PARALLEL WORLDS:
HUMANS, SPIRITS, AND ZAR POSSESSION
IN RURAL NORTHERN SUDAN

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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This thesis concerns the cultural meanings of zar spirit possession in Hofriyat, a Northern Sudanese village. It begins with an interpretive analysis of the Hofriyati everyday world, showing village kinship, marriage, and prevalent customs such as female circumcision to be informed by a common idiom: "interiority" or relative enclosure. In Part II it proceeds to discuss, in terms of that idiom, contexts in which the possession idiom might be invoked: who claims to be possessed, and under what conditions. Here it emerges that zar possession plays an important role in the negotiation and renegotiation of meaning by "rephrasing" interpersonal conflict, symbolically restructuring certain life experiences for the Hofriyati, and effecting realignments of kin relations and social positions in ways deemed favorable to the possessed. Next comes a comparison of the zar propitiation ritual and the local wedding ceremony, in which zar is seen to operate as a meta-cultural text, a comment upon the realities of everyday life and the informative idiom of village culture. This idea is carried forward into Part III, where the system of zar beliefs and spirit manifestations is discussed in its own right. Here possession is viewed as an esthetic form and potential messages to be derived from the identities and associations of the spirits are considered.
In sum, this thesis is an attempt to describe Hofriyati cultural meanings -- the logic of everyday life, its negotiation through acknowledgement of possession affliction, and its secondary or meta-cultural elaboration in ritual and in the system of zar beliefs. It draws principally upon the works of symbolic anthropologists such as Geertz, Turner, and Crapanzano, and upon the insights of Paul Ricoeur for theoretical guidance. However, the "theory of Hofriyati culture" which emerges in the dissertation is understood to be the result of interactions between the researcher and her Hofriyati informants. The thesis is an interpretation, a special sort of negotiated meaning.
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The subject of this thesis is spirit possession. But equally, it concerns the cultural and social context in which a particular system of possession beliefs exists, even thrives. The system of which I write is zar, the context, that of a village in Northern Sudan I will call Hofriyat.

The worlds of Hofriyat humans and zar spirits are parallel worlds, and they are contiguous; the latter, normally invisible to humans, overlies the former much like a transparency might overlie a map. The analogy is apposite: just as the transparency illuminates certain characteristics of terrain not immediately apprehended or distinguished by the reader, so the zar world illuminates the human, casting many of its qualities -- positive as well as negative -- into sharp relief.

The human world is the foundation upon which the spirit world rests; it is, ultimately, the latter's source of meaning. Now, the question as to how I would discover "meaning" in the course of my research haunted me throughout my stay in Hofriyat. It was not just that the best I could hope to achieve was a translation of Hofriyati culture, a faithful interpretation. My first few months in the field seemed to have been wasted sifting through sterile soil. If the world is meaningful to Hofriyati, I thought, its meaning
is heavily veiled. When I would ask why such and such was done, or what such and such meant, the answers I received seemed often to be tautological and, frankly, rather trivial. "Women are circumcised ('purified') to make their bodies clean and smooth." "We marry our patrilateral parallel cousins because they are close." Responses such as these seemed superficial to me. No one, in fact, volunteered what I would have considered "deeper" explanations. There was surprisingly little exegesis of symbols or symbolic constructs, and few references made to the tenets of Islam.

Since I was spending virtually all of my time with women it occurred to me that perhaps my expectation as to the location of meaning for my informants had been misplaced. For example, perhaps Islam -- which women referred to rarely and when they did, they used as a sort of gloss, an ultimate but unelaborated source of significance -- was less meaningful for them than for men, who readily cite the Quran in support of their beliefs and social arrangements. There appeared, then, to be important differences between men's and women's elaborations of Hofriyati culture, and this thesis represents primarily a women's perspective. That said, however, I feel that there exists in Hofriyat an underlying set of assumptions about the nature of the world and its appropriate order which male and female Hofriyati share. In the field, and then more extensively during the process of writing up, I
decided to look for this common basis of understanding not behind my informants' mundane or trivial responses, but in them, and not so much in Islam as, so to speak, behind it. In short, I sought to describe the "logic of everyday life" (cf. Geertz 1973), and it is the result of this endeavor that is presented in Part I of the dissertation. Here little mention of spirit possession can be found. This is the human world.

In Part II I discuss ways in which the spirit world impinges on and intrudes into the human. The reader is introduced to the idea that possession beliefs and performances constitute a cultural text that is appropriated by Hofriyati and referred to by them under certain conditions. From there I proceed to investigate the characteristics of those who come to acknowledge a possession affliction. Two chapters of case histories follow; then Part II concludes with a chapter in which the possession idiom is compared to that of quotidian life. Here it emerges that zar operates as a meta-cultural or metalinguistic text, commenting upon and reordering that of ordinary everyday life. And for those who choose to take it up, zar may perform a therapeutic function.

Part III is wholly devoted to exploring the spirit world apart from the contexts of possession incidence in Hofriyati humans. The spirits, like their human counterparts, are social beings, in some respects similar to Hofriyati but in others strikingly different. Zar here is viewed as an
esthetic form, as a type of "deep play" (Geertz 1973: 443 ff).
I consider what messages Hofriyati might derive from their
observations of spirits manifest in other villagers and from
their own possession experiences. Possession by alien beings,
however social they may be, ultimately creates a paradox in
and for those involved. It is, at the very least, provoc­
tive, opening up directions of thought (cf. Ricoeur 1976) not
always apparent to villagers or, indeed, willingly pursued by
them. Possession in Hofriyat may be considered the positive
use of potentially destructive ambiguity, and its pedagogical
function at least as significant as any other which might be
discerned.
PART I: THE HUMAN WORLD
"The solace of such work as I do with brain and heart lies in this -- that only there, in the silences of the painter or the writer can reality be reordered, reworked and made to show its significant side. Our common actions in reality are simply the sackcloth covering which hides the cloth-of-gold - the meaning of the pattern." — Lawrence Durrell, The Alexandria Quartet

IN THE FIELD, MARCH 31, 1976

The train will be late getting in to Kabushiya. North of Shendi, dunes from last night's sandstorm block the tracks and for several hours we are forced to stop while the route is being cleared. The heat in our car is stifling; my clothing is soaked with perspiration. Fellow travellers converse languidly, long accustomed to such delays. For me, however, the waiting seems endless. Suddenly we start to move. As we gather speed gritty desert air pushes through the windows like heat escaping a blast furnace; it affords but slight relief.

At 3:00 p.m. we reach our station. Ali, a young man from the village area where I now live, picks up one of the sacks filled with my provisions and we step down into the dust. After a moment's compulsory haggling over price, I am able to hire a karro (donkey cart) to take us the last few miles to
the village. The driver knows me, though I cannot place him. He is surprised to see me, he says, without the rest of the archaeological expedition. In my broken Arabic I tell him I have come back to live among the nas el-balad (local people), to learn their language and their customs. Although he nods, his facial expression belies the suspicion that I'm probably quite mad. "Our land is poor," he says, "and the summer heat is coming. We have no electricity as you have in Canada. Our life is hard; Khartoum is much better for foreigners. In Khartoum there are Pepsis, and fans, and refrigerators. Here we have nothing but dust! What will you eat?"

"I will eat kisra," I tell him.

He laughs. "Kisra is no good for the bellies of foreigners. It makes them ill!" I smile thinly, hoping to prove him mistaken.

Slowly we make our way along the rough track that bisects several villages seated on the desert fringe, following at a short distance the green band of cultivation that marks the Nile's edge. We pass close to the mummified carcass of a camel claimed by the sun on route to market: a poor omen. I glance down at the basket resting against my feet. It is filled with the paraphernalia of fieldwork: plastic-bound notebooks, pens, aspirin, and instant coffee. My research now begins in earnest. Throughout the remainder of the journey I am alternately engulfed by waves of panic and of resolve. I
cannot turn back; yet the closer we come to the village, the higher mounts my apprehension. How will I be received, if at all? Will anyone have believed that I would return as promised?

We reach the gigantic dom-palm on the outskirts of Hofriyat. Immediately the cart is surrounded by a group of ragged children who seem to take shape out of the sand itself. Much to my dismay they begin shouting a localized version of my name, heralding our approach to the rest of the village. Ali, his turban askew, tells them to move away, to let us pass, while the driver, sensing the current value of a spoken word, threatens them with his whip. Inevitably the latter strategy meets with greater success: still chanting "Jenes jat, Jenes jat" the children jump aside. As we pass the first mud-brick houses upon entering the village, dogs begin to bark, adding to the general commotion. Women appear at their doorsteps, some smiling and waving, others obviously less at ease but shyly curious nonetheless. At this point I know not whether my reception is that appropriate to circus freak or movie star; it is anything but tranquil.

To no avail my eyes pan the growing crowd seeking a familiar face. In a few moments the karro comes to a halt in front of the house I have contracted to rent, and I am happy and more than a little relieved to see several of my earlier acquaintances standing at the door in welcome: Nafissa, the
Sheikh's unmarried daughter; Samira, her cousin; Sadig, the young man who would be my assistant; and Zaineb, a married woman but five years or so my senior, mother of seven, and from that day my most trusted friend and informant.

After refreshing themselves with long draughts of water, Ali and the karro driver take their leave. I am on my own at last. Sadig runs off in search of my landlady who has apparently gone down to her fields with my housekeys in tow. Nafissa tells me the villagers did not think I would return alone, that my male kin would forbid it. Says Zaineb, wryly, "I knew she would."

After an interminable quarter of an hour, Sadig comes back from the river accompanied by 'Asma, the irascible landlady. We open up the two small rooms and kitchen that comprise my living quarters and I notice that in my brief absence the desert has reasserted its dominion. Tables, angaribs (rope beds), all are coated with a thick layer of dust. Warily, I lift an angarib away from the wall. An enormous spider larger than a man's outstretched hand emerges, and on spindly sand-coloured legs it advances towards us. Ever quick to respond, Sadig grabs the broom and dispatches it. I do not relish the thought of finding others of its kind. Sadig's mother Asia arrives and offers to help me clean the place tomorrow, at sunrise. She says I must get rid of the mats with which other members of the archaeological
expedition, the house's former tenants, had covered the floor. Apparently these are favorite haunts for several types of insects, including dreaded scorpions. She tells me we will sweep away all loose dust from the packed earth floors and then wet them down. This will make a hard surface and will also help to cool the rooms. I agree to try. Already 'Asma is bargaining for the discarded mats.

