TRANSFORMATIONALITY AND DYNAMICALITY OF KINSHIP STRUCTURE

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Building on data systematically gathered during a field study in Qatar, it is found that kinship structure is characterized by a property combining transformationality and dynamicality, certainly in Qatari kinship, and proposed here as a feature of the universal human phenomenon of kinship.

Introduction

Analysis in this paper on suckling kinship grew out of an empirical study of kinship in Qatar over a period of seven years (between 2006 and 2013).[1] The data consist of both systematic observations made by the lead author in the context of Qatari kinship and in-depth data obtained by a research team[2] headed by the lead author on suckling kinship, including elicitation of Qatari kinship terms over a period of three years. As argued in this paper, the study reveals a property characterizing kinship structure that combines transformationality and dynamicality, certainly in Qatari kinship, and proposed here as a feature of the universal human phenomenon of kinship.[3]

Conclusions discussed in this paper developed gradually after three consecutive, formal presentations (El Guindi 2010, 2011b, 2012a) in sessions on kinship held during the American Anthropological Association meetings in New Orleans, Montreal and San Francisco and organized under the name, Kinship Circle.[4] Some points made in these presentations have already been published (see El Guindi 2011, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d). The analysis presented here is based on two, field-derived, in-depth ethnographic cases,[5] that illustrate not only features of Qatari kinship but general properties of kinship.

Following a section on a conceptual clarification, the two ethnographic cases, Case 1[6] and Case 2, are each discussed, first as a narrative account and then followed by

analysis. General remarks and generalizations about kinship emerging from the research project and illustrated by the two cases will conclude the paper.

Conceptual Clarification

Recently, Dan Sperber made a rhetorical remark asking Is Kinship Back? (2012). This remark was the title of his blog commenting on the issue of *Science* (25 May 2012) in which "a plea by Stephen Levinson for the study of kinship terminology" was made, praising as well another article making a contribution to kinship study (Kemp and Regier 2012). The question by Sperber is particularly relevant in the context of an assumed demise (Stone 2000) or fall (Sousa 2003) of kinship, which is more illusion than fact. Many were misled by Schneider's assertion that kinship is an analytical category that does not correspond to any cultural category known to man and "has no discernible cultural referent in fact" (Schneider 1972[2004 reprint:269]). The question to be raised here is: Is the analytical construct of kinship expected to correspond to cultural categorizations? We think not. A discernible cultural referent can be revealed in analysis without necessarily having exact correspondence with an analytic construct. Local knowledge underlying cultural manifestations might be integrated in cultural accounts even though a particular group or people may not refer to such manifestations by a single referent. In the case of kinship, the term 'kinship' may not be regularly used in the vernacular even though the local population is continuously kinshipping, as is the case for the Qataris and most other Arabs.

An anthropologist constructs an analytic category and labels it 'kinship' to engage in analysis of social activities and cultural manifestations that are empirically determined to be within its bounds. Constructs are formulated by anthropologists when engaged in analyses aimed at building anthropological knowledge. An analytic separateness of kinship is possible and can be examined as a theoretically bounded construct of a human domain for the purpose of revealing its properties and significance in the total culture and underlying cognition. Central to this process is a notion of culture considered as a whole, yet consisting of interdependent, relational elements. The meaning of any one element derives from this relationality. Accordingly, no single element has full meaning in isolation from other elements. This applies to kinship, as well as to myth, ritual, etc. Like ritual (and as Lévi-Strauss and others demonstrated for myth), kinship is a domain both rich in symbolism and meaning, and also highly structured, characterized by mathematical properties (El Guindi and Read 1979a, 1979b, 1980), which makes it (like myth and ritual) subject to systematic analyses at abstract levels. Herein lies the danger of neo-Darwinist reductionist exercises applied to cultural phenomena, which counters looking at elements as part of a system. In sum, assumptions of the fall or demise of kinship are baseless and the answer to Sperber's question regarding the return of kinship is that, indeed, kinship is always here, but was simply deserted by some light hearted folks for a while.

Kinship, both as analytic construct and as a human domain (in all its constituent elements–principles, practices, terminology etc.) has been the focus of much ethnography and intense theorizing in anthropology throughout its disciplinary history.[7] Relatives by

birth (referred to as consanguinity) and by marriage (referred to as affinity) were both recognized. Burton-Chellew and Dunbar argue that treating affines as special kin is opposed to the tenets of evolutionary anthropology/biology, which, they claim, focuses exclusively on biological/genetic kinship. Evolutionary biology, their article states, has typically treated affines as though they were unrelated since only direct genetic kinship counts for evolutionary processes based on Darwinian fitness. Several questions/comments need to be raised here. First, it is not accurate to say, as Burton-Chellew and Dunbar (2011) write, that affines were considered a special kind of kin. In anthropology, affines are considered kin, based on empirically derived data that orients kinship as being contextualized in real cultural traditions. Second, what is biological/genetic kinship? There is no such thing. Biological/genetic relations can be subject to genetic analysis. Kinship, on the other hand, is an anthropological subject that incorporates social, cultural and linguistic elements and is a manifestation of underlying mathematical structures (on terminology see Read 1984, 2001, 2007). Yet Burton-Chellew and Dunbar write: "We … [ask] whether affinal relatives are treated more like biological kin or unrelated friends in terms of perceived emotional closeness. We show for a sample of contemporary Belgians that affines are indeed treated *more or less the same as biological kin* of similar nominal relatedness and not at all like unrelated friends" (p. 741, emphasis added). From the visiting patterns, they argue, affines are almost biological kin.

