Nations Development Programme 2007a and 2007b).

Local businesses, in many cases branches of Beirut-based chains, sell imported products. Villagers watch local television programs, and programs from abroad. They have relatives in other parts of Lebanon, not to mention the *mahjar*, the Lebanese diaspora. They keep in touch with these through a variety of means (N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra 2005). Village children and young

49 By summer, 2020, the official exchange rate was USD 1.00 per LBP 1,500.00, although at black market rates the value of the pound was much lower. There was also a shortage of US dollars. Lebanese still used the pound, but accepted dollars everywhere. Most Lebanese were paid in pounds, if they had jobs, so hardship was widespread throughout the country. Once again, educated young people were looking to emigrate.

people attend schools and universities established by foreign missionaries, or still run by foreign religious organizations. Curricula may be in French, Arabic, or English, or all three.

The imposition of power from outside, in the sense of "power over," or the attempt to impose it, has had a strong influence on the trajectory of village life in al-Firzul, as the epigraphs at the beginning of this chapter suggest. Resistance, too, has made a huge difference. Those who avoided trouble and kept their heads down kept the village intact and safe. So did those who fought back through force of arms. Through the extension of Lebanese infrastructures, roads and railroads, telecommunications, and government structures, al-Firzul became more thoroughly linked to Beirut, the metropole, and the rest of the country. Through these links, al-Firzul's economy was able to grow, and to benefit the villagers. Through emigration, the links between al-Firzul and its diaspora, between it and global centers, have created multiple routes for change.

FIGURE 3 Hermits' cells, 2000s
BY PERMISSION OF AL-FIRZUL FACEBOOK PAGE MODERATOR

FIGURE 4 The Bekaa plain, 2000s
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 5 The "second village" along the main Bekaa highway, 2000s
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 6 Ladies in their salon, 2000s
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 7 Militia graduation during the Civil War
BY PERMISSION OF THE SHEHADI FAMILY

CHAPTER 3

Women, Gender, and Families

We thank God for this food and may God keep the father for his children.

Lebanese saying

• • •

The man brings, the woman builds.

Lebanese proverb

• • •

A family should be based on understanding, mutual love, and sincerity.

Post-civil war interview

⁘

Families and larger kinship structures are fundamental to Lebanese society. One's religious affiliation, village and larger community ties, political affiliation, nationality, and much more are tied to family. Economic arrangements, organizational membership, location of official residence, inheritance, all are family.[1] Descent is patrilineal, but matrilateral ties are significant.

Given that this is the case, family change and how it might be related to the context in which al-Firzul exists becomes important. For example, are households smaller today? Why? What might be the consequences? How do individuals choose their spouses today compared to the past? Are there still residential clusters of kin, or are they scattering? What is the consequence of

1 This is not meant to imply that there are no divisions or conflicts within kin groups, but simply that kinship forms a significant level between the individual and the state. Suad Joseph phrased this point differently: "Kinship has been the central social identity. The kin group has been seen as the primary identity and loyalty for any Lebanese – superseding national identity and loyalty to the state and competing only with religion" (2000: 117).

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relatives having spread out of their old residential clusters? How does gender make a difference? How do changes affect gender?

The strongest factors driving change appear to be, first of all, the civil war, "power over." The second is horizontal integration in the form of increased contacts outside the village (both within Lebanon and in the mahjar). Third, the economic effects of the war were variable. During the war, the economy flourished, but afterward it declined. Paradoxically, though, standards of living and levels of education continued to rise. As a result age at marriage has increased, and completed fertility rates are lower. Last, religion has remained strong as a force for conservatism.[2]

1 Kinship and Residence

1.1 *Residence*

During the 1970s, an orientation toward males was evident in patterns of kinship and residence.[3] Residence was generally patrilocal, which did not mean that a married couple lived with the husband's parents; there were only thirty classical extended family households out of about 350 households. The extended family might have been extolled in stories about the Arab tribes or the days of yore, but it did not seem that many people wanted to live in one. The rise in the standard of living in al-Firzul since the days of subsistence farming had made that preference possible (see also Gulick 1969).[4] Patrilocality meant that the male household head or his kinsman usually owned the house. Only twenty-nine households were headed by women, and nearly all of these were widows.

Patrilocality also meant that the couple had set up housekeeping in the husband's village, even when the wife came from another town or village. One might just as well have called residence neolocal, given that couples seldom

2 Suad Joseph notes: "Further reinforcing the primacy of kinship and kin identity have been the practices of religious affiliation (subscribed to by the state).... Clerics have deployed kin values, codes of behavior, and principles of discipline in their relations with sect members, thus anointing kinship with the blessing of sacred authority" (2000: 118–119). Elizabeth Thompson described how French mandatory authorities coopted local elites by strengthening the hold of religious institutions on personal status law (Thompson 2000: 87–90; 148–154). The result was the strengthening of patriarchy and confessionalism, thus contributing to the deleterious consequences with which Lebanon is still struggling.

3 For clarity of exposition, in this section I have, for the most part, used the past tense to discuss kinship and residence. However, the system remains much the same today.

4 See Chapter 2, al-Firzul in Context, for details about extended family life under subsistence farming.

lived with the husband's parents. Patrilocality was supported by Lebanese legislation, in that a couple's official residence was in the husband's hometown.[5]

1.2 *Group Formation*

The principle of patriliny was used in the formation of patronymic groups. These were not corporate groups in the classical sense, for only the household constituted a true corporate group (that is, a social and economic unit). The sons and grandsons of a given male demonstrated a greater than random tendency to cooperate in social, economic, and political affairs. Their lands and houses, because of patrilineal inheritance, were likely to be contiguous. It was typical of villagers in the region that they could not trace their lineages past grandfather's father or grandfather (see also Peters 1963).

The official recognition of patriliny did not exclude the importance of matrilateral and affinal ties. Villagers call these *qarābit niswān* (relationship through, literally of, women). Villagers used to say "They are all relatives here," but when one stopped to figure out how a given individual might be related to another, the chain of relationships would include matrilateral and affinal ties.

With today's increased rate of exogamous marriage, though, in the future fewer individuals will be related through these multiple pathways. It will be interesting, then, to see what impact exogamy will have on the significance of *qarābit niswān* in village life.

1.3 *Terminology: Language and Reality*

1.3.1 The 1970s

Terms for kin groups reflected the official importance of patrilateral ties and patrilineal principles, while glossing over the strength of matrilateral and affinal connections. Several groupings were significant:

1. *ahl* (for *ahl al-bayt*) (family or household). This meant nuclear family, but would also include a close relative, such as the household head's unmarried sister, living in the same household. The household head would be presumed to be a man.

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5 Residence is still patrilocal. However, one can change both official residence and religious affiliation. In both cases the change must be registered in the offices of the governorate (*muḥāfaẓa*). An amusing anecdote about this legal situation involved a man from one of the officially Maronite families in al-Firzul. He reasoned that since they were all baptized, married, and buried as Melkites, he might as well change his official religion. He went to the government offices in Zahle, where the clerk suggested that his son might become President of the Republic if he remained a Maronite (for by custom the President must be a Maronite). The man went away without changing his religious affiliation.

2. *ʿayli* (patronymic group, often glossed as family; plural, *ʿayyāl*). This was an aggregate comprising all persons with the same patronym, and who thus claimed common descent through their fathers.
3. *bayt* (house). This might refer to the actual physical structure, but might also refer to the *ahl* of a particular household head, as in *bayt Najīb Ḥanna*. Finally, *bayt* might refer to the entire *ʿayli*, as in *bayt Sāba*, shorthand for *ʿaylit bet Sāba*.[6] In discussing a stranger, a person might be asked, "*min bet mīn?*" (from whose house?), that is, from which patronymic group.
4. *qarāyib* (relatives) comprised *ahl*, *ʿmūmi* (father's brothers, their households, and their immediate descendants), *akhwāl* (mother's brothers, their households, and their descendants), *akhwālu le-bayyi* (my father's *akhwāl*), *ʿayli*, and affines. *Qarāyib* thus incorporated both patrilateral and matrilateral kin. There was no special term for affines. Instead, they were given honorary status as *ūlād al-ʿamm* (sons and daughters of the father's brother).[7]

Akhwāl were defined by a link through one's mother or one's father's mother, but they still constituted a patronymic group among themselves. The relationship between an individual and her/his *akhwāl* was called *makhwali*.[8] If an individual resembled his/her *akhwāl* in some way, people would say the person was *mkhawwal* (or *mkhwwali*), which might or might not have been a compliment under the circumstances.

Qarābit niswān would also include relationship with and through *silfa*, and between two men who are *ʿadīl* to each other. The former referred to a woman who was a man's wife's sister, a woman's husband's sister, or a woman's husband's brother's wife. A man's wife's sister's husband was *ʿadīl*; the term was used reciprocally, and connoted a kind of balance between the two men. These relations were all salient in daily life, for one spent a lot of time visiting them.

In contrast to terms for kin groups, consanguineal terminology was bilaterally symmetrical, distinguishing the two sides. For example, mother's brother was *khāl*, father's brother *ʿamm*, mother's sister *khāla*, father's sister *ʿamma*. The sides merged on the grandparents' level, for on either side grandmother

6 *Bet* here is simply the local pronunciation of *bayt* when it appears in a compound construction.

7 In fact, almost any man of one's father's age and/or generation, with the exception of mother's actual brothers, might be addressed as *ʿammi*. This metaphorical extension of the term *ʿamm* for men the speaker must respect demonstrated the official importance of patrilateral relatives, and in particular, of the father's brother.

8 In the trans-Jordanian village Richard Antoun (1972) studied during the 1960s, the same relationship was termed *makhwal*.

was *sitt* or *tāta*, grandfather *jiddu*.[9] The system did not overtly privilege one side or the other, for kin on both sides were equally *qarāyib*. However, because the terminology did distinguish the sides, it could and did support a patrilateral bias.

Adults used reciprocal kin terms in addressing small children. In this usage, for example, a grandmother would address the child as *Tāta*, the term the child should use in addressing her. A father would address his child as *Bāba* (Daddy).[10]

Affinal terminology for the most part affirmed patriliny and patrilocality. For example, *ṣuhr* referred to a man married to a woman, daughter or sister, of the family (*ahl al-bayt*). Similarly, *kinna* referred to a woman married to a man of the house, a son or a brother. Where not otherwise specified, affines of the same generation were *awlād al-ʿamm*. Father-in-law and mother-in-law were, respectively, *ʿamm* and *mart al-ʿamm*.[11]

Any kinship system is a language about reality, not just because it is composed of words, but also because of its underlying structure. In the case of al-Firzul, what did its kinship language tell us? Consanguineal terminology was essentially bilateral, while allowing for a distinction between the two sides. That distinction allowed for the emphasis on patrilateral kin. Affinal terminology was based on patriliny and male-headed households. Group formation was basically patrilineal and patrilocal.

Essentially, two messages were conveyed by the system of terminology. The first message, conveyed by names for kin groups, by the honorary extension of the term *ʿamm* (father's brother), and by the logic of affinal terminology, was the official importance of males.[12] Residence was patrilocal, and men were household heads and representatives. Inheritance[13] was patrilineal. It was com-

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9 Normally, people use and refer to these terms in the vocative, *e.g.*, *khālti* (my mother's sister) instead of *khāla* (mother's sister). For a thorough description of a terminological system similar to that used in al-Firzul, consult Rodger P. Davies (1949).

10 Judith Williams observed the same usage in a Sunni village in the area, viewing it as a way in which children learned both the correct term for addressing senior kin and the authority their elders held over them (1968: 39). Suad Joseph, in her observations in a Beirut suburb, emphasized the aspect of authority: "The linguistic merging of identities facilitated patriarchal connectivity" (1993: 472).

11 There is an Arabic word which refers specifically to the mother-in-law, namely *ḥamā*. However, *mart al-ʿamm* seems warmer, friendlier, while *ḥamā* connotes a disagreeable figure.

12 As well, males were and are given preference in secular and religious law, and in religious symbolism (N. Jabbra 2009a) (see Chapter 6, Gender Symbolism in Ritual).

13 Of property, place of civil registration, and religious affiliation. Moreover, a man passes on Lebanese citizenship to his children. A non-Lebanese woman may acquire citizenship

mon for a man to name his son after his father, but daughters were less likely to be named after ascendants. Parents might be addressed teknonymously in reference to their eldest son, but not to their eldest daughter, even though she might in fact have been the eldest child.[14] *Walad* meant child or boy, depending on the context: "*Kam walad ʿindu?*" "*Tlāt ūlād ū bint*" (How many children does he have? Three boys and a girl).[15]

The second message, conveyed by the bilateral consanguineal terminology, and the fact that both *akhwāl* and affines were *qarāyib*, was that ties with and through women were also important. Although in one sense these ties were not given official recognition, in another sense they received it through a system of nomenclature which was used every day by everyone. Matrilateral ties were particularly important for women, but important for men as well, because of the connections they made among households and among men. We could say, transforming the old proverb, not only that the man brings, the woman builds, but also that men divide, women unite.

One reason for the importance of ties through women was that a woman widened her kin network upon marriage more than did a man. It was true that a man formed ties with his new affines, visited them, and so on. But although a woman moved from one house to another, she did not sever her social or legal connections to her own family; her continued membership in her natal family was shown on her government identity card.

Ties through women still create relationships which connect individuals separated by patriliny. Just within one circle of *qarāyib*, for example, there exist two distinct clusters of families (*ʿayyāl*) related through *qarābit niswān*: Mhanna-ʿAbdu-Juryus and Mhanna-Farah-Saidy.[16]

Women's family connections continue even after death. For example, in 2012 I attended the funeral of an old lady, Ḥnayni, from a large village family. On her casket was a bronze plaque bearing her given name, her father's given name, and her father's family name, thus identifying her as a member of her own patriline rather than her late husband's. There were in attendance, however, numerous members of her husband's patriline.

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through her Lebanese husband, but a Lebanese woman married to a non-Lebanese may not pass on her citizenship to her children.

14 For example, they would say "*Bū Ilyās*" (father of Elias), but not "*Bū Mārī*" (father of Marie). Today's young people are familiar with the practice, but use it infrequently. Like naming males after ascendants, teknonomy communicated male privilege, male authority.

15 This was an actual exchange in which I participated. *Ulād* is the plural of *walad*. The speaker could also have said *ṣabyān* (boys), but this usage was striking, and not unusual.

16 These patronymics are pseudonyms. In the interest of brevity, however, I will not provide the complex details of the links among them.

Some examples illustrate the importance of *qarābit niswān* for women. During the 1970s, they could expect help with large-scale cooking and food preservation projects, with childcare, and in emergencies, from their mothers, sisters, or daughters more than they could from anyone else. Even distance did not alter these ties. Women who married out of the village returned to visit their families on the occasion of major feast days; they might also come if they were needed. For example, Kawkab married a man who lived in a village in southern Lebanon. Twice, once when her sister was sick, and another time when her sister's daughter underwent major surgery, she left husband and responsibilities to return home to help out.[17]

A woman retained strong emotional ties with her mother, father, brothers, and sisters. If she married within the village, she saw them nearly every day. She dealt with her husband's family directly, but she was also the mediator between him and her own family, and she formed a link for her own children.

Some examples from the 1970s make the point. The case of Thérèse demonstrates how women enlarged their networks upon marriage. As a member of the Ḥanna patronymic group, she had close ties with other members of that group, particularly with her mother and sisters. Then she married Pierre, a Raḥmi from just down the street. Pierre's mother was still living, and Pierre's unmarried sister lived at home then, where the three cooperated in housework and food preparation.

Thérèse used to trade visits with Pierre's other sisters, all married into different patronymic groups in the village. Various other members of the Raḥmi patronymic group came over to see her; a girl cousin of Pierre was a good friend of his sister, and often dropped by. Thérèse had known all of these individuals before her marriage, but now they were family; the increased visiting, and especially the visits paid on ritual occasions, demonstrated this. While I was in al-Firzul for my early fieldwork, a number of women from or married into Bayt Raḥmi gave birth, and I accompanied Thérèse as she paid the requisite calls on each one.

1.3.2 The Contemporary Situation

By the early twenty-first century, there had been a number of changes in kinship and residence. After the civil war, households were smaller than they were in the 1970s, and over half of them were nuclear families. The percentage of

17 When her husband died, she sold his house, which she had inherited, and moved back to the village. One of her brothers built her an apartment on the ground floor of his house, and provided a maid for her until she died.

the larger kinds of households, such as extended families, stem families, and expanded nuclear families, had decreased considerably.

Today, residences of patrilateral kin are much less likely to be clustered in neighborhoods, but rather are scattered, with many villagers living in the "second village." For the most part, though, the new dwellings are occupied by their (male) owners and/or their patrilateral kin. Thus, the patriline reproduces itself in the second village. By telephone and automobile it is easy for scattered members of the patriline, indeed all of the *qarāyib*, to remain in contact.

The overall terminology for kin groups and relatives remains much the same. However, terms that might have served for both address and reference in the past are used today mainly for reference. One might refer to *silfi* (my brother-in-law), but one would address him by his given name.

A new development is that members of the most recent generations (in their twenties and thirties, and younger) tend to address and refer to relatives a generation or more above them by their given names, rather than by a kinship term with or without the name. For example, "*Tāta ʿAfīfi*" (Grandma *ʿAfīfi*) becomes, simply, "*ʿAfīfi*." "*ʿAmmi Ilyās*" (my father's brother Elias) becomes "*Ilyās*." "*Immi*" (my mother) might be replaced by the woman's given name, such as "Thérèse."

They also use diminutive, affectionate, or cute nicknames. For example, *Ḥanān* becomes *Nāno*, Grandma *ʿAfīfi* becomes *ʿIffu*, Grandpa *Fu'ād* becomes *Fu'ush*, Thérèse (in this case, a mother) becomes *Tirzo*. One girl told me that, as she put it, if she wanted something (from her mother), she would "feel the love," spoil (*ghannaj*) her, pile on the nicknames and terms of endearment.

Such practice represents a major change. Young people are familiar with the formal kin terms I collected during the 1970s. And they assured me that they still respected their elders. What they told me is that now relationships have changed. They feel closer to their parents and other kin senior to them. Relationships are not as formal, strict, or authoritarian as they were in the past. Once, children were required to obey their parents, they said, or face the consequences. This is no longer the case. If children or adolescents do not obey, frequently nothing much happens at all.[18]

18 Suad Joseph, in her study of post-civil war change in "Yusfiyyi," reported that, "Overwhelmingly, interviewees in Yusfiyyi reported that children had less respect for fathers than before the war." "A sixty-five year old mother put the relationship in historical perspective." "In the past when a father said sit, the daughter replied, 'bi amrak' (as you command). Now she says 'ma baddi' (I don't want to)" (2004: 284).

I received another explanation, too, that today the young know more than their parents, whereas formerly this was not the case. Parents and grandparents, uncles and aunts, were the experts. But now the younger generation are familiar with digital technology, are better educated, and generally more worldly. The knowledge gap no longer exists; indeed, it is the inverse. For these reasons, too, the relationship between generations has changed.

My observations suggest still other factors. Small children hear their parents discussing other relatives, such as their uncles and aunts, using their given names. The use of formal kin terms thus is not modelled. A six-year-old once addressed me by my given name. His mother reprimanded him gently, but he was only following the usage he had witnessed. Additionally, seniors today seldom use reciprocal kin terms in addressing small children, whereas during the 1970s this practice was common. Again, then, the authority of seniors is no longer emphasized.

As might be expected, the quality of relationships varies with the individuals involved. A girl might feel closer to her mother than she does to her father. In such an instance, she would use her mother's given name or a nickname, but address her father formally as "*Bayyi*" (my father). One young woman told me that she would not address her grandparents by their given names because they came from an older generation.

Some seniors are not happy to be addressed by their given names, so the young people use formal kin terms to address them. Others accept or welcome the usage. One of my respondents told me of a woman named Danielle who liked being addressed by her nickname, *Dāno*, because it made her feel younger. Sometimes young people simply dodge the issue of suitable address by talking to seniors using neither their names nor the appropriate kin terms.

Women's daily experiences of *qarābit niswān* have changed. Today there is little need for women family members to get together for a big project. Housewives now make only small batches of staples and special holiday foods, and they do not need much help with these projects, especially if they have maids. Dinners for engagements, weddings, and baptisms take place in hotels or restaurants, so women's role in putting these on is mostly managerial. Women relatives, especially sisters and sisters-in-law, continue to help each other in other ways, though. For example, when Rīma broke her foot, kinswomen brought food and came to keep her company; and she spent a few days with her sister. One young relative spent nights with Rīma after she finished work.

Qarābit niswān continues to be significant for men as well, for it can create political and economic alliances. It is hard to tell whether such connections

influence marriage choice, or whether they are simply a byproduct.[19] However, in one such case, a man married the daughter of a family that had a big business and consequently was well-to-do. They helped him financially in a variety of ways, including lending him money. In a case originating sometime in the 1990s, though, the woman benefitted more than the man. She came from a family of ordinary means, and married a man who was probably wealthier than all of her *ʿayli* combined. She did very well, but several of his political rivals came from her family.

2 Views about Marriage

During the 1970s, villagers had a positive view of marriage. It was a route to parenthood, desirable in itself in a pronatalist society. Also, an unmarried girl could look forward to becoming the mistress of her own household rather than living at home as a dependent. Marriage created a substantial status change for women in a way that it did not for men. Marriage, too, meant that individuals could participate in licit sex.

In the local Arabic dialect, the distinction between girl (*bint*) and woman (*mara*) was made not according to age or physical maturity, but rather to marital status (N. Jabbra 1980). *Bint* meant both girl and virgin, and was synonymous with *baʿda bil-bayt* (she is still at home, that is, in her father's house). *Bint* would be subdivided into *bint sghīri* (little girl) and *ṣabiyyi* (a young unmarried woman in her teens or twenties, that is, of marriageable age). *Mara* meant wife, non-virgin, and woman. An amusing anecdote I collected about an impotent bridegroom made plain the distinction between married and unmarried status, among the several meanings of *bint* and *mara*: the punch line was "*ū martu baʿda bint!*" ("and his wife (non-virgin) is still a virgin!").

Mara thus referred to a married woman living in her husband's house. Linked to a man's given name, as in *Mart Mkhaybir*, it would mean Mrs. Mkhaybir (the family name would be understood in context). It was and is considered more genteel to use *madame* to refer to a married woman, as in the French-Arabic hybrid *madāmtu le-Najīb* (Najīb's wife). Young girls, married women, and single women past the age of marriage, could be grouped together as *sittāt* (ladies), for as one middle-aged man put it, "*killun min jins Ḥawwa*" (they are all of the species of Eve).[20]

19 I also am not sure to what extent, if at all, such alliances affected choice of spouse made by families when marriages were still arranged.

20 I knew him well, and he did not mean it as a pejorative (N. Jabbra 1980).

Marriage, too, brought together the complementary halves of a man and a woman. "The man brings, the woman builds" (*al-rijāl janna wal-mara banna*), I was told. That is, ideally men and women had different tasks in the family. He was the household head, responsible for its economic support. She was the helpmeet, preserving and maintaining, raising the children. Both functions were considered essential and desirable. To some extent, too, women and men had different natures; women were thought to be more compassionate, for example, because of the milk in their breasts.

Families were keen that their offspring marry. One father, talking about the forthcoming marriage of his young daughter said, "Now I can set my mind at ease about her." He meant that now she would be established in life, for marriage would be her career.

Young people themselves were eager to marry. They mixed at school and in the youth club, and thus found ample opportunities to meet and assess each other. They were often shy and romantic, and some of the young men I knew had girls for whom they pined from afar.

Some of these school and youth club relationships ripened into marriage; others did not. Sometimes families still arranged marriages with relatives and neighbors. I remember one young bride whose marriage had been arranged happily telling me about the new things she was learning, including "toast." I did not encounter any cases of elopements or abductions, but knew of earlier cases.

Not everyone married. A few old bachelors lived alone, but near kin. Unmarried women, even those past any expectation of marriage, lived at home with their parents or other kin, typically a brother. They either did housework, some farm work, or made a living by a craft such as tailoring.

In studying village marriage records from 1926 to 2010,[21] I found a few cases where a man in his fifties, or even in his mid-sixties, married a woman post- or near-menopause. He would typically have been married before; she almost certainly had not been.[22] Children might not have been a desired outcome, for he would likely have been the father of grown children. In such cases, the couple wanted companionship and, for all I knew, licit sex. He also needed someone to look after him, and she would become the mistress of an independent household.

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21 I obtained these from the local priest's records and from the bishop's offices in Zahle.

22 I found only one bride designated as a widow in the marriage records, although there might have been others. She was described as the widow of her late husband not, like most brides, her father's daughter. An older bride perhaps had spent her younger years looking after an ailing parent or sibling, or she simply had not wanted to marry earlier.

For the most part, interview respondents in the 1990s and 2000s were in favor of marriage for women, and most young single women and men wanted to get married. I noted a strong sense of romantic love and desire for children. When I asked her why a woman should get married, one woman said, "Because it feels good to know that there is somebody who loves you and cares about you." Another said, "It is good to get married. It is a new phase of life. It is desirable for a woman to experience motherhood." Other single women, varying in age, sometimes felt otherwise. When asked whether a woman should marry, one said, "It is her own choice. She can do whatever she wants. Marriage is a good thing." When I asked her whether it was better to marry or to remain single, she said, "I did not get married. I do not care about men. It is all right if she does not get married."

Despite the prevalence throughout Lebanon of billboards and fashion advertisements showing revealing clothing, and indeed of young women wearing provocative styles, girls in the village and elsewhere in Lebanon need to take care of their reputations.[23] The double standard insists that girls be virgins at marriage. As marriage takes place at later ages, and as girls leave home to study or work outside the village, the double standard becomes harder to maintain.[24]

With regard to the desirability of marriage, I did not find any great change from the early 1970s. Even then, although most women of the appropriate age had married, some had not, living with their families. A few of them supported themselves. Widows, even young ones, normally did not remarry, and this situation has not changed.[25]

Attitudes in al-Firzul toward family life during the post-war years reflected the new middle class standards. They included the following: "The relation between husband and wife … should … be based on understanding. As for the relation with their children, it should be based on love, respect, and understanding." "A real family is based on love and fidelity." "A family should be based on understanding, mutual love, and sincerity." Some respondents noted that

23 Villages in the Bekaa are more conservative than communities in the Beirut area, as I well know from my observations on a university campus.

24 A recent study at a private university in Lebanon found that about one-third of the students surveyed had engaged in premarital sexual intercourse, and that their first experience took place at ages 17–19. Most had learned about sex from teachers, Internet sources, or friends (Bouclaous *et al.* 2020). Diane Singerman (2011) found that young people in Iran and several Arab countries engage in premarital sex because they must delay marriage for economic reasons.

25 Basically the logic was that if a widow remarried, her children by her first husband would not belong to the family line of the second husband unless, of course, the men were close patrilateral kin, such as brothers or the sons of brothers (N. Jabbra 1978).

there were women who married for materialistic reasons, but they condemned those reasons, together with infidelity and divorce. What is also noteworthy by implication is a rejection of arranged marriage or marriage by abduction.

Today, marriage is still expected, although as my interview data show, not all marry. Some single women I knew in the 1970s never did marry, but some others did, although late. Nothing much has changed, then. However, by and large, single women are still expected to reside with family, not alone.[26]

Laws concerning family life, including marriage, divorce, and inheritance, are still the province of the several religious denominations in Lebanon (Shehadeh 1998). Thus, there is no single set of laws regulating marriage for all Lebanese. One must marry according to the rules of a particular religious denomination, namely that of the bridegroom.[27] Anyone wishing a civil marriage must travel to another country, conventionally nearby Cyprus.[28] Over the past few years, the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies has considered proposals to establish civil marriage, but these have foundered because of opposition from religious leaders and the politicians who rely on confessionalism to recruit followers.[29]

I asked my respondents in 2000 what they thought of civil marriage. Responses varied, but over half of them opposed it because it was not sanctioned by religion. Civil marriage was not "serious," and marriage should be "blessed by God."[30] Some of those favoring it, many of them young, mentioned

26 Single women should live with family because it is respectable. One young woman from al-Firzul, a university graduate, had a job in the Beirut area, and lived with other girls in a suitable building of which two floors were dedicated only to girls. Other girls from al-Firzul continue to live in similar facilities.

27 In 2012 and again in 2013, a wealthy man from al-Firzul arranged and financed a group marriage ceremony held in Zahle. Clergy of different Christian denominations took part, and evidently had agreed on the procedure. Doubtless, too, each marriage was registered with the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities. Although the ceremony was limited to Christians, it nevertheless transcended the usual denominational boundaries.

28 Lebanese law recognizes marriages and divorces taking place in other jurisdictions. Travel packages for divorce, inter-communal marriage, or civil marriage in Cyprus are widely advertised in Lebanon (Ajami 2007; Moussaoui 2009). See Lamia Rustum Shehadeh (1998), for a detailed analysis of the issue of civil marriage in Lebanon.