I am invited to lunch on pumpkin stew and now infamous kisra bread with the womenfolk at Nafissa's. While we are eating, a young girl bursts into the courtyard gesturing excitedly. She speaks so quickly that I cannot follow. At once the women rise and begin arranging their wraps preparatory to leaving the hōsh (courtyard). There is a good deal of hasty conversation and an atmosphere of merriment prevails. Nafissa tells me to come along; I grab my notebook. Outside in the narrow passage that separates neighboring haishan (plural of hōsh) Nafissa explains that Khadija, her cousin and Samira's older sister, is about to have a baby. Several months ago, Khadija returned to the village from Khartoum where she was living with her husband. It is customary for women to give birth, says Nafissa, in their mother's homes. Khadija is now in labor, the midwife has been summoned.

Upon entering Samira's hōsh, I find the entire yard teeming with women; a few men have begun to gather outside the
walls. Presently, Zaineb emerges from the room to my right. She tells us that Khadija is expected to have an easy delivery, for the sapling uprooted and placed in water during the last months of her pregnancy has borne leaves. Now the midwife is opening Khadija's circumcision scar, she says, and is making her final examination.

According to Nafissa, only married women are allowed into the room where a woman is giving birth. Those who are unwed must remain outside. I ease my way towards the open door nonetheless; not daring to enter, I observe from the stoop. The room is quite dark, crowded with women sitting and standing practically on top of each other. Khadija lies on an angarīb while the midwife and several kinswomen hover about her. All those inside and some outside in the courtyard are shouting over and over again, "Ya Hassan!", "Sheikh Hamid!", "Ya Nebi!". Nearby I notice an old woman sitting on a mat fingerling prayer beads; before her are placed an iron nail and a clove of garlic. Suddenly the noise and confusion stop, all is hushed in anticipation. We wait; the silence continues for several minutes. Then the women commence trilling as birth is announced and the room is quickly emptied.

A few men now enter the hōsh, relatives, I am told, of Khadija's. They are congratulated by all present. One of them is sent off to Kabushiya to telephone Khadija's husband in Khartoum and inform him of his daughter's birth.
Meanwhile, Samira passes around dates and peanuts. The men prepare to sacrifice a goat. After about half an hour we are assured of Khadija's good health and Nafissa, Zaineb and I leave the hosh, making our way to Zaineb's house for tea.

Once there I ask about the shouting, the silence, the nail and the garlic, all that I can remember having seen. People shout the names of saints, I am told, to drown the cries of the woman giving birth; they are silent during the birth itself and until the afterbirth is safely delivered, unless complications arise that call for speech. Although the younger women claim to know nothing about the nail and the garlic, Zaineb's mother informs us they are present to divert the evil eye and to prevent hemorrhage or obstruction of the uterus (mushahrarah, discussed in Chapter 4). My notebook is fast filling up.

We sit chatting amiably until encroaching darkness necessitates the lighting of a lamp. Two of Zaineb's youngest have been fed and soon drop off to sleep. We leave them in the care of Zaineb's mother and depart the hosh, this time heading for an old house at the edge of the village. It seems a seventeen-year-old girl is being married next week. Tonight, and for the next several nights, she will be taught the bride's dance by other young village women, married and unmarried alike. The coaching party is called an 'alomiya (teaching) and must take place in secrecy, away from the eyes
of men and boys. About thirty of us press into the room. We sit on the floor around a small red mat. The windows are shuttered and the door is closed and bolted. A kerosene lamp suspended from a nail driven into the center support post provides the only illumination. The atmosphere is heavy with heat and incense. Someone begins drumming a fast rhythm on the dallūka (a type of drum) and the others start to sing and clap. The songs are love songs, highly sentimental and traditional to weddings. Younger girls vie with each other in remembering the latest tunes.

The bride stands barefoot on the mat, moving sensuously in time to the music but barely changing place: the wedding dance is referred to as ragīs bi șulaba, a dance of the buttocks. Her friends shout encouragements and criticisms of her style, making suggestions for improvement, for it is important to do the dance well. The bride's dance is both the climax of her wedding celebration and a high point in her life. She performs it publicly only once, as a virgin.

The 'alomīya has gone on for two hours now. Several times an older woman is sent to chase away the young boys who surround the building hoping to catch a glimpse of the activities inside. A shutter opens. At first we think the boys have returned, but wind blown sand soon fills the room, extinguishing the lamp. A dust storm (habūb) is upon us and we quickly disband. My flashlight is next to useless in the
murky gloom; when someone asks to borrow it I hand it over readily. With difficulty, those of us who live at the other end of the village find our way to the road. Progress is slow, we must lean into the wind with all our strength and feel our way along the outside walls of houses. Unbelievably, it starts to rain. A minute later it stops, but not before we are all thoroughly drenched.

I reach my house and must battle the storm in order to pry open the door. Inside there is no let up. Hot dust pours through the ceiling and through the fastened shutters, swirling up in a mad abrasive vortex. Twice I light the lamp, twice it blows out. Upon closing my sand encrusted eyes I witness an explosion of tiny white sparks. There is dust between my teeth, in my ears, in my nose, in every pore. Still, the wind does not abate. So I sit down in the darkness on an angarib with my back against the wall in spite of spiders, and wait for dawn.

LOCATION AND LOGISTICS

Hofriyat is a small village of 453 permanent residents located in Nile Province, northern Sudan, Africa. Its true position is 16° 56' north latitude, 33° 43' east longitude, but for convenience's sake it may be placed approximately 220
kilometers (137.5 miles) downstream of the capital city, Khartoum, and a short half kilometer or so east of the Nile.

Administratively it is part of a three-, and for some purposes, four-village area having its own "people's council" in the district of Shendi. On weekdays a converted Bedford lorry provides local bus service between the Hofriyat area and Shendi town, a sizable settlement 43 kilometers (27 miles) to the south. Here there are district courts and administrative offices, a daily suk (market), and a small hospital.

For more everyday needs, however, people look to Kabushiya, a few kilometers south of Hofriyat. This is a large village of some 3,000 people and houses the closest railway station, post office, telephone, and police station. Here, too, are several shops that carry a miscellaneous assortment of canned goods, cloth, soaps, and dried legumes; plus a semi-weekly suk where fresh meat and a variety of fruits and vegetables are available in season. On market days the local court convenes at Kabushiya to hear both civil and criminal suits; any case of magnitude or difficulty is passed on to the district courts in Shendi.
LANGUAGE

People in the area, and in the northern Sudan generally, speak a dialect of Arabic which contains numerous remnants of earlier vernaculars, principally Nubian and Bejawi (Awn al-Sharif Gasim 1965). Because of this peculiar mix, it differs in pronunciation, structure and semantics from other colloquials of Arabic spoken in the Middle East. Moreover, within the Sudan itself there is a great deal of regional linguistic variation, as the following incident will illustrate. During my stay in the village, I acquired a certain degree of fluency with "Arabi baladi" (country Arabic), as villagers call their language, chiefly as a result of very patient teaching on the part of my neighbors. Then, just before leaving the Sudan I took a short trip to the Red Sea coast. Merely by listening to my pronunciation and vocabulary people there could pinpoint the actual village area where I had lived, several hundreds of kilometers to the west.

I wish to stress at this juncture that all Arabic words and phrases included in the dissertation are reported essentially as given. No effort has been made to "correct" grammar or to use standardized orthography, to make the local dialect consistent with rules of the classical or modern literary language. The reader should also be made aware, however, that my most intensive contact in the field was with
local women. Frequently I was struck by differences in speech, chiefly vocabulary and pronunciation, characteristic of the adult male population, the majority of which, in sharp contrast to the largely unschooled adult female population, is literate. Men sometimes use classical pronunciation when conversing amongst themselves; moreover, they tend to be more exacting in their lexical choices, frequently using relatively obscure words which have more popular synonyms in local cross-sex parlance.

Women, for their part exhibit rather different linguistic tendencies. For they sometimes telescope two words which sound alike into a single sememe, with the result that one or both words assumes a wider range of significance than is usual in more standardized forms of Arabic. That this occurs is perhaps due to the fact that words which are very different in the written language are similarly pronounced in Hofriyati everyday speech: classical phonemic distinctions do not correspond exactly to those of the local dialect. In Hofriyat no phonemic contrast exists between sounds represented by the letter \( \text{dhāl} \) and those represented by the letter \( \text{zāy} \): \( \text{dhāl} \), pronounced classically as "th" in "that", is usually pronounced as "z", though occasionally it is pronounced as if it were \( \text{dāl} \), "d". Similarly, the letter \( \text{‘aın} \) frequently is pronounced as \( \text{‘alif} \) with or without hamza; \( \text{hamza} \) itself may be replaced with \( \text{yā} \) ("y"); \( \text{qāf} \) (gutteral "k") is as elsewhere
generally pronounced the English hard "g", though in numerous cases it is pronounced as kaf, "k", occasionally it is heard as jim ("dj"), or, more rarely, as the Egyptian glottal stop; tha, classically pronounced "th" as in "think", is locally pronounced as sin ("s") or as tā ("t"); mim ("m") is often replaced by ba ("b"), and so on. Such phonemic variation leads to the production of homonyms which add fuel to the already highly metaphorical speech of local women.

An example of this process may be provided by the word frequently used to signify "progeny" or "offspring". The Oxford English-Arabic Dictionary of Current Usage (1972) lists among its entries for that meaning the word dhurriya, derived from the root dharra: "to strew, scatter or spread" (Wehr 1976: 308). Yet Hofriyati women, in addition to using the local version of dhurriya to signify a man's progeny, also use zur'a: "that which is sown or planted; crop" (Wehr 1976: 376). The metaphorical operations underlying the standardized literary and the local forms are similar: both are based upon an implied association between human and agricultural reproduction. But more than this, the similarity is reinforced and intensified due to local pronunciation: in Hofriyat dhurriya is pronounced zurriya. Again, zur'a is often pronounced zuriy'a, the terminal 'ain becoming a stopped 'alif, the long "i" being changed to a diphthong. Though differences in pronunciation remain, these are slight; when
uttered by Hofriyati women, the two words do indeed sound alike. What is more, they mean virtually the same thing in this context. Whether similarities in pronunciation have led to shared meanings, or shared meanings to similarities in pronunciation is a historical problem which must remain unsolved at this point. However, I would venture to suggest the illiteracy of local women to be a contributing factor in this synthesizing process. Many have never learned the distinction between dhāl pronounced as "z" and zāy itself, for few if any receive schooling in the classical or literary language.