Using data from a social network questionnaire distributed to Belgian interviewees, they measured the number of alters (biological, affinal, or friend) contacted within past 12 months by each ego. On the basis of the pattern of contact and ego's expressed degree of emotional closeness toward network members (using questionable measuring tools), they concluded that affines are treated "like biological kin" (p. 741). To summarize all of this: some Belgian affines are visiting and, using a scale of 1-10, they express emotional closeness to these relatives, so biological anthropology of a certain orientation now claims it has an argument that these persons are 'almost biological kin' and therefore can be subject to the same reductionist formula to which genetic kin are subjected. However, it has been shown in ethnography for more than a century that complex human practices cannot yield valuable meaning if they are reduced by simplistic measurement instruments. Instead, method must be connected with theory and both to the kind of research in question. There are no wholesale, quantitative methods that are "one size fits all" in the social and behavioral sciences, particularly when dealing with such complex matters as kinship. One cannot simplistically take limited measurement instruments and use them to conjecture about matters shown to be ethnographically (and hence scientifically) contrary to what is being claimed.

There is a problem assuming that visiting patterns are an index of emotional closeness and emotional closeness measures "what it means to be a relative" versus being a friend. Clearly, visitation patterns are not a measurement of emotional closeness and emotional closeness is not a measurement of kinship. Their instrument is inadequate, the measurement false, and what is being measured is wrong.

Yet Burton-Chellew and Dunbar conclude from their shallow study on contemporary Belgians that behavior towards affines can then be explained by "inclusive kinship"

(their quotes). What is inclusive kinship? Do we now have inclusive and exclusive kinship? Is this a new categorization that anthropology must learn?

Burton-Chellew and Dunbar, in their statements, are trying to build an argument aimed at rescuing affinal kinship, as it were, and bringing it into the fold of evolutionary biology. This line of argument, familiar by now through other neo-Darwinist claims about kinship, reduces cultural manifestations to fit a set formula in efforts to scientize culture by biologizing it.

Steve Lyon and co-authors express skepticism about "ideas linking physiological adaptations to social behaviors … spreading disconcertingly into wider societal contexts" (de Ruiter *et al*. 2011:557), such as when certain practices are misconstrued as co-socialization and wrongly explained as aversion to incest (El Guindi and Read 2012). The same data base used to justify the Westermarck hypothesis about aversion to incest, namely the Israeli Kibbutzim, has been successfully used to refute it. Shor and Simchai invoke Kibbutz data gathered by non-quantitative instruments to persuasively refute the Westermarck hypothesis, writing that "peers (as our interviews reveal) had very good reasons to avoid romantic relationships despite often being attracted to each other" (2012:1510). There are many examples around the world that easily refute the claim of natural aversion. The objection being raised here is not simply about the nature-culture debate, but about simplistic claims, using inadequate data-gathering instruments, by which neo-Darwinists manipulate culture, chopping it into manageable segments to make claims about social and cultural domains. Kinship study, to remain robust, must, indeed, reaffirm anthropological tradition.

The Arab Case

There has been a long-term controversy in anthropology regarding the role and meaning of blood in kinship. Kinship has often been said to be constrained by the fact of its natural foundations. To stop there, though, is to say that humans are just biological creatures. Genealogy is often equated with biology. Most anthropologists today, however, recognize the cultural basis of human kinship, which takes different forms in different local populations and is expressed using different idioms. An example from Arab culture, the focal cultural tradition for this paper, is that Arabs give much importance to relations among kin, most of which is organized lineally by patrilineality–linked vertically by ascent from roots of ancestry and laterally by matrilateral and affinal ties (Antoun 1972; El Guindi 2012b; Lancaster 1981[1997]).

In a previous publication, El Guindi notes: "It is interesting that without anthropological mediation genealogies are perceived and drawn by Arabians from bottom up, ancestry in the bottom branching up and out to descendants. This challenges the view of tribal structures as being viewed from within, as identifying upwards to the ancestors, or that genealogical relations are constructed downwards from apical ancestry in descent" (2012b: 548). Procreation is expressed as a duality of groin and womb, thereby including the feminine and masculine elements in the process. Becoming kin is constructed by birth from groin and womb and genealogical relations are 'glued together' by *'asab*, which is nerve in English. Abu-Zeid (1991:213) describes consanguinity among the Ba-

dawi (Bedouin) groups of North Sinai in Egypt by using the phrase *mabda'*(principle) *al-'asaba*, thus referring to nerve as the binding element.

The topic of this paper is suckling as manifested in Qatar. While affines have long been recognized as part of kinship (and while evolutionary biologists are figuring out how to), other forms such as co-parenthood, adoption, and blood brotherhood were ambiguously labeled (e.g. spiritual, ritual, elective, among other ways) and categorized in kinship studies. Suckling is one manifestation of a form of kinship that would also have had an ambiguous place in kinship study. Instead, I argue, sucking belongs squarely within kinship. The complexities shown through field data of the processes involved in instances of suckling belie the use of simplistic measures to account for cultural activities, or the use of isolated behaviors to justify claims about kinship form or origin.

What is Suckling?

Soraya Altorki (1980) was the first anthropologist in modern times to conduct a limited field study focusing on what she called "milk kinship" as practiced in Saudi Arabia. Altorki rightly labeled the practice "kinship." This drew academic attention to the practice and gradually more publications on the subject appeared. Reference to the 'milk phenomenon' then became a way to subsume traditions by which women breastfeed infants other than their own. Publications after the 1980s, though, appeared to cover what seems, on the basis of our research on suckling, to be variant forms of the 'milk phenomenon', ranging from wet nursing to fosterage (Conte 1987; Giladi 1998, 1999; Héritier 1994; Héritier-Augé 1995; Khatib-Chahidi 1992; Lacoste-Dujardin 2000; Long 1996; Parkes 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Arabic sources did cover suckling prior to these publications, but are more difficult to compile and a compilation must become a dedicated project in its own right.