29 The civil marriage system proposed is conceived as an alternative to religious marriage, rather than as a system underlying all the religious rules, as is the case, for example, in the United States. It permits divorce, but in many ways privileges men, particularly with regard to child custody (Noureddine 1998).

30 These results are consistent with those from a national survey, where 82% of those surveyed supported religious marriage (Kaii 1997).

the need for divorce should couples disagree.[31] Others supported civil marriage because it would permit marriage with people of other religions, by whom they meant Muslims. One young man commented, "We are all the same citizens." In other words, the current system is divisive. In actuality, almost no one from al-Firzul has married a Muslim, and the one case of which I heard was a cautionary tale. Marriages with non-Melkites have typically been with Maronites or Orthodox Christians.

3 Finding a Spouse

Very old stories told of young men watching the girls, who made sure to look their prettiest, as they went to get water from the spring, but when water was piped into village houses that source of romance was no more. Some couples in those days, then, married for love or at least their own choice. I knew one of these couples, by then middle-aged, during the 1970s.

In the 1970s, numerous marriages were and had been arranged. Basically, the procedure was that various candidates presented themselves, and the parents chose. And if the girl was young, in her middle teens, she went along with the arrangement.

There were also a few elopements and even abductions. These were called by the same name, *khaṭīfi*, but to distinguish the latter, one added "*bil quwwi*" (by force). One of my neighbors in the 1970s had the most amazing wedding picture of herself and her bridegroom displayed on the wall. Hands on hips, with a big frown, there she stood in her white gown and veil. It turned out she had been abducted. Eventually, she said, she got used to him. I also learned the story of a woman whose brothers wanted to marry her off. They got the prospective groom drunk and that was that. Another woman had eloped with a neighbor when she was an adolescent still in school. I asked her why she did that. She said she was concerned that her parents planned to arrange her marriage to someone she disliked, for her older sisters' marriages had previously been arranged. Her family was not pleased, and one of her brothers boycotted the wedding.

In the 1970s, about one-third of households contained at least one member not from al-Firzul. Excluding military families renting in the village, these individuals were almost entirely women from other villages in the area. Numerous stories about how men married girls from other villages involved

31 Melkite Greek Catholics can obtain an annulment through the religious courts, but the process is difficult and expensive.

their connections with, typically, the bride's brother. The man went to the other village for a visit or on business, he saw the girl, asked about her, and so on to the inevitable conclusion at the altar. Marriages with co-villagers were with relatives or neighbors.

The situation, though, was changing during the 1970s. There can be no doubt that co-educational schools provided young people with opportunities to interact with the opposite sex which were not available to older generations. In the task-oriented atmosphere of the school, boys and girls could interact as colleagues or friends, without necessarily viewing each other as potential mates. Even so, within the school, one saw the girls and boys in separate little groups of twos and threes. Out of school, on the main street of al-Firzul, or on the Boulevard in Zahle, the self-conscious pairing-off became even more pronounced, as the little groups of adolescents strolled up and down, eying each other, and sometimes stopping to talk. The school showed a great potential for altering the mores of gender segregation, and in the end, as in so many areas of life, came to have a revolutionary impact upon Arab society. In al-Firzul, one noticeable effect of the school was the formation of the co-educational youth club.[32]

Adolescent boys and girls could also get together outside of school. In the family with whom I lived, one of the two sons was popular throughout the village because of his open and friendly nature, not to mention his good looks; he was also very active in the youth club. He and the daughter of one of our neighbors, also active in the club, often got together on club business.[33]

Management of male-female relationships before marriage required careful planning. Although there was no dating as such, there was some pairing off into couples, entirely on the sly. They would meet after school, in Zahle, or at the home of a friend or relative. The girl typically took along another girl as a chaperone.

One girl of my acquaintance had a secret boyfriend from her school in Zahle. I knew, a few of her friends knew, and his family knew, but her parents did not. She told me that he did not come to her house because, she said, the custom was that when the boy came to visit formally at her house, he intended to marry her. And she and her boyfriend were not ready for a formal engagement.

I learned some details about managing relationships. She told me, for example, that her boyfriend would be coming to the house with his girl cousin, ostensibly the "friend" she used to visit in his hometown. She said they liked

32 See Chapter 5, Gender and Community.

33 They did not marry, however.

each other very much, but "I do not know what will happen." He was eighteen, she was seventeen.[34]

How much did the pairing-off of young people represent a significant departure from tradition? It is true that the sexes were more strictly segregated in the past, and that marriageable girls were closely guarded. On the other hand, in the old days when the girls used to go fetch water from the spring, they always took great care to look attractive, because they knew the young men would be watching. Both sexes worked in the fields in the days of subsistence agriculture, and doubtless there arose opportunities for hasty meetings from time to time.

I gained the impression that the parents of 1970s adolescents were not as ignorant as their offspring hoped. Some parents of adolescent girls almost never let them out of the house, other parents seemed likely to crack down only if there seemed a possibility of things getting out of hand, and some were a little lax by local standards, even letting their daughters promenade on the main highway. I concluded that although there had been change in the behavior of young people, it had not been drastic.

Younger informants more explicitly verbalized their disagreement with some widely prevailing norms. Many young unmarried people expressed the wish that girls had more liberty, and that boys and girls could mix more freely. Youthful grumbling had to be taken seriously, because it did portend future trends, but it could not be taken at face value to indicate total disagreement with traditional norms.

Generally, women today marry their own choice, although there still exists family pressure not to wait for long. The older generation may play a substantial role in creating a match. One case from a generation ago might be termed a "fix-up." The prospective groom lived with his parents and might well have remained a bachelor. However, his mother's brother had an unmarried daughter he wanted to see established, and so they married.[35] I know a bachelor who still lives at home, seemingly happy to remain single. His mother prepared a nice apartment for him on the ground floor of their house, but there is yet no bride to bring to it. And a female relative living nearby has no desire to marry. So, a minority resists pressure from their families.

Today, young people make their own arrangements. If they live and work in the Beirut area, or attend school or university in the central Bekaa, they are likely to choose someone from another town. Abductions and elopements evidently no longer take place in the village.

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34 As it happened, they both married someone else.

35 His mother also wanted him married, so the young man seems to have had little choice.

According to interviews I made in 2007, dating was referred to as *mṣāḥibi* or *muwāʿada*.[36] A girl secondary school student recounted that typically a young man and a girl came to like each other and go out together. The best choices were public places, parks, restaurants, cafés, movies, sports clubs, or pubs. Young men and girls got to know each other at church, school, or university, and through friends and family. Sports clubs such as the Atlas Club, or religious clubs such as the Rasūliyyi were good, too. As elsewhere in Lebanon, girls did their best to look attractive to the young men. Dating might start in the teens for girls, somewhat later for the young men.

I learned a lot from the experience of one young man then in his twenties. He told me (this account is much condensed) that after the young man finds an attractive girl, he waits for an opportunity to talk to her and tries to impress her with gifts such as flowers and chocolate. He tries to spend time with her, hoping for a commitment. After a year or so her parents start nagging, "Is he serious or is he just fooling around?" If her parents agree to the relationship, then the young man takes her to meet his parents.

The consent of both sets of parents was vital. Reasons for parental concern might be that the potential groom was unable to support a wife and children, or that he was not well educated. A person's character was also important. Did the young man have any bad habits? What was the girl's mother like? (Farāzli say that a girl resembles her mother).[37] Religion would be critical. Other kinds of Christians would be suitable, but not Shiites, Sunnites, or Druze.

In 2020 I interviewed a young woman university graduate, May, and it seems that much has changed, and much has not changed, since my 2007 interviews on dating and marriage. They still call dating *mṣāḥibi*, but seldom use the term *muwāʿada* today. For the most part teenagers form close friendships that might or might not become serious. Young people in their twenties might be sexually active, although I have no way of knowing how many there might be. In either instance, the double standard as transmitted through the eyes, ears, and tongues of villagers keeps girls quiet about their relationships, for they might compromise their reputations. Compared to the village, Zahle, and better yet, Beirut, offer a degree of anonymity. Efforts to maintain discretion and secrecy frequently strain a relationship past its breaking point.

36 *Mṣāḥibi* means "friendship," while *muwāʿada* would be "dating" as such.

37 They cite the proverb, "*ṭub al-jarra ʿā timma, ṭitliʿ al-bint le-imma*" (turn the jar on its mouth, the daughter takes after her mother). The rhyming, semi-nonsense character of this proverb is typical. It and the other proverbs I have quoted are well-known and used in al-Firzul and throughout Lebanon. All are listed in Freyha (1974).

Parents still play a major role in making or breaking a relationship. Religion remains a concern, and families still strongly support religious marriage. Marriage with a good family is very important. Parents are keen to see their sons and daughters married, for they think that a girl needs a man to support and protect her, and that a man needs a woman to look after him, just as his mother did.[38]

May, though, does not think much of these considerations. For her, marriage is for children, and above all, for companionship: "to find someone to go through life with … having someone to call your own and to hold at night is something good in a world that is rather cruel."

She favors civil marriage because it grants both wife and husband equal rights, and because if the marriage is unhappy, divorce is better than suffering. Children should not grow up in a stressful house. A woman should have an exit ready, just in case. Religious marriage just supports institutional religion, and through it political parties and factions.

If all goes well, the families hold the formal engagement party. On this occasion, the groom asks for the girl's hand, and he and his family present her with gifts. Her family follows with further gifts to the bride.[39] Other visits between the families take place, both before the formal engagement, and afterward. It seems that with affluence a certain spirit of ostentation has emerged, for additional visits and parties or formal meals are expensive. Ideally, a formal engagement should not be broken, but that can and does happen. After a house or flat is ready, and preparations are made, the wedding follows.

In 2004, only about one-fourth of households contained a member not from al-Firzul. My sense is that this was mainly because there were fewer military families by that time. Certainly, there were far more opportunities for young people to meet others from outside the village, very typically in school, than there had been in the 1970s. Secondary education and beyond could only be obtained outside the village, even though many young people lived at home and commuted. When young women and men are working or attending school outside the village, not only are they more likely to marry a non-villager, but they also find more freedom for dating.

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38 In other words, Valentine Moghadam's "patriarchal gender contract" (1998) is still relevant. See Chapter 4, Women, Education, and Work, for details.

39 Traditionally, the groom and his family gave gold bangles to the bride, but today they might give her other jewelry instead. Gifts from the bride's family on this occasion are also an innovation.

4 Age at Marriage

Beginning in 1926, the local priest recorded the ages of brides and grooms married in the village's two churches.[40] The number married in any given year varies considerably, although never exceeding thirty. In nearly all cases, marriages were first marriages.

The first and most notable datum about mean age at marriage is that it has increased considerably. In 1930 the figure for grooms was 21.5 and for brides 18.5. By 2010 it had increased to 31.0 for grooms and 25.0 for brides. Two related reasons appear to be responsible. First, both young men and young women are staying in school longer, and only a few young women marry before completing school. Today higher levels of education are valued for both males and females. Education itself is costly, involving tuition, living expenses, books, and supplies, not to mention reduced income while in school.

The second reason is that rising standards of living, combined with inflation and devaluation of the pound, make it impossible for young men to marry at early ages. Until they can support a wife and children in their own house or flat, young women and their parents will not consider them worthy husband material. Moreover, the groom's family is responsible for the betrothal gifts to the bride, plus almost all of the costs of the wedding and reception. In recent years, these costs have escalated. And so both young women and young men marry later.

The civil war does not seem to have affected brides' ages at marriage, although respondents told me that girls married earlier during that period. On the contrary, in the records from the parish registry, brides' ages fluctuated somewhat during the war years from 1975 to 1990, but did not decrease. What seems to have happened in many cases is that parents pulled their daughters out of school when conditions became dangerous, and just kept them at home. The girls then married at about the same ages they would have chosen had there been no war.[41] There are exceptions, though. Two women in my close network married in their teens and now in their forties, have grandchildren or children about to marry. Grooms' ages showed an increase from 1930 to 2010,

40 These figures include outsiders married there (brides), and exclude residents who married elsewhere (also brides). In some cases the priest did not record the couple's ages, so I omitted them from my analysis. The records suffer from errors both of exclusion and inclusion of known couples. One final flaw of my data is that people are not always precise about ages, and this was especially true in the past.

41 However, the war had an adverse effect upon the education of both sexes.

amounting to almost ten years. The increase makes sense in terms of the economy, as I noted above.[42]

My long-term figures suggest earlier effects of the economy on numbers of marriages in a given year. The Great Depression of the early 1930s depressed the number of weddings for a few years, and there was a slight effect during and at the end of World War II, after the French and British left. On the other hand, the economy prospered during the civil war, and many couples married then.[43]

5 Family Structure and Size

According to the census I conducted in 1972–1973, mean household size was 5.6 persons. The modal household, 244 in all out of 357 households, consisted of a married couple with their young children. An additional twenty-three consisted of a widowed parent with children. Only seventy-eight households were extended family households or contained relatives other than the married couple and their children. The remaining households contained various arrangements of kin or consisted of single individuals. There were no households composed of unrelated individuals.

According to my census from 2004, mean household size was 3.6 persons, so on the whole households were much smaller than they were in the early 1970s. The modal household consisted of the nuclear family, and there were 387 of these out of a total of 609 households. The next most frequent household type, at seventy-two, consisted of a widow or widower with children. Next, at forty-eight, came households consisting only of a married couple. These included young couples just establishing a household, or older couples whose children had grown and left home. An additional thirty consisted of expanded nuclear families, that is, nuclear families with the household head's widowed mother or unmarried sister living with them.

There were seventeen stem families, that is, an old couple with one married son, plus his wife and children, living with them. There was only one classical extended family (grandparents, sons and their wives, and grandchildren). Eighteen households were composed of groupings of relatives characterized

42 Prem Saxena and his colleagues, 2004, in a nation-wide survey, also noted the effects of the war in elevating ages at marriage.

43 Overall, marriage rates have fallen in Lebanon since then, because of the country's poor economic situation; and divorce rates have risen (Lebanon: Drop in Standard of Living 1994). The economy has deteriorated further in recent years.

by no particular kinship structure. Eleven households consisted of single individuals, typically widows or widowers, and nine households were composed of siblings.

In sum, overall today households are smaller than they were in the 1970s. As well, the percentage of nuclear family households increased from 1972–1973 to 2004. Also, the larger kinds of households, such as stem families and expanded nuclear families, decreased in percentage. Old people evidently prefer to live near, but not with, their offspring.[44]

Apart from structure, family size is also in part a function of women's age at marriage, and in part a function of the use of birth control practices. These, in turn, are a function of both availability and motivation.

In 1972–1973, the modal household size (197 cases) consisted of 1–5 individuals; an additional 150 households consisted of 6–10 individuals, and only four households held more than 10 members. I did not inquire as to birth control practices or motivations for family size. However, then as now, Lebanese culture was pronatalist. Women married young and were expected to get pregnant soon after the wedding; family members looked forward to the first baby within a year. Women looked forward to being mothers and their mothers to being grandmothers. At about thirty, one woman of my acquaintance was already a grandmother, although this was unusual. In 1995 I interviewed an old woman who told me that in the old days when a woman stopped nursing a baby, she got pregnant again. Now they go to the doctor, she added, and have only a few babies. A number of families in my personal circle had been large; women had given birth to seven, nine, or eleven children. However, by the 1970s, these families were a thing of the past.

In 2004, mean household size varied by age of household head. These numbers reflected not only the classical household cycle from young couples who have not yet completed their families to those whose children have mostly left home, but also changes in desired number of children across the decades since the 1970s. Moreover, the number of children borne by women also differed by age of household head. So, older women had borne more children than the younger ones, although doubtless those in the youngest age cohort had not completed their childbearing.

I asked respondents in 1995 and 2000 how many children they thought were ideal. Several people thought that two was a good number, but almost as many thought that four (two boys and two girls) was a nice size (a "cute" family). Most respondents prefaced their remarks about family size with comments

44 I learned this from an old lady who, together with her husband, lived with her son and his family. She would have preferred to live in a separate household with just her husband.

about the expense of raising children, the high costs of school fees, and the overall bad state of the economy. Some added that times had really changed since the days of their parents and grandparents, when women had six or more children.

There is no doubt that limiting family size is now an acceptable concept in al-Firzul, and that its acceptability is due mainly to economic factors. Women's freedom to work outside of the house does not seem to be an explicit motivation, for by and large women tend to drop out of the labor force at marriage or around the time their first child is born. There still seems to be an expectation that a bride will soon become pregnant, so although I did not ask how couples were limiting their families it would seem that birth control follows the birth of at least the first child.

Nationally, the total fertility rate fell to just under three children per woman by 1996 (United Nations. Lebanon 1998), and to 1.51 by 2015 (Inhorn 2018: 459). Evidently delayed age at marriage is an important factor in reduced family size (United Nations. Executive Board 2001; Khudr 1997).[45] Contraceptive pills and other means of birth control are available without prescription from pharmacies, and contraceptive pills may be obtained free from the Lebanese Family Planning Association. Abortion is against the law except to save the life of the mother, but illegal abortions may be obtained (United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2002: 100–101; Pfister 2018).[46]

Al-Firzul thus fits very well into the national picture. Ages of women at marriage have been rising. As well, there is a widespread perception that large families are economically unwise. Also, young women are receiving more education than their forebears, so are marrying later. Thus, there are numerous motivations for reducing family size. Lebanese ecclesiastics are not pleased at the trend toward smaller family size. One woman told me that the Melkite Bishop of Zahle had stated on television that married women these days were having fewer children because they were more interested in clothes and careers. This was why there was a shortage of priests and nuns, he said.

45 In Lebanon, today the average age of first marriage for men is 32.8 years, for women 28.8 years (Bouclaous *et al.* 2020: 3).

46 I have no information on contraceptive use in al-Firzul or recourse to abortion by its women.

6 Conclusion

Compared to the 1970s and before, by the second decade of the twenty-first century families in al-Firzul are smaller because women are marrying at later ages in order to complete their education. Also, village couples evidently are practicing some form of contraception, at least after the first child is born. Women and men alike find that it is too expensive to raise and educate a large family.

Additionally, villagers prefer to live in nuclear families. These were the predominant form as early as the 1970s. They spend a lot of their time with relatives, but they do not care to live in the same household with them. Residential clusters of related households, a residue of patrilineal inheritance patterns, continue to exist, although less frequently, thanks to the development of the "second village." However, the telephone and the automobile continue to connect those living in the "second village" with their relatives in the old village core. Nevertheless, because families are now scattered geographically, social control has weakened, leaving more options for individual choice, for departing from older kinship patterns.

Marriage by choice, or romantic love, has become the principal means of choosing a spouse. Arrangement has pretty much died out, as have abductions and elopements. Moreover, although I did not specifically explore this topic, I suspect that there are fewer marriages with relatives than used to be the case. When one-fourth to one-third of marriages are with non-villagers, they necessarily are with non-relatives.

Kinship and family are still important to Farāzli. However, their conception of these has changed to a middle class pattern. Households are smaller, women and men marry later, for love, not by arrangement, and in most cases husbands support their wives and children economically. These trends are the result, for the most part, of al-Firzul's post-civil war affluence. Moreover, increasingly younger generations are spending more leisure time with friends they have made in school, or elsewhere in the area. It is not so much that kinship is less important as it is that kinship has been supplemented by friendship. As one young man put it, al-Firzul "is open now. Not like the old days."[47]

Returning to the typography of power, first of all both vertical and horizontal integration have had their impact. The civil war was, above all, vertical, "power

47 I have not been able to research this topic in depth, although I consider it very important. Suad Joseph (2013) asserted that anthropologists need to pay much more attention to the lives of children and youth in the Arab countries. How is friendship with peers part of their lives today? What difference does it make?

over," and villagers did their best to stay out of it. It had its impact, though, causing a major disjuncture in people's lives, changing the village layout, disrupting the local economy, and interrupting educational careers. Since the war, couples have had fewer children because of the high costs of raising them. Both education and high standards of living have raised the age of marriage for both sexes. Extended social contacts outside the village, in the Zahle region and elsewhere in Lebanon, have had the effect of supplementing kinship with friendship. Last, religious beliefs, religious law, and civil law have continued to retard change.

FIGURE 8 Commemorating Sa'ada's engagement, c. 1915
BY PERMISSION OF THE JABRA FAMILY

FIGURE 9 Afternoon coffee; *qarābit niswān*, 2000s
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 10
Family and food; celebrating a baptism, 2005
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 11 Dancing at a wedding, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 12 Singing *īhās* at their brother's wedding, 1982
BY PERMISSION OF THE JABRA FAMILY

FIGURE 13 Family excursion to Baalbek, 2001
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER 4

Women, Education, and Work

A woman without education is a blind woman.

• • •

A woman can work at everything nowadays: computers, engineering, economics, tourism, everything.

• • •

The most important thing for women is always to take care of their husbands and children.

Excerpts from interviews

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In the days before girls had access to schooling in al-Firzul and only a few boys went to school, children grew up learning adult work from their parents. Boys who attended the school run by the priest learned to read and write, and both sexes learned the rudiments of arithmetic. That was about all the formal schooling children obtained.

Girls learned to cook, clean house, do laundry, care for children, manage small animals such as chickens, and grow a kitchen garden. They fetched water from the well, and worked on the farm planting, weeding, and harvesting. During my early field work, mature women related childhood anecdotes about working in the fields and vineyards or performing domestic chores. One told me she saw a wolf as she was coming back to the house with a basket of grapes. Another had a story about a time when she was quite young and was set to watching milk heat on the fire; that it boiled over made a big impression on her. Neither of these women had had the chance to go to school. The younger of the two was born in about 1920, the older around the turn of the twentieth century.

Boys learned to plow with mules or pairs of oxen, how to care for large animals, how to sow, cultivate, and irrigate crops, and when and how to harvest

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them. One man who left the village in about 1950 to pursue secondary and higher education, related a memorable incident from his childhood involving one of his uncles. The older man took his nephew, showed him how to harness the oxen to the plow, then took his hands and placed them on the plow handles.

At that time a future of subsistence farming and housekeeping was all most men and women could foresee. One did not need much, if any, formal education for that. Training at home and on the farm was all one needed. Education and work have changed.

The principal sources of change appear to be gradual incorporation into state frameworks beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the influence of diaspora kin, the economy, and later on, the Civil War and global media. A particularly important period was that between the two World Wars. By then a number of villagers had emigrated to North America. They sent back remittances, enabling their kin at home to enjoy a higher standard of living. Some of the earliest innovators making the transition to market farming were those who had uncles and other relatives abroad. Market farming presupposes markets, and the growing Lebanese infrastructure of roads, communications links, and wholesale markets began to make market farming possible. By the time I carried out my initial field work in 1972–1973, local farmers were sending their produce to the Beirut wholesale market located near the port.

Market farming made villagers more prosperous and brought villagers into closer contact with other Lebanese, and most importantly with Beirut. New ideas, new prosperity, new opportunities gave a substantial boost to improvements in education, especially that of girls.

1 Education

Al-Firzul has witnessed far-reaching changes in the education of its young people, particularly its girls. These changes began in the period of the French Mandate, during World War II and in the post-war years. As the village became better integrated into the state, and as its economy grew, educational opportunities increased. Attitudes changed. The civil war caused some setbacks, but today education is considered desirable for women and men alike. These changes can be seen in information I collected during 1972–1973 and after the civil war.

1.1 *Education before the 1970s*

Before the establishment of formal schools during the 1940s, plus post-World War II economic growth, few boys and men were educated, and no girls and

women. Attitudes toward education were not favorable even for males, and the general belief was that women did not need education to be good farmers, housewives, and mothers. In those days, education was valued mainly for its instrumental value, that is, it was related to occupation and income. Additionally, even though al-Firzul was located along the main road through the Bekaa, it was not yet well connected to the larger Lebanese context. Hence, villagers had not learned much about other values of education.[1]

Prior to World War II, the only formal education available to villagers was that offered by the village priest, who gave instruction in reading, writing, and the Gospel to a few boys. More advanced education had to be sought in Zahle or elsewhere, usually in a monastery or convent, but few village young people pursued this option.

In 1941, the Lebanese government opened a primary school in the village, admitting both girls and boys. Only in the late 1960s did it add the *brevet* (middle school), and it still does not offer a secondary program. Also, sometime during the 1940s, the Melkite Greek Catholic Salvatorian Sisters (the nuns, *ar-rāhibāt*, as the villagers call them) took over the priest's school, admitting girls on a wide scale.[2] Until the late 1970s, it offered only the primary certificate. In the Zahle area, religious orders opened several schools which admitted girls. Al-Firzul's nuns added the *terminal* (secondary school) in 2006, but the government school still offers only the *brevet*.[3]

In 1989, the Salvatorian priests established Dar al-Ṣadāqa, a vocational school, in al-Firzul, where it is located on the main Bekaa highway.[4] It offers courses in subjects such as furniture making and carpentry, computer studies,

1 Afif Tannous observed that it was not until villagers in Bishmizzeen, in the Koura, learned about education in Lebanon and the larger world through the silk trade, missionaries, and returned emigrants, that they became interested in educating their children (1943: 339–342). Similarly, in his mid-1950s survey of villages just north of al-Firzul, Charles Churchill found that lack of interest in education, particularly for girls, was related to limited contacts with the outside (1959: 5–7).

2 Not surprisingly, the two schools are located in different quarters, the government school in the Upper Quarter, the nuns' school in the Lower.

3 I have been told that today most of the students on the *brevet* and *terminal* levels at the nuns' school are from outside the village, typically local Shiite children. Evidently, villagers prefer to send their children to what they perceive as better schools, namely private schools run by religious orders, in Zahle. Their perceptions seem to have some basis in fact (Frayha 2009).

4 The school is part of a larger project called Foyer de l'Amitié, founded in 1979 in Zahle. From there it was relocated to al-Firzul in 1989. Beginning in 2010, it received additional support from Digital Opportunity Trust Lebanon. It also receives support from the YMCA and several international organizations (Foyer de l'amitié, n.d.; Digital Opportunity (DOT) – Lebanon, "A New Fouras Center," 2010). Like al-Firzul's nuns, the Salvatorian priests are based at Dayr al-Mkhallis near Sidon.

and other technical subjects. Both young women and young men attend its classes, with students coming from villages throughout the area.

Lebanon's educational system was created under the French mandate (1920–1943). Following the French model, there is a nation-wide curriculum, divided into primary, intermediate, and secondary levels. The primary certificate (*certificat* or *certificat primaire*) is roughly equivalent to North American grade 6.[5] The *brevet*, the intermediate level, is equivalent to completing North American junior high or middle school. To complete it a child must pass a national examination.

The secondary level includes a vocational track in addition to the academic one. However, most Lebanese consider academic learning superior to vocational training, and it seems in fact that the vocational schools are not very good. Formerly, completing the academic secondary level required passing two national examinations, the *baccalauréat* (*bachot*) and *philosophie* (*philo*), which were taken in two consequent years. Now the *philosophie* has been eliminated, leaving only the *baccalauréat*, which is called the *terminal*.

French is offered in most schools in Lebanon, frequently as a medium of instruction in addition to Arabic. Al-Firzul's two schools emphasize French and Arabic, offering only a little English.

In 2004, I learned about girls' education during the post-World War II years, while visiting a middle-aged woman named Jeannette, who was born during the 1940s and began school during the 1950s. While we sipped coffee, girls' education came up in the conversation. Jeannette said she had been very good in both French and Arabic, and that the nuns at school had cited her as an example for the other children.

So why, I asked, did she not continue after the primary certificate? Well, in those days she would have had to go outside of the village and that was not done then.[6] Now, she added, things are different. Girls get a lot of education and get jobs. Why is it different today? She said it was because village young men were marrying girls from elsewhere, and vice versa. In the old days, villagers only married each other (that is, they were removed from larger social and cultural currents). She added that a lot of the girls she went to school with can barely read and write now.

Her mother, who had come with me, said that when she was young, girls got no schooling at all. She insisted that all her children go to school, that they not

5 When I first went to Lebanon, obtaining the primary certificate required passing a national examination, but that is no longer the case.

6 Today children take shuttles to schools outside of the village or their parents drive them, so concern for the well-being of girls is no longer a factor.

take off to help on the farm or at home. She and Jeannette said that at the end of the term so many children had been pulled out of school that few were left except her and her sisters.

1.2 *Education during the 1970s*

One can view the 1970s as a period in which the new educational opportunities of the 1940s began to show effects. In 1972–1973, about two-thirds of individuals over the age of ten in al-Firzul were literate, a figure similar to the rural average for Lebanon at the time.[7] Very few women past their mid-thirties had any education at all, and most were illiterate. Few men in this cohort held even the primary certificate, and many of them were also illiterate.[8] They had not attended school because they were needed to work for their families.