Finally, I include a few words of caution as to the association between Sudan Arabic(s) and more common dialects of the Middle East. As Hillelson, who compiled a popular Sudanese Arabic-English dictionary published by the Sudan Government in 1930, notes,

The spoken Arabic of the Sudan, by virtue of phonetic and grammatical features and a characteristic vocabulary, forms a distinct dialectical group, and as such occupies an independent position amongst the dialects of the Arabic tongue. The geographical extent of this group roughly coincides with the Arabic-speaking portions of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, but oversteps its boundaries in the West, so as to include the speech of the Arab tribes of Wadai, the Chad region, and Bornu. Within the group, however, there are considerable variations which correspond to differences in locality, tribe and social condition, and there is no sub-dialect which can be regarded as standard for the whole of the group. The speech of the literate class, largely influenced by Egyptian Arabic and the written tongue, stands in clear contrast to the unaffected language of the villagers and nomads; the latter, on the other hand, does not represent a uniform mode of speech, but falls into a number of sub-
dialects, which imperceptibly grade into each other with no clear line of demarcation.

Sudan Arabic, then, like every other spoken dialect, is not a homogeneous language, with definite rules of grammar and a fixed vocabulary, but rather the common term for a number of local forms of speech which constitute a group owing to a general similarity of type, and in consequence of geographical and political contacts. (1930A: xiii-xiv)

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The geographical area in which Hofriyat is located straddles two ecological zones; it is a region in which true desert gradually begins to give way to semi-desert acacia shrub, with an average annual rainfall in the vicinity of five centimeters. Rainfall, however, is unpredictable: some years the area receives far less than five centimeters, other years (about one in five) it receives considerably more, as much as fifteen centimeters. Thus the region is marginal with respect to cultivation undertaken at any distance from the river. More than rain, it is the annual inundation of the Nile upon which farming in this area depends.

Villagers distinguish three seasons. Kharif, or the rainy season, usually begins sometime in early to mid-July (though in 1976 it hardly appeared), bringing with it periodic thunderstorms, frequent cloudy afternoons and temperatures somewhat cooler than those of summer, averaging between 40 and
44 degrees Celsius (104 to 111 degrees Fahrenheit). In late August or early September the Nile flood is at its peak.

Villagers assert that winter (shita) starts in late October or early November, after the rains, when temperatures fall as much as five degrees to about 39 C (just over 100F). In December I recorded one daytime high of 27C (about 80F), but days as cool as this are exceptional, calling for sweaters, blankets and woolen scarves to be worn at least during morning hours. Winter in Hofriyat is a seemingly endless series of perfect sunny days and spotless skies. When one day in January 1976 a cloud appeared overhead, several archaeologists then working nearby rushed for their cameras, so strange was the event. Windstorms, always a possibility, nevertheless seem to increase in frequency towards the middle of February, when temperatures also start to climb. By the end of March they are again averaging about 44 C in mid-afternoon, and biting sandstorms are common.

Summer (seyf) really begins in mid April or early May. At this time the Nile is at its lowest stage of flow, as little as a sixteenth of the volume it carried at full flood (Ministry of Information and Culture, Government of Sudan n.d.:33). Sandstorms continue, accompanied by samoom, hot winds that blow mercilessly from the north-east. Temperatures over 50 C (122 F) are not uncommon now, and people are forced to rest during the heat of the day. Clear blue skies of shita
give way to white hot skies in seyf, when plants and animals alike need careful tending lest they succumb to dehydration. This is the "hungry season": there is little available in the way of produce, and people subsist largely on beans (fülməsər), kisra, and leavened bread, with a little meat, some greens and onions from time to time. During seyf people frequently complain of lethargy or inertia (zihuj) and boredom.

The seasonal cycle is completed when seyf gives way to kharif early in July with the welcomed onset of rain. Such rains as do occur are rarely gentle, often damaging fragile mud-brick walls and irrigation channels, and collecting in large stagnant pools wherever the baked earth refuses to let it drain. For all its destructive capacities, however, the rain works wonders in rejuvenating the parched terrain. For a brief period patches of bright green relieve the normally monotonous grey-brown landscape.

HISTORY

Unlike so many of the places where anthropologists traditionally do fieldwork, the vicinity of Hofriyat has a recorded history extending deep into the past. At one time or another it has enjoyed the mixed fortune to have been
Figure 1: Map of Sudan
settled, invaded or travelled by members of several literate civilizations. For the most part, however, events in northern Sudan, or Nubia, have been linked inextricably to those taking place in Egypt.

Around 2,000 B.C., Pharaohs of the eleventh and twelfth dynasties conquered the Nile valley as far upstream as Semna, above the second cataract. Egyptian occupation here was by no means continuous, however. At the beginning of the New Kingdom, (sixteenth century B.C.), this area was reconquered, Egyptian holdings increased at least as far south as the fourth cataract, and a province made of the subjugated domains. Thus was Egyptian influence well established in northern Sudan from earliest times.

Perhaps the most important outcome of this was the growth of an Egyptianized yet, as it is thought today, wholly indigenous civilization centered at Napata near the fourth cataract. Beginning in 750 B.C., the rulers of Kush, as this kingdom has come to be known, took advantage of certain weaknesses in the Egyptian state and pushed north, successfully founding Egypt's twenty-fifth dynasty. A branch of the royal family was installed at Meroe, near present-day Hofriyat.

Although Kush's hegemony in Egypt was fairly short lived, effectively ending in 661 B.C., the kingdom persisted and flourished in the south until long after that date.
Initially, at least, the basis of its power was not agriculture, for even when irrigation is practiced cultivable land is limited to a relatively narrow strip bordering the river Nile. Rather, the authority of Kush lay in its domination of the caravan traffic in slaves and luxury items between Egypt and what is now southern Sudan, and in its exploitation of gold mines in the eastern desert.

After losing control over Egypt, however, trade with that country declined and the locus of power began shifting southwards. Now the city of Meroe, located on the edge of an ecological zone somewhat more favorable for agriculture than was Napata, assumed growing importance. While Napata apparently remained the religious center of Kush, Meroe became its administrative capital sometime in the sixth century B.C. And, after the third century B.C. the royal cemetery was also moved here, resulting in the eventual construction of well over fifty pyramidal tombs. The remains of these structures and of the various palaces, residences, and temples of Meroe itself are within easy walking distance of contemporary Hofriyat. Insofar as villagers are largely unaware of their illustrious heritage, the existence of these ruins provides fertile ground for legend and for superstitious speculation.

Meroe, at the height of its power between the third century B.C. and the start of the Christian era, exerted suzerainty far to its south, along the White Nile probably to
the region of the Sudd (Haycock 1971:35). But after this time and until its unequivocal collapse in 350 A.D. when the city was sacked by Axumite invaders, the Meroitic state gradually declined. Incursions of nomadic pastoralists, always a source of harassment, became more frequent and were less readily repulsed. Thus, as so frequently would be the case thereafter, the country split up into numerous small principalities.

Further, Meroitic state religion, based upon that of ancient Egypt, now fell into decline. And, as Egypt had become Christianized, so, almost inevitably, would the Upper Nile valley. In mid-sixth century A.D. a few Christian priests of monophysite persuasion sent to prosyletize in Nubia rapidly achieved success in converting the sedentary population. Henceforward until the establishment of Islam some eight centuries later, Nile villagers were at least nominally Christian.

During the sixth century, according to the ecclesiastical history of John of Ephesus, there were three independent kingdoms in Nubia. Between the first and the third cataracts was Nobadia; south of there and extending as far as ancient Meroe was Mukuria, and beyond this was Alodia (in Arabic "'Alwah") with its capital near present day Khartoum. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that these were well established kingdoms with permanent boundaries. As Adams
...the number of kingdoms, or petty chiefdoms, probably fluctuated from one century to the next, and the extent of their dominion depended upon the ability of the king at any given moment to exact tribute and obedience. There were probably large stretches of the Nile Valley which did not acknowledge any authority beyond that of a local chief, except at intervals when they were directly threatened with attack by their stronger neighbors. (1967:13)

Hence it is quite possible that Hofriyat, being located in a border zone between Makuria's and 'Alwah's respective areas of interest, was more or less independent throughout this period.

Although Egypt fell to Muslim Arab invaders in 641 A.D., Nubia was left politically unmolested for many centuries afterwards. In 651, a treaty was formalized between Nubia and Muslim Egypt providing for mutual security and trade. Nubian merchants in Egypt and Muslim traders in Nubia were guaranteed safe-conduct, but were prohibited from settling in each other's domains. Further provisions negotiated the payment of several hundred slaves to Egypt as annual tribute from the Nubian princes. Thus was the way paved for a relatively peaceful and gradual penetration of the Sudan by Arabs and Arabized Egyptians. And, once again, the slave trade and the quest for gold and African luxuries were demonstrated bases for political relations between the two regions.

In spite of the aforementioned pact designed to prevent such settlement, small groups of Arabs and Muslim Egyptians began trickling into the Sudan as early as the seventh century
A.D. For the most part these few advance migrants were pastoralists who sought refuge from organized government and taxation. They therefore took up residence in the deserts, beyond the reach of Nubian administrators.

Then, late in the twelfth century during the Ayyubid period in Egypt, events built towards a complete dissolution of the formalized peace. No longer was Nubia a protected zone, forbidden to would-be settlers from the north. Thus, when the Bahri (Turkish) Mamluk dynasty was later established in 1250 and many Arab tribes in Egypt subsequently experienced increasing political pressure from their new rulers, such groups as found it expedient moved south virtually unimpeded into the Sudan. Included in this larger wave of immigrants were some of the Ja'ali and Jawabra ancestors of current residents of Hofriyat.