Nonetheless, about a century before Altorki's study, the classic publication by Robertson Smith (1885) on kinship and marriage in early Arabia included a brief, but ethnographically significant, discussion on suckling. In it, Smith combines the two phrases, "milk kinship" and "foster parenthood," as one overall institution that he called milk-fosterage. He writes: "there is a real unity of flesh and blood between foster-mother and foster-child, or between foster-brothers; and so we find among the Arabs a feeling about milk-kinship so well established that Mohammed's law of forbidden degrees gives it all the effects of blood-relationship as a bar to marriage" (1885:176). Smith appears to have derived this statement from either a primary or secondary source on Qur'anic text. Although he does not specify it, his observation can be traced to two Qur'anic verses (*suras*), numbers 4:23 and 24:31, the only two *suras* that specify kin prohibitions.

In an earlier work by the lead author, these two *suras* were examined from a kinship perspective and the specified taboo relations were charted (for the first time in anthropology), using standard notational symbols of kinship (El Guindi 2003[1999]:86, 99), showing kin in relations of *tahrim* (prohibition), thus facilitating anthropological analysis of the Qur'anic text. Of the two *suras*, only 4:23 mentions suckling in the *tahrim*. The exact passage, using a male point of reference, states:

Prohibited to you are your mothers, daughters, sisters; father's sisters, mother's sisters; brother's daughters, sister's daughters; **"suckling" mothers**, **sisters-in-suckling**; your wives' mothers; wives' daughters in your care, wives of your **sons by groin**, and combining two sisters in marriage (translation by the lead author from the original Arabic; emphasis in bold added) .

The reference to suckling mothers in the Qur'an is specifically about mother-child and the reference to sisters-in-suckling is about suckling siblings. Two dyads comprise the focus on suckling: mother-child and sibling-sibling. In other words, the only passage on suckling is in the context of the incest taboo, among persons in a limited, and specific, set of relations called *maharim*, which denotes prohibited unions, namely kin in relations of tahrim. Prohibition indicates absence of avoidance. An incest taboo among specific kin removes avoidance rules. The same two dyads are mentioned by Robertson Smith except that he used the English vocabulary of fosterage rather than suckling.

Referring to the Qur'anic text, which he mistakenly describes as Mohammed's law, Smith uses the terms foster-mother, foster-child and foster-brothers (the original, as indicated above, was suckling sisters, not suckling brothers, because this particular *sura* is inscribed from the reference point of a male–a fact that seems to have escaped Smith). The other *sura* about incest relations (24:31), (charted in El Guindi 2003[1999]:86) is inscribed in the original text from a female reference point.

The Qur'an is considered by Muslims to be the divinely revealed primary source in Islam and holds special sacredness. It is, therefore, significant that kinship is so well defined in it. *Sura* 4:23 is particularly important because it defines Arab kinship in Islamic society, making equal mention of procreative, marital and suckling kin, thus mapping the boundaries of the domain of kinship in terms of three interrelated forms. The Qur'anic passage is about incest prohibition, and, by extension and implication through use of the notion of *maharim*, it is about avoidance, avoidance behavior and avoidance removal. It is also interesting that the *sura* uses the phrase "sons by groin," which points to the role of the groin in procreative kinship, as is envisioned in Arab culture. After analyzing data from the Qur'an, primary field data and additional ethnographic sources, El Guindi (2012d) proposed a duality of groin and womb as characteristic of the idiomatic construction of Arab genealogical kinship by which the process of becoming birth kin is conceptualized, namely as a simultaneous construction from both groin (paternity) and womb (maternity), while genealogical relations are perceived as bound together and extended by *'asab* (nerve). This is confirmed by numerous studies describing Badawi (or Bedouin) groups, such as Abu-Zeid (1991:213) on Arab Badawis of the Egyptian Sinai, where he uses the local terms *'asib* (stress on first syllable, nerve bound) and *'asiba* (nerve binding) to describe patrilineal relations. El Guindi analyzes suckling as a way to both limit and widen the marital pool of spouse choices, thus intersecting with, and intensifying, agnatic kin relations (2011a, 2012d).

Another Islamic source that legitimizes suckling as institutionalized kinship among Arabs and Muslims comes from the Hadith (al-Tirmidhi n.d.:129-135), the Prophetic Narratives that are the second Islamic source of importance, though not considered divine. It is reported in the Hadith that Muhammad, the Messenger and Prophet of Islam,

stated: suckling (*rida'a*) prohibits what birth (*nasab*) prohibits (Hussein 2006:55).   In other words, according to the Hadith, suckling creates kin equivalent to birth kin and therefore the same taboos apply. Thus the Hadith establishes equivalence between birth and suckling kin regarding prohibition, while it simultaneously recognizes relations by birth and relations by suckling as related forms of one kinship system.