By the 1970s, most people seemed to regard at least the primary certificate as necessary in and of itself. Few women needed to make their own living, because it was expected that they would marry and be supported by their husbands. However, a handful of parents were beginning to think that it might be useful for their daughters to get more education, just in case something happened to their husbands. In the main during the 1970s, though, education for girls past the level of the *brevet* reflected family affluence more than any other factor. The location of schools in the village was also important, for then girls could simply walk to school.

By the 1970s most individuals in the cohort aged 11–30 had attended or were attending school, although eight males and sixty-one females had not (that is, were illiterate). More males than females had obtained their primary certificate, but more females had completed the *brevet*. However, about three times as many males as females had completed secondary training (academic or vocational/technical). Very few women or men had obtained university degrees. In short, villagers seemed to view education up through the *brevet* to be desirable, but beyond that, it seemed to be sought mainly for practical purposes.

It is hard to tell what effects children's experiences in school had on their continuing their education. From helping children with their homework and watching them play, I learned that rote and authority were uppermost. One little girl, aged about 5, played "school," mimicking the teachers, waving a big

7 For 1970, these were 47.3% for women, 74.0% for men, and 60.9% overall (Chamie 1985: 50). The figures for al-Firzul included 83% literate males eleven and older, but only 54% literate females.

8 Anne Fuller (1961) commented that during the 1930s, about a third of the men in Buarij, a nearby Sunni village, were literate, but added that their skills had deteriorated from lack of use.

stick, and issuing loud strident commands. As near as I could gather, most of the elementary level teachers in the nuns' school were only secondary school graduates.[9] They wrote out materials from the textbooks on the blackboard, the children copied them, and then did their best to memorize everything.[10]

Subjects such as arithmetic were offered both in Arabic, the language of the children, and in French. French, in other words, was not taught simply as a subject, but was used as a medium of instruction. Children had to be compliant and persistent to get through the system.

1.3 *Education: The Civil War and Later*

The civil war had mixed effects. On the one hand, Christians from other parts of Lebanon came to live in al-Firzul, bringing new ideas about education with them. On the other hand, when conditions got really bad, parents kept their children at home, and schools were closed for long periods. The civil war caused a setback for many children's education.[11]

The war had a particularly deleterious effect upon girls' education in the village. Respondents interviewed in 1995 and 2000 stated that many women during the war married early instead of continuing their education. Some women of my acquaintance married young and became grandmothers while still in their forties. In many cases, though, it seems that parents took their daughters out of school, and kept them at home for a few more years before they married. Nevertheless, had it not been for the war, their education would have been much better.

Compared to the 1970s and before, the post-civil war period witnessed vast improvements in the education of girls and women.[12] Overall, only one percent of al-Firzul's population is illiterate today; virtually all males are literate, while only a few elderly women are illiterate. About eighteen percent of females have completed some kind of post-secondary degree versus only fourteen percent of males. Moreover, on both the secondary and post-secondary levels, women are more likely to have completed academic programs, men technical or vocational courses of study.

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9 In other words, they were not well-qualified.

10 The national examinations for each level of education rewarded memory skills, and this is still the case.

11 UNESCO figures for the war years, although spotty, suggest a lot of fluctuation in enrollments across the country (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Institute of Statistics, n.d.).

12 By the 1990s, national educational enrollment by gender, on all levels from pre-elementary through university, approached parity (M. Khalaf 1995).

What has helped to promote young women's education on the post-secondary level in al-Firzul is that both the Lebanese University and Université Saint-Joseph offer degree programs in Zahle. Additionally, the local branch of the American University of Science and Technology offers a variety of technical, vocational, and liberal arts programs.[13] In Beirut and Byblos the major universities (Université Saint-Joseph, Lebanese American University, and American University of Beirut) provide limited residence space on campus. Private enterprises and religious orders offer respectable places for young women students to live off campus.

By the 1990s, affluence and better opportunities had further raised women's educational levels in al-Firzul, and attitudes toward higher education for women continued to change for the better. In surveys conducted in 1995 and 2000, I found that respondents, regardless of gender or generation, uniformly supported education for girls and women. "Education is a good thing. It is a light." "[A woman should have] as much [education] as she likes. Education has no limit." "Education increases awareness and culture." "A woman without education is a blind woman."

Some respondents qualified their remarks in various ways. Those who specified the minimum level of education said that completion of secondary school was necessary. A few added that circumstances, such as lack of money or marriage, might place limits on women's education.

Several respondents commented on the reasons why education was important for women. "A man does not care; he can survive without education, but for a woman, education is very important." "Education is a weapon in the hands of women, especially when a woman does not intend to get married or when she becomes a widow." "She (a married woman) should be educated because this is an important factor for better understanding between her and her husband and her children." "A woman needs education to be able to raise her children." "Sometimes men need women to work and help them in earning their living." A male lawyer specializing in divorce said, "I have cases of an uneducated woman without a family to shelter her, and who accepts being beaten by her husband, deprived and cheated on, without doing anything. She just stays home because she has no other place to go. If she were educated and had a job, she would leave her husband the next day."

In short, villagers now view education for women as making them better wives and mothers, as a backup for times of financial need, or in case they find themselves without a husband or with a bad one. Moreover, education helps a

13 This for-profit institution operates in English, and has academic arrangements with some American institutions.

woman to understand the world. In addition to purely instrumental reasons, then, it seems education is now viewed as good in and of itself.

1.4 *Understanding Changes in Education*

Affluence is a critical factor. Now that girls and boys are no longer needed to work on the family farm, and families can afford school tuition and other costs, there are few limitations on education. Children and young people can stay in school for longer periods, and obtain higher certificates and degrees. These in turn are necessary for life and work in an advanced economy.

2 Work

In rural areas of the Middle East, traditionally women expected to work hard all their lives, on the farm, in the home, caring for children, and in the production of food, textiles, and crafts. Residents of al-Firzul had definite ideas as to what constituted proper work for women and men.[14] In one way or another, the home or family farm was the focal point for women's activities.

2.1 *Early Twentieth Century*

One old lady, born around the turn of the twentieth century, narrated the following: when her mother went to the plain to harvest wheat, her aunt went to the vineyard to harvest grapes. She, then aged about 12, stayed home to clean house. All the women and girls knitted, crocheted, and embroidered for their families. They made pillow covers and sweaters, and crocheted the edging for their headscarves. She knitted, too, when she was little. She had time for fun, though, playing with her friends in the hills, coming back only to eat.

They had a lot of animals, chickens, a cow for milk, and at least one sheep, for *dēmi*.[15] They would force-feed it to make it fat, for the best *dēmi* contained a lot of fat. When they slaughtered the sheep just before Lent, they ate some of it raw, made *ghummi* with rice and the offal, and made *dēmi*.

One time, she recalled, her mother put some milk in a big pot to heat in order to make yogurt. Then she left the house for a while. She told the children, "Be careful that the milk does not boil over." The milk started to rise to the top of the pot. She told her brother, "Help me lift the pot from the fire." He said,

14 If work needed to be done, though, and a person of the appropriate gender was not around, anyone who was able did the work; they said, "*baddna nʿīsh*" ("we need to live").

15 Preserved mutton, in many parts of Lebanon called *qawarma*, is used to provide protein and flavor to numerous dishes made from grains and dried legumes.

"No, leave the pot on the fire and let the milk fill the pot to the top!" The milk boiled over.

She married when she was about 15, just before World War I. Her first two children, twin girls, died during the war; they were born too small (probably premature), she said.[16] World War I was hard all over Lebanon, and food was scarce. Once, she recalled, Ottoman soldiers came to their house and demanded food.

2.2 *The 1930s and 1940s*

In those days, there was no electricity, no bottled gas, and consequently no appliances. A generation before they did not even have kerosene lamps. Instead, they used little oil lamps with wicks. There was no farm machinery, only animal and human power.[17]

They would work all day in the plain, planting and harvesting. Villagers grew mainly wheat, barley, chickpeas, lentils, and beans, with some fruits and vegetables for household consumption. The women would come back in the evening to cook, clean, wash and iron,[18] spin yarn, sew and knit, and bake. There were some twenty people (adults and children) in the extended family house. One respondent said everything was dirty, including the barefoot children. They would cook "a big pot of beans" (*ṭanjarat fasūlya*) for everyone. They would work so hard, and got very tired.

There was a public oven, a *tannūr*. It was like a hole in the ground with raised sides, she said. They burned wood in it to heat it, then stuck the loaves around the sides to bake. Women took turns using the oven. Once a little boy fell in and was badly burned.[19]

Pregnant women worked until they started having labor pains, and one woman gave birth on the road. After giving birth, they soon went back to work. They swaddled their babies and took them with them so they could nurse them, laying them on a mat in the shade. Older children played near their parents, or worked with them. One little boy, trying to imitate his parents' work with a sickle, managed to injure his finger. He tried to pack it with dirt to hide it, but the blood seeped through. To this day he has a split fingernail.

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16 Nine other children survived to adulthood, three of whom lived into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

17 Consult Houda Kassatly and Nadine Panayot-Haroun (2013) for descriptions of the equipment they used.

18 The irons they used were heated by hot coals placed inside.

19 See Kassatly (2000: 78–79) for photographs detailing use and construction.

2.3 *The 1950s*

According to another respondent, born in 1939, by the 1950s not much had changed; women still worked on the farms. At that time, there were few vineyards or orchards; most people raised grain and legumes as before. Women would do housework in the mornings, and prepare food to take to the fields.

When a family had grapevines, the men needed to cultivate between the rows early in the season. The women would hold back the branches so the mule, plow, and man could get through. Women and children helped staking the grapevines. There were a lot of biting gnats, my respondent recalled. During the grape harvest, the women would sit on mats, to pick over and pack the bunches. After the harvest was over, the men would prune the vines. The women gathered up the cuttings, then the men took them home on the donkey to be used for firewood.

Women washed clothes by hand. If a family did not have water piped in, and most households did not, the women and girls had to go to the spring for water. Then they heated the water over an open fire. They washed the clothes in a big tub, using soap in bars; they did not have washboards, just rubbed the soap on the clothes. After rinsing the clothes, they boiled them. They washed woven mats in the creek by beating them in the water to shake the dirt loose. At night, by the light of a kerosene lamp, they sewed clothes by hand, or on little hand-cranked machines. Only the village seamstresses had foot treadle machines. Another task was spinning wool with drop spindles (*maghāzil*). They used the yarn for knitting sweaters, shawls, and other warm garments. By about 1960, though, they began to buy ready-made yarn from Zahle, lightening their workload rather considerably.

They boiled wheat over open fires for *birghul*, and then took it to the mill on the creek to be processed.[20] In those days the mill was still water-powered. Over open fires the women boiled sour grape juice to make verjuice,[21] and ripe grape juice to make molasses. They also made grape vinegar. They made tomato paste, *kishk*,[22] and raisins. They made apricot jam, put up grape leaves, dried fruit and vegetables.[23] Men helped with most of these chores. The

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20 Known as bulgur wheat in the West, *birghul* is parboiled cracked wheat.

21 Verjuice (*ḥuṣrum*), a sour condiment, is made by boiling down and salting the juice of unripe grapes.

22 A winter soup powder made from *birghul* and yogurt.

23 For details of traditional women's food preservation techniques see Kanafani-Zahar (1994). Up to the early 1970s, a considerable part of the food put up for winter consisted of wheat, which could be converted into flour and *birghul*, and dried legumes. These were purchased by the time of my 1970s fieldwork, but had to be prepared by the housewives.

women washed clothes and ironed. They cleaned house. They looked after the children.

My respondent's mother said, referring to the work she did, "I got very tired." When the children were little and they lived with her father-in-law in a big extended family house, she did housework, and looked after the chickens, the cow, and the goats. She worked in the fields and vineyards. She did the washing and ironing for her family and a couple of bachelor brothers-in-law. At night she used to sew clothes for the children and underwear for her husband. In those days, they had no electricity, so she would set the kerosene lantern next to her little hand-cranked sewing machine on the floor. She said she lost teeth with every child. By her fifties, she needed to go to the dentist because she had trouble eating, and got a set of false teeth. She bore seven children, all of whom are still living.[24]

In those days, everyone kept chickens, goats, a cow, and sheep. Today, she added, people do not keep animals because they think they are dirty. Now they buy meat, eggs, and milk. Even for the weekend before Lent, they buy a sheep to slaughter.[25]

2.4 *Work during the 1970s*

By the 1970s, the village had completed the transition from subsistence farming to market farming begun after World War II. Commercial farming made possible a much higher material standard of living, lightening women's workload considerably. By then houses had electricity and running water, and oil stoves for heat. Water for bathing and laundry was heated in wood-burning boilers, washing-up water on the propane stoves used for cooking.

Women acquired a variety of appliances: propane stoves for cooking, electric irons, semi-automatic washing machines, food processors, and refrigerators. Not every woman had all of these items, but the number and variety of appliances increased every year. Although women had participated extensively in subsistence farming, from planting through weeding and cultivating to harvesting, the advent of commercial fruit growing, increased hiring of casual farm labor, and the purchase of farm machinery, freed most of them from all farm work save help in the harvests.

Improved transportation, together with the higher amounts of cash, also affected women's work. If a woman did not have the time, energy, or

24 Her mother-in-law bore nine, one of whom died in infancy, two as adults.

25 During Lent one was not supposed to consume dairy products, eggs, or meat. They slaughtered the sheep to have one last feast, and then preserved the remainder for consumption after Lent.

help, she did not have to do without necessary foodstuffs, for she could buy them. She had the cash, too, for ready-made clothing and household furnishings. Nevertheless, al-Firzul's women still worked much harder than their urban counterparts.

In this section, I will divide women's work during the 1970s into two categories, household work and income-generating work. Not surprisingly, the former was much more acceptable than the latter, especially if it involved working outside the home.

2.4.1 Household Work

A married woman who was the wife of a household head was in charge of food preparation and preservation; production of some clothing and bedding; mending and laundering; house cleaning; managing household property; caring for her children; and keeping up the kitchen garden. She worked hard, for she was in charge of a household averaging five to six persons. She did, however, have help from her daughters, perhaps daughters-in-law, sisters, her husband, and relatives in other households.

Even during winter, the slack agricultural season, tasks such as bread baking and laundry were all-day affairs. Laundry was done once a week, or oftener, if there were babies and small children in the family. They used semi-automatic washing machines, boiled everything after rinsing it, and then hung it out in the sun. Depending on the size of their families, women baked about every ten days to every three weeks. They made the *khubz as-ṣāj*, a single round layer made from whole wheat yeast dough, baked on an iron dome heated from below. Bread-making was a complex operation involving two women and many hours of work.

Summer heralded the time of heavy work, for women then began a round of food preservation tasks. They dried vegetables, herbs, and fruits. They made jam and pickles. They preserved olives in brine and balls of *lebani*[26] in olive oil. They made raisins, molasses, vinegar, and verjuice. They made rose water by distilling rose petals and water. They made *birghul*, boiling the wheat themselves over open fires, drying it in the sun, and taking it to a mill to be crushed. From *birghul* and yogurt they made *kishk*. They minced fat mutton from a whole carcass, rendered it with salt, and put it down in crocks to make *dēmi* for long-term storage. They made tomato paste. They put up grape leaves. They made yogurt and cheese with milk purchased from the nomads or neighboring villages.

26 *Lebani* is a soft green cheese made from yogurt.

Tomato paste was about the only widely used commercially canned vegetable, but people also bought dried milk and canned meat and fish. Nevertheless, in a country where food was relatively expensive, and labor cheap, housewives' labor represented a substantial saving of money. Women took pride, as well, in the quality of their home products. Housewives were also in charge of directing the purchase of staple supplies. They knew what and how much was needed, and which merchants had the best quality and prices.

A good deal of women's attention during the warm months was thus, like that of the ant in La Fontaine's fable, directed toward laying in supplies for the winter. Partly this was a legacy of the old days when households were nearly self-sufficient. But it was also convenient to have everything on hand, in case unexpected guests should arrive. Civil disorders and international conflicts could also wreak havoc with the supply of foodstuffs and other necessities. During the October war in 1973, for example, women were concerned with, among other things, the shortage of kerosene and sugar. It was possible, too, for a village to become snowbound, as al-Firzul was for a few days during January, 1973.

Women also helped on the family farm, although their work was usually limited to assisting in the harvests. Men did the heavier tasks such as picking the grapes or cherries, and those involving transport, while the women sat in a shady spot preparing the crates for transport to the produce market in Beirut.

As mothers, it was women who were chiefly responsible for the care and upbringing of their children. They fed and clothed them, played with them, and comforted them. Fathers were also responsible, and in fact most men enjoyed children, but by virtue of the physical ties between mothers and their children, it was thought that the care of children was women's special function.

Even though most women no longer breast-fed their infants, the special compassion of women, and their function in building character, was expressed through the idiom of milk. When I asked my male research assistant why he thought his future wife should be chiefly responsible for the care of their children, he pointed to his flat chest, and said, "I have no milk." A humorous anecdote from one family illustrated the symbolic importance of milk. A woman had had to wean one of her baby sons to cows' milk, and that was why, she joked, he was so stubborn.

Up to this point I have spoken of women as if they were all married women who were mistresses of their own households. These women had greatest managerial responsibilities, as well as the principal care of children. But otherwise, unmarried women engaged in most of the same activities as married women.

They helped their fathers and brothers in harvests; they did housework, and helped with food preparation and preservation, childcare, and laundry.

Old women with married sons might abdicate managerial responsibilities to their daughters-in-law, and cut back on their workload. Young widows, on the other hand, had to take on their husbands' productive work on the farm, with the assistance of hired hands. Small wonder, then, that they felt overworked. One widow I knew, Georgette, had been widowed young with four small children. They lived in a tiny house on the edge of town, barely scraping by, for her husband had come from a poor family. When the children grew up, however, one of the boys was able to provide his mother with a much higher standard of living, and now her old house has been much enlarged.

2.4.2 Income-Generating Work

This work could take place within the home, where a woman might produce items for sale. She might also find paid employment outside the home, or in rare cases develop a small business.

There were almost no employment opportunities in retail trade or manufacturing during the 1970s. Education also affected women's employment outside the home. Few women above the age of 31 had any education at all, so just about all they could do outside the home was agricultural labor or domestic work for other families. Neither of these was acceptable except *in extremis*.

The few teachers and secretaries or clerks came from the younger and better educated cohort. The most respectable work outside the home was teaching, followed by secretarial work. The only other profession on the horizon was pharmacy, and the local doctor's sister was in fact studying pharmacy in Beirut.

Additionally, it was thought that married women with families should be home looking after their children, houses, and family farms or other enterprises, and women shared that opinion. Urban middle class standards for married women's lives were already well established. The following summaries of interviews with women provide examples:

A woman should do everything for her child, while her child should obey and love her. She should not sit around drinking coffee and neglecting her family. If a woman has no children, working outside of her home is acceptable.

A good woman teaches her children to be good adults. She loves her children and her husband, and does everything for them. She should not gossip or meddle in other people's affairs. She should work at home, cook for her children, arrange their marriages, and make them good people.

A third woman repeated the proverb, "the man brings, the woman builds." She said that a woman should obey her husband, be a good mother, not make

trouble among neighbors or between her husband and his brothers, or repeat malicious gossip. A woman's first thought should be about her home.

Only seven women were engaged in any kind of salaried or waged work. There were a couple of peddlers, old women who had carried out trade in needlework, *kishk*, soap, and cooking oil since their youth. Their work was not considered respectable.

That left income-generating work inside the home. Over a hundred women were engaged in such enterprises on a part-time basis, utilizing housewives' traditional skills. Thus, at home they made food products such as *kishk* or vinegar. One or two had knitting machines, and others sold crocheted garments and doilies. There were a few dressmakers.[27] Those engaged in home-based income generating activities regarded themselves as housewives, however.[28]

2.5 *Work Post-civil War*

After the civil war (1975–1990), women's work changed, reflecting the local economy and new attitudes toward women's education. At the same time, contradictions remain between attitudes favoring women's employment outside the home and beliefs that valorize women's responsibilities to home, children, and husband.

Formal and informal interviews I made in 2000 and 2004 support these generalizations. Middle-aged women, married or single, were less likely than younger women to report performing any kind of work except "housewife" or "not working" (which were more or less synonymous). Younger women were much more likely to be engaged in skilled or waged work than their older counterparts, who had less education and fewer opportunities than younger women, married or single.

When I looked at the combination of marital status and age, I found that young single women were mainly students, while single women in their middle years might have jobs, professions, or businesses. Most married women in their young and middle years were housewives. A few of the ones in their middle years also reported that they had jobs or engaged in volunteer charitable work.

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27 Dressmakers worked in a room within their own homes, although they had to learn their skills through an apprenticeship with an established tailor.

28 Jenny White found that working class women in Istanbul who engaged in income-generating needlework nevertheless regarded their work as part of their role as good women; it was not considered work as such. However, unlike the situation in al-Firzul, their work took place within a system of subcontracting production for export, benefitting the subcontractors and exporters more than the women (White 1994: 1–17). In al-Firzul, the women and their families benefitted directly from whatever the women earned.

Nearly all of the widows I interviewed were middle-aged or elderly housewives. In sum, single women had the freedom to be students or workers, or to run businesses. It was normative for married women to be housewives, but some of the ones in their middle years, once their children were grown, were able to engage in volunteer work. Other married women continued in the jobs or careers they had begun when they were younger. Because of their age, not surprisingly widows followed the norms of an earlier era.

The jobs or professions women pursued varied, but all except one required at least the *brevet*, if not post-graduate training. There were office workers, including secretaries, lawyers, teachers and tutors, business owners, shop workers and cashiers, dressmakers, bookkeepers, and the director of the village medical and dental clinic. Additionally, some women managed family land. The only job I found that did not require much, if any education, was that of a woman who worked in a bank cleaning and making coffee. Almost all of these jobs and careers were what the villagers would call "clean" (*nḍīf*, meaning indoor non-manual work requiring some degree of education).

As my ethnographic observations show, the post-civil war activities of housewives reflect new middle class standards. They no longer bake bread for household consumption, instead buying it from local bakeries. All clothing and bedding are purchased. They have more kitchen appliances than did their predecessors, including automatic washing machines, clothes dryers, dishwashers, food processors, and microwave ovens. Most women obtain their families' grocery needs from local shops and supermarkets. By the 1990s, winter food supplies (the *mūnī*) prepared by housewives consisted largely of brined olives, pickles, preserved eggplant, jam, tomato sauce, tomato paste, *dēmi*, and *kishk*. These items, though, are prepared in small quantities. Last, families are smaller than they were in the 1970s, so women have fewer children to look after.

Housework is therefore a good deal less onerous than it had been in the 1970s, and now there are maids.[29] Women no longer work in their families' orchards, vineyards, and fields, so they need new means of keeping fit. One woman I know has a treadmill in her bedroom, while her mother, mother-in-law, and grandmothers needed no exercise machines.

Today's women have the leisure and energy to adopt the middle class standards of housekeeping appropriate to their new income levels. Widely available women's magazines feature articles on beauty, home decorating, cooking, and fashion. Cookbooks are popular. One well-known book, available in Arabic, French, and English editions, features versions of familiar Lebanese recipes, a lot of desserts, and a wide range of international dishes. Some women have

29 Hired through agencies, most of these come from Ethiopia.

devised their own recipes, a new way of preparing oven-cooked potatoes, a tasty relish to top *ḥummuṣ bi-ṭaḥīni*.[30] Family meals, especially Sunday dinner, include numerous dishes.

Household furnishings have become more elaborate, including carpets, draperies, chandeliers, pictures, knickknacks, and ornate furniture. Rooms are distinguished by function, as had already begun to be the case during the 1970s: family sitting rooms, *salons*, kitchens, and bedrooms. A middle-class house or flat typically has several bedrooms and bathrooms. Kitchens now include built-in features, such as counters with stone tops, cabinets, and even tables. Fancy tilework adorns kitchen and bathroom walls.[31]

Although many housewives have maids, local values hold that these play an auxiliary role in child-rearing. Mothers should be the primary care-takers and shapers of children's characters. With all children now attending school, mothers in fact enjoy many child-free hours. Because the mothers themselves are better educated than their forebears, they are able to devote more time to overseeing their children's homework.

Advertisements on television and billboards feature pretty mothers and wives using child care and household products. Among affluent circles in the Beirut area, I have observed that families bring their maids to look after the children on occasions such as weddings or restaurant lunches, so that they can enjoy themselves without paying constant attention to possibly fractious little ones. Very likely, through emulation, at least some Farāzli will eventually follow suit.

Yet another sign of middle-class standards is that wedding and baptismal celebrations are no longer held at home. Today's festivities are held at hotels and restaurants, so although women are still involved in planning, they leave the actual preparation to a commercial enterprise. The last wedding party I attended that was held at home took place in 2004, and the women of the household prepared much of the food that was served. Earlier that year, though, a young couple celebrated the baptism of their daughter with family at a Zahle restaurant.

Two or three generations ago, wedding and baptism celebrations would have been modest, held at home. Today's celebrations reflect both affluence and middle class standards. They demand less direct work from women.

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30 Pureed chick peas prepared with *ṭaḥīni* (ground sesame paste), salt, lemon juice and, frequently, garlic.

31 Anja Peleikis observed a similar phenomenon in Zrariye, a Shiite village in southern Lebanon, where emigrant remittances enabled families to enjoy a high standard of living (2003: 68–71).

Last, women's leisure time gives them the opportunity to participate in benevolent societies, such as the ladies' religious sisterhoods. Few women belong to these organizations, but those active in such associations find them meaningful. Moreover, charitable activities are culturally appropriate for women, and village women's participation in them follows wealthy women's leadership in national organizations such as the Lebanese Red Cross and the Beirut Marathon Association.

2.6 *Understanding Changes in Attitudes toward Women and Work*

In interviews carried out in 2000, I explored attitudes held by women and men, young and middle-aged, toward women, family, and work. People held very positive attitudes toward women's education. They thought that women should get all they wanted, in whatever field they liked. Work and careers presented a more complex picture.

One young single woman said, when I asked, what are the jobs a woman should have? "You mean professional work? It depends on the specialized study that she takes." What are the jobs that a woman should not have? "Exhausting jobs, or jobs that prevent her from spending time with her family." In the 1970s, women and girls used to help their families with work on the farm. Do you think this is still common? "Some women and girls still work on the farm. It is because they (are uneducated), so they just help their families with farm work." What would you wish for Lebanese women and girls in the future? "To be able to accomplish (something) on their own, and not always have to depend on their husbands."

Another young woman said, when I asked why a woman should have a job. "It's fulfilling for woman to have a job, especially nowadays with the difficult financial situation. Working makes people earn money." She added, "Sometimes men need women to work and help them in earning a living (for the family)." What kind of jobs should a woman have? "A secretary or in an office." What jobs should she not have? "Civil engineering. Office worker is what a woman should do." Then she said, "Here in al-Firzul, a few women still work on the family farm. Some of them are ashamed of doing it, although they should be proud of working on their family's land. They do this kind of work to help their husbands." Last, I asked, what do you wish for women's future in Lebanon? "A better financial situation, especially for the youth. Many educated people cannot find a job nowadays because of the economic crisis." What do you wish for yourself? "To continue my studies and find a good job."

A middle-aged widowed housewife said, when I asked, do you think that a woman can be a leader in politics, economics and in society? "Yes, why not? She is more mature than a man." Do you think that a woman can be a leader

and a good mother and wife at the same time? "Yes, of course. Women are capable." What is the level of education a woman should reach and why? "I like a woman to go to university, get married and raise her children and when her children are grown, she can go to work. I think it is hard for a woman to work when her children are still small." Why do you think a woman should go to university? "Because women are to raise children in the future, so they should know everything before raising them" (that is, education makes women better mothers). Do you think that women should have jobs outside the home? "I would rather that women who have small children not work. When their children grow older, they can work and be home when the children return from school, in order to look after them and to commit to them. When a child comes back home and cannot find his mother, it will cause dissolution of the family, and if the husband comes back home and does not find his wife, he will leave the house." What kind of jobs should a woman have? "Women can do everything. Personally, I like women who teach future generations about life, religion, and all kinds of good things, such as family matters and patriotism." What are the jobs that a woman should not have? "Hard work. Women should not work in construction. Women should not do hard physical work."

A young woman said, when I asked, do you believe a woman can become a leader in politics, in the economy, or in society? "Yes, of course. Why not?" Then she added a qualification when I asked, do you think that a woman can be a leader and a good wife and mother at the same time? "It is hard for her to be able to be both."

Yet another young woman said, when I asked, do you think a woman can be a leader and a good wife and mother at the same time? "Yes, she can, because women can do anything." She went on to say, when I added, To whom a woman should commit first, to her husband, her family, her religion, her village, or her country? "To her husband and family because they are the most important thing for a woman." What are your wishes for women's future in Lebanon? "To be able to work in every village, an opportunity for women to improve and also for women to be able to preserve families."

A middle-aged married man said, when I asked, to whom should a woman commit first, her husband, her family, religion, her village, or her country? "To her husband and to her children." What are the jobs a woman should have? "A woman can work at everything nowadays: computers, engineering, economics, tourism, everything." Do you think there are jobs a woman should not have? "Of course a woman is not going to work on the land (laughter). Hard labor and physically exhausting jobs."