The states of Lower Nubia gradually gave way as the infiltration of Arabic speaking peoples intensified. Like their predecessors, the majority of the newcomers were pastoralists who wished to maintain a nomadic way of life. Thus they tended to skirt the Nile valley, preferring to settle in more fertile pasturelands to the south, south-east, and south-west. Even so, soon after the fall of Old Dongola to Muslim forces in 1317, some Arab immigrants, undoubtedly intermarrying with the local population, began to form small tribal organizations along the middle Nile. Moreover, by this
time Christians in Nubia had become increasingly isolated from contact with the established Church. So again Nubia was bound to follow Egypt's lead in shifting religious direction, and eventually adopting Islam.

In 1504, 'Alwah, the uppermost Nubian state, was overrun by an unidentified group believed to have originated in the southern Sudan. Supported by Arabs who had settled nearby, their rulers became at least nominal converts to Islam, and founded the Funj Sultanate with its capital at Sennar on the Blue Nile. The Funj quickly linked together in a loose confederacy the numerous petty chiefdoms that had arisen in the wake of Christian Nubia's demise. Regional rulers in the Nile valley were permitted to remain as vassals of the Funj leader or his Arab viceroy. Consequently, local customs and institutions in the dependent area were largely unaffected by this change in the balance of power.

Funj dominance introduced a period of limited stability and increased prosperity along the reaches of the Nile. Trade was extended and intensified, and the sedentary population grew. Religious scholars were encouraged to take up residence in Sudan, in order better to educate her population in the ways of Islam.

During this period the Hofriyat area was governed by the mek^6 (king or chief) of Shendi. When towards the end of the eighteenth century the power of the Funj overlords waned,
several small kingdoms that had once been vassals of the Sennar state attained virtual independence, Shendi included. The resultant political Balkanization, accompanied as it was by local wars and internecine disputes, all but guaranteed the success of the Turko-Egyptian conquest in 1821.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Until fairly recently, the early history of the Sudan was pictured as a series of migrations and invasions of various peoples, barbarians from the south if their cultural remains were somewhat crude, or members of more civilized northerly groups if they were not. According to this view, each successive human inundation all but supplanted the group that had preceded it, undermining the traditions of the latter in the process of substituting its own (see Hillelson 1930b and Arkell 1961 for examples).

However, modern archaeological evidence suggests that there is far more continuity to Sudanese cultural history than previously was supposed. While admitting that migrations did occur from time to time, it now appears less likely that there were such extensive displacements of populations and cultures as once thought (Adams 1967, Trigger 1965, Shinnie 1967, Haycock 1971). Thus, the point should be stressed that
many customs, cultural idioms, and linguistic forms that characterize the Arab Sudanese today actually predate the coming of Islam, and some may have even more ancient origins.

For example, a strong case is now being made for independent local development with regard to the growth of Kush, where once it was generally believed that this kingdom had been founded by a handful of Egyptianized Libyan settlers (Adams 1967, Haycock 1971). However thick their Egyptian veneer, many Meroitic traditions were certainly indigenous.

Furthermore, some, such as bed-burial, persist in modified form even today. At various times before, during and after the Meroitic period, the dead were buried in natural sleeping posture lying on an angarlib, or native bed. Just as in the past, this bed is currently the most common piece of furniture found in northern Sudanese households, being manufactured of a wooden frame strung with palm-fiber rope. And, in Hofriyat and elsewhere in the Nile valley, the dead are still carried to the cemetery on an angarlib, though the body is now removed from this prior to burial itself. Nevertheless, Adams reports that until recently the bed that had been used in a funeral procession was abandoned at the gravesite when the mourners returned to their village (1967:24).

Another ancient tradition, and one that only lately has begun to fade, is facial scarification. While similar
Tattooing is practiced by many groups in Africa and Arabia, most settled northern Sudanese are distinctive in having three vertical cuts on each cheek. Interestingly, this motif is also shown on the faces of royalty depicted in Meroitic temple reliefs (Haycock 1971, Shinnie 1967, 1971, and personal communication).

Meroe, and after it Christian Nubia, were matrilineal societies. Further, in both periods there was a tendency for females to enjoy access to political power. Meroitic Candaces (queens) are known to have ruled during their sons' minorities (Trimingham 1965:44, Haycock 1971:36, Reisner 1922:193), and in Nubia queen-mothers were customarily consulted by the king about affairs of state (Hasan 1967:117). Writing in the fourteenth century, the Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun notes that succession among Nubians passed from the king either to his sister or to his sister's son (Area Handbook 1960:15).

Such tendencies even appear to have survived the adoption of Islam with its patrilineal emphasis. In 1772 the explorer James Bruce reached Shendi, finding there upon the throne a woman, whom he called Sittina ("our lady") (Bruce 1813, vol. vi: 448). Burckhardt, who spent a month in Shendi in 1814, also noted that women typically play an important role in determining royal succession (1922:247). Perhaps it would not be too incautious to suggest that the custom has found contemporary expression in the exalted and often
tyrannical domestic position of the Arab Sudanese haboba (grandmother) (See infra, Chapter 2), though this is not unusual in Islamic cultures. Interesting, too, is the marked propensity for Hofriyat households to be organized around a group of related women (See Table VII, this chapter).

Several other contemporary practices betray the area's non-Arab heritage. The tradition of drawing a cross in antimony on the forehead of a newborn child, the use of fish bones and palm crosses in making ritual ornaments (jirtig), and the custom of bathing in the Nile on ceremonial occasions are but a few which probably date from Christian times or earlier. It seems likely that in the beginning Islamic beliefs did not supplant those of monophysite Christianity so much as the two systems, having numerous affinities, gradually coalesced, with Islam eventually gaining the ascendancy.

Historians assert that organized Christianity and Islam coexisted for many decades after the important Arab migrations of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. And in fact, pockets of Christians could still be found along the Nile until as late as the mid-eighteenth century (Haycock 1972:20). As with other social upheavals which Sudan has undergone, it now appears that its Arabization was more gradual and less culturally disruptive than once had been thought.

Further, as Trimingham notes, wherever Islam has become established it has shaped itself to local conditions by
incorporating and reorienting indigenous religious elements (1965:167). Various spirits and other supernatural beings do not simply disappear from belief, but are reclassified according to categories stipulated in the Quran. Thus, continuous with its Christian and pre-Christian bases, popular Islam in Sudan today evinces an elaborate hagiology and cult of saint veneration, as well as belief in a host of spirits now assimilated to the category *jinn* (see Chapter 6, Part II and Chapter 11, Part III for fuller discussion of this issue).

In sum, syncretism and synthesis are partner processes common to riverain Sudanese culture, a point which should be borne in mind throughout forthcoming discussions of Hofriyat village life.

**RECENT HISTORY**

In this section I will consider events and trends which have affected the people of Hofriyat and their ancestors in recent times. It is my intention here to provide background information more specifically germaine to Hofriyat and the district in which it is located than to the northern Sudan as a whole.

Most of our knowledge about Shendi area during the last years of the Funj confederacy (late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries) comes from local chronicles, traditional histories and the accounts of European travellers. These last
31.

are perhaps most interesting for our purposes, as they frequently furnish insights into conditions of everyday life. Consequently, much of what follows is based upon the observations of Bruce, Burckhardt, and Cailliaud, who visited the area prior to or, as in the case of Cailliaud, coincidental with the Turko-Egyptian conquest.

As previously stated, by the late eighteenth century the mek of Shendi, though tacitly subject to the Funj overlord in Sennar, was to all intents and purposes completely independent. He, and the majority of riverain inhabitants under his rule, were of the group known as Ja'aliyin, an amalgamation of several more or less related tribes of Arabs and Arabized Nubians living along the Nile between Khartoum and Atbara.

In addition to Ja'aliyin there were also small groups of Jawabra, a people said to have come lately from their traditional homeland in the north, near Dongola. According to my own informants, Jawabra first settled in the Hofriyat area early in the eighteenth century. Initially they saw themselves as Islamic missionaries whose primary occupation was the teaching of the Quran to illiterate sedentaries. Jawabra acknowledge relationship to the Ja'aliyin, however, through traditional genealogies showing both groups descended from the Prophet's uncle, Abbas. At present these two major tribal divisions are so completely intermarried that none of
Hofriyat's 79 households is distinctly one or the other.

At the turn of the nineteenth century the population on both sides of the Nile in the Shendi area was about 24,000, with a further 6,000 inhabiting the capital, Shendi town (Robinson 1925:108). By far the majority of rural inhabitants practiced animal husbandry and cultivation. Then, as today, people farmed on the floodplain after the annual inundation, in the wadis or desert watercourses after a significant rainy season, and along the riverbanks by means of sagiya (water-wheel) irrigation. They were semi-sedentary at best, and remained so until recently, establishing more or less permanent dwellings close to the river but leaving these for several months at a time to camp near their pasturelands and wadi-plantations several kilometers to the east.

Townspeople, on the other hand, chiefly engaged in commerce. Shendi was then an important stopping point for the many caravans that travelled between Egypt and Sennar, Kordofan, Darfur, and Bornu, and between all of these and Suakin on the Red Sea coast. Apart from dura (a type of millet), imported because the area could not adequately feed the caravans in addition to its permanent population, the most significant items of trade were camels and slaves. Burckhardt estimated that 5,000 slaves annually were auctioned at Shendi, the majority of whom came from the Nuba hills and the western Sudan. Most were exported to Egypt, some went to Saudi
Arabia, and the remainder were sold domestically (1922:290). Thus, a great many well-to-do families in Shendi town and in the district's larger villages owned slaves; most of these were put to work as agricultural laborers.