   While the Qur'an speaks only of the dyads (an aspect which limited analysis by Smith [1885] and many years later by Carsten [1991]), the Hadith supports our independently discovered, field-gathered data showing how relations extend vertically and horizontally through suckling. These intersecting extensions uncover a dynamism in Qatari kinship activity, as well as a central property of kinship relations in general.
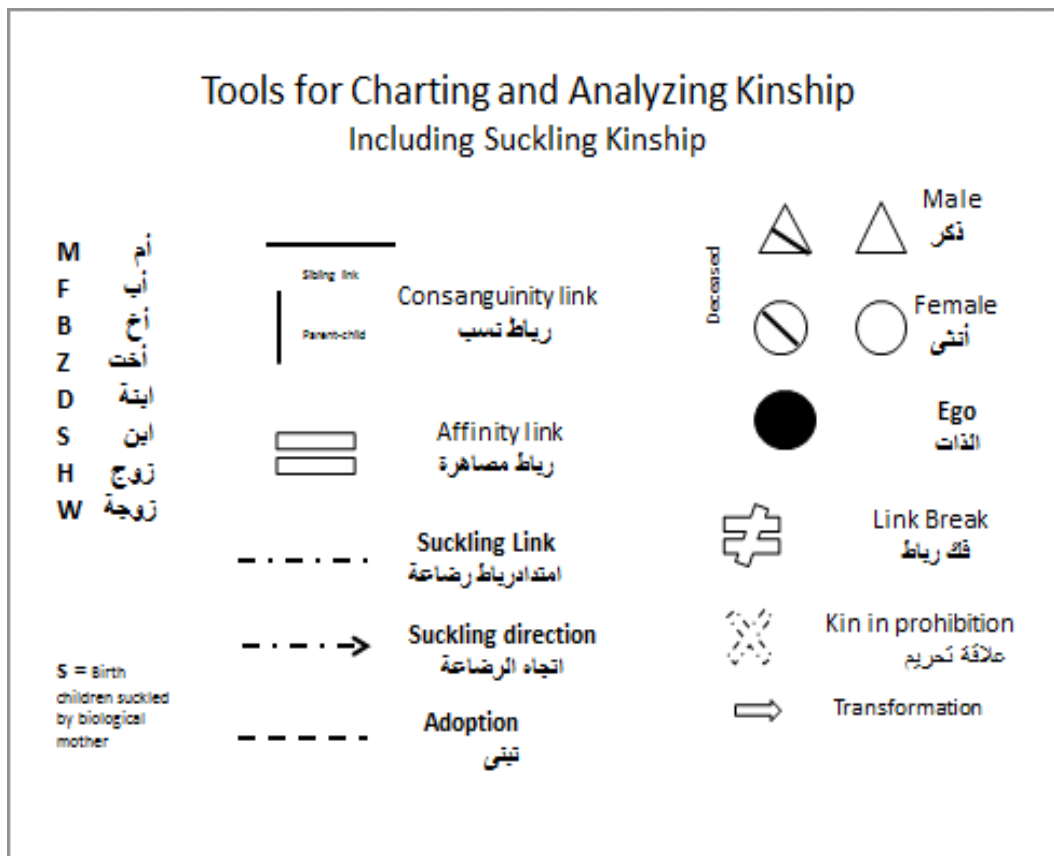

Tools for Charting and Analyzing Kinship
Including Suckling Kinship

M أم	
F أب	
B أخ	
Z أخت	
D اينة	
S اين	
H زوج	
W زوجة	

Sibling link
Parent-child
Consanguinity link
رياط نسب

Affinity link
رياط مصاهرة

Suckling Link
امتدادرياط رضاعة

Suckling direction
اتجاه الرضاعة

S = Birth children suckled by biological mother

Adoption
تبنى

Deceased

Male
ذكر

Female
أنثى

Ego
الذات

Link Break
فك رياط

Kin in prohibition
علاقة تحريم

Transformation

Figure 1. Conventional tools for charting kinship with additional new tools designed especially for suckling kinship. Concept and design by F. El Guindi. © Copyright El Guindi 2011.

   Before describing and analyzing the two ethnographic cases that are the subject of this article, we present (see Figure 1) the symbols and conventions we used for charting kinship relations. Most of these are familiar, except for the added symbols used when analyzing suckling kinship.

Ethnographic Case 1[8]

Narrative

We briefly summarize an actual ethnographic case that illustrates how suckling is traced, in practice, and the relations that it creates, thereby transforming procreative and marital kin positions and constructing and removing avoidances, thus enabling or prohibiting cross-sex sharing of gendered space. Ego, as shown in Figure 2, is the interviewee. She describes lineal and lateral extended relations, some cemented and some prohibited in marriage through the act of suckling by a woman of children other than her own.
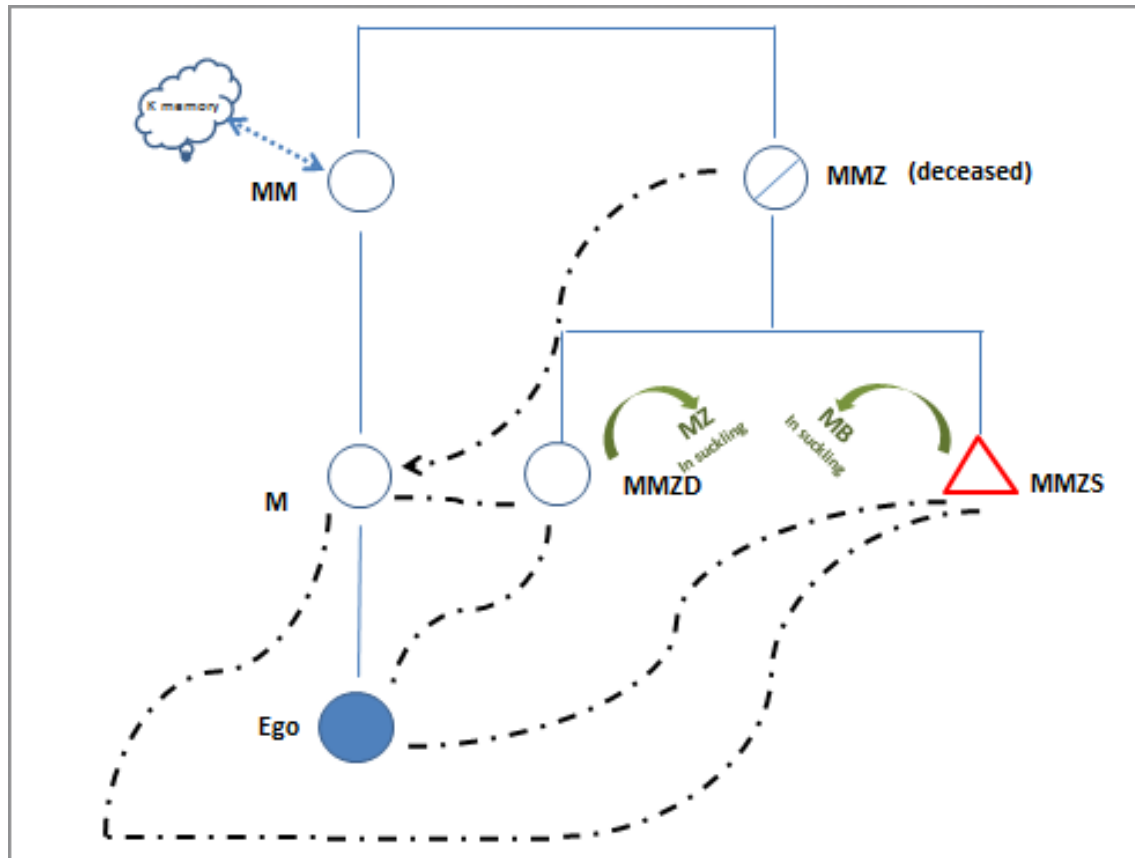