I then asked him, do you think a woman can become a leader in society, in politics, or in the economy? "Of course, yes." Do you think a woman can be a

leader in these fields and remain a good mother and wife at the same time? "It is possible." Then I asked, what are your wishes for women's future? "I wish them to struggle to get to important positions in politics and in the economy. And the most important thing for women is to always take care of their husbands and children."

Another middle-aged married man said, when I asked how he would define a woman's character. "Women and girls are fifty percent of society and they are as capable as men." How would you define a man's character? "A little bossy, but there should be understanding and equal rights between men and women." Do you think a woman can be a leader in society, in politics or in economics? "Why not? A woman is as capable as a man. Women are only physically different from men, but otherwise, they have the same mind, the same potential." Do you think a woman can be a leader in these fields and remain a good wife and mother at the same time? "Of course, but this all depends on the opportunities she gets because, as you know, our society has not given complete rights to women yet."

I concluded from these and other interviews that education was very important for women; no one disagreed. Also, on the whole women had the same characters as men, perhaps being more sensible or mature. Women's jobs or careers should be "clean," that is, indoor work, preferably that requiring at least middle or secondary school. Manual work and farm work (unless needed on the family farm) were not considered suitable. Even civil engineering was singled out; perhaps they were thinking of site foremen, or of women engineers supervising men on a job site. It could be, too, that the field is stereotyped as being masculine.

Respondents expressed a good deal of uncertainty as to whether a married woman with children could or should combine a job or career with marriage and motherhood. None of them mentioned maids and nannies, although they were available by that time at reasonable costs throughout the country, including in al-Firzul. I did not ask about them, and I can only conclude that personal relationships with husbands and children ranked very high in people's thinking. In other words, it was acceptable for hired help to do the household labor, but the actual caring for children and husband had to be done by the wife and mother.[32] Thus, women tended to drop out of the labor force (if they had been in it) after marriage or at least by the time their first babies were born.

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32 Joseph (1999: 175–176), described the valorization of motherhood which characterizes Lebanese family relationships. Today's middle class context means that housewives can actually devote their time and energy to their children, unlike the case when most Lebanese women were peasants or worked in factories. Middle class women who are

An example from my field notes in 2005 illustrates widely held attitudes on the matter. The occasion was August 14, the eve of the Dormition, the patronal feast of the village. A young man had taken his sister's baby to the *kermesse* (fair). Even before they left the young mother, a university graduate, was concerned. It was not, she said, that her brother would not take good care of her. It was simply that she did not want to leave the baby too long with someone else. As it was, she had left her "all day" with her mother-in-law. I said, "She is her grandmother." "She (the baby) will not forgive me for leaving her." I said I did not think so, and added, "You should cut the umbilical cord!" "Oh, she is too young for a *garderie*!" (I had not meant day care, but only a more relaxed attitude). So, despite the fact that the young uncle was very responsible, and that everyone loved the baby, the young woman, convinced that the child needed her, only her, all day long, was worried about being a good mother. The little girl was, to be sure, her first baby, but the mother's beliefs were not atypical.

Despite such attitudes, throughout Lebanon the availability of childcare facilities is increasing. In al-Firzul, when children are out of school for the summer, the MIDADE (an organization for children) offers a summer "*colonie*" (day camp), which is attended mostly by children from the adjacent Lower Quarter. There are also the Scouts for elementary school age children of both sexes; their clubhouse is adjacent to the park in the Upper Quarter. Not all mothers place their children in either of these. In any case, the children do not spend enough time in them to enable their mothers to take work outside of the home. Children often start pre-school early, but again they are only there a few hours a day.

In the Beirut area, "*colonies*" are widely advertised, testifying to their popularity and the need for them. There are also numerous "*garderies*" (nursery schools or day care centers), and even "*pouponnières*" (for infants). So whatever families may believe or desire, many need the services these facilities provide. Not surprisingly, it is mostly working class women without nannies who need the childcare centers. Today there are *garderies* in Zahle and elsewhere in the region, and the nuns have opened one in al-Firzul, too.

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employed are nevertheless responsible for housework and care for dependent family members, and may therefore be obliged to leave paid employment (Sugita 2010: 32–33). Working class and poor women, however, still must face the double day of paid work and domestic work. I have heard wealthy ladies in Beirut emphasize the importance of mothering. However, from what I have observed, maids and nannies carry out much of the child care, and drivers have the responsibility of taking the children to and from school.

3 Summary and Conclusion

Women's and men's educational levels are much higher than they were when I first visited al-Firzul in the 1970s. The changes began in the 1940s under the French Mandate, when the government improved the local road system, later when the newly independent Republic built a public school and the Melkite Salvatorian Sisters took over the priest's school and admitted girls. Initially, then, greater integration into the country plus the availability of education were the main factors.

These two factors continued to have an effect, as the local infrastructure improved and educational opportunities grew. They changed attitudes, too, so that there emerged a kind of positive feedback system, with every change driving further improvements. Eventually, more and more Farāzli had access to the mass media, first radio then television, and finally the Internet. As well, once educated, they could read magazines, newspapers, and books.

Today, it is considered essential for women to have all the education they want. They may not need to make a living, but as villagers see it, they need to understand their husbands, their children, the world they live in. Uneducated women are, simply, "blind." Economic changes have meant that individuals need education to work. An illiterate man could be a good subsistence farmer like his father or grandfather; he cannot run a small business.

The attitude change in al-Firzul is reflected in real changes in women's and girls' educational levels. Overall, only one percent of the population is illiterate today, and virtually all adult males are literate. Only a few elderly women remain illiterate. This represents a substantial change from the 1970s. Moreover, about eighteen percent of females have completed some kind of post-secondary degree (academic or technical) versus only fourteen percent of males. This is an amazing change from the 1970s, and reflects respondents' changed attitudes, together with greater affluence and availability of schooling.

Several young girls are university students, either in Zahle or in Beirut, others have completed their studies, some on the graduate level. Some of al-Firzul's women lawyers and teachers are single, so marriage is no longer women's only career option apart from the convent.

The educational system in the village has changed since I first observed it during the early 1970s. The teachers in the local schools are better qualified, with university degrees. I do not know to what extent they still rely on rote and authority, but perhaps less. All instruction in subjects, other than Arabic language and literature, is given in French. It is, in effect, a system of total immersion, since the children speak Arabic at home. The schools also give three hours per week of instruction in the English language. Children no longer have

to take a national examination for the *certificat primaire*, and the *philosophie* no longer exists; the former *bachot* (*baccalauréat*) has become the *terminal*.

I can only speculate as to why girls are doing better in school than young men. In al-Firzul, the young men are under pressure to find work so that they can set up independent households and get married. The girls do not face that pressure. Also, they perhaps are socialized to be more cooperative, compliant, and serious.

In the post-war years, there is little correlation between women's higher levels of education and their labor force participation. Villagers are aware that families need women's salaries, and women in particular see the desirability and the need to be financially independent. And yet most young married women, especially young mothers, are staying home, even if they had worked earlier.

Partly, of course, this reflects the continued lack of suitable opportunities in the central Bekaa.[33] The alternative is commuting to Beirut, and that is a long and arduous drive. It is unlikely that al-Firzul's women will commute by bus, for the small private vehicles are unsafe, unreliable, and unpleasant. There is no train. However, women's staying home also reflects the villagers' continued ambivalence about married women with young children participating in the labor force.

The circumstances are quite different for educated young single women. Particularly if they received their education in Beirut, they probably will not return to the village to live. There are just too few opportunities in the Bekaa, and they have become accustomed to a cosmopolitan environment and a faster-paced life. As well, they very likely will meet a young man who is not from the village. They may emigrate to North America or somewhere else in the diaspora, following the example of their ancestors who founded the *mahjar*. It is those who married in the village, then, who will have the hardest time finding work commensurate with their education.

Valentine Moghadam's patriarchal gender contract is an important factor in creating and maintaining this situation.[34] The contract, as operationalized,

33 There are not only few jobs in the area, although more than there used to be, but given villagers' ideas of what is suitable for women, the job pool is limited. In other words, gender segregation of the workplace is a factor. Educated men may also find that the local economy offers them limited scope for their abilities. However, gender ideology limits them a good deal less, and it is much easier for them, married or single, to commute or move to Beirut.

34 In her feminist critique of globalization in the Middle Eastern context, she termed the implicit or explicit rules governing the relationship between men and women the "patriarchal gender contract." In its classical form, men are expected to support their families

includes not only the infrastructure of roads and public transportation, but laws affecting women's employment,[35] and gender ideology. This last, she says, is "predicated upon the male breadwinner/female homemaker roles in which the male has direct access to wage employment or control over the means of production, and the female is largely economically dependent upon the male members of her family" (1998: 9–10).[36] At one time in al-Firzul, it also was predicated on educating males more than females, and females marrying young (1998: 6). These facts have changed. But as my interviews demonstrate, gender ideology still affects concepts of suitable work for women and men. Also, the strongly-held belief that married women should put their husbands and children first has a major impact upon women's employment.

Moghadam also addressed the question of a changing economy. As unemployment rates and the cost of living rise, and real wages fall, can the patriarchal gender contract be sustained in al-Firzul? Or will villagers follow their compatriots in Beirut, who increasingly put their children in *garderies* and *pouponnières* out of sheer economic need or desire for a professional career?

The effect of economic change on women's labor force participation has not changed since I first addressed the issue. Since the decrease in the value of the Lebanese pound evident in Fall, 2019, plus the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lebanese women's labor force participation is likely to decline further from its already low percentage. In the longer run, however, it is impossible to predict whether economic need or scarcity of work will make the greater difference in women's employment rates, either in the nation as a whole or in al-Firzul.

The factors affecting change in women's education and work, then, are threefold. The first consists of horizontal integration. The Farāzli are more connected now to the rest of Lebanon via its improved system of roads and communications. Through emigration, and through mass media, they remain connected to the *mahjar*.

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economically, while in return women are expected to obey them, bear and raise (male) children, and keep house (1998: 9–11).

35 Lebanese laws mandate gender equality in most aspects affecting employment, but there remains the question of the ways in which cultural norms affect practice. Moreover, taxation adversely affects married women, employers are not required to provide child care facilities, and there are no laws concerning sexual harassment in the workplace (M. Khalaf 2010).

36 See also Sugita 2010: 34; and Youngs (2000). Although women in al-Firzul have always contributed substantially to family economies, it has been men who have usually held land titles and been legal household heads. They are also much more likely to be business owners.

Opportunities, in this case, more and better schools, formed an important part of this connection. The economy played an important part. With market farming, incomes increased, so that families could afford to pay school expenses. Moreover, with reliance on a single breadwinner, women were freed from productive labor, and children now had the opportunity to attend school. Women, married or single, have the freedom to be housewives or seek professions and careers. However, a number of factors impede further change in women's work outside the home. Cultural values still hold that women should put their homes, husbands, and children first in their lives. The local opportunity structure itself presents several problems, particularly when one takes into account attitudes toward suitable work for women. The pool of jobs is small and there is a lot of competition for the positions available. Last, the transportation infrastructure as it exists today places severe limits on women's commuting to Beirut.

FIGURE 14 Schoolgirls, 1973
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 15 Nuns' school, 2012
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

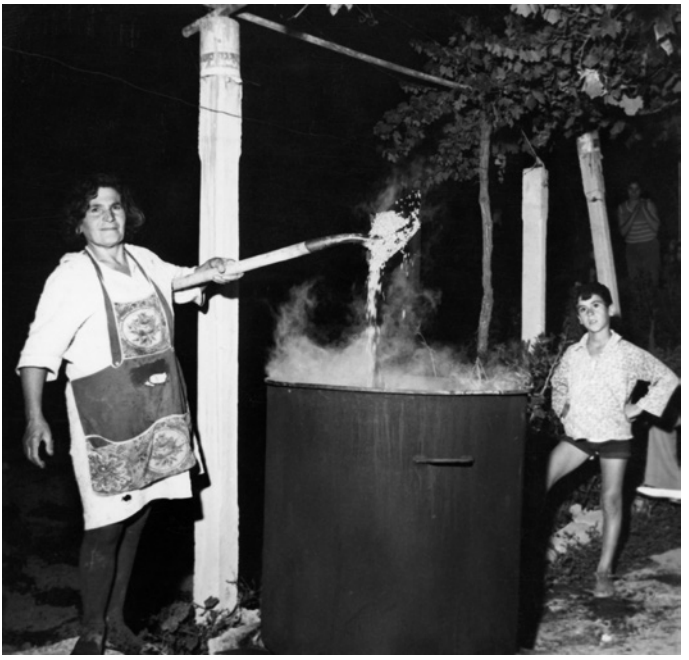

FIGURE 16 Boiling wheat for *birghul*, 1972
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 17 Picking apples for home consumption, 1972
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 18 A lawyer in her office, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 19 Father and daughter in their ice cream shop, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER 5

Gender and Community

They're all relatives here; there are no strangers.
A village elder

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Now there is a second village.
Local comment

• • •

I am usually on Facebook multiple times a day, every day. I usually interact with relatives in Fourzol daily, depending on the topic.... We get to see them, and they get to see us, as we were, as we are now, as we will be.
An emigrant

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My absence from Lebanon during the war years vividly brought home to me the transformation effected both by the war and by globalization. Much of that transformation concerned village unity and solidarity. My interest in this chapter, then, is on the village's sense of community, its social solidarity, the identification of Farāzli with their home, and how these have changed or not changed over time.

During my 1972–1973 research, George, a prominent village elder, told me, "They are all relatives here; there are no strangers" ("*killun qarāyib hawn*; *ma fihish ghurb*"). He meant this literally; almost all marriages had been contracted among fellow villagers, and there was little migration into or out of the village. Multiple kinship links, both patrilateral and matrilateral, connected nearly everyone. To be sure, the village was divided into two quarters,[1] each of

1 According to respondents, this division dates back to a quarrel among young men during the 1920s. However, the village still constitutes one community, one municipality, and marriages

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which also had its own church, but the village was still one. The statement was also metaphoric: George meant that village unity was strong. Equality was the dominant ethos, and social class stratification and other divisions were minimal. Instead, kinship was the main form of social organization, linking equals across family lines. Certainly there was a sense that some people were more respectable than others but overall, respectability did not fall along lines of affluence.

Another aspect of village cohesion was social control. When all the houses were close together, the very walls had eyes and ears, so to speak. Everyone knew what everyone else was doing, they gossiped about each other and so, in effect, controlled each other's behavior. As my assistant Rashīd told me, "People talk about two kinds of people, the very good and the very bad," implying that it was best not to be talked about, at least not in a negative way. Villagers could spot a stranger. I remember once walking down the street during my 1970s fieldwork and hearing one man say to another, "*haydi Frinsawiyyi*" ("that's a French girl," meaning a foreigner). I received comments, too, on persons I talked to, especially if they were of low prestige. For these reasons the village was very safe.

When I first visited al-Firzul in 1972, nearly all of the houses were located in a little valley hidden along a stream flowing into the Litani River. This had been the village layout since it was settled millennia ago. Beginning in the early 1970s, and especially after the civil war, people started to build down the entrance road, along the main Bekaa highway, and among the vineyards. During the war, residents along the highway had to move back to the old part of the village for safety, but today there is scarcely a break along the road.

Villagers point to a sharp contrast between today and the pre-1970 period, referring to the geographic spread of houses since then. They say "now there is a second village" ("*hallaq ṣār fī ḍay'a tāni*").[2] This does not mean that there are two separate municipalities where before there was one, but rather that there are now two distinct settlement areas. People living along the highway cannot hear the church bells, both literally and figuratively a sign of integration. If someone has died, for example, they do not hear the bells tolling. They only know to go to Sunday Mass because the clock tells them it is time. These developments mark, I think, a significant shift in social solidarity.

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take place between the quarters. The Upper and Lower Quarters are so-called because of their relative positions on the hillside, not because one is considered better than the other.

2 They were referring literally to the new settlement patterns. One might take the comment metaphorically as well, to refer to a generational divide, one which is changing rapidly.

The new houses in the vineyards tend to be large, ornate, and costly structures, advertising their owners' wealth. Growing social stratification has been accompanied by conspicuous consumption. A further sign of ostentation is that many women have hired housemaids, typically from Ethiopia.

So the village is divided not only geographically but also by socioeconomic status. And the mechanisms of social control afforded by a dense distribution of houses are weaker now. For example, I have observed numerous instances of families holding joyful celebrations such as weddings or baptisms right after a death in another family. It used not to be considered proper to celebrate in the wake of someone else's grief.

What, then, is the "glue" that keeps the village together? How is gender an ingredient in the glue? To a considerable degree the glue is still kinship. In addition, women's and children's formal organizations unite the village, while men's political organizations tend to have a divisive effect. Some organizations, originally all-male, now include women. These, too, have positive consequences for village cohesion. On the other hand, pan-village institutions, such as the new senior citizens center, have not yet realized their potential to unify the village. Structures of village governance add to community solidarity. These were founded by men, and are mostly run by them. Use of the Internet, especially social media, seems not to be gendered, yet it, too, unifies and promotes village identity. In short, kinship, most organizations, pan-village institutions, and practices and structures of governance, plus uses of the Internet, keep the village together in the face of geographic dispersal and social class divisions.

As I see it, the principal influences on change are mainly the horizontal, that is, al-Firzul's integration into Lebanon and the larger world around it. Social media are an important part of that integration. Additionally, economic change plays an important part. Affluence has enabled individuals to participate in organizations and institutions, and has also enabled the use of the Internet in a variety of ways. Factors of conservatism are not strong, although the importance of kinship has changed little. The only other barrier to change is that set of attitudes and beliefs which hold back women's full participation in the economy, institutions, and electoral politics.

1 Kinship

Kinship has been one of the most durable aspects of life in the village. Today, though, there are more marriages with individuals from other villages. Young people remain longer in school, meeting, and then marrying, their peers from other villages. It is no longer true the way it once was that "they are all relatives here; there are no strangers."

The basic kinship system remains intact, however. Descent groups are patrilineal, patrilateral ties are emphasized, and residence is patrilocal. Ties through men thus create the inner structure of descent groups, but separate patronymic groups among themselves. *Qarābit niswān*, however, still link those groups in numerous ways.

In addition to forming the links of *qarābit niswān*, women have a further role. As culture keepers, older women maintain village and family histories. For example, Wardi had the entire genealogy of both her and her husband's families completely memorized, and she knew village narratives going back to the nineteenth century.[3]

Paradoxically, though, patrilineal descent does have a unifying effect. Lebanese receive their civic identity through patrilineal descent. They are associated officially with the village or town of their patriline unless they carry out a legal procedure to change their registration. Emigrants within Lebanon and in the diaspora are still legal residents of their home village. On election day, citizens crowd the roads driving back to vote in the home towns they left long ago. In the election held in June, 2009, for example, individuals even returned from abroad to vote (Worth 2009: A1).[4] Not surprisingly, they are expected to vote with family members. These facts, of course, are true for all Lebanese, but they are yet another way in which the inhabitants of al-Firzul and their descendants continue to be tied to the village and to be identified and identify with it.

Villagers regard kin living elsewhere in Lebanon or in the *mahjar* as members of the family. Links with these, then, also contribute to community. Emigrants within the country, most of whom live in the northern suburbs of Beirut, remain connected to al-Firzul through both patrilateral and matrilateral kinship; they visit and telephone frequently, and most retain a house or flat in the village.

Through chain migration, kinship also connects villagers to relatives in the diaspora. Those abroad are expected to help their village kin emigrate;[5] they are expected to help their kin back home who, in turn, are expected to do the same. For example, in assisting al-Firzul's transition from subsistence farming to market farming, kinsmen in the diaspora sent remittances, and helped them obtain the means to transport their crops.

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3 Even before her death, one of her daughters, Violette, had begun to take up her mother's role as elder and culture keeper.

4 Until May, 2016, this was Lebanon's most recent election. The 2016 election, however, took place only on the municipal level. National elections for the Chamber of Deputies took place in May, 2018. At that time, a Firzli was elected to the Chamber.

5 See also N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra 1984.

For another example, ʿAbla emigrated to Los Angeles and established a business there. Later, she sent for her sister's daughter, Nādya, and her son-in-law, to help her in the business. ʿAbla died long ago, Nādya is widowed, but she and her unmarried daughters maintain the business to this day.

Sālim emigrated to Mankato, Minnesota, married a co-villager, and had three children. Their sons married American-born Lebanese, one of village origin. Sālim took his only daughter back to al-Firzul and arranged a marriage for her to his brother's son, George. He established the young couple back in Mankato, putting George to work in his business. Later on, George sent for *his* brother's son, Najīb, to help him through graduate school. Najīb's maternal grandmother was the sister of Sālim's wife. In return for financial assistance with his graduate studies, Najīb worked in his uncle's business during school breaks.[6]

Sometimes today's emigrants return. The contrast between Lebanon and the United States is not as great, perhaps, as it was some generations back. Too, intercontinental travel is much easier now than it was up to the post-World War II era. They may go back to al-Firzul, or they may settle in a Beirut suburb. One young man, Tony, whose parents took him back to Lebanon to live in a Beirut suburb subsequently ended up attending university in Los Angeles where he had kin, the most important of whom were his father's brother, Najīb, and his maternal grandmother's sister, Nādya. Today, he still lives in Los Angeles.

2 Organizations

For a long time, Farāzli had no voluntary organizations. There were no church sodalities or saints' confraternities, no political parties, no men's clubs, no ladies' clubs involved in the work of local betterment. The closest approaches to such organizations were the men's cliques sitting around village storefronts of an evening, clusters of ladies visiting on their terraces, and political coalitions which formed during local electoral campaigns.

Villagers rejected political parties because they viewed them as divisive. Also, hard work kept most villagers from forming or participating even in

6 What I have observed for al-Firzul's emigrants is that they have tended to emigrate as unmarried individuals, in recent years frequently as university students. In some instances, they have joined kin or other Farāzli, or married them, but sometimes they have not. In any case, though, connections with the village and with their relatives there, remain strong. See Suad Joseph (2009) for a somewhat different pattern of emigration. However, her respondents, too, continued to maintain close ties with their kin in Lebanon.

non-political organizations; they preferred to spend whatever free time they had resting or visiting family and neighbors.

In Zahle and Beirut, middle-class and wealthy women were and still are active in the organizations to which their leisure time gives them access and impetus. One time, I learned during the 1970s, women from an organization in Zahle tried to organize the women of al-Firzul, but the effort amounted to nothing. Perhaps the city women did not promote their project hard enough, perhaps the village women had too much work to do, or possibly they sensed a spirit of condescension in the visitors who came hoping to uplift them. The first exception to the long history of rejecting organizations came in 1962 with the founding of the Atlas Club, a youth club, and it has had a rocky history.

Organizations that were originally just for men have changed. Women now belong to two of them, although they still have fewer women members than men. On the other hand, organizations that originally were founded by and for women are still composed solely of women. All of these organizations have the effect of benefitting and uniting the village.

2.1 *Men's Benevolent and Religious Organizations*

The Saint Manṣūr Society (*Jamʿiyyit Mār Manṣūr*), raises money to feed the poor and carry out other charitable acts.[7] Members of the Manṣūr family make up the core of the society, but it admits others. In recent years, a few women, most of them middle-aged and married, have joined the Society as well. I was told that it is not only a local organization, but has national and international links. It was the Mār Manṣūr Society that conceived the idea of a senior citizens' center and raised much of the money for its completion.

A second men's organization, the *Jamʿiyyat Tajaddud bir-Rūḥ al-Qudus* (Society for the Renewal of the Holy Spirit), was created for young men some years ago by the priest then assigned to the village. It was never large, and with the priest's departure, ceased to exist. As its name suggested, it was a Christian spiritual and charitable organization. Another young people's organization, the *Jamʿiyyit Mār Būlos* (Saint Paul Society), works with the MIDADE (see below). Today, its membership comprises both young men and women.

2.2 *Women's Benevolent and Religious Organizations*

Relatively new to the village, these admit only women, no men. There are, or have been, several of these. They include the *Akhawiyyit Qaddīsi Rīta* (Sisterhood of Saint Rita) in the Lower Quarter, the *Akhawiyyit al-Maʿūni*

7 Saint Manṣūr is equated with Saint Vincent de Paul, who worked with the poor in seventeenth-century France and founded several religious orders.

ad-Dā'ima (Sisterhood of Our Lady of Perpetual Help) in the Upper Quarter, and the *Ā'ilāt Qalb Yasūʿal-Aqdas* (Families of the Sacred Heart of Jesus), which crosses quarter lines. The Sisterhood of Saint Rita[8] was founded by the village priest, who approached some pious ladies interested in serving the church; subsequently the local Bishop presided at their induction. It has about sixty members, who sing at two morning Masses during the week, and are responsible for cleaning and maintaining the church. They try to help the needy of the village by holding modest fund-raisers.

The other sisterhood is based in the Upper Quarter. A much older organization, having about 140 members, it carries out activities similar to those of the Saint Rita Sisterhood. Once or twice a year the two sisterhoods get together for a social event. They also jointly organize the May devotions to Mary (N. Jabbra 2009a and b; and see Chapter 6, Gender Symbolism in Ritual). Most of the members of both sisterhoods are middle-aged or older, single, married, or widowed.

The newest women's benevolent and religious organization is the Families of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, found throughout Lebanon, and even, I learned, in the Lebanese diaspora. Every "family" consists of fourteen women or girls, each with a leader, and there are families in both quarters.[9] The purpose of the organization is to promote spirituality and assist prisoners and the poor. The families take turns praying novenas.[10] All of the families get together every month for a Mass, alternating between the quarters.

Women also organized two non-religious benevolent organizations, neither of which exists anymore. However, while they lasted they did have a unifying effect. One of these was Auxilia, a national charitable organization. Auxilia owned cooperative supermarkets and gasoline stations in several locations throughout Lebanon. It also put on huge fundraising dinners. I attended one for the Bekaa branch held in the gardens of a local hotel. The organizers expected about 700 people. The principal organizer of the event gave a brief speech, and we listened to the music of three consecutive bands while we ate. Young girls helped with seating guests and selling raffle tickets. Auxilia succumbed a few years ago, probably because of the faltering economy and the death of its founder.

Another village women's organization also no longer exists, namely the Women's Committee (*al-Lijni an-Nisa'iyyi*), which raised money through the

8 Saint Rita is a popular saint in Italy, where her remains are preserved in a shrine. Numerous images of her may be found in the village.

9 The families are not kin groups, but simply parts of the larger organization.

10 A Latin devotional practice, a novena is a set of prayers repeated over nine days.

sale of *ʿabaya*s (traditional cloaks) the members made. The *Lijni* employed quarters in the old nuns' school, where they had set up workshops with industrial-type sewing machines. They used the money they made to help the poor and build a children's park by the Scout house, with grass, trees, flowers, and play equipment. The *Lijni* ceased to exist because, I was told, the poor state of the economy prevented people from buying its products. It could be, too, that it did not have the support from a national organization. Now that the *Lijni* is defunct, the municipality has taken over the park.

Although I have portrayed women's religious and benevolent societies as having a unifying effect, they also tend to follow the familiar division of the village into two quarters. The Families of the Sacred Heart organization is pan-village, but the two sisterhoods are divided by quarter. The Lijni tended to draw women mainly from the Upper Quarter, although members used the nuns' old quarters in the Lower Quarter for their *ʿabaya* workshop. Auxilia's membership came mainly from the Lower Quarter.

2.3 *Youth and Children's Organizations*

During my 1972–1973 field work the Atlas Club (*an-Nādī Aṭlas*) was the only formal organization in the village, renting space on the main street. Despite its heroic name, young people of both sexes were members. It was mainly a sports club, its principal sport being volleyball, which young men and women alike played, on separate teams. It was originally founded by a group of young men, and at first admitted only males. At the time, although youth clubs were becoming popular in Lebanon, village elders viewed it with some suspicion because it was a novelty. Following an accidental death at a volleyball match, which caused great enmity between the two families involved, the club was suspended for a few years. Then the young men decided to admit girls, with their calming influence, in the hope of making the club more acceptable. It was hard to persuade the girls' fathers, but eventually they were successful. The club still exists, but now has its quarters in the basement of the *Saydit al-Bishāra* church on the edge of town in the Upper Quarter. Members play volleyball, basketball, and tennis on nearby courts, and hold matches with teams from other villages.

A second youth club, the Firzul Sports Club (FSC), was created following dissension within the Atlas Club. Members have a new clubhouse across the street from the *Saydit an-Niyāḥ* church in the Lower Quarter, sharing the building with a children's organization, the MIDADE. Members hold basketball and volleyball matches, complete with music, far into the night. Tennis is another sport.

There are also some organizations for children. One is the Scouts, a coeducational group sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The children have a clubhouse, a prefabricated steel structure, next to the park built by the *Lijni*. They are grouped by age into three levels, and participate in environmental activities, camping, and excursions to historic and scenic sites.