Although the Funj had encouraged Islamic educators to settle within their domains, and a religious school had been in successful operation near Shendi since the early seventeenth century (Hasan 1971:77), still it seems, most of the area's inhabitants wore their Islam rather lightly. Women were not veiled and unmarried girls were clothed in nothing but short thong skirts, ṭāḥat. Ḥaishan, the high walled enclosures surrounding houses within which women are now expected to spend most of their time, were virtually non-existent.7 Far from their being secluded, one of the principal occupations of women at that time was the brewing of marissa, or native beer, and the making of araki, another alcoholic beverage. Burckhardt and Cailliaud further report that drunkenness, thieving, and a state of general lawlessness prevailed. While there were a few religious practitioners (sing. feki) then living in the region, no mosques had been built as yet. Such as it was, the mek, far more than the Shari'a (orthodox Islamic law) was the primary source of law and order.
According to Burckhardt (1922:248 and 310) and local informants (Robinson 1925), Shendi in the early 1800's was almost continuously at war with nomadic pastoralists who inhabited the surrounding deserts. The latter periodically struck at the region's jugular, pillaging caravans and carrying off camels bound for some distant market. In addition, the nomads and the rural Ja'aliyin and Jawabra ongoingly engaged in mutual raiding for livestock. Consequently, riverain settlements often were destroyed by marauders or abandoned in the face of attack. Afterward villagers rebuilt, or relocated with kin elsewhere along the Nile, thereby establishing a pattern which came to be repeated many times in the century that followed.

Travelling south by caravan in April of 1814, Burckhardt passed close to the ruins of ancient Meroe in the immediate vicinity of contemporary Hofriyat. However, in his memoirs he does not mention the existence of settlements nearby, and conceivably the area was then deserted. Three hours' journey beyond Meroe, a distance which places him somewhere south of Kabushiya, his caravan arrived at a small village called Dawa. Here, he writes,

are a great number of dispersed huts and hamlets. The Arabs Djaalein [Ja'aliyin] here pasture their numerous herds of cows, camels, and sheep. They have also a few water-wheels, and grow considerable quantities of onions, with which they supply the Shendy market. Their huts are made of mats... (1922:245).
In this, two points are worthy of note: first, animal husbandry appears then to have been more important than it is now; moreover, the dwellings here mentioned are far less substantial than those in which Nile villagers live today, an indication of the semi-sedentary lifestyle prevalent at that time. Secondly, it is interesting that onions are still the principal cash crop grown along that stretch of the Nile which includes Hofriyat.

One month later, Burckhardt retraced his steps, heading north en route to Suakin. This time he passed through the village of Kabushiya, noting that it was governed by a relative of Nimr, the current mek of Shendi and a member of the Sa'adab Ja'aliyin (1922:325). Thus we have further confirmation that close ties existed between Shendi and the area of Hofriyat during this period, a circumstance which bore grave consequences for villagers shortly thereafter.

Riding south in April 1821 just slightly in advance of an invading force sent by the Ottoman ruler in Egypt, Mohammed Ali, to conquer Sudan, the French explorer Cailliaud entered the region of Hofriyat. He came in search of Meroe and its pyramids, and so spent many days in the area living in a village immediately north of the ruined city. He found several other small habitations here; however, none of these settlements carried names (insofar as they were reported by Cailliaud) that could easily link them to contemporary
villages. Moreover, the place was sparsely populated.

Houses, he noted, were either made of straw and branches and covered on the outside with a thick layer of dried mud for strength, or constructed almost entirely of earth (mud-brick) with roofs of wood and straw (1826:132-33). Some were circular, having conical roofs (tuqil), others were square, having high walls and flat roofs (144). Such variation might in part be due to function, for I was told by villagers that round huts were formerly used as kitchens. Buildings of this type were still in existence in Hofriyat well into the twentieth century as reported by the archaeologist Garstang (Liverpool University) who excavated at Meroe between 1909 and 1914 (Shinnie 1976: personal communication). On the other hand, the diversity of house types observed by Cailliaud might be taken to indicate that the inhabitants were becoming increasingly sedentary, since some structures were obviously built to last. Today, all local houses and kitchens are squared and substantially constructed of mud-brick topped with flat roofs of reed and wood.

In 1821, Shendi surrendered after minimal resistance to Ismail Pasha, son of Mohammed Ali and commander of the Turkish occupation force on the east bank. While reasons for Mohammed Ali's conquest of Sudan were many, high on the list were his desires to secure a lucrative source of slaves and to obtain the gold that he believed ubiquitous there. Immediately after
taking control, therefore, Ismail imposed heavy taxes on the local population which had not been closely governed for some time. Moreover, the Turkish army had to be fed. As a result, villages were raided for gold, grain and cattle; underground grain reservoirs were emptied even of that portion of the harvest kept for seed. Most villagers lost their livestock and their jewelry, and many lost their lives, for according to Turkish custom the army paymaster would purchase the ears of natives killed for fifty piasters a pair (Robinson 1925:111). In 1822 the crops failed and people could not pay the tribute demanded. When they revolted, several of their leaders were taken to Shendi and decapitated.

Towards the end of that year, Ismail Pasha returned to Shendi from Sennar, whence he had led his expedition south. Since the tribute he had raised thus far fell short of what he was expected to furnish, upon his arrival in Shendi town he imposed a further levy on the Ja'aliyin (and Jawabra) payable immediately in livestock, money and grain. The conditions of this tax were exorbitant beyond belief, and Mek Nimr was unable to raise it. That evening, with the help of Shendi townspeople, Ismail and his entourage were assassinated.

In no time at all the Turks descended on Shendi district with the full force of revenge. Villages were devastated, the inhabitants of Shendi town were massacred. Those who had foreseen this repercussion and those who managed to survive
the onslaught fled with what little they owned to the Ethiopian frontier, their homes and fields abandoned. The area remained a virtual wasteland until 1829, when the Turkish Governor General, Kurshid Pasha, pardoned all concerned in the rebellion except Mek Nimr and his family. The peasantry were ordered to return to their villages, and many complied.

This did not quell the unrest, however. Taxes remained oppressive, the Nile valley was still underpopulated, and much prime agricultural land had fallen to disuse. In 1838, the new Governor General, Ahmed Pasha, ordered that anyone who owned riverain land must clear and cultivate it, and instal irrigation equipment, or surrender his property to the first claimant able to do so (Hill 1957:130). Much resettlement and some shuffling of cultivation land ensued.

Conditions such as these prevailed throughout the period of Turko-Egyptian occupation. Locals were drained by the heavy taxation designed in part of ensure forfeiture of their domestic slaves, who would then be made part of the Egyptian army. Moreover, famine was frequent since villagers were able to store little grain against the event of crop failure or drought. This was a time of frequent population dispersion and subsequent resettlement, punctuated by all too brief periods of prosperity. It is little wonder that when rebellion occurred in 1881 under the leadership of Mohammed Ahmed, the declared Mahdi (deliverer), people of the Hofriyat
area joined enthusiastically. Many elderly villagers lost relatives fighting on behalf of the Mahdi in the Battle of Metemma in 1885.

All this changed, however, with the Mahdi's death later that year. Most of the awlad el-balad, as riverain villagers are called, were bitterly opposed to his proclaimed successor, the Khalifa Abdallahi. For this man was not from the Mahdi's family, nor from the Mahdi's homeland, the Nile valley, but was a Ta'ishi, one of several Baggara tribes located in Kordofan. Upon taking control of the newly independent Sudanese government, the Khalifa replaced awlad el-balad with his own tribesmen and supporters in all important offices in the capital and in the provinces, thereby forestalling probable conspiracy but increasing resentment for his administration on the part of Nile villagers. Further, like the Turko-Egyptian regime before it, the Khalifa's rule was extremely harsh. Taxes were considered to be, if anything, more oppressive; punishment for non-payment was often death (Rehfisch 1967:46).

In 1889, shortly after another thwarted revolt of the northern sedentary tribes, the Khalifa sent a force of some 5,000 of his men accompanied by almost twice as many camp followers (families of the warriors) on an expedition against Egypt that, whether wittingly or not, was doomed to fail. The army proceeded down the west bank of the Nile, intending to
levy reinforcements as it went from among the disaffected Ja'aliyin, and, even though this was a year of terrible famine, planning to live off the land on both sides of the river during the march north. Since the Khalifa's soldiers were not paid on a regular basis, plunder was merciless in the villages through which they passed. Riverain inhabitants who had not yet evacuated now fled in terror as news of the approaching army was received.

Several elderly Hofriyati told me stories of how they or their relatives had survived this troubled time. One woman's parents, upon hearing the uproar caused by large numbers of people moving over the land, hurriedly left the village, desperate to avoid the bloodthirsty "Baggara". They had no food and did not eat for days at a time. Someplace they managed to steal a little grain, but as soon as they had lit the fire to cook it, they saw the Khalifa's men in the distance and were forced to move on. Wherever they went it was the same, living in the open, eating whatever they could find, making do with such clothing as they had worn from the start. Her father used the skin of a dead donkey to fashion crude sandals for himself and for others in the party; the soles of their feet were cut and bleeding. What remained of the leather was boiled for soup.

When the opportunity arose to join the British in their march to defeat the Khalifa in 1897-98, not surprisingly those
villagers who were able did so, hoping to take revenge for the many cruelties they had suffered at the hands of the "Baggara".

In December of 1898, a few months after the Anglo-Egyptian reconquest, an English traveller by the name Budge made his way to Bejrawiya, a village close to Hofriyat. Everywhere he found desolation. Land bordering the river was densely overgrown with weeds and thornbushes, it had not been cultivated for several years. Gaps in the river bank showed where water-wheels once stood; these had long since been ripped out and the wood used for fuel (1907, vol.1:261). Here and there a few villagers had come back and were beginning the arduous task of clearing the ground prior to planting. Budge met one of these souls, who introduced himself as the sheikh of Bejrawiya:

In the late afternoon we went along the river bank and visited one or two of the villages. The sh@kh showed me the mud huts wherein many of his friends had lived formerly, and in some of them I saw on the ground the stones on which the women used to grind the dhurra and roll the oblong dough into thin flat cakes. Remains of both dough and dhurra were on several, and the sh@kh told me that they had been left thus by the women who had to flee for their lives before the Dervishes, led by Mahmud, who about a year previously had swept the Island of Meroe from one end to the other, and slain all who would not join him. Not a living thing was to be seen, and the desolation of the place was complete (1907, vol.I:278).