Figure 2: Ethnographic Case 1. Analysis and graphic by F. El Guindi, Data gathered by Shaikha al-Kuwari during the research project funded by UREP. © El Guindi 2011.

Ego's MMZ was deceased at the time of the interview. Accordingly, the holder of the memory of the suckling path is MM as indicated in Figure 2. MMZ had nursed her own children, one boy and one girl, and simultaneously suckled Ego's M. Once suckled, M and MMZD became sisters-in-suckling and therefore MMZD became MZ in-suckling to Ego. By extension, M and MMZS became siblings and hence MMZS turned into MB-in-suckling. This had implications for marital possibilities, always an important factor to be considered in cross-gender relations. As siblings, M and MMZS become taboo in marriage to each other, particularly with regard to preference for cousin marriage. Suck-

ling lifted the avoidance relationship that otherwise existed between them. The cross-gender factor is also relevant to the incest taboo. Though M and MMZS would otherwise be ideal marriage partners, having been suckled by the same woman (MMZ) turned MMZS into MB, which activated the incest taboo, thus removing the barrier of cross-gender avoidance and preventing the possibility of marriage.

In other words, suckling by MMZ of M resulted, according to Ego, in re-categorizing existing kin relations and constructing new ones. These transformations are accompanied by a change in kinship terms. The transformations involve the following: 1) MMZ and M, whereby MMZ became MM; 2) M and MMZD, who turned into MZ; and 3) M and MMZS, who turned into MB. Thus, using English kinship terms, MZ and MB were transformed from being cousins to Ego to becoming maternal aunt and uncle to Ego. Marriage, after this transformation, becomes prohibited while avoidances, expressed in practice, symbol and ritual, are now removed.

Analysis and Discussion

The case just described is diagrammatically presented in Figure 2. This case, among many others, shows how suckling has changed kin positions, kin terms, and avoidances. Cross-gender avoidance means individuals in certain positions to each other, including being total strangers, must abide by behavioral, symbolic and ritual avoidance that maintains social, physical, behavioral and linguistic distance. The tradition of veiling in societies like this is relevant to these events. Veiling, unveiling, de-veiling, and re-veiling turn, in this context, into active measures of the distance imposed by avoidance culturally defined. Marriage lifts avoidance, but occurs between persons who prior to marriage stood in an avoidance relationship to each other. Suckling can lift or construct avoidances. Suckling giver and recipient, indicated in Figure 2 by an arrowed broken line showing the direction of suckling, extends relations and prohibitions beyond the dyad, both lineally and laterally. The broken lines indicate relations of suckling. Suckling lifts avoidance and constructs new taboos, hence enables and disables marriage possibilities.

Ethnographic Case 2

Narrative

Ego, a married woman, had a baby boy who died several weeks after birth. She wished to adopt a child because her age was relatively advanced for bearing another child. Adoption is problematic, but it was the only option open to her. Adoption practices vary in the Islamic region and official records show that adoption is seldom utilized as a means to 'have children'. In addition, adoption is not considered *shar'i* (stress 1st syllable, Islamically legal), according to Islamic primary and secondary sources.

Islamically legal or not, the sociological question becomes: Can adoption incorporate a total 'stranger' into a kin network and can it bring about a transformation from stranger to kin? We address this issue and raise another one: If such a transformation is feasible, what would be the social mechanism for so doing and what is the culturally supported mode by which such a transformation is legitimately activated, and into what class of kin does this stranger become incorporated?