An additional organization for children and young people is religious. That is the MIDADE (*Mouvement International d'Apostolaire des Enfants*), also called the *Rasūlīyyi*. It originated in the Vatican, and is supported by the local bishop; its purpose is social and spiritual education. Young adults, members of the Saint Paul Society, are active as mentors and leaders. It meets in the Firzul Sports Club building across from the church. Most of the children who belong come from the adjacent Lower Quarter of the village.

Although I have described children's and youth organizations as having a unifying effect, they also follow the familiar division of the village into two quarters. The Scouts and the Atlas Club are located in the Upper Quarter, while the MIDADE and the Firzul Sports Club are based in the Lower Quarter.[11]

2.4 *Political Parties*

There are several political parties, membership of which is mostly male.[12] First is the *Ḥizb al-Qawmi as-Sūri* (the *Qawmiyyi*), also called the *Parti populaire syrien* (PPS) or Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP).[13] It was the main party during my early fieldwork. The second is the *Katā'ib* (*Phalanges libanaises*), which became more popular during the war. It is a rightist Lebanese nationalist party consisting heavily of Maronites in Lebanon as a whole. Because of the division in the village between the Upper Quarter and the Lower Quarter, the *Katā'ib* is more popular in the Lower Quarter, the *Qawmiyyi* in the Upper Quarter. The *Quwwāt* (Lebanese Forces, LF) and the *Ṭayyār Waṭani al-Ḥurr* (Free Patriotic Movement, FPM, President Michel Aoun's bloc), both rightist groups, have substantial followings as well.

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11 Evidently, anthropologists have made few studies of youth and children's organizations in the Arab countries (Joseph 2013). However, anthropologists may have been looking in the wrong places. Small towns and villages might well be the kinds of places where conditions support youth and children's organizations. It is important to remember that al-Firzul's young people themselves founded both the Atlas Club and the Firzul Sports Club.

12 These became much more prominent during and following the civil war. One may join a party, registering and receiving a membership card from the national headquarters. Until recently, the village clubs were composed only of men.

13 Despite its name, it is not affiliated with the Syrian government, but rather advocates a leftist pan-Fertile Crescent ideology.

Support of political parties is very much a young men's affair. They maintain clubhouses along the main streets and plaster their insignia about on walls. During the 2009 election they held noisy demonstrations at night, driving around in their vehicles, shouting, and setting off fireworks. Although affiliation with parties is mainly for young men, young women hang around the clubhouses with them, and today join the parties. All in all, because of the role of parties during the civil war (J. Jabbra and N. Jabbra 2001), because of their divergent ideologies, and because of their division by quarter, the political parties tend to have a divisive effect.

Partisan affiliation later spread to older generations. In 2018 a major confrontation ensued between supporters of the *Quwwāt* (Lebanese Forces) and the *Ṭayyār Waṭani al-Ḥurr* (Free Patriotic Movement) over the placement of a statue supporting the Lebanese Forces in front of the house belonging to a supporter of the Free Patriotic Movement (Trtian 2018). Several men from the Lebanese Forces were detained by the Army for a few days. The confrontation was related in part to inter-family competition within the village and in part to larger national issues between the two parties. Al-Firzul's integration into the larger Lebanese scene has frayed its sense of community. Indeed, the parties are divisive.[14]

3 Governance and Institutions

Local structures of governance were established and are run by men, and men played a prominent role in founding local institutions. Both have an important role in maintaining village cohesion. The governor (*muḥāfiẓ*) of the Bekaa governorate (*muḥāfaẓa*) is a man, as are the *qā'immaqām* (district chief) of the Zahle district (*qaḍā'*) and the heads of the various bureaucracies in the governorate and district. All village political offices are held by men. No law prohibits women from occupying any public office in the country, but cultural norms that view men as natural leaders limit the number of women officeholders, both in al-Firzul and at all levels in Lebanon as a whole.[15]

14 Michelle Obeid's account of town council elections in Arsal shows a similar transition from 1963 to 2004, during which campaign issues changed from competition among families to competition among supporters of national parties and movements (Obeid 2019: 123–146).

15 Symbolism in village weddings and first communion celebrations, the division of space in the church between the men's section in front and the women's section in back, plus the fact that only men may become priests, naturalizes, gives divine sanction to, village men's public leadership in social, economic, and political affairs. However, the youngest

The result, by and large, is that women's role in politics consists mainly in voting and exercising influence. On the national level, for example, women's organizations typically demonstrate and publicize their issues. In the small political arena that is al-Firzul, which operates very much along lines of kinship, women influence politics through conflict resolution, supporting the work of office-holders, and campaigning for political candidates. Through *qarābit niswān*, they form a substantial part of the links among the main political actors in the village. Nevertheless, overall it is apparent that men possess more power and influence than do women; they control far more resources, economic, political, social, and cultural, and these resources are institutionalized and official.

3.1 *Village Governance*

Al-Firzul constitutes a municipality (*baladiyyi*) under the authority of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities. As such, it has a council (*majlis al-baladiyyi*) of fifteen members, including a president (*ra'īs al-baladiyyi*, municipality president, or mayor). The municipal government keeps records on land holdings and is in charge of granting building permits. It is responsible for providing local sanitation, water, electricity, and maintenance. Its revenue comes from the Ministry, and from taxes and fees it levies. Members of the local government thus control a lot of resources.

An important elective office in the village is that of the *mukhtār*.[16] There are three in the village, two in the larger Lower Quarter, one in the Upper Quarter. The Lebanese government requires the *mukhtār* to record all deaths, births, and marriages in his jurisdiction. He also maintains information on whether individuals have criminal records, what official religion individuals profess, and in which quarter they reside. These records, forwarded to the civil registry in Zahle, are the basis of an individual's civil status. Verification of such information is essential for an individual to carry out any official transaction. The *mukhtār* is not simply a clerk, then, because his records are fundamental to the workings of Lebanese civil law.

The *mukhtār* is the village's official liaison with the government in Zahle. As such, he is positioned to forge informal connections (*wāsṭa*) with the offices of the governor and the district chief. Part of the *mukhtār*'s job is to maintain

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adult generation, in which women tend to be better educated than men, may break this pattern.

16 There exists no equivalent to *mukhtār* in English. The office combines elements of registrar/recorder, notary public, and liaison, in this case between the municipality and the governorate.

close ties with his constituents by, for example, offering them hospitality in his house. He collects fees for the transactions he performs, which are meant to be used for such activities. He consults with the municipality on projects such as street maintenance. Last, the office is prestigious. The *mukhtār* thus controls considerable political capital (N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra 1978).

Village elections are run on the basis of kinship, both patrilineal and through *qarābit niswān* (see Obeid 2019 for further examples). Big patronymic groups monopolize all three *mukhtār* positions. The position of *ra'īs al-baladiyyi* has long been held by a member of a grouping of several small families (*Bū Kharaywish*), which are believed to be related, but which, in my view, are more likely to be a long-standing coalition. The coalition belongs to the Lower Quarter, which thus controls the majority of village political positions.[17] The municipality council itself is divided between the quarters.

The big families (patronymic groups, *'ayyāl*) do not wield power because they are big landowners with peasants working for them.[18] Each man in such a patronymic group, like all the other men in the village, owns his land separately, and it is only when the parcels are added up one by one that they amount to a lot.[19] But a big family has many members, voters, and many connections, affinal and otherwise. Also, because of its numbers, it is more widely respected, attracts more attention, than would be the case for a small family.

In recent years activities of the municipality have contributed substantially to al-Firzul's solidarity and cohesion. The municipal government embarked upon a program of village improvement, promotion, and beautification. It erected a decorative water wheel by the creek near the site of an old mill, planted trees along the entrance road, and erected a sign at the crossroads from the main highway directing visitors to al-Firzul's distinctive mountain peak and Roman ruins.

Khalīl, a former mayor, conceived the idea of promoting tourism in the village in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism.[20] When I interviewed him, he envisioned a tourist center, with a shop for handicrafts made by local women. Another idea was to guide tourists to the Canaanite and Roman

17 This arrangement is considered fair, because the Lower Quarter is bigger.

18 As appears to be the case in Berqayl and Mashghara (Gilsenan 1996; and Traboulsi 2004, respectively).

19 There is a belief that an ancestor owned a large parcel of land which was subsequently divided and subdivided down the generations. In that sense a big patronymic group "owns" a lot of land.

20 Other villages and towns in the region are well known for their antiquities and other points of interest, which are publicized online and in tourist guides. The mayor evidently wanted al-Firzul to enjoy the same recognition.

ruins carved on the face of the mountain at the head of the valley. Part of his dream was realized by one of his successors, Brāhīm. The Ministry of Tourism has created an Arabic-English brochure on the Zahle district (*qaḍā'*) which describes al-Firzul's attractions in some detail; this may be downloaded from the Ministry's web page.[21] A map is provided, complete with a key to its monuments and natural features. Signs lead tourists on paths around the antiquities, and they can later refresh themselves at the restaurants located nearby.

In some instances it has been private individuals who have attempted to improve the village. These have been men of some affluence, from families of good reputation, either resident in the village, elsewhere in Lebanon, or in the diaspora – in other words, individuals who can deploy substantial financial resources. Several have donated money for the installation of new pews in the old church, each section bearing a plaque giving credit to the donor. Additionally, improvements to the church structures, such as the *salons* used for wakes and meetings, have been paid for by individuals, who again are given credit with plaques. Three men, Najīb, Pierre, and Rashīd, patrilateral cousins to each other, erected a large clock which stands at the turn to the main street. More recently, they sponsored a statue of Mary which was placed on top of the clock. The father of a young man who was killed in an accident installed an iconostasis and new icons in the *Saydit an-Niyāḥ* church in memory of his son.

3.2 *The Role of Gender in Secular Governance*

In al-Firzul, women's roles in governance comprise conflict resolution, voting, supporting candidates and incumbents, and campaigning during elections. Through *qarābit niswān*, they are part of the links used in *wāsṭa*. Although women occupy positions in nearby municipal governments, their example has not yet influenced al-Firzul.

Conflict resolution is an important part of women's activities in the village political arena, although it often involves minor disputes among family members or neighbors. Following are some examples.

Juryus and his wife Wardi, who were highly respected by all who know them, were sitting quietly at home one evening when Juryus's older sister, Ḥnayni, came over, very upset. Gradually Wardi calmed her, and the following story emerged. Some neighborhood gossips had told Juryus and Wardi's son-in-law, George, that Ḥnayni had said that George's sister's husband (who is Ḥnayni's son) would not have left her to work in Australia if she (George's sister) had been a better wife. George was now very angry at Ḥnayni for this supposed

21 (http://mot.gov.lb/Content/uploads/Publication/121023064701310~zahle.pdf; downloaded 5 December 2015).

insult to his sister. Ḥnayni, however, insisted that she had said no such thing. George, who lived next door, was summoned when he came home from his shop. Juryus and Wardi listened to his version of the story a few times, and let him vent his feelings. Finally, they, and Ḥnayni, let him know what the truth really was, and in the end, George and Ḥnayni were reconciled. In this particular instance, it was Wardi's calm voice that settled the situation.

Villagers say that wives can influence their husbands when there is a conflict, either negatively or positively. Following are two examples. For some years, two brothers, Brāhīm and Farīz, have been engaged in a feud. Brāhīm's wife, Lizette, stood by while she watched him vandalizing property owned by Ḥanān's brother, Khalīl. Farīz's wife, Ḥanān, in turn, actively supported both Khalīl, her brother, and Farīz, her husband, in the feud. I attended a gathering of the family at the home of Juryus and Wardi which was intended to end the feud and create peace. The attempt was unsuccessful, and some of the younger men nearly came to blows.

Women can also settle conflicts. Once there took place a dispute over money between Saʿada's husband, Pierre, and another man, Elie. Saʿada tried hard to settle things, visiting Elie, calming Pierre. She brought in her sister's husband as a mediator. Saʿada and Elie's wife met several times, and succeeded in bringing their children together. This was important, because otherwise the dispute might have been handed down to them, the next generation, from Pierre and Elie. Pierre and Elie still do not visit each other socially, but they are cordial in public. In fact, Pierre's son supports Elie politically, and campaigns for him.

An instance of conflict resolution from the 1960s was serious. The Atlas Club was holding a ball game in the courtyard of the nuns' school. Bishāra and Shikri fired their pistols into the air to celebrate the local team's victory. A bullet ricocheted off the wall, killing the eldest son of Ilyās and Jeanette. Ilyās, Jeanette, and Ilyās's whole patronymic group understandably were highly upset. Bishāra, who had a reputation as a hothead, found himself in the Zahle jail. Now all the relatives tried to pacify Ilyās and his family, to restore peace. A first set of mediators failed. In desperation, before an act of revenge violence could take place, a second set was chosen: representing the side of Ilyās were Juryus and Wardi, and on the other side was Mūsa. Complex kinship connections linked together Juryus, Wardi, and Mūsa, and further yet more complex connections linked them to Ilyās, Jeanette, and Bishāra. Wardi, Juryus, and Mūsa spent a long time negotiating. Wardi again was quiet and comforting, telling Jeanette, you have two more sons, meaning, don't get them involved in trouble. It was an accident, not a fight, meaning, Bishāra didn't intend to kill the boy. Wardi continued, two young men shot off their guns, and they do not

know whose bullet killed her son. In the end it was Wardi's talking to Jeanette that calmed things.

Finally, a settlement was made. Bishāra spent some years in jail. Also, Mūsa conveyed to Juryus, who conveyed to Ilyās's father, titular head of the family, a large sum (however, not "blood money" as such) to compensate them for their court and other expenses. Bad feelings persisted between the two families, but open feud was averted.

In all these cases, those involved chose mediators who were related to both sides. Moreover, in this very serious case, *qarābit niswān* constituted most of the connections linking the principals. Finally, it was critical that Wardi was able to persuade Jeanette to keep her surviving sons uninvolved, lest the quarrel be passed down from generation to generation. As Wardi said on another occasion, "if you influence the husband, the children will follow him," that is, feuds escalate from generation to generation when the children get involved.

A significant aspect of this case is that villagers seem to have a personalized view of the law. In the case of Bishāra, the family of Ilyās resorted to the police and the courts not in the interests of seeing that the law was obeyed, but in order to injure Bishāra and his family. Their notion of justice was predicated on a balance model; *i.e.*, "we suffered so much, and so must you." The injured parties saw the law as an instrument to be used instead of seeing themselves and their opponents alike as subject to it. In their view, justice was above the law and its agents, who were envisaged as intruders, corruptible.[22]

Even though they have not yet achieved elective positions in village government, women are still involved. In the 2009 election for the municipal council, mayor, and *mukhtār*, Josephine, a well-placed[23] and energetic woman, campaigned vigorously for the side she favored, circulating pamphlets, making telephone calls, and visiting friends, neighbors, relatives, and other villagers. However, she also supported one of the candidates for the council from the other side. After a lot of scheming, she succeeded in placing him on both lists, ensuring that he won the election.

Six years later, Fu'ād, one of the *mukhtār*s in the Lower Quarter, died. He had owed his fifty-year tenure, to a considerable degree, to the efforts of his wife, Antoinette. She prepared his paperwork for submission to the civil registry in

22 The cases of Juryus, Wardi, and Ḥnayni, and the much more serious case of the shooting in the schoolyard, were discussed in detail in N. Jabbra and J. Jabbra 1978; see also Suad Joseph (2011: 160).

23 From one of the big families, she is married to a member of the same family.

Zahle, and kept an open house, always welcoming visitors – even those who did not support him.

After Fu'ād's death, there ensued various efforts to choose his successor, even though the election would not be held until the national government scheduled one.[24] Members of Fu'ād's large family, the Saidys, assumed that Fu'ād's son Joseph would easily be elected, that he would be selected long before the election actually took place. After all, Fu'ād's predecessor was his father's brother, Sālim, so family members assumed that Joseph would simply inherit the job.[25] The actual election would be, in effect, a rubber stamp.

However, despite support from his kin, Joseph lost to a member of another large family in the quarter, the Aʿzāns.[26] He lost, I learned, because he had grown up outside the village, consequently was not well known, and because he was so complacent about his family tradition that he did not actively campaign. The incumbent of the Lower Quarter *makhtara* lost to another member of his patronymic group, also the Saidys.

Women in both the Saidy and Aʿzān families enthusiastically supported their favorite candidates, campaigning, handing out literature, trying to elicit voters' support. A middle-aged woman from the Saidy family, ʿAfīfi, told me after the election that the Aʿzān candidate won because some women from his family, and men, had bought votes for him. However, she had supported her kinsman who had lost, so perhaps her statement should be taken with a grain of salt.

Several women, including one who is a lawyer, floated their names as possible candidates for the *majlis al-baladiyyi*. However, when they failed to generate support, they backed off. ʿAfīfi's brother Rashīd told me that elections are all about the big families. These monopolize political positions even though their candidates might be unqualified. Basically, then, both the *baladiyyi* offices and the three *makhtara* positions are sewn up in advance. The result is that local political offices remain in the hands of men. However, the grip of the big families on local politics may ultimately benefit women candidates, for they, too, belong to the same families.

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24 Elections for all municipalities are held at the same time, on a date determined by the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities.

25 Sālim had been *mukhtār* during the 1920s. Suad Joseph (2011) described what she called political familism, a system in which the disposition of political spoils – we might term them in fact what citizens should have by right – takes place through kin or kin-like relations.

26 Through *qarābit niswān* the families are connected, and in the past they had acted in concert politically. This time, though, members of the Aʿzān family felt that it was their turn to hold the position.

3.3 *Non-governmental Secular Village Institutions*

These include the senior citizens center, the medical and dental clinic, and the women's food production cooperative. All three of them have the potential to add considerably to village cohesion, but thus far they have failed to take firm root. The fourth and newest institution is the Social Foundation.

In late September, 2013, villagers held the grand opening for a senior citizens' center, Markaz Mār Manṣūr (Saint Manṣūr Center), located near Saydit al-Bishāra church in the Upper Quarter. The project was initiated by the Saint Manṣūr Society, following the example of similar establishments run by branches of the Society elsewhere in Lebanon. It was intended to be a drop-in center for village seniors to spend the day playing cards and enjoying other forms of entertainment, or rest if they wished. The building has space for a director and nurse, a large room for gatherings, a small meeting room, a chapel, two bathrooms, and two separate bedrooms with several beds in each, distinguishable by the colors of the bedcovers, pink or blue. Plans were made to bring the seniors to the center, and fund operating expenses.

Villagers raised money for the project. Larger sums were contributed by members of the Saint Manṣūr society, the municipal government, and by the Social Foundation. Furnishings for the center were funded by the Waleed Bin Talal Humanitarian Foundation, directed in Lebanon by Leila al Solh, who was the guest of honor at the grand opening.[27] On hand were numerous local dignitaries, including the Bishop, who blessed the center. Ms. al Solh gave the keynote speech, followed by addresses from the many notables on hand. Then villagers toured the center and partook of refreshments. After the grand opening was over, Ms. al Solh and the guests retired for a festive lunch in the restaurant built high in the valley near the spring.

However, one of the two men in the Saint Mansur Society who had originally conceived the project died, and the other fell ill. Al-Firzul's organizations, governance, and institutions, like their national counterparts, tend to operate on the basis of kinship and the force of individual personalities; that is, leaders' charisma has not been fully routinized into stable bureaucratic form. The resulting lacuna at the top paralyzed the project, and for a time, the center stood empty, unused.

About a year later, the center began to open once a week, and now it is open twice a week. Young members of the Saint Manṣūr society bring the seniors by car, entertain them, and serve them dinner. However, the Center is still not popular. The idea of a drop-in center for seniors is a new concept for villagers.

27 A prominent Sunni and former cabinet minister, she is *khāla* to Saudi prince Al-Waleed bin Talal.

There is a widespread notion that it is a charity, meant for the poor. Jean, a middle-aged man and keen observer of village life, told me that he thought it needed more promotion to accustom people to the idea.

A second institution is the clinic (*al-mustawṣaf*), located on the ground floor of the municipality building on the main street. The facility offers both medical and dental services. Because the physicians, dentists, and nurses volunteer their services for a nominal fee, costs for office visits are minimal. The clinic also has a dispensary, which provides immunizations and prescription drugs at a discount.

The clinic came into being when Bishāra and a group of like-minded villagers, probably inspired by the existence of similar clinics in other Lebanese villages, decided to establish one in the village. Because they needed to operate within the confines of a recognized organization, they met with the Mother Superior of the village convent and started their project under the name of the Salvatorian order. Initially, they had no space for the clinic, but then the municipality granted them space on the ground floor of its building. The clinic is not, however, a municipality project.

Villagers try to obtain supplies and equipment, and pharmaceutical firms are encouraged to donate medicine. It has been an uphill struggle, though, to obtain what the clinic needs. It relies heavily on the assistance of the Social Foundation (see below) to obtain supplies and drugs, and to maintain the facility. Al-Firzul's clinic fills a local need, not only for the poor, but also increasingly for its thinly-stretched middle class. When I toured the facility, I found both clinics to be plain, but well-equipped with the basics. Rānia and two other middle-aged women take turns serving as manager and receptionist. The organizational structure of the clinic is stronger than that of the senior citizens' center but it still has a hard time staying afloat.

The Women's Food Production Cooperative (*al-Jamʿīyya at-Taʿūnīyya al-Intājīyya lil-Marʾa ar-Rīfīyyat al-Firzul*, literally the Production Cooperative Society for the Rural Woman of al-Firzul) produces traditional food products. Although its organization is much stronger than that of the clinic or the senior citizens' center, and is part of a national organization, it, too, struggles to continue. The overall project, one of several similar cooperatives across the country, was originally funded by USAID with the Lebanese Department of Agriculture and the YMCA. The Cooperative's products are marketed under the label Terroirs du Liban, sold throughout the country. These include *kishk*, tomato paste, vinegar, verjuice, pickles, preserves, and rose water, all foods I observed village women making for winter storage during the 1970s.

The national directorship of the project instructs members in techniques, quality, and business management. The Cooperative has a factory and office

down in the plain east of the main highway. Unlike the seniors' center, it has a well-developed bureaucratic structure, headed by Laurette Juryus (her real name). Its membership has dwindled somewhat since its founding, evidently because some of the members' husbands thought they would neglect their families. Today there are about a dozen women involved. However, those remaining continue to earn money, learn useful skills, and contribute to village *esprit de corps* (Darmency 2014).

The Social Foundation (*al-Mu'asasa*) was founded in 2014 by a local man who is wealthy and nationally prominent, and is directed by his wife. It aims to strengthen the local economy, including the agricultural sector, so as to prevent young people from leaving the area. It provides financial support to the clinic and the seniors center. In addition, it holds classes in technical and job-related subjects, offers children's and youth-oriented programs, and arranges for participation in events of national unity, such as the Beirut Marathon and organizing aid to the areas in Beirut damaged in the August, 2020, explosion. I do not know to what extent the foundation is well known in the village, perhaps not well, although it has been in existence for some years, and has its own Facebook page to promote its activities.[28] Consequently, I do not know to what extent it contributes to village cohesion.

3.4 *Religious Institutions*

Religious institutions for the most part are also headed by men. However, positions in them are not chosen locally, for incumbents are appointed by the Melkite Salvatorian hierarchy which is based at Dayr el Mkhallis near Sidon. The bishop, located in Zahle, and the village priest are, of course, men, belonging to the Salvatorian order.[29] In addition to conducting religious services, the priest keeps records of marriages, baptisms, and deaths, which he forwards to the Bishop's office in Zahle, to become official church documents. Given the high value that most villagers attach to the sacred, and the importance of the records he keeps, the priest wields a good deal of influence. He has his limits, however. If a project he proposes is not well liked, or if he seems to be prolonging the Mass, villagers do not hesitate to tell him that he needs to mend his ways.

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28 It seems that villagers interpret activities of the foundation as personal contributions from its president.

29 Women will not likely become priests for a long time to come, if at all. Nearly all of the respondents I interviewed in 1995 were opposed to the idea of women priests, in part because of tradition, and in part because they could not imagine women giving communion.

Additionally, each church has a *wakīl* (roughly, manager), who is appointed by the Bishop from among village men. The job, which is prestigious, tends to run in families. The *wakīl* is in charge of the church's finances, is responsible for its maintenance and improvements, and generally supervises all events held in the church.

The nuns who operate one of the local schools are of course women, today few in number, and their mother superior, the *raysi*, is in charge of the village convent. However, the nuns, like the priests, belong to the Salvatorian order, and thus fall under the jurisdiction of the overall Superior General in Sidon. In addition to running the school, the nuns are in charge of the first communion observances and generally of children's religious education. They thus set standards for piety, but dispose of far fewer resources than do the priest and the *wakīl*.

4 The Internet

Cell phones first appeared in al-Firzul during the 1990s after the Civil War. At that time they could only be used for placing and receiving calls, and capable at best of crude texting and voice messaging. By 2004, a few houses had desktop computers. One could log on to the Net at a few places, using dial-up modems with very slow connections.[30] To communicate with my university in the United States, I used to go to a small shop near our house. The proprietor had two or three machines in the back. Every time I went, he had to chase away the teenagers, mostly boys, who were playing games.[31] Things have changed.

Today in al-Firzul the Internet, especially social media, affords an increasingly important means to village unity while fostering a strong sense of identity. Use of cyberspace seems not to be gendered, but rather is stratified by age; it is mainly the young and some of the middle-aged who use email, search engines, and social media.

Sample quotations[32] gathered during summer, 2009, demonstrate some early uses of the Internet by Farāzli: "Hi, my name is (XX, male), I'm from Lebanon – al-Fourzol. I live and work in Montreal – Canada. I'm too proud to

30 For some years now, the village has had wireless service.

31 One of the boys found, somewhere, what was described to me as "a naughty email," which he circulated among his friends. Their mothers found out, and complained vociferously to the school. The boy was suspended for a week.

32 Spelling, capitalization, grammar, and punctuation as in the original.

be from that I like to know all the al-Fourzol descenders here in the American continent. I'll be glad to receive any e-mail from them."[33]

"I am looking for anyone with a surname/last name Abdo from al-Ferzol (near Zahle) in what is now Lebanon. I believe that some Abdo's from al-Ferzol may have moved to Mankato, Blue Earth, Minnesota…."[34] Abdo was one of the four families from al-Firzul who settled in Mankato some generations ago.

In the last few years, social media have created new ways of connecting villagers wherever they might live, and linking their descendants to the village.[35] In 2013, I interviewed via email three employed young people with al-Firzul antecedents living in the United States.[36] Two young women, in the Los Angeles area, have parents who immigrated from al-Firzul; one of these maintains links with an impressive number of friends and relatives from the village living in Beirut or elsewhere. The third, living in Pittsburgh, himself emigrated from al-Firzul. All three keep in touch with friends and relatives from al-Firzul through Facebook, and the young man also keeps connected with LinkedIn and WhatsApp.

From Los Angeles, May said: "I probably check Facebook once a day on average, so I see what other people have posted. My cousins in Fourzol, especially XX and YY, post pretty frequently, so I love seeing what they are doing…. I've used IM … a few times to speak with (four close female relatives) on various occasions, but with the time difference,[37] it isn't that often that we are both on at the same time."

Her cousin Nina said: "I am usually on Facebook multiple times a day, every day. I usually interact with relatives in Fourzol daily, depending on the topic…. We get to see them, and they get to see us, as we were, as we are now, as we will be. I also get to see my aunts and uncles, and children my cousins have had since my last visit to Lebanon in 1993."

John, the young man in Pittsburgh, said, rather tersely:

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33 I found this item when I Googled the village name, but it is no longer online. Queries of this type are now to be found in social media sites.

34 Myfamily.com, accessed 25 June 2009; the site's main page advertised that one could "connect your family online."

35 Facebook is (probably still is) the most popular social media site in Lebanon, followed by LinkedIn, and finally Twitter (Government of Dubai 2014). Lebanese mostly use English for these media, facilitating communication with kin and friends in the United States and Canada. At that time, users of all social media, except possibly LinkedIn, tended to be young, and this appears still to be the case.

36 As with my materials from 2009, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage in these interviews and those I made in Lebanon are as in the original communication.

37 Ten hours.

> (He communicates) "With my family and cousins on a daily basis or at least couple times a week. With distant family and friends it is more on Holidays and Birthdays." (He keeps in touch with) "My siblings, Cousins and Friends." "They live in fourzol and beirut. We exchange Pictures, articles and funny stuff."

I also interviewed two women from al-Firzul living elsewhere in Lebanon. Josiane, a young employed woman, lives in a Beirut suburb, although she spends her weekends in the village. She uses both Facebook and LinkedIn to stay in touch with friends and kin in Lebanon and North America. She said, "I am always in touch with Ferzol family and friends. There is daily interaction.... I have more than 100 friends and family members connected to me on Facebook, ... in ferzol, others in Canada, the US, the gulf, Egypt...."