Gradually, survivors returned to the river as so often they had done in the past, settling in their old villages or wherever they could find some land to cultivate. But the
riverain population had been decimated during the Mahdiya. Shendi town which as previously noted had a population of 6,000 in 1800, was inhabited by no more than 500 persons just a century later (Budge 1907, vol. II:402).

THE PRESENT: LAND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Villagers who managed to live through the period described above had lost most of what they possessed at its conclusion. Herds were severely reduced. Land ownership was in a muddle, and there had been so much confusion in the comings and goings of the past hundred years or so that it was extremely difficult to sort it out. In 1906\(^1\) and again in 1927,\(^1\) the Anglo-Egyptian government undertook to register land in the Hofriyat area. Claims of ownership had to be proved through possession of unambiguous title (Mustafa 1971:67), or, according to local land authorities (aradi, singular), continuous occupation and use for a period of ten years. I was told that because this last condition was so formidable, many people who were no longer living or farming locally became registered owners of Hofriyat cultivation land, whereas several newcomers to Hofriyat wound up in possession of arable land elsewhere.

Over the years there has been little alteration of land records, except when the Nile changed its course through the
floodplain around 1966, and in cases of outright sale, of which there have been few. Rather than register inheritances, many local people prefer to keep land in the name of the deceased, a practice which disguises the actual degree to which it has become fractionated. Many individuals today own tiny pieces of land in several distant locations. If they wish to farm, these people, along with those who have plots far from the village area, must rent out the land they own and, with monies thus obtained, turn around and lease cultivation ground for their personal use closer to home.

While the system of land registration is relatively inelastic, there do exist local practices which operate to soften this effect. (One of these is discussed in Chapter 9, with regard to the case history of a man plagued by spirit possession.) And, whether or not one owns any land at all, there are several ways to gain access to space for cultivation. Such ways are costly, however, frequently leaving the farmer with a mere 30% to 40% of his crop after paying the various expenses for land, water, taxes, and seed. Much of what remains after deductions is already owed to local merchants.

Moreover, the population of Sudan has swelled in the years since pacification. Now it is doubtful indeed if the narrow strip of arable land next to the Nile, extending no more than 500 to 600 meters inland at its widest, could
support the population of Hofriyat and area if no labor emigration had occurred. But with the growth of government and industry in the cities and larger towns, many men have abandoned farming to work outside the village. Table I provides a list of the occupations subsequently taken up by those who have left Hofriyat.

Some emigrants have removed their families as well, though as will be shown later in this discussion, such relocation is rarely permanent. Regardless of where emigrant families reside, they tend to maintain strong ties with Hofriyat, returning occasionally to attend funerals and the various religious festivals, weddings and other ceremonies that occur throughout the year. In Table II I present a conservative summary of known adult non-residents who actively keep up their kin obligations in the village area.\textsuperscript{14}

Other men who work outside of Hofriyat, however, have preferred to leave their families behind in the village. These individuals periodically send support payments home to wives and kin, and return to visit whenever possible, usually not less than twice a year.

At present, less than half of Hofriyat's 79 households are principally supported by farming. Moreover, only about a third of all adult males who were born in Hofriyat or who were born elsewhere and married Hofriyat women, now engage in
TABLE I

OCCUPATIONS OF NON-RESIDENT ADULT MALES:
SONS OF HOFRIYAT
AND NON-HOFRIYATI HUSBANDS OF VILLAGE WOMEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government &amp; Public Service</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Industry, Skilled Trades and Clerical</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation Unknown</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE II
ADULT KIN OF VILLAGERS
LIVING OUTSIDE OF HOFRiyAT,
KNOWN RELATIONSHIPS ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KIN</th>
<th>PLACE OF RESIDENCE</th>
<th>Town or Urban Area</th>
<th>Nearby Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sons of Village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-HoFRiyat Husbands of Village</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughters of Village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-HoFRiyat Wives of Village Men</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10 t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* with husband's family

 t in or near natal home
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGRICULTURE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers (own or rent)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm laborers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGRICULTURE PLUS OTHER</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government service</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious practitioner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RETIRED</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STUDENTS</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNEMPLOYED</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
agriculture on a full or part-time basis. While the majority of men who actually reside in Hofriyat are farmers (see Table III above), less than half of these (42.9%) exclusively work ground that they or their families own. The remainder must rent at least some land in order to make a living.

More Hofriyat men today live outside the village than live within it, as Table IV illustrates. Adult women, on the other hand, are far less mobile: whereas the average rate of non-residency for males between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine is 63%, the comparable rate for females is only 25.1%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th>RESIDENT OF VILLAGE</th>
<th>NON-RESIDENT</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ever</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married Unmarried</td>
<td>Ever Married Unmarried</td>
<td>Non-Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>0 4 0 7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>7 12 8 19</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>12 2 27 4</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>10 0 15 0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>11 0 4 0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>10 0 3 0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>10 0 0 0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>60 18 57 30</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though permanent emigration from Hofriyat certainly occurs in some cases, a more typical residence cycle progresses as follows. A young unmarried male whose family does not own land in significant quantity, or command some other resource (such as a diesel pump for irrigation) that affords full time lucrative employment, goes to the city in search of work as soon as possible after his schooling has ended. In most instances, this takes place when the boy is between seventeen and twenty years of age. He then works in Khartoum or some other town for a period of several years, living with other village men in shared accommodation, sending money home on a regular basis to help support his parents and siblings, and all the while saving as much as possible against his eventual wedding.

When, usually in his mid to late twenties, the young man feels that he has enough money set aside, he returns to the village to find a wife. His mother generally provides him with a list of potential candidates, rating each one on her various attributes and the closeness (degree of kinship) of the match. The young man might already have a preference, perhaps a girl he admired as she danced at a wedding party. He discreetly "shops around", makes his choice, and then consults the menfolk responsible for his intended bride. They, in turn, may seek the girl's consent, though this is by no means necessary. If both sides find the alliance
suitable, a date is set for the signing of the marriage contract and transfer of mahr (payment in money from the groom to the bride's father on behalf of the bride, often referred to as dowry) and shaila (gifts of clothing, jewelry and food given to the bride and her mother by the groom). As often as not, the man then returns to the city to work for several months more in order to accumulate whatever he still might need to finance his wedding.

The wedding itself is celebrated in the village. Afterward the groom usually stays with the bride in her parents' home for a few weeks before resuming work in the city. When at last he must leave, however, his new wife remains behind. Periodically he sends money for her support, but he himself returns to the village only for emergencies and holidays. This situation may persist until well after the births of his first and second children. Occasionally it happens that the bride is taken to live with her husband's kin, but more often she remains with her natal family.

If and when the man rises in his job to a point where he can afford to support a small family in the city, generally he will send for his wife and children. They remain with him until his wife again becomes pregnant, at which time she returns to the village where she and her young children live until a few months after the baby is born. Then she rejoins her husband in the city.
Ordinarily this process is repeated with every birth. School aged children either remain in the city under the care of relatives during their mother's absence, or they accompany her to the village, and enroll in the local public school. Several such children continue to live with their grandparents in Hofriyat after their mothers have returned to the city.

At some point, usually when it becomes a financial burden to house and feed a burgeoning family in Khartoum or Omdurman, the husband brings his family to live in the village where it is much cheaper for them to be maintained. He or his wife may have rights to a vacant house there, or perhaps he has access to some residential land on which to build. Once ensconced in Hofriyat, his wife is left to care for the children while he again returns to the city to work.

As he approaches late middle-age, a man contemplates taking up a less taxing occupation in the village, where he can be close to his family and friends. Men over fifty begin trickling back to Hofriyat, content now to rent a little farm land and be supported by their sons. Virtually all who survive to old age eventually return.

Table IV summarizes the above process with respect to men only; Table V compares place of residence for men and women of the same chronological ages.
TABLE V
ADULT VILLAGERS LIVING OUTSIDE HOFRIYAT:
PER CENT COMPARISON BY SEX AND AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th>NON-RESIDENT VILLAGERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women spend the greater part of their lives in their natal villages, or sometimes in their husbands' villages should they happen to marry non-Hofriyati. Thus, the ratio of adult women to adult men in the village of Hofriyat is high, 2.2:1. Table VI provides a breakdown of the permanent population of Hofriyat, indicating marital status for adult residents.

Many women in fact prefer a hard life in the village to a comparatively luxurious life in the city, where conveniences such as electricity and running water are widely available. For in the village they are less directly answerable to husbands and brothers; they are somewhat freer to do as they wish within the limits of appropriate behavior. The reader should be assured, nonetheless, that husbands are kept well informed about their wives' activities in letters from resident kin.

Marriages which follow the pattern just described are normally quite fragile. There are numerous prolonged separations during which ample opportunities arise for a man to take a second wife, which situation, for financial reason if for no other, frequently leads to divorce for the first. Women in the village, then, pay a price for their relative liberty. Husbands at large are an unceasing source of worry, a theme which we meet again in Part II of this thesis.
### TABLE VI

POPULATION OF HOFRIYAT,* MARCH, 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADULT MALES</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADULT FEMALES</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated, no support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from husband</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILDREN</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ratio of children to adults: 1:1.2

Within adult population, ratio of men to women: 1:2.2
Average number of people per household: 5.73
Average number of adult females per household: 2.16
Average number of adult males per household: .99
Average number of children per household: 2.58
While divorce will be discussed more fully in later chapters, here it is important to note that it is fairly common. When she is widowed, divorced, or upstaged by a younger co-wife, a woman usually returns home if she was previously living with her husband elsewhere. Then she and her young children live in the village with her own natal family; if her parents themselves are divorced or separated, most commonly she will live with her mother.

Table VII presents a breakdown of households by composition for the village of Hofriyat, updated to the month in which I left the field. The categories in Table VII oversimplify matters, for as will be seen, there exists a seemingly endless variety of living arrangements, all of which make sense, however, in terms of the residence cycles outlined above. Without doubt, many of these complex households are the products of financial expediency. Yet in conversations with informants I detected an underlying preference for women who are near relatives to live, if not together in the same household, then at least fairly close to one another. The relative boundedness of women within the village and even within certain households (Table VII), is, I feel, one expression of a prevalent cultural idiom, the tendency towards "interiority", which we begin to explore in the following chapter.
### TABLE VII

**COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS IN HOFRIYAT, MARCH, 1977**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSITION</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUCLEAR FAMILIES*</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON-RESIDENT HUSBAND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essentially nuclear families*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended families</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEADED BY DIVORCED/WIDOWED WOMEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essentially nuclear families*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended families@</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman living alone</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEADED BY DIVORCED/WIDOWED MEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essentially nuclear families*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended families</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACHELOR HOUSEHOLDS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTENDED FAMILIES</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARRIED COUPLES ALONE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOINT FRATERNAL/SORORAL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* may include unmarried adult children

@ fourteen variations, up to four generations in depth
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. The name of the village and the names of informants mentioned in the text are pseudonyms.