The story in our case goes this way. Ego originally wished to adopt a girl, but the search led to a boy born to two individuals incompatible culturally for marriage. Ego 'adopted' the baby boy upon his birth. The 'adopted' boy, however, did not and could not automatically, through the channel of adoption, become Ego's son, nor she his mother. The primary kin in this case are shown in Figure 3.
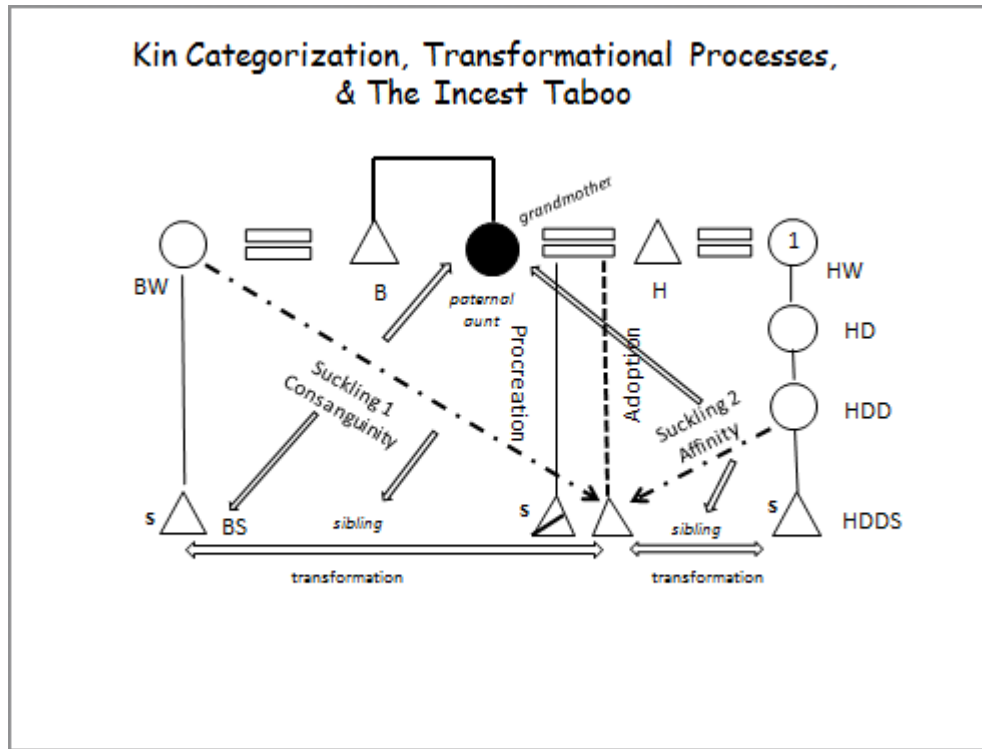

Figure 3. Analysis and diagram (both by lead author) comes from a case study collected by both authors, separately from the UREP project. © El Guindi 2012.

Suckling, though, is both socially approved and a *shar'i* mechanism for kin incorporation. Suckling the adopted boy would immediately transform him into son, Ego into mother, and Ego's husband into father. Ego, having passed the biologically reproductive state and hence not lactating at the time of adoption, could not herself breastfeed her adopted baby. Without suckling, the adopted son remains 'stranger' by cultural definition and hence in a state of taboo to the females in the family, in which case cross-sex avoidance prescriptions and restrictions would be active.

The dilemma lies in the fact that Ego cannot, for cultural reasons, keep a "strange" boy with her and raise him the way a mother raises her procreative son since the cross-sex incest taboo would be active and cross-sex avoidance behavior will be activated as long as the adoptive boy remains in the state of *ajnabi* (stranger) or nonkin as culturally defined. He is therefore not a *mahram* (Ar. singular, *maharim* is plural form), which is a cultural category of kin among whom avoidance is lifted and normal, unritualized daily interaction is permissible. Cross-sex avoidance is highly ritualized and includes, among other behaviors, avoidance of co-presence in physical space, observation

of an avoidance dress code (such as face veiling by the woman), and certain prescribed practices by men. This is precisely why Ego originally wanted to adopt a girl rather than a boy. She explicitly said so in the interview.

Analysis and Discussion

To further clarify the relations involved, let us follow how the case developed. Ego 'adopted' a male baby. Since he is not her procreative son, there is only one other way the boy can become her son, namely she suckles him. However, this was not a possibility. Her brother's wife (BW), however, was lactating since she had just borne a baby. This was a critical factor for Ego to go ahead with the adoption process. She had to guarantee the availability of a suckling mother for her baby. But would any woman do in this case? Clearly not. So Ego gave her newly adopted son to her BW to co-suckle along with her own son by birth. This instantly turned her BW, otherwise totally unrelated to the adoptive boy, into the baby's mother and simultaneously turns Ego, the suckling mother's HZ–also unrelated to the adoptive boy–to paternal aunt (FZ) of the boy. This transformation from stranger to kin lifts the potential state of cross-sex avoidance between Ego and the boy, thus making it possible for Ego to raise him.

While these transformations appear to have solved the problem, Ego and her husband both still felt unsure about the sufficiency of this construction of consanguineal kin status for the boy through the transformation from stranger to kin. So they proceeded as follows. Ego's husband had an earlier wife with whom he had grown children. One of his granddaughters had borne a baby coinciding with the adoption by Ego and was therefore lactating. Even though she lived in an adjacent country, both Ego and her husband traveled with the boy for him to be suckled by the granddaughter of Ego's husband, along with her own baby. By doing so, both babies, her procreative child and the suckled child (already related to her consanguineally) became siblings, but more relevant to our ethnographic case, Ego's husband (grandfather of the suckling woman) became grandfather to the suckled boy and, by extension, this turned Ego into the boy's grandmother.

By suckling, then, Ego became paternal aunt (FZ) through the consanguineal chain and grandmother through the affinal chain. This ensured a secure lifting of avoidance (through a double lock, as it were) on both 'maternal' and 'paternal' sides, using channels of consanguinity and affinity, to make active a new consanguineal kinship relation between Ego and her adoptive boy. Suckling by granddaughter of Ego's husband intensifies relations further since husband becomes grandfather to adoptee and Ego, who is already paternal aunt to adoptee (consanguineal) , becomes grandfather's wife (affine), which interlocks consanguinity and affinity, removes distance and avoidance that adoption alone cannot do, as an adoptee remains 'stranger', not kin.