Rīma, a middle-aged housewife also residing in a suburb of Beirut, uses Facebook every day to keep in touch with friends and relatives, including those in Los Angeles. She said she has over 200 people with whom she communicates. "we exchange events pictures, quotes, prayers, good books. etc." She uses Facebook frequently "because connected people and friends I didn't hear from them for so long." Via Skype, she telephones her grown children in the United States every day. And she uses Pinterest for ideas on homemaking.

I learned more in general about young people's social media activities from a young villager, Michel, whom I interviewed. They have Facebook "friends," he said, in Beirut, all over Lebanon, and the United States. He added that al-Firzul "is open now. Not like the old days." From his description of his contemporaries' social media use, it was clear that entertainment and keeping in touch with friends were their two main activities.

Today al-Firzul has its own Facebook page, Ferzol, created and maintained by George, a young village man. Although information about the village on the page seems to be sketchy, most neighboring villages do not have a page at all, so Facebook is one more important way for Farāzli to express their local pride and identity. Indeed, because non-villagers also have access to the page, al-Firzul's reputation is enhanced.

Those who post messages on the page use English, Arabic written in Arabic letters, or a combination of English orthography, French orthography, and numbers used to transliterate the Lebanese dialect into European characters. Several examples may be seen in the quotations below.[38] They show the way in which English, despite the long French colonial presence, is supplanting

38 One name for this amalgam is "*ʿarabzī*" (*ʿarabī* plus *inglīzī*). In it, 7 stands for *ḥ*, 2 for *ʾ* or *q*, 3 for *ʿ*, and 5 for *kh*.

French, together with the cultural hybridity that characterizes modern Lebanon.

Posts include pictures of local scenes, especially the Ḥabīs (the village's distinctive mountain peak) and the new statue of Mary on top of the clock at the roundabout. There are also numerous religious images, holiday greetings, pictures of villagers, and obituaries.

The young Farāzli posting messages keenly follow national events, such as the protests against political corruption following the accumulation of trash in streets across Lebanon after a major garbage dump was closed; this issue was at the forefront of news in summer and fall, 2015. One young woman made a sarcastic comment: "*Chabeb w sabaya nhna eza hon y3ne mndal sektin? mch lezm n3ml chi w nnzl nsami3 swtna? W nbayin eno nhna m3 hay l sawra*" (Guys and girls, if we are up here not saying anything? We should not do anything, go down and make our voices heard? Show that we are with this revolution?). Some posts, part of the dialogue on the trash situation, promoted recycling.

A girl wrote, "this is the best village in the world love you ferzol & miss you." After a snow scene in the village, another wrote, "*Chou 7ello bass alla ye3inkoun 3ala el sa23a*" (How beautiful, but God help you in the cold). Following an old panorama of the village from the 1940s, a young man commented, "Nice Photo."

Love for the village, though, may be accompanied by criticism. In connection with a photograph of dirty snow and congested traffic along the main highway, a girl wrote, in the local dialect written with Arabic letters:[39] "*Wayn al-baladiyya? Lanshūf shū raḥ ta'mal.*" (Where is the municipality? Let's see what it will do) (meaning, she is not expecting much).

Users of the site continue to discuss current events. The Beirut explosion which took place on August 4, 2020, was covered by numerous photographs and videos of the ruins, wounded people, and the blast itself. Someone posted a video of the visit by French President Emmanuel Macron to the ruined areas. There was a picture of a statue of Mary and Jesus with the caption "Pray for Us." The municipal government posted some advice on handling the coronavirus pandemic.

More recently, a group of individuals, who wished to remain anonymous, created an Instagram page called liveloveFerzol. It appears that most of the posts are landscapes, village panoramas, or views of some of the new ostentatious houses. I noticed that a good many of the landscapes were taken in the *jurd* (an unsettled, uncultivated area above the village). When I first went to

39 Usually it is only the *fuṣḥa* (Classical Arabic, or Modern Standard Arabic), rather than the *dārij* (the spoken dialects), that is written in Arabic letters.

the village, and for a long time afterward, no one went up there except to hunt or collect edible wild plants; and they walked. Now there are roads and they drive. The Instagram page, then, also brings young Farāzli together, but in a changed village. That, though, is the village they know.

Sebastian Maisel (2013) described the role of discussion forums in maintaining tribal identity among young Saudis. However, Lebanon does not appear to have many of these, and al-Firzul does not have one at all. I do not know to what extent the youngest generations use older platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn, let alone new ones such as Snapchat or TikTok. But because users are most likely to link to cousins, neighbors, and friends from local schools, to a considerable degree the hubs of their networks will continue to be based in al-Firzul.

5 Summary and Conclusion

Long before my first fieldwork, village houses were clustered in a little valley hidden from the main Bekaa plain. Houses were close enough that villagers minded each other's business through watching and hearing others. Gossip kept everyone more or less in line. Even during the early 1970s, most houses were located within the original village settlement area. During the civil war, those who had built along the main highway had to move back for safety.

Today new houses, many of them large and ostentatious, have been built along the entrance road, on the main highway, and among the vineyards. These new areas of settlement constitute the "second village." Although the old forms of social control still exist, they are strained. The egalitarian ethos expressed in the saying that all were relatives is much weakened. However, despite some erosion in older forms of social solidarity because of the growth of socioeconomic stratification and geographic spread, new forms of social cohesion have come to take their place, to unite Farāzli wherever they may be.

Kinship is still a strong force for village solidarity. As both family genealogies and networks show, connections through women are important in maintaining links within the village. This is because both village and kin group endogamy are practiced, although less frequently today. Both patrilateral and matrilateral kin ties connect villagers across the world.

The Atlas Club, founded in 1962, was the first local organization. Others have followed, women's religious organizations, men's and women's benevolent societies, and political parties. The religious and benevolent organizations have a unifying effect. The parties are mainly for men, and tend to have a divisive effect.

Local governance structures, both secular and religious, were founded by men and are mostly run by them. The *muḥāfiẓ*, the *qa'immaqām*, the heads of all local departments in Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the *mukhtar*s, members of the village council, and the president of the municipality are all men. Women's role in governance is less direct. They vote, settle disputes among villagers, and by campaigning for favorite candidates, influence the outcome of elections.

Religious institutions are much the same. The priest and bishop are both men. The order of the nuns who run one of the local schools constitutes a partial exception, in that the sisters manage their own affairs. However, in the end they report to the Superior General for both Salvatorian orders.

The senior citizens center was the creation, for the most part, of the *Mār Manṣūr* Society. Most of the work to build it was carried out by men, and the Social Foundation paid most of the costs of building the center. The clinic was created by a group of villagers, is run by several women, but is also supported by the foundation. The food production cooperative is run entirely by women.

Use of the Internet, including social media, is not gendered, but rather is stratified by age, with the young and to some extent the middle-aged using electronic means of communication the most. Early on, it seems to have been mainly emigrants who sought connections with the village and other emigrants. Today, social media, email, and real-time applications such as Skype and WhatsApp directly connect Farāzli wherever they are in the world, so that the *mahjar* remains part of the village. The social media create a set of hubs, with the village being the biggest hub.

What has kept al-Firzul's sense of community intact, although changed, is very much its horizontal typographies. Integration into the infrastructures of Lebanon and the larger world via the economy and electronic media have created change and enabled continuity. Affluence has enabled individuals to create and participate in organizations. It has enabled them to use electronic media. Kinship, as a local factor, has continued to support community. One of the main factors retarding full community today is that set of attitudes which prevent women's full participation in the economy, institutions, and electoral politics. The other is politics, local and national. Paradoxically, integration into the larger Lebanese setting creates less integration within the village itself.

FIGURE 20 Members of the *Lijni* modeling their *'abayas*, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 21 Inaugural ritual of the Saint Rita Sisterhood, 2006
BY PERMISSION OF THE JABRA FAMILY

FIGURE 22 Testing for SARS-CoV-2 at the clinic, 2020
BY PERMISSION OF THE LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

FIGURE 23 Political party clubhouse. Name removed; the author does not support any Lebanese political party
BY PERMISSION OF THE SAIDY FAMILY

CHAPTER 6

Gender Symbolism in Ritual

> Seen on billboards around Beirut during summer, 2011: The bride and groom in full regalia, and between them, a funny little man in a business suit. "You may now kiss the banker" (that is, borrow from our bank to celebrate your wedding).
>
> Original in English

• • •

> … send down Your heavenly grace upon these Your servants … and grant that this Your handmaid may, in all things, be subject unto her husband; and that this Your servant may be the head of his wife, that they may live according to Your will.
>
> From the wedding liturgy

• • •

> Oh, Mother of Rain, rain on us; and rain on our fields; so that our thirsty crops will drink; and grow, and feed us.
>
> Women's prayer for rain in al-Firzul

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In this chapter I intend to treat three rituals in which gender is symbolized and communicated: the observance of first communion, weddings, and funerals. They distinguish females from males, and reinforce the pre-eminence of males, reifying social structure more than changing or challenging it. They do not simply exist in the domain of religion, but affect family life, education, work and political behavior.

Rituals communicate through symbols and have concrete effects on social relationships. "Formal occasions invoke positional and public, rather than personal identities" (Irvine 1979: 776–779; 786). Participants may know each other personally, but formal situations emphasize their social positions.

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Rituals, however, are more than formal social behavior. They both communicate a message and accomplish something; it is through communicating that they create their results (Rappaport 1979: 188–190; Rappaport 1999: 50). Indeed, "Its (ritual's) medium is part of its message" (Moore and Myerhoff 1977: 8). Rituals order and re-order social life; they affect social relationships, including participants' social roles and identities (Moore and Myerhoff 1977: 16). This is why I have paid so much attention to sacred ritual. It naturalizes, gives positive sanction to, beliefs about gender difference and hierarchy.

In al-Firzul, the three Christian rituals I will discuss below, first communion observances, weddings, and funerals, communicate a conservative message about gender. However, the beliefs and rituals of vernacular religion created and performed by women may subvert the teachings of the institutional Church.[1] Resistance to resistance might be viewed as a positive force for change, but in this instance, that remains to be seen.

First communion observations, weddings and funerals have changed since the 1970s. In the case of first communion celebrations, though, what is more significant is not recent change, but the existence of the ritual itself among Melkite Greek Catholics. The events that led to the split between the Antiochian Orthodox and the Melkite Greek Catholics eventually resulted in the Melkites adopting a number of Latin practices (Jabbra 2009a). Today, weddings and first communion celebrations demonstrate a family's wealth. Features borrowed from the West, such as the music performed, are now deemed essential to weddings. Funerals have changed less, but the memorial services have been collapsed from three to two. The signs of mourning have been lightened. And affluence has enabled the gender hierarchy perhaps implicit in pre-Civil War funerals to become manifest. Vernacular rituals observed by women, although changed over the decades, may subvert the male-female dominance hierarchy communicated by first communion, weddings, and funerals.

1 Origins of First Communion in al-Firzul

In Byzantine tradition, infants are baptized, chrismated (anointed with holy oil), and given communion at the same time. Roman Catholics, though, defer first communion until children are about seven. This custom was part

1 I have borrowed this term from Leonard Primiano, who offers this definition: "Vernacular religion is, by definition, religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it" (1995: 44).

of the many changes European missionaries tried to induce Middle Eastern Christians to adopt. It took them a long time and a lot of work to implement change, and despite the fact that the Jesuits had a base in nearby Zahle, the Farāzli retained many Byzantine customs.

Accounts by French and Italian Jesuits, the principal Roman Catholic missionaries in the Zahle area, give some information about the introduction of first communion celebrations (Kuri 1991; 1996; 2001). As early as 1836, twelve years after the split between the Orthodox and the Melkites, the new Melkite Bishop in Zahle celebrated the Liturgy in al-Firzul and invited the congregation to visit the Jesuits in Zahle for confession and catechism. In 1846, the head of the Jesuit mission in Zahle preached in al-Firzul, and in 1862 the missionaries established a religious school for girls in al-Firzul (Verdeil 2011: 411). It is likely, though, that this school did not last long.

During the 1850s the Jesuits continued to promote European practices such as devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Their annals demonstrate their zeal for instilling Roman Catholic customs and beliefs among local Christians. In the face of what they viewed as intransigence and ignorance, they used processions, images and banners, devotions, and religious services to attract attention. Catechism, confession, classes, preaching, and again religious services were employed to re-educate, even control, Melkites in the Zahle area. First communion exercises formed an important part of children's religious education. The Jesuit archives record that in 1846 the Jesuit director in Zahle prepared children for first communion. This seems to be the earliest mention of it in the area.

The Jesuits consistently separated females and males, adults and children alike, for purposes of education, proselytizing, and religious services (Kuri 1991: 93, 98, 148).[2] In the late 1850s, they formed teams of children missionaries to go out to surrounding villages. The boys walked in front, the girls some distance behind (Damas 1862). The separation of the sexes and foregrounding of males evidenced in al-Firzul's first communion celebrations have deep roots.

I asked Thérèse, a middle-aged lady in the village, why they celebrate first communion in al-Firzul, because it is not a Byzantine tradition. She told me that they celebrate first communion in order to have a grand occasion. She added that the children generally are seven when they receive first communion.[3] Her

2 These citations refer to the mid-1850s. The Jesuits may well have been following local custom in segregating the sexes in public, but they certainly did nothing to introduce other models.

3 Roman Catholic practices are so engrained in Lebanon by now that priests have been known to demand that children of returning emigrants participate in a first communion ceremony

sister Georgette told me that they celebrate first communion everywhere (she meant, among Lebanese Christians affiliated with Rome). The children do not have their first communion until they can understand their religion, she said. She added that now first communion has become a spectacle.[4] In the old days, they would take a picture, and give the children a few treats. That was it.

Their mother, Wardi, born in 1918, said that she did not participate in a group first communion because the nuns had not yet come to the village. She did not remember the occasion herself, but when she was a baby they baptized her in the font, chrismated her, and gave her first communion, just as the Orthodox do. By the 1940s, about a century after the Jesuits were holding first communion services in Zahle, the nuns arrived in al-Firzul to open their school, and they soon established first communion observances.

Today first communion is well-established in al-Firzul and the priest, the nuns, the children, and their parents enjoy it. It is an important celebration for the children and their families, and a major marker in the children's religious lives.

2 First Communion in 1973

In 1973 I first observed the celebration of first communion as organized by the Melkite Greek Catholic Salvatorian Sisters. A special Mass was held for the new communicants, children aged about seven, in the *Saydit an-Niyāḥ* church to which the nuns' school was attached. This took place immediately before the usual Sunday Mass. The Bishop and an elderly bearded priest, both wearing white vestments, came for this Mass. The church was full.

The children processed in, arranged by height from the shortest to the tallest, led by two little girls dressed as angels, in white dresses with wings attached. Someone had put red lipstick on the angels. The other children were dressed in long white robes with little collars. The girls wore little white bucket straw hats with chin straps, while the boys were bare-headed. Both girls and boys wore white gloves. They then sat down in the first four rows, which were covered with white cloth, a single calla lily sticking up on each end.

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before receiving communion (interviews, 2009). In the United States the Melkite hierarchy has succeeded in returning to Byzantine roots, at least in this instance.

4 Marked by big lunches held in restaurants, and in well-to-do Lebanese circles, the occasion for big parties. Merchants specialize in providing clothing and other items for baptism and first communion.

The angels sat in the front row on the left, but were not among the first communicant group because they were too young. The other little girls sat to the left of the aisle, the boys and a few girls to the right. The children were still arranged by height. Behind them sat other children from the school, including the boarders then resident, all in their Sunday uniforms of navy blue smocks and white plastic collars.

The few men who attended the service were clustered on the sides or by the altar, in the section where men usually sat. The children's teachers hung around anxiously seeing to deportment. One of the nuns, the religion teacher, directed the proceedings from near the altar. The greater part of the children sat with hands folded piously.

The Mass was held much as usual. A small boy in a blue suit read the Epistle at breath-taking speed. Part of the homily was directed to parents, admonishing them not just to admire how sweet the children looked, but also to help them be good Christians. The priest told the children to pray and come to Church. He added that they should be good Lebanese, and not to fight with other people (a reference to recent civil unrest). He addressed the meaning of communion, that it was a gift from God. After the homily, the children and the entire congregation stood up. The Bishop, taking a big piece of paper from the sister in charge, asked the children a few questions to which they chanted the responses. Then they all recited aloud the Nicene Creed and the Our Father, accompanied by members of the congregation.

Afterward, the children recited the usual pre-communion prayer. The nuns shepherded their charges forward to the altar to receive communion, and back. Then following the nuns, quite a large number of the women present also received communion. One little boy knelt in front of Saint Joseph's picture; a little girl or two bent over in seeming profound prayer after receiving communion. The men in attendance took a lot of photographs during the Mass, especially when their children received communion.

After all who wished received communion, the children recited the post-communion prayer, and the Mass ended soon thereafter. Then the congregation left, and the nuns formed the children into two lines, the angels in front, and marched them out into the courtyard, with the Bishop following. Next the children were ushered onto a platform as their mothers watched, for photographs with the Bishop and the headmistress. People milled around for a while, and the Bishop went inside. After some minutes the nuns and teachers produced congratulatory cards, pictures of Jesus, and packets of sweets. Someone sold ice cream. After about twenty minutes people began to leave because the priest was starting the regular Sunday Mass.

One little girl, Georgette's daughter Liliane, told me that she had taken first communion the previous year. On that occasion the girls wore bride's dresses and veils supplied, like this year's clothing, by the nuns.[5] She added that the nuns brought the children inside and gave them lunch.

3 Post-civil War First Communion Observance

In 2009, I was not able to attend the first communion celebrations, but obtained an excellent narrative DVD produced by the proprietor of a local video store. I watched this with some of my respondents, who provided extensive comments.

Villagers alternate holding first communion between the two churches, and this year it was the turn of the Annunciation church (*Saydit al-Bishāra*) in the Upper Quarter. The ceremony took place on a Saturday evening. Most women wore dressy clothes and were elaborately made up, with recently styled hair. Many men wore business suits. The children wore white monks' or nuns' habits, with Roman Catholic-style crucifixes hanging about their necks. Several of the girls had had their hair styled. All of the girls wore crowns of white artificial flowers, but there were no little girls dressed as angels. Evidently the children's costumes change every year. In family pictures at one house, taken during the period 2000–2005, the daughter wore a bride's outfit when she celebrated her first communion, while her younger brother wore a white monk's habit.

As they processed into the church in boy-girl pairs, the girls carried plastic sheaves of wheat, the boys plastic grape bunches, symbols, I was told, of the bread and wine of the Mass. The end of each pew was decorated with a white veil, white flowers, and some sheaves. As the children entered, the congregation rose and applauded. At the front of the church, the children deposited the sheaves or bunches in baskets, made the sign of the Cross (some in Roman Catholic fashion),[6] and took their seats in white plastic chairs placed in front, at right angles to the pews. The girls were placed at the congregation's left, the boys to the right.[7]

5 The ever-popular little brides' dresses and veils are characteristic of Latin practice in North America.

6 The Byzantine practice is to use the thumb and first two fingers joined together, and move the hand from the right to the left shoulder, while Roman Catholics use the whole hand and move from left to right.

7 Symbolically, the good side. They adhered to this same pattern in 1973 as well.

The priest began the Mass as usual. Several girls got up to the microphone to pray a litany. Adults smiled fondly. A nun watched from the side. The children tried hard to keep their hands folded piously, but they fidgeted a bit, too.

Several little girls and one little boy took turns reading the Epistle which told the story of the Last Supper. Then the priest read from the Gospel of Saint John, a passage relating that those who receive communion will never die. Then he turned to his homily, addressing the children, smiling. He told them to pray, and reminded them of the significance of communion. They were pure children, wearing white as a symbol of their purity, and he hoped that they would always remain free from sin. Then, two boys offered a chalice of wine and a plate of *qurbān*.[8] After this a few girls recited prayers at the microphone.

Then the priest instructed the children to rise. They extended their right hands and affirmed their rejection of Satan. Next they recited the Nicene Creed. There followed the central part of the Mass, the children bowing their heads. They recited the Our Father, hands raised, Roman Catholic style. After some further prayers by the children and the congregation, the boys rose to receive communion one by one, followed by their parents. After the boys finished, the girls began, again followed by their parents. Evidently putting boys first has existed for some years, at least fifteen, according to Joelle, my nineteen-year-old respondent, who said that was what they did when she received first communion.

Two boys at the microphone made a final prayer. The priest ended the Mass in the usual fashion, praying before the icons. The church bells rang, and strobe lights flashed behind the iconostasis.[9] Next, the priest gave the children Bibles wrapped in white, boys first, then girls.

The children recessed after the congregation in the same boy-girl pairs as before, now carrying their Bibles. They went with their mothers to the church hall for refreshments consisting of cake, cookies, punch, and fruit, while their fathers waited outside. I asked Yolla, a middle-aged lady, who had paid the costs for the ceremony (flowers, Bibles, costumes, and refreshments). She said the parents contributed about USD 50.00 per child.

Like weddings, first communion has grown into a larger celebration than was the case in 1973. Most notable, though, was the foregrounding of boys in

8 The Melkites, like the Orthodox, use an aromatic slightly sweet leavened bread called *qurbān* (offering) for the Liturgy. The thick round loaves are stamped on top with a symbol of Christ before they are baked.

9 The iconostasis is a barrier separating the altar area of the church from the area where the congregation sits or stands. There are three entrances in it, one in the middle, and two on the sides. On it are placed at least four icons, always one of Christ on the right, and one representing the particular church (in this case, the Annunciation) on the left.

the service. They were seated on the right (the good side), they presented the *qurbān* and the wine to the priest, they received communion first, and they received their Bibles first. In the second half of the service, almost no girls participated at the microphone. Even the girl-boy pairs in the processional and recessional distinguished the sexes.

Before the introduction of first communion, when the Farāzli still followed Byzantine custom, girls and boys had the same experience on the occasion of their baptism, chrismation, and communion. People held the observance separately for each infant; there were no group celebrations. And during the first communion event I attended in 1973, the nuns organized the children by height, not gender. They did, however, seat the boys on the right. Now, though, it seems important not only to distinguish the sexes, but to give pre-eminence to males, just as those nineteenth-century Jesuits did.

4 Weddings in 1972–1973

During the 1970s, engagement was preceded by the actual matchmaking, either on the initiative of the young people themselves or by their parents and other senior relatives. At the engagement celebration, the prospective groom, his parents, and other relatives visited the bride and her family, bringing sweets, gold bangles for the girl, and two rings. The young man's father (or another senior male) asked for the girl's hand, her father agreed, and the groom's father put the rings on the fourth fingers of the couple's left hands. The groom's family members then put the bangles on the bride's wrist. A party ensued and the wedding date was set at this time. An engagement was considered binding.

The engagement period was usually short, three or four months, and devoted to intense preparations for the wedding. The bride's family would obtain her bridal gown, and assemble a trousseau consisting of clothing for the bride, jewelry and cosmetics, and household linens. It might also contain household furnishings such as kitchen appliances, dishes, and glassware.[10]

The groom's family would make arrangements for a house or flat and furniture for the newlyweds. The bride and her family would select a woman (married or unmarried) to serve as the bride's *shbīni* (witness; normally her sister), during the religious ceremony. His family prepared further gifts for the bride, and selected his *shbīn* (usually his brother). The bride's role in all of these

10 For the previous generation, it was considered essential for the bride's family to give her a cabinet in which to store linens and clothing, in addition to other gifts which might be made.

preparations was limited, although she was concerned about the outcome and eager to be married. On the night before the wedding, both families held big parties, with food, drink, and dancing.

Many things happened on the wedding day. First, the family and friends of the bride gathered at her house, and the groom's at his. In both houses, refreshments were served, consisting of candy and punch, plus wine or distilled liquor. At the bride's house, the bride waited, while the women came to congratulate her. Older women showered the bride with candy, and sang the *īhā*s about her beauty and happiness. Then the bride put on her white gown, a hairdresser styled her hair, a white veil was put on her head, and many photographs were taken. When all was ready, the groom's family came over to fetch the bride, while her kinswomen showered them with cologne and candy.

After some minutes, all went in procession to the church. At the church door, the girl's father or a senior male in the family handed her over to the groom at the church door. Then the bridal pair, the groom on the right, entered the church together to show their consent to the union.

The couple proceeded to a small table covered in white set up in front of the Holy Doors to the altar; on the table were a cross, the Gospel, an empty wineglass, and a vessel of wine. The sponsors took their places beside the bridal pair, the groom's *shbīn* to his right, the bride's *shbīni* to her left. The guests gathered around the front of the church, paying no attention to the usual practice at that time of seating the men in front, the women in back. The priest blessed the rings of betrothal,[11] touching the bride's ring to the fourth finger of the groom's left hand, and the groom's ring to the fourth finger of the bride's left hand. Then he exchanged the rings and put them back on their fingers. This exchange constituted the betrothal part of the religious ceremony.

Next the couple, groom first, were asked if they consented to the union. The rite of crowning followed. The priest blessed the wedding crowns and placed them on the heads of the groom and the bride. Then he placed the groom's crown on her head, her crown on his, and then reversed them back, crossing them over their heads. The ceremony of crowning, *al-iklīl*, provides the name for the entire wedding ceremony. Selections from the Gospels and Epistles were read,[12] and prayers were said for the success and fruitfulness of

11 They had worn them since the engagement party, but took them off before the ceremony. According to official Church teaching, the religious betrothal was the official one, but in fact people held their own engagement observance, described above, after the match was made.

12 The Gospel was typically the story of the wedding at Cana (John 2: 1–12), the Epistle the Pauline one enjoining the wife to be subject to her husband, the husband to love his wife (Ephesians 5: 22–33).

the marriage. There might be a homily. Next, the Lord's Prayer was recited by all, including the bridal couple.

The priest blessed (not consecrated) the wine and poured it into the glass.[13] Then the couple and their witnesses partook of it. During the singing of the wedding hymn[14] which followed, the priest led the groom's witness, the groom, the bride, and the bride's witness, all holding hands, in a counter-clockwise procession three times around the little table. The priest removed the crowns. Next he pronounced a final blessing, and the bridal couple and their sponsors signed the registry. Then the couple, sponsors, and guests left the church.

After the wedding, the couple and guests went to the groom's house, where a reception was held. When they reached the house, the groom's mother handed the bride a round piece of bread dough, the *khamīri*; she stuck it over the lintel of the main door, decorating it with a cross of small coins.[15]

By the 1970s, a short honeymoon of two or three days spent in a resort hotel had become popular, and the young couple doubtless welcomed the privacy. One lady told me that in the last one or two decades ("forty years," she said), a honeymoon of a week or so had been in vogue.[16] While the couple was away, the women of the bride's family held a little party to take the trousseau over to the new house.

After the couple returned from their honeymoon to their new house, or the groom's father's house, they sat for a reception every afternoon and evening, wearing dressy clothes. During this time, lasting the remainder of the week, people came to bring gifts.[17] Usually they brought money but young girls,

13 Unlike the custom among Latin-rite Catholics, the Melkites do not celebrate a wedding Mass.

14 This invokes Isaiah, Mary, the martyred saints, and Christ.

15 This rite evidently had some connection with the bride's fertility. The implicit concept was that as the yeast dough expanded, so too would the bride's abdomen expand in pregnancy. Additionally, it was the mistress of the house who shaped the loaves of the family's daily bread. The younger woman would take the assistant role until her mother-in-law retired from active work. So the bride's taking the dough from her mother-in-law's hand was in effect receiving the keys to the household, anticipating her eventual role as mistress of the household.

16 Forty years was a round number, and an exaggerated one at that. In the old days very likely no one had heard of honeymoons, nor could they have afforded one. Many decades before the 1970s, family and neighbors waited outside the groom's father's house for evidence to be produced of a successful consummation of the marriage. Then the men shot off their guns to make a joyful noise in celebration. In the 1970s, I heard a funny story about a bridegroom who had not been able to consummate the marriage. His problem had obviously become common knowledge. No wonder newlyweds welcomed even a brief trip away from the village.

17 The gifts collectively were called *nuqūṭ*.

friends of the bride, might bring household items such as glassware instead. The guests were served sweets and cordials, and might be showered with cologne at the door. Lady guests took home small bundles of bonbons. The newlyweds did no work during this week, and did not go out formally.

On the Sunday following the wedding, the two families took the newlyweds to church for Mass. On this occasion, the bride wore an all-black ensemble, for the first time in her life, to symbolize her new status as an adult married woman.[18] The next day the bride, groom, and the groom's family visited her family, symbolizing once again her transfer to her husband's house, and marking the end of the wedding period.[19]

Weddings I attended in summer, 1972, and spring, 1973, illustrate some of these generalizations.[20] By post-civil war standards, they were modest in scope.