2. Undoubtedly local men also take part in the synthesizing process described below; however, due to my limited contact with that half of the Hofriyat population, I am unable to state this unequivocally, or to hazard the extent to which it is characteristic of their linguistic performance.

3. Some of the climatological information presented here is drawn from a pamphlet published by the Ministry of Information and Culture, Government of Sudan entitled "Facts About The Sudan" (no date).

4. The account that follows is based upon the writings of several historians and archaeologists. Rather than list sources for every statement, I have omitted references wherever the authorities seem to concur. Controversial points and facts not replicated in other works, however, are acknowledged. The reader is asked to consult the bibliography at the end of the thesis for further information on this topic.

5. The Emperor Justinian and his wife, the Empress Theodora, sent rival missions to Nubia. The former sent priests belonging to the Melkite (Catholic) sect whereas the latter sent monophysites. Although monophysite Christianity eventually triumphed, there is some dispute about its initial success. See Kirwan, 1937 for details about this controversy.

6. According to Trimingham (1965:87, note 4), this "is a title and not the equivalent of Arabic, malik (meaning "king").

7. According to my informants in Hofriyat, haishan are a relatively recent innovation there. Houses and other domestic buildings typically were not enclosed by high walls until about 25 or 30 years ago. Women, moreover, were not as restricted then as they are today, and many unmarried girls still wore nothing but the rahat, a short skirt made of narrow leather strips. The trend towards building walls and restricting women's activities came about, they say, because men started to read the Quran.
8. Villagers told me that a semi-sedentary (or transhumant) way of life was followed until well into the twentieth century, in fact, until 30 or 40 years ago. Now when wadi-plantations require tending, whole families do not move; rather, men go alone to their camps, leaving wives and children in the village. This change is roughly coincidental with that described in note 7 above and may stem from the same source.

9. The Island of Meroe is that area enclosed by the main Nile, the Atbara and the Blue Nile rivers.

10. Under S.A. Tippets, Settlement Officer, Berber Province.

11. Under a settlement officer by the name of "Abu Mera" (O'Mara).

12. One of my informants, the most widely consulted aradi in the district, says that once every hundred years or so the Nile undergoes a major change in the course it threads through the floodplain at low flood. Re-registration is necessary because the land that "belongs" to one side of the river now appears on the other side. However, this does not result in a boon for those owning land on the side where more soil appears. An imaginary line is drawn down the center of the floodplain: if the river covers up land an individual owned before the change, then the extra land that surfaces on the opposite bank belongs to him. While this system is fair to landholders concerned, it does increase the problem of fractionation. Furthermore, land over the river is quite inaccessible to the majority of people who own no boats and would not dare to swim the Nile for fear of crocodiles. But probably the worst effect of such a change in the river is that which occurred to Hofriyat just before 1966: the Nile, which had been close to the east bank moved over towards the west, making it too far for water-wheels to draw water for irrigation on the eastern shore. Many men were forced to abandon farming at this point, and only those with diesel pumps could successfully continue to engage in irrigation cultivation.

13. See Barclay 1964:33 for a discussion of similar practices in Burri, near Khartoum.

14. This summary is conservative because it is drawn primarily from census information and secondarily from recorded genealogies. Consequently, unless non-resident
individuals had parents, children, or other close relatives living in Hofriyat at the time of my fieldwork, they may have been overlooked.

15. Until the Turko-Egyptian conquest in 1821, Sudan followed the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence in matters of family law. The Turks brought in Hanafi law, and that system is currently in established use. However, numerous changes have been made in Sudanese Shari'a, the majority of which substitute Maliki rules for Hanafi in an effort to bring the latter into better accord with the law as it is traditionally followed in the rural areas. In Hanafi law a girl must consent to her forthcoming marriage; ostensibly she cannot be married against her will. But in Maliki law which Sudan follows on this matter (Articles 7 and 23, Circular #28, 1916), she may be compelled to marry according to her guardian's wishes if her morals are in jeopardy. This stipulation is sufficiently vague that fathers generally marry their daughters without so much as talking to them about it until engagement is a fait accompli. See Anderson (1950) for a discussion of developments in Sudanese Shari'a law, and Mustafa (1971) for further information about law in the Sudan.

16. Or, he might seize the opportunity to take a second, "city" wife. (As Muslims, village men are permitted four wives simultaneously if all four can be equally well provided for).

17. As mentioned earlier in this chapter.

18. In certain circumstances, however, a woman's mother will travel to the city to be with her daughter at childbirth.
WOMB AS OASIS: IDIOMS OF ENCLOSURE
AND THE PRACTICE OF PHARAONIC CIRCUMCISION

IN THE FIELD, JUNE 12, 1976

It is the height of the desert summer, a season of intense heat and daily sandstorms. It is also the season of purification, *ayam at-ţahur*. Schools are closed, boys and girls home for vacation; gradually their fathers are returning to the village, on holiday from the working year spent in Khartoum, Kassala, or Port Sudan. Now is the time, I am told, when circumcisions will be performed: boys and girls have time to recover from their respective operations without losing time at their studies, and fathers have time to host the necessary festivities and religious ceremonies and to bask in the achievement of becoming the fathers of men.

For male children, the pomp and ceremony of circumcision is rivalled only by that of their weddings. It is a major social step towards full adulthood.

For little girls, the unpleasant prospect of circumcision is not balanced by the achievement of womanly social status: a girl remains a girl until she is married. Her circumcision is celebrated by the briefest and most subdued of ceremonial feasts: morning tea. There are no religious festivities
associated with the event as there are for boys. The operation, however, renders her marriageable; undergoing it is a necessary condition of becoming a woman, of being enabled to use her one great gift, fertility.

It is the twelfth of June, a day which promises to be as hot and as demanding as any yet experienced. I am to witness the circumcisions of two little girls. Zaineb calls for me at sun-up. It seems we are late. We run to a hōsh in the interior of the village. When we arrive, Miriam, the local midwife, has already circumcised one sister and is getting ready to operate on the second. A crowd of women, many of them grandmothers (ḥabūbat), has gathered outside the room, not a man in sight. A dozen hands push me forward. "You've got to see this up close," says Zaineb, "It's important." I dare not confess my reluctance. The girl is lying on an angarīb, her body supported by several adult kinswomen. Two of these hold her legs apart. Then she is administered a local anesthetic by injection. In the silence of the next few moments Miriam takes a pair of what look to me like child's paper scissors and quickly cuts away the girl's clitoris and labia minora. She tells me this is the lahma jewa, the inside flesh. I am surprised that there is so little blood. Then she takes a surgical needle from her midwife's kit, threads it with suture, and sews together the labia majora leaving a small opening at the vulva. After a liberal application of
antiseptic, it is all over.

The young girl seems to be experiencing more shock than pain, and I wonder if the anesthetic has finally taken effect. The women briefly trill their joyous ululation (zagharūda) and we adjourn to the courtyard for tea. While we wait the sisters receive the ritual ornaments (jirtig) which will protect them from harm as they recuperate.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The operation described above is a modified version of "Pharaonic circumcision", a term widely employed both in the literature and by Sudanese themselves (ṯahūr far'owniyya). As villagers explain it, the custom is quite ancient, dating from the time of the Pharaonic Egyptians, though this point is questioned by historians, archaeologists, and medical experts alike (Huelsman 1976:123, Barclay 1964:238). Another phrase used in reference to this procedure, "infibulation", is, perhaps, technically more accurate in that the vaginal orifice is partially occluded by skin that is clasped or fastened together. Throughout this chapter and the remainder of the dissertation, I use the terms Pharaonic circumcision, female circumcision and infibulation synonymously.
THE OPERATION PRIOR TO 1969

Seeing an infibulation, even in this modernized, "sterile" form, was an experience I had been dreading. Yet, my virtual lack of emotional reaction then, and a few days later when I was able to photograph another of these events, horrified me more than the circumcisions themselves. It was all so matter-of-fact. However, the relative indifference with which my village friends treated the phenomenon only temporarily diffused its effect. For one night after the last of the operations had taken place, when I was as alone as one can be in the field, I suddenly felt the impact of what had taken place. I became determined to find out why this severe form of circumcision is practiced; why, in the face of orthodox Islamic disapproval, and the contravening legislation of at least two modern Sudanese regimes,² it persists.

Granted, there have been recent improvements in the midwife's technique. The operation today is less radical, somewhat more sterile, and, owing to the use of benij, or anesthetic, less painful than it was for local women circumcised prior to 1969. I remember sitting transfixed in alarm as my informants recounted their own experiences.

Before Miriam received government training in midwifery, female circumcisions used to be performed by diyat el-ḥabil, "midwives of the rope".³ A circular palm mat with its center
removed was so placed that it fit over a freshly dug hole in the ground. The girl was made to sit on the mat at the edge of the hole. Her adult female relatives held her arms and legs while the midwife, using no anesthetic and having no apparent concern for sterile procedure, scraped away all of the external genitalia including the labia majora using a straight razor. Then she pulled together the skin that remained on either side of the wound, and fastened it with two thorns inserted at right angles. These last were held in place by thread or bits of cloth wound around their ends. (Fresh acacia thorns produce numbness when they pierce the skin, and may have helped to relieve the pain.) A straw or a reed was also inserted, posteriorly, so that when the wound healed there would be a small opening in the scar tissue to allow for elimination of urine and menstrual blood. The girl's legs were then bound together and she was made to lie on an angaríb for a month or more to promote healing. According to my informants, whatever the length of her recovery, it had to be less than forty days, to distinguish it from the time spent in confinement after childbirth. When the wound was thought to have healed sufficiently the thorns would be removed and the girl unbound.
EXPLANATION

Most historical and functional explanations of this practice, based solely upon the testimony of male informants, have been somewhat chauvinistic and more than somewhat speculative. In truth, I cannot claim to be less of either in this essay: most of my informants are women. Furthermore, it is not my purpose to account for the custom's origins as several other authors have attempted to do. I wish merely to provide an interpretation of the context of Pharaonic circumcision as it is practiced in one village in Sudan.