Both links were created via suckling. Suckling, then, can have transformational consequences by restructuring kinship. Suckling by selected relatives of both Ego and Ego's husband extended relations of consanguinity and transformed the nature of the relationship among the recategorized kin. The selected lactating women can turn total strangers into consanguineal kin (*nasab*, in Arabic). Transformations occurs by calculating links of consanguinity and affinity–transformations through which cross-sex avoid-

ance between Ego and the adopted boy is lifted, making it possible for Ego to act, behave, and perform as if she is procreative 'mother', which in fact she cannot become. These transformations are shown in Figure 3.

Given the cultural importance of the cross-sex factor, we asked Ego: What would have happened if the adoptee had been female; that is, had the adopted child been a girl instead of a boy, Ego's initial desire? Would this change avoidance, incest, and suckling? The response of Ego to this hypothetical question was unequivocal: "nothing different".

Why would all of this suckling still be necessary if the adoptee were a girl? True, a change in the gender of the adoptee from male to female would transcend an avoidance relation between Ego and adopted child, but it would create an avoidance relation between adopted daughter and Ego's husband and brothers. Ego elaborated on this issue by relating a real story of an acquaintance with circumstances resembling those of the hypothetical question in which "the adopted girl lived all her life in misery from the cumbersome daily demands of cross-sex avoidance even within the privacy of the family household." She would be bound by avoidance rules, which include veiling and unveiling to cross-sex household members (for more on this see El Guindi, 2003 [1999]) and segregation among relatives, such as between female adoptee and adoptive father and maternal uncles. Therefore, Ego would have been determined not to subject a girl adoptee to similar hardships of ritualized avoidance, thereby depriving her of normal life. Ego, however, acknowledged that in this particular case her husband, whose age is advanced, would be too old for the need of cross-sex avoidance between him and the adopted 'daughter', but it must be noted that even if the rule would not be necessary vis-a-vis her male adoptive parent, it would still extend to her male siblings and other male relatives for whom avoidance would be culturally required.

In this ethnographic case, the "adoptee" and its gender are unintended. Eager to mother, Ego instantly became emotionally attached to the newborn boy and wished to mother him; that is, to nurture and raise him as if he were her son. But Ego and her husband are neither genetrix and genitor (procreative mother and father), nor can they become mater and pater (social mother and father) to the boy without suckling. Adoption is not recognized as kinship in Islam. The case described above demonstrates, confirming data from many other cases, that adoption is not socially admissible as a means to incorporate non-kin as kin into an existing kinship network. That is, adoption is not a permissible cultural mechanism for kin incorporation. The only means for transforming stranger to kin (other than marriage) is through calculated suckling. Suckling, carefully calculated, re-categorizes consanguineal kin and lifts avoidance. It can construct and reconstruct kin of consanguinity or kin of affinity. It can convert maternal kin into paternal kin and vice versa. The details of the ethnographic case presented here reveal structures and transformations with implications for consanguinity, affinity, adoption and the incest taboo.

General Conclusions

Suckling, like consanguinity (Ar. *nasab*) and affinity (Ar. *musahra*), is kinship by analytic kinship criteria, and is also culturally recognized as such. It provides a legitimate

means to incorporate kin and to transform stranger into kin; feeding, as it were, 'fluidity' to become a property of *nasab* (Arabic for genealogical relations by birth) groupings and regroupings in social systems which operate corporately in accordance with a principle of agnatic descent, expressed in terms of an idiom of ascent from remote ancestry. By allowing some, and prohibiting other, marital unions, suckling activates principles of agnatic consanguinity and bilateral affinity, as it links and delinks relations by birth and relations by marriage.

   Hence suckling does not just feed milk to a mother's baby; other suckled infants will interact subsequently, as adult kin, in their social groups in ways that reflect a transformation engendered by suckling. Sucking can intersect descent and alliance, ultimately re-channeling alliances, not for exogamous relations but to maintain endogamy, which in turn preserves the descent structure. In a previous publication, El Guindi (2012b) proposed, and we argue here as well, that suckling is a cultural mechanism linking descent and alliance to preserve endogamy, thereby challenging observations insisting on linking descent and alliance with exogamy.

   Suckling has a transformative function in kinship relations, constructs new links, creates new relations, transforms existing ones, constructs kin terms, intensifies and interlocks kin relations, creates incest taboo, prohibits some relations and creates others. It categorizes and re-categorizes consanguinity and affinity. Suckling is kinship and a transformative mechanism for kinship. As kin relations became visible, kinship patterns
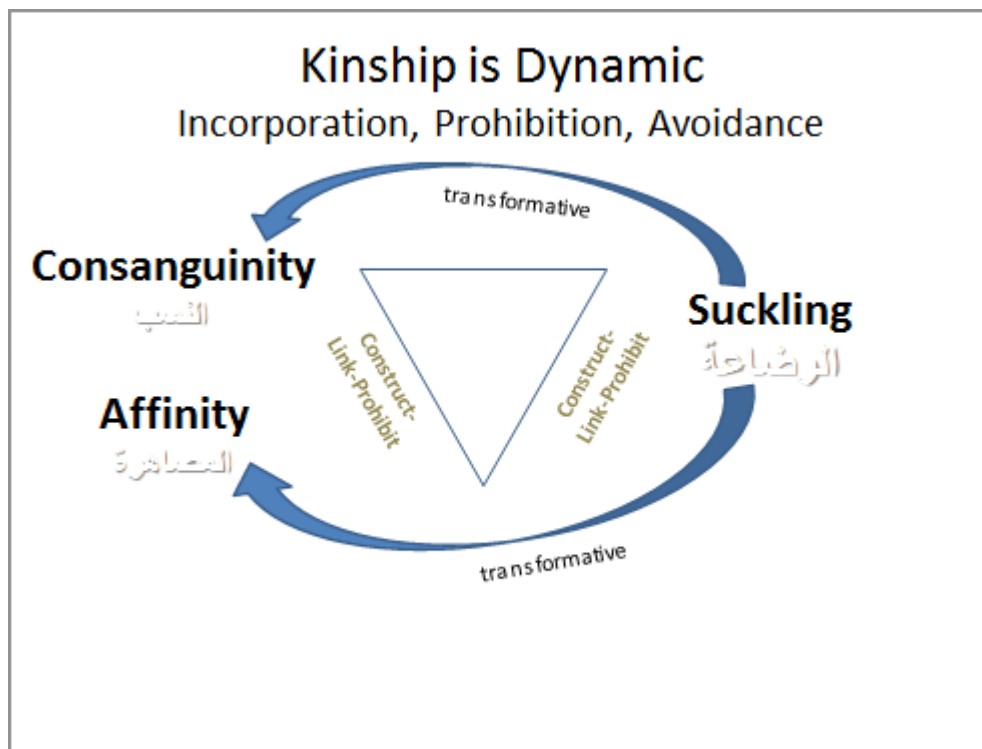