In the first, the bride, Nādia, was from al-Firzul. The groom, Fādi, was from Zahle, so the religious service took place there, in his church. On the day of the wedding, in mid-afternoon, Nādia's patrilateral relatives went to her father's house in the village, where her mother greeted them and sprinkled them with cologne. The men went into the salon, while the women went into a second room where the bride, Nādia, sat with her *shbīni*. Her mother came in with a tray of candy and *ʿaraq*. From time to time, the older women sang *īhā*s. In the late afternoon, Nādia's mother took her to her bedroom to be dressed in her white gown, have her hair styled, and put on her veil. After she came out, many photographs were taken. An hour later, everyone left for Zahle in a small fleet of jitney taxis, and entered the church. At the church door, Nādia's father handed her over to Fādi. After the service was over, the bridal party went into the church hall, where everyone congratulated them. Nādia's relatives returned to the village.

The second wedding also took place in Zahle, where the groom's father lived. However, it took place not in the family's church, but in a chapel under the new statue of Mary, evidently because of the young couple's devotion to her. The young couple were Joseph and Najwa.

The wedding was set for 6:00, but we left the village in the early afternoon because we were close relatives of Joseph's father. After the women of the family returned from the hairdresser's and put on their best clothes, we left for

18 The groom's family obtained this ensemble during the engagement period.

19 That final visit was called "returning the foot" (*raddit il-ijr*). For a detailed analysis of the symbolism involved in taking the newlyweds to Mass see N. Jabbra 2018.

20 I attended the first and third of these weddings as a member of the bride's family, the second of the groom's.

Zahle in a couple of jitney taxis, stopping along the way to purchase some floral bouquets.

When we arrived, we presented the flowers, and offered the parents felicitations. Joseph's mother offered us cigarettes and candy. Joseph came in, dressed in his suit, and everyone embraced and kissed him. His mother's relatives came up from Beirut. About 4:00 the caterers arrived from Beirut with pastries and a large wedding cake decorated with pink and white streamers. They also laid in a large supply of 'araq, sparkling wine, and sodas.

Next, we went to Najwa's house where her female relatives showered us with cologne. Then we took her and went with her family to the church, where her brother (because her father was deceased) handed her over to Joseph. Following the service, we returned to Joseph's father's flat. Najwa and Joseph cut the cake, and ate some of it. A general reception followed, with sparkling wine, juice, the cake, pastries, and candy. There was no receiving line, as there had been at the previous wedding, but Najwa and Joseph went about greeting the guests. Another round of pictures was taken. None of the women sang the *īha*s, perhaps because Joseph's mother's family were from Beirut where they did not sing them. About 7:30, Najwa and Joseph, dressed in their travelling clothes, brought out their suitcases, and got ready to leave for their honeymoon. We greeted them and the family again, and left.

A third wedding, held in spring, 1973, provides further details on post-wedding events. Because there had been a recent death in the family, the couple, Adele and Michel, held a small wedding service at Saint George's shrine across the valley, the guests consisting mainly of close family on both sides. Following the ceremony, the bride and groom changed clothes and left for their honeymoon at a mountain resort.

The next day, women from Adele's family met at her father's house to take her trousseau over to her new house. It consisted of dresses, stockings, shoes, suits, a coat, and house robes, plus mattresses, pillows, bed covers, coffee table doilies, and other household furnishings. Before we left, Adele's mother handed around chocolates.

We walked with the porters, who carried the large items, to Michel's house. There we were greeted by some of his female relatives, who sprinkled us with cologne, while we said "*inshallah byithannu*" ("God willing, they will be happy"). Then they put away the items from the trousseau, we sat in the salon for a brief visit, they served us candy, and we left.

Three days after the wedding Adele and Michel returned from their honeymoon. One evening, dressed in our nicest outfits, we visited Adele and Michel to bring them their gifts. We walked down to Adele's family home, where all the relatives had gathered, the women in one room, the men in another. A

boy passed around chocolates to everyone, as we greeted everyone, "*inshallah byithannu*" ("God willing they will be happy").

After some minutes, we left *en masse* to Michel's house. There the *khamīri* was pasted over the door. There we were greeted with showers of cologne, then went inside to greet the newlyweds. He was dressed in a suit, she in a long evening dress. We said, "*inshallah btihannu*" ("God willing you will be happy"), they said "*farḥitkun*" ("for your joy," of getting married, having children, one's children's marriages, grandchildren). Then we sat, women and men again in separate rooms. They served us cigarettes, sparkling wine, coffee, and candy. We gave them their gifts, shook hands again, and left.[21]

On the Sunday about two weeks after the wedding, we put on our nice clothes to take the young couple to the church. We went first to Adele's family's house, and walked with her family to Michel's family's house. There we found Adele in a stylish black coatdress, broad-brimmed black hat, and black patent high heels. Michel wore a suit, necktie, and dress shirt. After some minutes we all walked to the church, where the priest celebrated the Liturgy, making special prayers for the newlyweds. After the Mass, we all left and went home.

In short, weddings are about males taking precedence. They are about making a girl into a woman by making her a wife, by transferring her from her father's house to her husband's house. Divine blessing supports the entire system of symbols and actions.

The groom's father, on his behalf, asks her father for her hand. At the church the bride's father hands her over to the groom's family and thus to the groom. Although she must give her consent to the marriage, she is in fact transferred from one male to another.

They enter the church with the groom on the right, the good side, and at the altar the groom and his *shbīn* stand at the right. The groom is asked first whether he consents to the union, he receives his ring and crown first, and he and his *shbīn* go first in the procession around the altar. In all ways, then, he precedes her, he is better than she.

During the service, the Epistle states that she should obey him. The Gospel about the wedding at Cana communicates divine blessing upon marriage. The priest prays for fertility, and the *khamīri*, too, is about fertility. The bride's fertility, though, is meant to add to the groom's patriline. Last, the rites of churching and returning the foot symbolize the bride's transfer from her house to his.

21 Because I was young and single, I gave them a set of pretty glasses.

5 Weddings Post-civil War

Matches between young people are now made by their own choice, and arrangements no longer exist. Following is an account by Bashīr, the groom's father's oldest brother (*ʿamm*), of an engagement party held late in 2007.[22] Although it took place after the war, in many ways it characterized the pre-civil war period. First, in the evening, Bashīr, his parents, his brothers and sisters, plus their families, gathered at the groom's father's house. Next they went as a delegation to the family house of the bride-to-be, Muna. Numerous photographers and video crews were on hand to record the happy occasion. The older women started singing the traditional *īhā* songs when they went in. Then they sat inside where each family had their pictures taken with the young couple, Muna and George.

After the picture taking was finished, each senior woman of the groom's family got up in turn to present Muna with a gift. First came Marie, the groom's mother, with the engagement rings. She asked the groom's grandfather Rashīd (the senior male in the family) to put the engagement rings on the couple's left ring fingers. Then came Bashīr's turn. Instructed by his mother, he got up and put a gold bangle from him and his wife on Muna's wrist. Other members of the groom's family followed suit. Next it was the turn of Muna's family to give some small gifts (neckties and the like) to George. Bashīr commented here that his sisters and mother sang *īhā*s boasting about the groom, his qualities and pedigree, but also praising the bride. Then the women of the bride's family began their *īhā*s. These were first focused on the bridal couple and then extended to both families and how good an alliance it was.

After that, George's family passed out chocolates, white *mlabbas* (Jordan almonds), and other sweets. Everybody then drove to a local restaurant where Muna's family had a feast ready.[23] It featured a big *māza*[24] and drinks, followed by the *plat de résistance*, a stuffed whole roast lamb. There followed music, dancing, and more *īhā*s.

In recent years, the formal engagement may be accompanied by additional and expensive social events, such as lunches and dinner parties, hosted by both families. As well, it is now popular for the groom's family to give the bride

22 I was not in Lebanon at the time, but received this very thorough account via email.

23 On this occasion, the groom's family only provides the sweets. Later, the families' roles are reversed, for it is the groom's family that is responsible for putting on the wedding and the reception which follows.

24 Usually translated as *hors-d'oeuvres* or appetizers, but in fact a substantial part of the meal.

jewelry instead of gold bangles. It is also expected that members of the bride's family bring gifts on the occasion of the engagement, again typically jewelry.

Some minor changes have been made to the wedding ritual in the church, although overall the religious part remains the same. Shortcuts may be made in the service. Recorded Western music, such as the familiar tunes by Wagner and Mendelssohn, may be broadcast. Occasionally one sees flower girls and ring bearers.

The secular festivities have expanded considerably, thanks to affluence[25] (see, for example, Voisard 2016). Less emphasis is placed on a family celebration of beautifying the bride or preparing a trousseau. Instead, the two families hold separate big parties one or two evenings before the wedding. The bride's hair and make-up are professionally done. The wedding reception (*ʿasha*, dinner) has also become more elaborate, with a huge dinner-dance held at a hotel or restaurant, music provided by a band, and of course dancing. The honeymoon is longer, and the two families no longer take the couple up to the church a week after the wedding. It has become fashionable to hire photographers to produce professional-quality DVDs of the wedding and the reception (especially the latter).

Weddings are by invitation only, and may include friends and important clients or business associates of the groom's father. The invitations are ornate, and provide information about the "*listes de mariage*" (banks where the couple is registered for cash gifts). Villagers may not know who is getting married when a procession goes by, but this would not have been the case decades ago, when all villagers attended every wedding.

Weddings held soon after the end of the civil war show the transition to today's elaborate weddings. One such transitional wedding took place in winter, 2004.[26] Held in the village by a middle income family, it was a modest affair compared to weddings today. However, post-war affluence and the impress of global mass media were already in evidence.

Two evenings before the wedding, the groom's family held a party for relatives and close friends at their house. The plentiful food had been prepared by the women of the family the night before. We ate, drank, and danced until late.

On the day of the wedding, just before the service started, we walked to the groom's father's house, where the groom, Pierre, and his *shbīn* were waiting;

25 Billboards I saw in the Beirut area during summer, 2011, pictured a bride and groom, with a middle-aged man between them, and bore the caption "You may now kiss the banker." The billboards were meant to be humorous, and to advertise the bank's services, but they conveyed the fact that weddings frequently involve borrowing substantial sums of money to support the ostentation now deemed requisite.

26 On this occasion, I attended the wedding as a member of the groom's family.

then we walked to the church. The bride, Antoinette, and her family arrived *en caravane*; when she got out of the car, people urged Pierre to kiss her, and he did. Recorded light classical music was played as we entered the flower-decorated church.

Everyone applauded as a small boy and girl proceeded up the aisle from the back of the church, followed by Antoinette and Pierre, the *shbīn* and *shbīni*, and Antoinette's and Pierre's parents. The village priest was waiting near the altar. The usual Melkite wedding service ensued. The priest gave a final blessing, followed by congratulations all around.

Next, Pierre's family surprised everyone by holding a *zaffi* (the first I had seen) in the church courtyard. The *zaffi* is a performance in antique style by a professional team of dancers. It is not only expensive to hire a team of dancers, but the current popularity of the *zaffi* throughout the country also demonstrates Lebanese nostalgia for an imagined past.[27] After the *zaffi* we went down to the church *salon* to congratulate the young couple, and went home. After half an hour we heard the celebration as Antoinette went down to Pierre's house to put the *khamīri* above the front door.

The most expensive village wedding I observed took place in summer, 2009.[28] In this case, both ostentation and global influence, chiefly from the United States, were very much in evidence.[29] First, young friends and relatives put on "bachelor" and "bachelorette" (their words) parties for the couple. Two evenings before the wedding the bride's father held a garden party for family and friends, including several relatives from the United States. The entertainment featured dancing to a live band, a *zaffi*, fireworks, the *dabki*, and *īhā*s.

On the afternoon of the wedding, family members gathered at the bride's house. Photographers took pictures of the bride, Rosine, and her family. Servers circulated with sweets and beverages, including sparkling wine. Some older women sang *īhā*s. Then the groom's family came, with a *zaffi* troupe and a long white stretch limo.[30] Rosine rode to the church in the limo with her father and her father's paternal cousin, the senior male in the family, as was traditionally

27 Both Lucia Volk (2001: 180–201) and Samir Khalaf (2012: 201–224) have commented on nostalgia and excess in modern Lebanon. For Volk, nostalgia defines both the generation that came of age before the war, and the ways their descendants view village life; then the *zaffi* would represent the good life that came before the bad. For Khalaf, excess or spectacle as he calls it, is an escape from reality.

28 This I attended as a member of the bride's family.

29 In this instance, both of the bride's parents, and the bride herself, had spent many years in the United States, so they were familiar with American customs and thought of them as normative.

30 There exist rental agencies specializing in vehicles exclusively for weddings.

proper. The lavishly decorated church filled rapidly while the bells rang. Outside the church stood a horse. The wedding planner initially had thought that Rosine would ride it to the church, but in the end, it merely stood by the church.

Then the wedding procession began.[31] The *shbīn* and *shbīni* came in with the bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls and ring bearers. Last came Rosine, escorted by her father, who handed her over to the groom, Jean, at the front of the church. The Bishop and other priests officiated. From that point on, the wedding ceremony took place as usual, to the accompaniment of still and video photographers.

I did not attend the dinner-dance held in the gardens of a hotel in nearby Chtoura, but I learned that it went late, involving several "Las Vegas" acts engaged by the wedding planner, copious food and drink, and dancing; a huge crowd was on hand.[32] The entertainment included a *zaffi*, flamenco dancers, a snake charmer act, a singing duet, videos of the bride's and groom's childhoods, and fireworks. People danced far into the night. Rosine and Jean went on a honeymoon to several European countries.[33]

Rosine and Jean's wedding clearly showed the effects of affluence and transnational connection. It was extravagant, and featured numerous elements popular in the United States, such as flower girls and several attendants for the bride and groom. The bride's father escorted her down the aisle to the groom standing at the altar. The bride's and groom's friends held bachelor and bachelorette parties for them, another feature popular in America. Also, it was the bride's father who paid most of the wedding expenses, as is the case in the United States, rather than the groom's father.

Despite this wedding's extravagance, though, the role of family was still significant, particularly that of patrilateral kin. The senior male of the family rode with Rosine and her father when they brought her from the house to the church. Her father then led her into the church, where he handed her over to Jean, the groom, at the altar. Rosine was thus symbolically transferred from her father and his family to her husband, and therefore as well to her husband's house.

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31 The processional was the theme music for the 1992 film "1492: Conquest of Paradise," popular at the time.

32 On this occasion, the bride's father had invited many of his business associates to join close family in the church. As is usual in Lebanon, many more guests attended the dinner party held afterward than went to the church.

33 Many years later Rosine's father told me that in all he had spent "a million dollars" on the whole wedding.

It is rare today that a bride's female friends and relatives assemble a trousseau for her, hold a party, and then take it over to the groom's house. The *listes de mariage* have replaced the *soirées* during which the young couple received wedding gifts. Brides still press a round cake of raw bread dough, decorated as in the 1970s, over the door of the groom's house, right after the wedding before everyone leaves for the *ʿasha*. However, the symbolism I outlined for the *khamīri* no longer holds. It is simply a nice tradition, for now women buy bread from bakeries, and couples cannot afford large families.

Families no longer take the young couple up to the church a week or so after the wedding, nor do the newlyweds pay a return visit to the bride's family.[34] The waning of this two-part rite of passage demonstrates the influence of the *mahjar* and mass media upon weddings today. Families are more affluent, and want to demonstrate that through extravagant celebrations.

Other features of modern weddings in much of Lebanon include a professionally produced DVD of the proceedings, starting with the bride's professional make-up and hairstyling, then scenes of her modeling the wedding dress in some scenic or historic setting, and ending with the big dinner-dance, the *ʿasha*. Just before the *zaffi*, the bride comes down a long staircase, white fireworks shooting up on both sides. With this extravagant focus on the bride, it might seem that gender roles are changing. However, the bride is only "Queen for a Day," and the basic cultural, social, and legal frameworks of gender roles remain unchanged.

6 Funerals in the 1970s[35]

By then, most people died in hospital in Zahle. If the person were old and infirm, family members had been visiting around the clock. Once the person actually died, word quickly got back to the village, and soon they tolled the bells at the church. Those hearing the bells made the sign of the Cross to pray

34 Although families no longer take the young couple to Mass or pay a return visit to the bride's family, villagers still make a social and linguistic distinction between married women and unmarried girls.

35 My information for this part comes mainly from interviews, because I was unmarried in the 1970s and thus did not attend wakes. On one occasion I went briefly to pay my respects to a deceased relative; I was then in my late twenties, not a young girl. In any case, I would not have attended the funeral service or the interment. In al-Firzul, until recently, no girls or women attended the funeral service, and they still do not attend the interment (see N. Jabbra 2018).

for the deceased. Before the remains were brought home, someone in the hospital would wash the body of the deceased and clothe him or her in a suit or dress.

A few hours later, once the deceased had arrived at the house, they laid him/her out on a bed, hands by the sides and stocking feet discreetly tied together with a strip of cloth, flowers all around, boxes of tissues handy. Ranks of chairs were arranged in the room for the mourning women to sit on.

Until the funeral, typically held the day after the person died, women would come to sit with the remains, to talk, to sing, to pray, to weep. At one time they would bring in a *naddābi*, a woman who specialized in reciting verses extolling the qualities of the deceased, but by the 1970s the *naddābi* was no more. The men gathered separately in the same house. It was expected that all village adults would come, the women dressed in black. The men wore no particular colors unless they were close relatives, in which case they would wear a black necktie and a dark business suit. Other men might dress more casually. The family men sent word around the region, so visitors came from Zahle and other towns. Meanwhile, the casket sat ready, with floral arrangements and a formal portrait of the deceased.[36]

Overnight, family members got little sleep as they held a vigil with the deceased. They ordered in sandwiches and the like, and hired men to make and serve coffee to the mourners. Early on the morning of the funeral, male kin, the brothers and paternal cousins of the deceased, came to the room where the deceased was laid out to recite verses praising him or her; these were similar to those of the *naddābi*. When the time came for the funeral, men of the family brought the casket and placed the remains in it. One of the women turned up the mattress and the priest came to cense it, "to purify it." The family hired a singer or a brass band to play a dirge if the person were very young or very important.

Only men attended the funeral service in the church. Village men carried the casket, the family men following behind. The band accompanied the crowd to the church, but stayed outside. Inside the church they put the casket on a table covered in black cloth, without flowers, in front of the altar doors, and then the priest and the congregation said the funeral prayers.[37] The family men stood in the aisle behind the casket, weeping.

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36 Professional studios would prepare these portraits, often from simple black-and-white snapshots, inserting suitable clothes and background, and framing them in a dark silvertone. The family would later hang the portrait on the wall in their best parlor.

37 It is not the Melkite custom to have a funeral Mass, but there are specific Bible readings and other texts.

Next they, still only the men, took the casket to the nearby family tomb, the musicians again playing a dirge. There in the cemetery the priest said, "You came from the earth, and you go back to it," and sprinkled some dirt on the casket. Then they put the casket inside the tomb, closed it, and put the flowers in front of the door. Finally, they returned to the church door, where the family men stood to receive condolences.

If a young man died before marrying, women used to sing the *īhās* normally sung for weddings, and dance to wedding songs; the men would shoot off their guns in celebration. This was because they would not be able to celebrate an actual wedding for the deceased. They did not do this for young girls because they would not carry on the family patriline. In modern Lebanon celebrations might still be made at funerals if a young or famous person has died.[38]

Until the 1940s, between the funeral and the forty days' memorial, the family would remain at home to receive condolences. Still in mourning, the old custom had been for them not to shave or have their hair styled or cut; to refrain from listening to the radio (or in later years, watching television); and not to wear cosmetics, attend pleasurable social gatherings, or even to visit others. The women wore black, generally with black stockings. By the 1970s, the family did not stay home for forty days, but still observed mourning.

Memorials were celebrated on the following Sunday, three weeks later, forty days later (approximately six weeks), six months later, and a year later. These were held in the church after the Liturgy. Special prayers for the deceased were recited. At the forty-days memorial (the *arbaʿīn*) the *qurbān*[39] was blessed and pieces were distributed to the congregation at the church door. Other memorials were quieter, just for the family.

Women and men, then, performed different roles at funerals. It would be hard to conclude, however, that these connoted a gender hierarchy, although they certainly communicated gender difference. The women gathered in one room with the remains, the men in another. Only men attended the funeral service in the church and the interment.

Married women wore black when attending a wake or in mourning; it was a social obligation to attend the wake. Unmarried young women would not attend the wake unless the deceased were a close relative, and then only

38 Note, for example, the funeral in 2014 for Sabah, a much-loved singer (Hassan 2014); and a young actor-singer in 2015 (Young star laid to rest 2015). Also see Chémali (1909: 41–42).

39 The *qurbān* (or offering) is the same sweetened aromatic bread, with a special stamp on top, used in the Mass. In the case of memorials and saints' days, though, it is not consecrated, but only blessed.

briefly; unmarried women past the usual age of marriage would stay for the entire period (N. Jabbra 2018).

Mourning for family members was ended in stages. The restrictions on grooming were lifted first. Later came the restrictions on visiting, sports, television, and radio. Holding or attending joyful occasions such as weddings came still later.

7 Funerals Post-civil War

The following account is based on events taking place in summer, 2011. An elderly man had died at home after a long illness, and the funeral took place the next afternoon. Before the service, a few men, most of them casually dressed, gathered in the courtyard. Inside the upper salon, the men of the family, in business suits and ties, had formed a receiving line, and more men were sitting around the periphery of the room. Women and men proceeded down the receiving line saying "*Inshallah btislam*," to which the reply is "*Tib'a ḥayātak*" (m.) or "*ḥayātik*" (f.) ("God willing, you will remain healthy") and ("May you remain in good health").

The women then went down a flight of stairs to join the ladies of the family and other women waiting in a second salon. Sofas lined the periphery, and plastic chairs had been placed in rows in the middle. The open casket containing the remains of the deceased lay on a gurney from the funeral parlor in front of the room.[40] A big spray of white lilies decorated the casket, and at each end a candle was burning. The room was full of women dressed in black, a few in black skirts with white blouses. Nearly all the women were married except one or two past the usual age of marriage who were close relatives of the deceased. The ladies sang prayers and hymns, including the Lourdes hymn ("Immaculate Mary") in Arabic. Some spoke quietly among themselves.

The daughters of the deceased, dressed in black and wearing no make-up, sat near the casket, weeping. About fifteen minutes before the funeral service was to start, the men came down with the priest. One man brought in the top and closed the coffin. The priest recited prayers, concluding with the hymn "Eternal Memory,"[41] which everyone joined. Then the men took up the coffin,

40 He had died at home, but his remains were placed under refrigeration in a hospital morgue overnight. That is the usual practice today.

41 This hymn expresses a wish that the deceased would dwell in God's memory forever, that is, enjoy eternal life in Heaven.

carried it outside, and up to the church. As they lifted the coffin, the man's daughters cried out with grief.

The visiting ladies took their leave, paying their last condolences. After the service in the church above, which took about 20 minutes, concluding with "Eternal Memory," the men took the deceased to the cemetery and laid him in the tomb. This part of the proceedings was very brief.

Two days later, on the following Sunday directly after the Liturgy, they held the prayers for the dead, "Oh Lord, Teach Me Your Statutes,"[42] and ending with "Eternal Memory." During the Mass and prayers a big picture of the deceased was placed at the right side of the iconostasis. After the Mass was over family men distributed *qurbān* at the church door. Family men and women gathered in the upper (men's) salon to receive condolences.

Funerals constitute another instance of how the symbols of kinship have changed. When I first went to the village the deceased was laid out at home, even though s/he might have died in hospital; a funeral meal of sandwiches and the like was served in a separate room to the mourners. All the women attending wore unrelieved black, for women were the more conspicuous or symbolic mourners. Unmarried women did not attend the wake, unless they were very close relatives. No women, married or unmarried, attended the funeral service in the church or the interment.

Today, because both village churches have salons where the deceased can be laid out and family members sit to receive condolences, wakes are held there. The coffee, sandwiches, and fruit are served there. After the funeral, interment, and one-week memorial, though, condolence calls are made at home. Women and girls in the village still do not attend the funeral or interment.[43]

Mourning dress appears not to be as strict as before. Widows do not continue to wear dark colors for the rest of their lives, and the period of wearing mourning is shorter, too. When visiting the bereaved at home, women do not always wear unrelieved black; navy and dark stripes or patterns are acceptable, as are a dark skirt and a white blouse. The women of the family, though, wear only black, and might wear black stockings. After the initial period of mourning is over, though, they change to other colors. I was told that these changes were a result of the Lebanese civil war, when so many died. The result, whatever the cause, is that women are not so conspicuously symbols of mourning for an extended period of time.

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42 The text of this set of prayers is drawn in part from Psalm 119, and is a standard memorial prayer used at funerals and memorial services.

43 This is not necessarily the case in other parts of Lebanon, and the situation is changing in al-Firzul.

I observed another example of changed standards following a death. After one important funeral in *Saydit an-Niyāḥ*, the young people in the sports club across the street were playing a match, with recorded music broadcast over a well-amplified system. A young family member was watching television in his room. In another instance, the son of the deceased's father's brother's son (considered a close relative) went swimming in Zahle with his son and some young friends. A generation ago, if someone had died, music, sports, television, radio, and engaging in pleasant social events would all have been unacceptable.

Today families might celebrate baptisms or weddings in the wake of another family's bereavement. In previous decades, one reason for elopement was if someone had died recently. These days, it is a different matter. Now weddings and baptisms are elaborately planned, and cannot easily be cancelled or rescheduled.

Few families celebrate the *arbaʿīn* (forty-days memorial) now. There is the funeral, and then a memorial a week to a week and half after; that has become the *arbaʿīn*. People still observe the one-year memorial as before, though. Overall, memorials and mourning appear to be in a state of transition. Different families and different individuals do different things. Age is definitely a factor, with younger people having more flexible attitudes.

A number of factors appear to be responsible for the transition, and respondents listed several. Men have jobs or businesses now. They no longer do seasonal work like farming which they can leave for a few hours. It is hard for them to take a lot of time off for the extended mourning rituals that took place some generations ago. The civil war was perhaps a factor.

The weakening of social control is another factor. Houses are spread out geographically in the second village, married offspring do not live with or near the husband's parents, and socioeconomic stratification is more pronounced. Finally, I learned that the older ways were really hard on families. To sit, night after night, receiving condolence calls for a period of six weeks, serving coffee, and receiving no relief, must have been exhausting and stressful.

A noticeable change taking place is that women are beginning to attend the funeral service in the church, although not the interment. In 2016, when a well-known villager died, a delegation came up from Beirut. The women in the group attended the service in the church, although the village women did not. A few years later, the widow of a former villager died in Beirut, but was buried in al-Firzul. At her family's request, the village women attended the service in the church. Thus, Beirut customs are beginning to make an impact on long-standing traditions in al-Firzul.

Funeral observances show the impress of affluence. Following the death in 2015 of the long-standing *mukhtār* of the Lower Quarter, villagers held a huge

funeral. Family members brought his remains from Beirut, where he had died, then through the main street in a big procession of cars, with the sounding of horns, gunshots, and fireworks. As they brought the casket into the church, horsemen galloped by the church while more fireworks were set off across the street.[44] The bishop and several regional notables were on hand. As with all services held in the church, the funeral was amplified and broadcast.

Modern affluence is also responsible for the existence of the two salons, and thus the gender hierarchy now noticeable at funeral observances. The men's salon is upstairs, and better furnished than the ladies' salon below. When both women and men together receive condolences, they do so in the upper (men's) salon. And they sit separately. Moreover, from the point of view of those entering from the vestibule and proceeding counter-clockwise, the men in the receiving line stand on the right (the good) side, the women on the left. If women do attend the funeral service in the church, as in other religious services held there, the women and children sit in the back section, as s they do in regular Sunday services. In other words, men's precedence over women is still communicated in today's funeral observances.

8 Women's Practice of Vernacular Religion: Subverting the Gender Hierarchy

Several of the practices and beliefs of vernacular Christianity in al-Firzul subvert the message of the institutional Church that men are superior to women.[45] I observed the three rituals, Corpus Christi, May devotions to Mary, and the Mother of Rain, I describe here over several years, from 1973 to 2016, but although details have changed, their basic message remains the same: Mary, a woman, is all-powerful. Women are powerful.

8.1 *Corpus Christi*

Corpus Christi (the Body of Christ) is celebrated in early June (see N. Jabbra 2009a; and N. Jabbra 2009b for full accounts of the observation). The holiday was introduced to Melkites in the Zahle area by Jesuit missionaries during the nineteenth century. However, Farāzli have created their own vernacular

44 Again, see Chémali 1909: 41–42.

45 In the interest of honesty about vernacular religion in al-Firzul, I should note that there is a ritual which, in part, foregrounds males as social actors, namely the family feast day observance (N. Jabbra 2016).

version. The following is condensed from observations and interviews I made in 1973, 2004, and 2009.

On the eve of the feast, the church bells rang and people gathered in the courtyard of the Dormition Church where the priest blessed them. Then the procession started down the hill, headed by the priest, who was followed by a number of women singing hymns, including the Lourdes hymn,[46] sung in Arabic. The procession stopped at several houses along their way through the village.

At each house, the women had set up a small table (called a *samdi*) at the entrance and put a white cloth on it, decorating it with flowers and greenery. They hung a second white cloth on the wall, pinning up pictures of Jesus, various saints, and more flowers. The priest blessed the household members, and the procession continued on its path to the Annunciation church, and past Saint George's shrine. Finally, they returned to the Dormition church, where the priest blessed the people again.

I asked one of the women participating why they sang the Lourdes hymn if the holiday was devoted to Christ. She said that they include Mary, the mother, with the Trinity. She shares with them, she is a partner. What she meant, I think, is that Mary is as powerful as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – which is powerful indeed.

8.2 *May Devotions to Mary*

May devotions to Mary are another practice introduced by Jesuit missionaries, probably during the nineteenth century. What is significant is the fact that women are the main participants in the ritual, and that they increased its scope over several decades to become a major public celebration.

I first observed May devotions to Mary in 1973 (see N. Jabbra 2009a; and N. Jabbra 2009b for a fuller account). One of our neighbors held daily evening prayers at her house for the entire month. She said she had a great devotion to Mary and all the saints. If she had any kind of pain, she would pray to Mary, and the next day the pain would be gone. She did not think men were as religious as women, which was why the May devotions were largely a women's affair.

She began by arranging statuettes of the Virgin and some saints on her balcony, and lighted candles in front of them. She and some neighbor women knelt in front of them, and recited a number of prayers and hymns to Mary, ending after an hour. She told me that on the last day of May they would hold

46 Often called "Immaculate Mary," it is a hymn to Mary composed in nineteenth-century France for pilgrims to the Marian shrine at Lourdes.

longer prayers and have a procession, but I was not able to be present on that occasion.

I obtained an account of the 2009 May devotions from the same woman, now president of the Saint Rita sisterhood. She told me that on the last day of April each sisterhood set up a *samdi* for Mary in the church in its quarter. Every evening in May, the sisterhood members would assemble at the church to pray and sing hymns.

On the last day of May, members of the two sisterhoods, the Sacred Heart organization, plus the nuns, the priest, and many other women and men, assembled in the Annunciation church in the upper quarter. Then they processed down the main street, carrying a big statue and a big picture, both of Mary. Before them went a car with a sound system broadcasting religious songs, including the Lourdes hymn. People along the way threw flower petals and wafted incense toward them.

The procession then turned toward the lower quarter church, the Dormition, where the priest again blessed the picture and the people. Then the crowd went out of the church and farther up the hill to the Mystic Rose chapel (a private family chapel). There the priest blessed the picture and people a final time, while they prayed, threw flower petals, and wafted incense.

8.3 *The Mother of Rain*

A well-known Lebanese proverb says that the world is a mother. And in Arabic it is the world that rains or snows, that makes the weather cloudy or sunny. For the *Farāzli*, that mother, that world, is Mary herself.

The Mother of Rain is a vernacular tradition with no evident connection to institutional religion, Christianity or Islam. Instead, it appears to be a practice with deep roots in the region (see N. Jabbra 2018 for details). Following is an account condensed from my field notes made in 1973.

In early January, it was very dry, with almost no rain or snow since November. One day several young girls got together, and went through the streets, chanting:

> Oh, Mother of Rain, rain on us,
> And rain on our fields,
> So that our thirsty crops will drink,
> and grow, and feed us.

The girls came up to our house from the street. They asked Wardi for a piece of cloth, for the church. She gave them a scrap from a dresser, and also half a lira (worth something in those days). Then, their hands full of bits of cloth, they went back through the streets chanting, collecting more cloth and coins along

the way. The girls tied the rags together like a rope, and encircled the outside of the church. They put the coins in the box for collecting offerings. One of the girls, Kawkab, said "I believe that now the Virgin will give us the rain."[47]

In times past, everyone gave her or his head covering to the girls to be tied around the church. By 1973, most people no longer wore head coverings, so just cloth was contributed. The pieces of cloth connected worshippers with the supernatural, and that they literally did, for the pieces of cloth were taken from people's clothing. Tying up the church was a symbolic means of control or obligation, in this case requiring the Virgin to respond positively.

When I asked him, my assistant Rashīd said he did not know why they appeal to the Mother of Rain instead of making a special prayer during Mass. But his parents, Juryus and Wardi, said, why it is the Virgin who sends the rain. This is because our church is dedicated to her. Also, the Virgin can speak with her son, intercede with him, and she is the one who helps us, just as in the Gospel.[48]

Villagers still appeal to the Mother of Rain when there is a drought, but the observance had changed by 2015. Now it was the Sisterhood of Saint Rita from the Lower Quarter, led by its president, that made it. They collected money among themselves and bought ribbons, light blue and white for Mary, and red for Jesus. They chanted the verse, tied the ribbons into a chain, and encircled the church. Finally it rained.

In this latest performance of the Mother of Rain, the physical connection between the individuals performing it and the Virgin's church has become tenuous indeed, reduced to a cash nexus; the ladies only purchased the ribbons and tied them around the church. Encircling the church is viewed as essential, though. The sisterhood president, Violette, told me that they tied up the church, Mary's church, thus Mary herself, to remind her to bring the rain; and she put her hand around my wrist, showing me how someone would tie a string around her wrist, to remind herself to do something.[49]

8.4 *Summary and Conclusion*

Corpus Christi and May devotions were both developed and introduced to the Zahle area by men. Corpus Christ celebrations have always involved the participation of the priest, but May devotions in the village were developed

47 It rained about a week later.

48 Here they seem to have been referencing the Biblical account of the wedding at Cana (John 2: 1–11), at which Mary told Jesus what to do, and he converted water into wine.

49 Although non-verbal, then, tying up the church is part of the prayer. The act of encircling the church has been reinterpreted (although I suspect that my own interpretation of the earlier practice might not have been consciously held in people's minds).

by women and only after some years was the priest brought in. The Mother of Rain is a very old regional ritual, with no known origin. In al-Firzul, it has always involved only women and girls.

The vernacular rituals I have just described subvert and undermine the gender hierarchy of institutional religion through foregrounding women and girls as participants. Through their veneration of Mary, a powerful female supernatural figure, they have enabled women to carve out a spiritual place for themselves in a patriarchal church.

9 Conclusion

As is evident in my description and analysis of first communion, weddings, and funerals, actions and symbols of institutional religion communicate and uphold a gender hierarchy favoring males. First communion celebrations among the Melkite Greek Catholics in al-Firzul owe their existence mainly to the activities of Jesuit missionaries based in Zahle. Before the split between the Orthodox and the Melkites in 1724, first communion followed Byzantine practice, in which infants experienced baptism, chrismation, and communion on the same occasion. During the transition to full union with Rome, the Jesuits worked zealously to inculcate what they viewed as correct religious practices among the Melkites. It was not until the Salvatorian Sisters came to the village in the 1940s, though, that first communion ceremonies as we know them today were introduced.

Weddings today furnish an occasion for conspicuous display. They are much more expensive to hold than was the case as late as the 1970s. Standards have changed, and since the Civil War more money is available to put on a big show. In addition, through the emphasis on her dress, hairstyle, and make-up, there is more focus on the bride's appearance, and relatively less on the connections between the two families. North American models communicated from the *mahjar* and through the mass media have altered the secular parts of weddings. Getting married today does not make a woman out of a girl, but it is not clear what does so.[50] It should be added, though, that the terminology distinguishing married women from unmarried girls has remained unchanged at least since the 1970s. Moreover, weddings continue to foreground male pre-eminence.

50 Or, to put it another way, the events surrounding weddings no longer symbolize the transition in as clear-cut a fashion that "taking them up to the church" and "returning the foot" did.

Funerals show marked gender differentiation. Married women wear black for the wake; as a rule, unmarried girls do not even attend it. Men are much less conspicuous as mourners, in that only the closest relatives among them wear black or dark colored business suits. It is only women who sit with the deceased for the wake. Women normally do not attend the funeral or the interment; men attend both. These practices do not seem to communicate gender hierarchy as such. However, when women attending the wake do so in a salon located downstairs, and when women and men receive condolences together, the women sit on the left, gender hierarchy is communicated. Formal mourning today lasts for shorter periods, and affects fewer individuals. The situation is in transition, with much variation among individuals and families.

Three rituals from vernacular practice, Corpus Christi, May devotions, and the Mother of Rain, subvert and invert the gender hierarchy of institutional religion. The question becomes, then, whether that subversion will in fact become a force for change.

FIGURE 24 Wedding, 1982
BY PERMISSION OF THE JABRA FAMILY

FIGURE 25 First communion, late 1960s
BY PERMISSION OF THE JABRA FAMILY

FIGURE 26 Mother of Rain; encircling the church, 1973
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 27 Preparing a *samdi* for Corpus Christi, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

FIGURE 28 Corpus Christi procession, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

Yūsif Ḥanna Yūsif was the only man in the village who could read, so people used to bring him their letters. Then someone asked, if he dies, who will read our letters?

Old village anecdote

•••

Marriage is a girl's protection.

Lebanese proverb

•••

We did not raise our daughters to work in the fields.

Modern saying in al-Firzul

⁘

The forebears of today's women of al-Firzul lived without electricity, gas, or plumbing, with no appliances or maids. Any help they received in their work came from family members. They worked hard in the house and in the fields, with no formal education at all.

This has all changed. Today, most village women are housewives who do not work in the orchards or vineyards. Standards of housekeeping have risen, as villagers have moved into the middle class. Now village women are educated, have electricity, gas, and indoor plumbing, with cold and hot water. They have appliances and many have maids, so housework is lighter. They are free to be employed, depending on the opportunities available, or engage in charitable or religious activities. Up to now, though, labor force participation on the part of al-Firzul's women is not significant numerically, and as yet village women have not yet held any local political office. Relatively few women are involved in organizations. Most of their activities take place with both their husbands' and their own kin.

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Their husbands' forebears were farmers who worked hard on the farm, assisted by the labor of family members and animals. They had no machinery and no motor vehicles. Few had much if any education, for they did not need it in their daily lives. Now, they are all at least literate, if not as well educated as their wives. They have businesses, jobs, professions, and crafts, and can and do support their families.

The newest generation of Farāzli are oriented toward the future. They, especially the girls, are well-educated, looking forward to good jobs and careers. These may well take them out of al-Firzul, if not out of Lebanon altogether.

1 Summary

Lebanon and al-Firzul have experienced external forces for millenia. The ancient inscriptions at the Dog River tell us only about conquests. By the Roman and Islamic periods, though, we have much better evidence of cultural, social, and political contact as well. Much of Lebanon became Christian during the Roman era, Arabic-speaking and partly Muslim during the Islamic period.

The Crusades were a pivotal period, opening Lebanon to European culture again. During the Ottoman era, under the influence of Jesuit missionaries, al-Firzul changed its religious orientation from Orthodox to Melkite Greek Catholic. Late in the nineteenth century, the French put in a graded road and a railway over Dahr al-Baidar, and through much of the Bekaa, bringing more travelers into the area. Villagers could and did travel to Beirut, where they experienced new phenomena. Also, a few villagers began to emigrate to the Americas, from which they sent remittances and letters.

The close of World War I brought the French Mandate. The French put in infrastructure improvements in the area, and prosperity began to increase thanks to emigrant remittances. An important change was the provision of schools in the village, so that girls could be educated from home. After World War II the French troops left, and during the Cold War the United States became a world economic and political power. Affluence increased, market farming replaced subsistence farming, and women's workloads gradually began to lighten.

By the mid-1970s, numerous factors convened to cause the extraordinarily ruinous Lebanese civil war. Those who went through it are still too scarred to discuss it, and the cleavages within Lebanese society have grown. Lebanese contrast "before the war" to "after the war," for during the war accepted mores were abandoned and lawlessness prevailed. Al-Firzul emerged from the war

relatively unscathed, but children who came of age during the war received less education than they might otherwise have attained.

The kinship system in al-Firzul, as elsewhere in Lebanon, gives precedence to males in many ways. Descent is patrilineal, residence is patrilocal. Family law, under the jurisdiction of the religious courts, favors males as well. Kin terminology for descent groups is patrilineal; the terminology for consanguineal relatives is bilateral, but that for affines is patrilaterally skewed. Relationships through women, *qarābit niswān*, are acknowledged both in terminology and in behavior. Basically, then, Farāzli speak a language of kinship, live lives of kinship, with a dual message.

At one time, most marriages took place within the village, often with relatives. Indeed, it would have been difficult to avoid marriage with at least a distant relative. Up to the 1970s, families were large, and attitudes strongly pronatalist. However, by then, couples were beginning to limit family size. That trend has persisted, for today Farāzli find that the expenses of rearing and educating children make a smaller family desirable. Because couples marry later, thanks to years spent getting an education, not to mention the costs of setting up a household, they have fewer children.

Today marriages are no longer arranged; elopements and abductions are phenomena of the past. Young people believe that marriage should be for love, not only between husband and wife, but also between mothers and children.

Up to the 1940s schooling was not available for girls in al-Firzul, and only a few boys learned to read and write from the village priest. Then primary schools opened in the village, to be followed by schooling on the complementary level. By the 1970s, the results were evident. Women aged above their mid-thirties had no education, but most women younger than that had attended at least primary school. Also, by that time, girls were attending regional secondary schools. Today, the Salvatorian Sisters offer schooling leading to the examination for the *terminal*, and numerous young women have completed university.

Local attitudes strongly support the education of girls and women. No longer is it the case that education is conceived of simply as a means of making a living. Today Farāzli believe that education opens the mind to the wider world. The increase in both affluence and the availability of schooling have made that possible.

Women's work has changed. In the days of subsistence farming, women worked on the farm and at home. They prepared and preserved food, made clothing, and looked after children. They cultivated, weeded, and harvested. They carried out their tasks without benefit of indoor plumbing, electricity, or

machines. By the time I arrived in the early 1970s, women's work had lightened considerably. Women had a few appliances; they had inside running water, hot and cold, electricity, fuel oil for heating, and propane for cooking. They were able to purchase clothing and groceries, although most were still baking bread for their families. Their only work on the farm was help in harvests; they did not do the main work by then.

Today, all but a few poor women do no work on the farm. Most are housewives with a light workload thanks to appliances and maids. Some are teachers, lawyers, or other professionals. Some have shops or work with their husbands. However, structural constraints limit women's employment, particularly that of married ones with children. Educated young single women are free to live elsewhere. The situation in Beirut today suggests that with further deterioration in the economy more women may turn to *garderies* so that they may work outside the home.

At one time one could say, "They are all relatives here; there are no strangers," meaning not only that villagers were united by a tight web of kinship, but also that there were minimal social class divisions. Additionally, most of the village houses were close together in a little vale along a stream. Social control was governed by the eyes, ears, and tongues of villagers.

Today, socioeconomic class distinctions are noticeable. Additionally, the so-called "second village" of new houses has spread down the entrance road, along the main highway, and among the vineyards and orchards. The tight social control created by densely settled residential units is weaker now.

That part of the kinship system organized around women unites houses divided by patriliny. Women's organizations cross family and other lines to unify the village. Men's charitable organizations also unify the village, but the male-dominated political parties do not. Local structures of governance, both secular and religious, are run almost entirely by men. So, for the most part, are local institutions. Use of the Internet, especially social media, is not gendered but rather stratified by age. The village has its own Facebook page, too, plus a new Instagram page. Cyberspace unifies.

Gender symbolism is marked in first communion observances, weddings and funerals. First communion celebrations have distinguished the sexes since their beginning in Jesuit proselytizing. The distinctions have become more marked over the years. Additionally, the celebrations have become more expensive to put on, another sign of the ostentation that has accompanied affluence. Today weddings are less about uniting two families, more about conspicuous consumption. Weddings are planned in detail, and they are expensive. The marriage liturgy still emphasizes male dominance.

When I first stayed in al-Firzul, only married women attended wakes and made condolence calls. No women attended the funeral service in the church or the interment. These traditions have not changed. In contrast to first communion and weddings, funerals have not become ostentatious with affluence. Rituals of vernacular religion, the Mother of Rain, May devotions to Mary, and Corpus Christi, have carved out a space for women in a religious universe which supports patriarchy.

2 Some Portraits: A Glimpse of the Future?

Today's young woman is educated. She speaks Arabic, French, and English. She likes both Western and Arabic music. She wears Western clothes, as fashionable and expensive as she can afford. She looks for a husband she loves, one who loves her. She wants a career, and children, but is conflicted as to how to combine motherhood with her career. Economic pressures, though, may well drive her to into the labor force, or out of the country.

She will have fewer children than her forebears. She will engage a nanny if she can afford one, and if she lives in al-Firzul, rely on her relatives for child care. She communicates with her Lebanese friends and emigrant cousins via social media. She may be religious, but religion does not consume her. She is close to her family, especially her mother.

If she works in Beirut, she goes home frequently. If she lives outside the village or abroad, she may find village society limited. She does not care, and probably does not know much, about older ways of doing things, old stories. The young women described in what follows represent the vanguard of women in al-Firzul.[1]

2.1 *Joelle*

She started preschool at a French language school run by Lebanese nuns in Zahle, and completed her *terminal* there. She studied only a little English in school (typical of schools in the area), but her father had spent some years in the United States. Following a summer's intensive English course, she entered the Lebanese American University campus at Byblos. Today she is fluent in

1 I carried out all of my interviews in English, so the quotations are in exactly the words my respondents used. Since I interviewed the first three young women, in 2012, I have been able to stay in touch with them and update my materials. I interviewed the fourth young woman in 2020.

English, Arabic, and French. She majored in Communication Arts at the university, and now has a public relations job and an apartment in a Beirut suburb. Joelle is ambitious, and intends to find a challenging and lucrative career.

Her parents completed, perhaps, the *brevet* – no more. Her mother is a housewife, and her father farms family land and runs an agriculture-related business with relatives. Her younger brother works on the farm.

Emotionally close to her family, especially her mother (they are "good friends," she said), she goes home on weekends. When she returns to her apartment, she takes back clean, pressed clothes, and a week's worth of food her mother has prepared; she scarcely knows how to cook. She has cousins in the United States, friends in many countries, and uses Facebook to keep in touch with them.

Joelle loves al-Firzul, and is proud and "flattered" to have been raised there. It was a good foundation for life, she said, and if she had the choice, she would want to be raised there again. However, she finds its mentality narrow. She added that as she went on with her education, she continued to broaden her mind. In the end, she might find the village, indeed Lebanon, to be limited. She wants to live in a "modernized, open-minded" way, not in the conservative way she attributes to the village. She does not seem to be very interested in village traditions. She might like to pursue more education abroad, but funds are an issue. She concluded that she would like to live outside the village, but visit a lot.

She considers herself religious, but does not attend Mass every week. However, when I interviewed her she said she bases her principles on religion. Perhaps we might say that she is conventionally religious, but not very observant.

She dates occasionally, when she finds the time, and goes out with her friends both in the village and near where she lives and works. She likes American, French, and Arabic music and the theatre, but does not care for rock concerts, or sports.

She has specific ideas about the kind of husband she wants, although she is in no rush to get married. She reflects on young women she has known who got married at twenty or so: "now their lives are over." Her future husband's particular career does not matter, but he should be educated, have a good standard of living, be polite, mature, and well-raised (*mrabba mlīḥ*). He could be from the village, or from elsewhere. She wants a church wedding, the "day I always dreamed of," but not "a stupid big wedding," just friends and family.

She wants children, four maybe. It depends on her time and their finances. If she could not strike a balance between children and work, she would probably quit for a few years. I sensed that she had not quite figured out the mother-career issues that conflict so many women.

Some years after I completed Joelle's portrait, she became engaged to marry a young man she met through mutual friends. He is a university

graduate like herself, a Melkite, from a middle class family. They planned to marry in a church, but neither in al-Firzul or his hometown. Once married she planned to continue working in her chosen field. In short, Joelle's latest plans matched the dreams she had when I first interviewed her. I was not able to attend Joelle's wedding, so I cannot say anything about it. They moved to Dubai, where he was working. She had a baby, and as of this writing (2020), is employed part-time, combining the responsibilities of motherhood with her work by employing a Filipina maid and having recourse to a flexible schedule.

2.2 *Lise*

She graduated from the nuns' school in the village which, like Joelle's school, gave instruction mostly in French, offering little Arabic or English. However, she left school with much better English than Joelle. She said her American relatives visit frequently, and that she watches English language television.

She started her university studies by attending the tuition-free Lebanese University branch in Zahle. She was studying physics, hoping to become a biomechanical engineer. She then transferred to the local branch of the English language American University of Science and Technology (AUST), changed her program to hospitality management, and graduated in 2016. Although I did not ask her, I suspect she realized that her chances of employment, especially in the Bekaa, would be higher with hospitality management than with biomechanical engineering. While she studied at AUST, she worked to pay her fees and gain experience. Her brother is studying business management part time at AUST, and working to pay his fees.

Her father is a farmer without much land. He had started to study bookkeeping in Zahle when the war broke out, so he had to leave his studies. Her mother has the *brevet* and is a housewife.

She likes American popular music, but also Lebanese, particularly the old romantic songs. She enjoys comedy and romantic movies on television. She seldom dates, but likes to go out in groups with friends.

Her husband should be educated, the main financial support of the family. She would prefer him not to be from al-Firzul because everyone is related there and knows everyone else's business. A local young man has probably dated your friends, she added. She said she wanted her future husband to be the "man" in the family, meaning the head of the household, but not an authoritarian one. She wants what she termed a traditional wedding, with all her family and friends on hand, but not a big wedding. However, she would not want to marry before completing her university degree and getting a job.

She wants many (four) children, she said, adding that her mother and mother-in-law would be the best persons to care for her children if she could not be with them all the time. After all, they are family, they care.

She considers herself religious, and goes to Mass every Sunday. She prays before she sleeps and when she gets angry, to calm herself. She reads the Bible. On religious holidays the whole family on her father's side gets together.

She loves al-Firzul, for there are many good things about it. Everyone is close, they care, they look after the old people. But they are too nosy, they gossip, they "twist things." In a way, she commented, the good things and the bad things are the same. She added that in the neighborhood where her grandmother lives, down the street from Joelle's house, there is a lot of gossip; they are really nosy there, she said.

She would like to live somewhere else someday, maybe in America where she has relatives. Like Joelle, she is young, she still has to resolve career and child care issues, and does not know where life will take her.

In 2020, she was still living in the village, still single, and working as a waiter at a local winery. Her dreams appear to have been put on hold for the time being.

2.3 *Muna*

She is married to a villager, and has two small boys. His parents have, perhaps, the *brevet*; her mother has only the primary certificate, but her father has a technical secondary diploma. Her husband's father farms family land, and has an agriculture-related business; his mother is a housewife like her mother. Her father has had many jobs over the years, but farms now. Muna and her husband live downstairs from his parents, in a family-owned building.

She completed secondary school at a Francophone school in the region. Then she and her husband both received their degrees from the American University of Science and Technology branch near Zahle. He studied computer science, and works today in the Beirut area, to which he commutes every day. She got her degree in English studies, and teaches in the nuns' school in al-Firzul.

After a few years, she opened a learning center located in a nearby shopping mall. Even before she opened the center, she already had several children enrolled. During the school year she offered tutoring in all subjects, concentrating on English in the summer. She began the center with herself as the only teacher, but soon hired others to meet the demand. In the end, despite the fact that the school was making money, she had to close it because the teachers turned out not to be well-qualified. Now she is looking forward to pursuing graduate studies in English.

She puts her sons in the *garderie* at the nuns' school. Her mother and mother-in-law also care for them, and help with cooking. Because they live so close to each other, Muna, her husband, and her in-laws are in and out of each others' houses all the time.

She does not have friends or family in the Lebanese diaspora, but her husband has a married brother and several cousins in Canada and the United States. She is close to her family, who live nearby. She has friends, too, in the village, and she visits both friends and family every week. She likes any kind of music if it is new. With two active toddlers, she has no time for television until they are asleep. When I interviewed Muna, the older boy got into the kitchen cabinets, and threw things on the floor until his father intervened. She would like to have a third child, a girl, for herself, for girls are thought to be especially close to their mothers.[2] Unfortunately, the costs of raising a third child, and paying for school tuition, would be high. And the boys are already a handful. Her husband thinks two children are enough.[3]

She considers herself religious, but seldom attends Mass because of child-care responsibilities. Both children are baptized now, and she plans to teach them religion as they get older. She is familiar with village traditions, and observes them, but she is much more interested in contemporary life.

She likes al-Firzul, and would not want to live anywhere else. Upon reflection, she added, well, it is good to live in the village, but Beirut would offer better opportunities for work and entertainment. Not much happens in the region around al-Firzul.

A permanent move to Beirut or its suburbs would pose a number of challenges for Muna and her family. Although her husband has a job in the Beirut area, she would lose hers if they moved, and finding a new one might be difficult. The cost of living would be higher. In al-Firzul they have a house, but they do not in Beirut, and housing costs there are steep. And they would need, sooner or later, to fund their children's education. Last, by moving, Muna would lose her built-in child-care arrangements, her mother and her mother-in-law.

2.4 *Yasmine*

She finished her *certificat primaire*, *brevet*, and *terminal* at a religious school in Zahle, one which emphasized French. She then completed her degree in Nutrition at the English-language Lebanese American University. Following

2 And a blessing for all the family. People say the girl is kind and loving; (*al-bint ḥanūni le ahla*).

3 Postcript: As of this writing, September, 2020, she is expecting another child, a girl, but has retained her educational aspirations.

her degree, she did a year's internship at the Hôtel-Dieu hospital in Beirut in order to complete her licensing requirements. She continued her studies at LAU, receiving her Master's degree in 2020. She plans to study for her Ph.D. in the United States, where her brother is a graduate student. She would like to continue her career in nutrition, perhaps adding public health to her qualifications. She is not sure whether she could find work in Lebanon, however, given its weak economy and fragile political situation, so she might need to remain in the United States.

Her mother had begun to study archaeology at the Zahle branch of Université Saint-Joseph when the war prevented her from completing her degree. Today she is a housewife. Her father completed the brevet, but had to leave his studies to support the family when his father became ill. He is a farmer, and also obtains income from renting out commercial properties.

She feels close to her mother and her mother's side of the family. She finds her father's family reserved, not as lively and emotionally demonstrative as her mother's family. Just the same, she knows she could count on her father's family if she needed them.

Her musical tastes are catholic, including Indie, soul, and jazz, and she named two singers who perform classical Lebanese music. She enjoys Netflix and documentary films.

She dates, at least in Beirut. The villagers are too nosy, and would talk. Her relatives would pressure her to get married. When I asked her what kind of husband she wanted, she replied that that was "a big question." He should be loyal, understanding, and successful, because people should not marry until they are financially stable. He should accept her academic aspirations. He should not be from al-Firzul. That would make for a complicated relationship because all the relatives would want to interfere. She does not care much about his religion, as long as his beliefs were moderate. However, her family would be unhappy if she wanted to marry a Muslim. She wants a small wedding, with only a few friends and family in attendance.

Children constitute another big issue. How many? It would depend on several factors. She explained that it would be good for a child to have a sibling of the same sex. And she would want to have a career as well. Suppose something happened to her husband, or he turned out to be the wrong choice? She added that housewives with children do not understand the world outside. They are stuck in the house, dependent on their husbands.

She loves her religion, "as she understands it." She is not a Biblical literalist, and dislikes any form of religious narrow-mindedness. She enjoys celebrating religious holidays with family and good food.

She loves al-Firzul, walking around, enjoying the land, the scenery. The close families are good. However, society there is a problem. They watch you, they "micromanage" you. And there is the double standard. She would like to live in the city, and spend weekends in the village.

Yasmine is young yet, she has not fully figured out what she wants to do, nor how to get there. As is the case for the other young women I interviewed, she still has to resolve the relationship between motherhood, the role of a wife, and the demands of a career.

Joelle, Lise, Muna, and Yasmine, four young women, two single, two married, are close to the village and to their families. They have aspirations and ambitions for education and the professions, and have acquired cosmopolitan tastes in their activities and entertainments. Lise and Yasmine are still single, looking forward someday to marriage and motherhood.

Compared to their great-grandmothers who came of age just before World War I, or their grandmothers who became adults during the 1930s, or their mothers who grew up in the 1970s, they have so many more opportunities for marriage, education, work, and travel – to experience the world beyond the village. They do not look back, they are not interested in the past; instead, they are oriented toward the future. Yet their futures will pose problems, dichotomies. The difficulty will be to combine their hopes for family and children with their aspirations for careers and personal growth.

A mother's heart is a child's school.

Lebanese saying

If you aspire to the heights, stay awake at night.

Lebanese saying

The earth is yours
And you are the path;
Rise from your chains
Free and strong;
The earth is ours
Consecrate freedom;
So that the world's tyrants do not rule us.
The earth is ours.
Here is my hand, give me your hand.

Adapted by the author from Fairouz, "The Earth is Yours." Thanks to "Yasmine" for providing the complete text

FIGURE 29 Rosey, 2004
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

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