Figure 4. Dynamic transformational property of kinship. Concept and design by F. El Guindi. © El Guindi 2012.

became observable in analysis. Kinship is dynamically vibrant and increasingly relevant in all aspects of Qatari life, including institutional arrangements, even in today's world as Qatar becomes an economically leading country and technologically advanced state in a highly globalized region.

It is worth re-stating that limiting kinship to consanguinity and affinity, as has been the case since Lewis Henry Morgan, is inadequate and insufficient. From Qatar research data and the lead author's earlier Zapotec data on *compadrazgo*, El Guindi continues to propose that three forms of kinship should be equally recognized: *nasab* (consanguinity), *musahra* (affinity), and *rida'a* (suckling). It is argued that suckling, rather than breastfeeding or mothering, is kinship, and the focus must be on suckling, not on the substance of milk.

Studying kinship and kinshipping, using in-depth primary data, can tell us something about what kinship 'is all about'–a dynamic system of relations and transformations, a structure and a process, an abstract construct, a cultural concept and, universally, a social reality in human life way beyond its biological limits. These conclusions are presented in graph form in Figure 4.

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[1] The research team included co-author Wesam al-Othman, as part of a field project funded by two grants from the Qatar National Research Fund under its Undergraduate Research Experience Program: UREP 06-012-5-003 **(**Milk Kinship: The Khalij Case) and UREP 09-051-5-013 (Blood, Milk and Marriage: Kinship Behavior and Kinship Terminology in Qatar). The grant contents are solely the responsibility of the lead Principal Investigator and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Qatar National Research Fund.

[2] The co-author collaborated in the elicitation of Case 2 and in drafting a descriptive narrative of Ego's story. We both thank the undergraduate students involved in the UREP projects: Shaikha al-Kuwari (lead senior undergraduate), Sara al-Mahmoud, Alanoud al-Marri, Raneen Najjar, Dana al-Dossary, and Fatima Abed Bahumaid.

[3] It has been proposed by the lead author, since 1972, that transformationality and mediation comprise a structural property of ritual structure, based on analysis of data gathered among the Zapotec (El Guindi 1972[1980], 1973, 1977a, 1977b, 1981, 1982). The book on Zapotec ritual consists of both a detailed ethnography of life-crisis rituals and an innovative method of collaboration with a Zapotec "colleague" from the village, which was studied for more than 26 months (El Guindi 1986). Collaboration with mathematician/anthropologist Dwight W. Read led to an algebraic structure characterizing the structure of Zapotec ritual (El Guindi and Read 1979a, 1979b, 1980). The dialectic basis of Zapotec ritual was discussed in a collaborative chapter with Henry Selby (El Guindi and Selby 1976). The cognitive level of Zapotec ritual was analyzed and published in the *Proceedings of The Cognitive Science Society* (El Guindi 2006).

[4] All Kinship Circle sessions were co-organized by Dwight W. Read and Fadwa El Guindi.

[5] The lead author considers the in-depth ethnographic study to be the anthropological method that provides the most scientifically valuable data of all methods using anthropological instruments, quantitative or qualitative. The level of detail provided by using ethnographic contexts cannot be matched by any other instruments, quantitative or qualitative. However, other instruments of data-gathering and data-analysis can provide complementary and supplementary materials that can enrich an ethnographic study. The first case presented here was gathered as part of the collective project, whereas the second case was collected by both authors outside the UREP funded project.

[6] Case 1, is one of many cases gathered and discussed in a seminar setting by the UREP research team. Analysis of Case 1 derives from "case" interviews using "idealized model templates": 9 with a male ego and 9 with a female ego. Templates were made after analysis of data from the exploratory phase of the research project involving in-depth interviews of 10 persons.   There were a total of 28 interviews.

[7] The central notion of '*asabiyya*, translated in the literature as 'solidarity', was introduced as a core concept in the first, still current, organized theory of kinship formulated in the 14th century by the Arab social philosopher/anthropologist Ibn Khaldun (Ibn Khaldun 1961).   This theory, which refers to a state of bondedness resulting from shared nerve, was developed by Ibn Khaldun long before disciplinary anthropology was born.

[8] This ethnographic interview was conducted as part of the UREP research project by a female undergraduate Qatari student at Qatar University, who, as a result of her UREP training, was admitted to the doctoral program to study anthropology at the University of Florida.

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