With little exception, arguments offered thus far have been intellectually unsatisfying taken in and of themselves: various authors have suggested that Pharaonic circumcision was designed to ensure chastity, and to protect young women from rape (Barclay 1964, Tringham 1965). Others (cited in Ahmed al-Safi 1970:64) consider it to be a primitive form of birth control. And, it has been argued that infibulation is thought to make women more attractive sexually, that the vaginal orifice is made smaller in order to increase the male's sexual pleasure (Tringham 1965, Barclay 1964). According to Barclay (1964), it is a common belief among male Arab Sudanese that local women are "oversexed", a condition which circumcision is intended to control. Lastly, and least convincingly, there are those who maintain that infibulation
originated among desert nomads as a hygienic practice designed to prevent vaginal infection where sanitary conditions, owing to a scarcity of water, were less than ideal (Cederblad 1968).5

Even if it could be proven that the custom had originated in the attempt to control vaginal disorders, the sanitation argument does not explain why the custom should persist under improved conditions. It does not explain why riverain sedentaries perform Pharaonic circumcisions where there is an abundance of water at their disposal, and it is customary, if not mandatory, to bathe at least once a day. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that the practice does not do the opposite of its proposed intent, for urinary tract infection and problems with both micturition and menstruation are common complaints among village women.

With regard to the notion that infibulation increases the male's enjoyment in intercourse, there are several points to be considered. First of all, the tremendous success of regional brothels, staffed by purportedly uncircumcised Ethiopian women and Southern Sudanese must at least weaken this view, especially since these establishments are patronized by married men having direct or occasional access to women, and by unmarried men alike. The growing male acceptance of recent innovations in the circumcision technique also undermines the pleasure argument. In the
village where I lived there is a relatively large group of women circumcised prior to 1969 who have never been married. Most of these women are over the age of 20, an age considered late for marriage. Yet, many younger sisters and cousins of these women, circumcised after that date in the less radical manner, are presently married. Since it is customary for elder daughters and female parallel cousins to be married before their younger sisters and parallel cousins, men are now marrying, and what is more, saying that they prefer to marry women who have been less severely mutilated. My female informants suggested the reasons for this preference to be an expected improvement in sexual relations over the experiences of their longer married kinsmen, and religion (din). In fact, many men who consider themselves religious advocate adopting the Sunna (orthodox) form of female circumcision wherein only the prepuce of the clitoris is excised. Moreover, I was informed by friends in Khartoum that many Western educated Sudanese are now having their daughters "pseudo-circumcised". In the latter operation, a girl is first given a Sunna circumcision and then loosely infibulated. Apparently, the infibulation is reversible, and is performed only so that the girl might save face before her traditionally circumcised cohorts at boarding school.

By far the majority of those who insist that Pharaonic circumcisions continue to be performed are adult women, and
notable among these, the habōbat (grandmothers). Any account of the practice falls short of the mark if it fails to consider why this should be so. One of the arguments mentioned earlier does suggest that circumcision is relatively advantageous to women as a form of birth control. While indeed this may be a latent function of the practice, as Hayes (1975) suggests, there is no evidence from my own fieldwork to support the view that limiting the number of one's children is its actual purpose. Most women in the village who had been stably married for ten or fifteen years became pregnant at least six or seven times during that period. Of these, women who tend to miscarry or to produce still-born infants have been pregnant most often. (See Chapter 7, Section II for further discussion of this issue.)

In contrast, I was frequently consulted on the subject of birth control. Women nurse their babies for as long as two years; yet, there is a relatively short post partum taboo on sexual activity (2-3 months). It is believed that if a woman becomes pregnant too soon after the birth of her last child, the child she is nursing will sicken and die. These circumstances, coupled with the relative fecundity of village women probably account for the fact that several of them approached me for information about birth control pills and injections, saying that they wished to space their children further apart.
VIRGINITY, FERTILITY AND SEXUAL COMPLEMENTARITY

What infibulation does, though this is not necessarily its original purpose, nor, perhaps, what it is intended to do today, is ensure that a girl is a virgin when she marries for the first time. It does control her sexuality, and makes it less likely that she will engage in extramarital affairs. For a young girl both dreads and eagerly awaits her wedding day. She welcomes the elevation in status while fearing what it implies: having to engage in sexual relations with her husband. My informants told me that it may take as long as two years of continuous effort before penetration can occur. But for a man it is a point of honour to have a child born within a year of his marriage. Often, then, the midwife is summoned in secret, under cover or darkness, to assist the young couple by surgically enlarging the bride's genital orifice, a service for which she charges an exorbitant fee.  

Because they find it so painful, most of the women I talked to said that they avoid sex as often as possible, encouraging their husbands to sleep with them only when they wish to become pregnant. Sexual relations do not necessarily become easier for the couple over time. When a woman gives birth, the midwife must be present not only to cut through the scar tissue and release the child but also to re-infibulate
her once the baby is born.

After each birth, therefore, a woman's body is restored, at least superficially, to its condition prior to marriage. And, during her forty-day confinement period, she is represented to her husband as a bride and given gifts of clothing and jewelry like those of the original shaila (Chapter 1, later discussed in Chapter 10) though smaller in scale. Moreover, a divorced or widowed woman might undergo re-infibulation in anticipation of remarriage, thus renewing, in a sense, her "virginal" status. According to Hayes (1975:622), the notion of virginity assumes special significance in Northern Sudan. As she so succinctly remarks with reference to Pharaonic circumcision, "in Sudan, virgins are made, not born". Continuing,

The concept of virginity in Sudan is an anomaly to the Western world. Virginity, from our point of view, is a physical condition which is absolutely (and irrevocably) changed by a certain specific behavior. Virginity in Sudan can be thought of as a social category, in the sense that the physiological manifestation can be socially controlled. (1975:622)

While I am in basic agreement with this statement, I would submit that, for women, the social category "virgin" has somewhat less to do with sexual abstinence than it has to do with fertility. For, although infibulation acts to control female sexuality, this is not its avowed purpose.¹¹ My friends stated that it is performed on young girls in order to make them clean (najif), smooth (na'im) and pure (tahir). (In
fact this last intended result furnishes the colloquial term for circumcision in general: *tahūr*, signifying cleansing or purifying.) Women say a girl who has not been purified through circumcision may not marry, thus may not bear children and attain a position of respect in her old age. Circumcision prepares her body for womanhood, whereas marriage provides her with the opportunity to advance her position through giving birth, especially to sons.

Explanations for infibulation found in the literature apparently confuse the sexuality of women with their ability to bear children where these aspects of womanhood ought to be distinguished (the promiscuity argument). Conversely, perhaps they tend overly to dissociate the sexuality of males from the their ability to impregnate women (the pleasure argument). For male fertility is closely associated with concepts of virility, as the following incident will demonstrate. Once I overheard a man talking about his beautiful *bit 'amm* (father's brother's daughter) whom he wished he had married. Although this woman and her present husband had been married for over a year, she had not yet conceived. Said the man, "By God, if I had married her, she would have had twins by now!"

As I will attempt to demonstrate in subsequent pages, infibulation neither increases nor for that matter limits male sexual pleasure (this is irrelevant here) so much as it ensures or socializes female fertility. By removing their
external genitalia, women are not so much preventing their own sexual pleasure (though obviously this is an effect) as enhancing their femininity. Circumcision as a symbolic act brings sharply into focus the fertility potential of women by dramatically de-emphasizing their inherent sexuality. In insisting upon circumcision for their daughters, women assert their social indispensability, an importance which is not as the sexual partners of their husbands,\textsuperscript{12} nor, in this highly segregated male authoritative society as their servants, sexual or otherwise, but as the mothers of men. The ultimate social goal of a woman is to become, with her husband, the co-founder of a lineage section. As a respected habōba, she is "listened to", she may be sent on the haj (pilgrimage) by her husband or her sons, and her name is remembered in village genealogies for several generations. In this society women do not achieve social recognition by becoming like men, but by becoming less like men physically, sexually and socially. Male, as well as female circumcision stresses this complementarity. Through their own operation, performed at the same age as when girls are circumcised (between five and ten years), boys become less like women: while the female reproductive organs are covered, the male reproductive organ is uncovered, or, as one Sudanese author states, "unveiled" (Safi 1970:65). The importance of the habōbat is emphasized in this ceremony as well: I was told that in the past it was
customary for one of the newly circumcised boy's grandmothers to wear his foreskin as a ring on the day of the operation.

After circumcision, young boys are no longer permitted to sleep with their mothers and sisters, but must accompany their older brothers in the men's quarters. Similarly, a young girl is increasingly restricted to association with womenfolk and is expected to assume more domestic responsibility once she has been circumcised.

Indeed, the most notable feature of village life is this polarization of the sexes, most marked between men and women of child bearing age. To the outsider, it almost appears as though there are two virtually separate, co-existing societies, which only occasionally overlap. Men and women generally do not eat together, they occupy separate quarters in the family compound, and they associate with those of their own sex in segregated areas at ceremonies and religious events. Further, while men have ultimate authority over women this is often far less actual than supposed. In everyday affairs women are more strictly governed by the habūbat than by their male kin, and when it comes to a matter of direct control by her husband, the Hofriyati woman is expert in the art of passive resistance.

The nature of male authority is itself instructive. A woman is legally regarded as being under the control and care of her father, and after his death, of her brothers for as
long as they live. When she marries, she also becomes accountable to her husband, but her immediate male kin retain moral responsibility for her welfare. Theoretically a measure of both economic and moral responsibility passes to her adult sons should she be widowed or divorced. What these men share is the right to allocate, and in the case of her husband, to use, the woman's reproductive potential.

Through marriage, a man acquires access to his wife's fertility, and she the means to activate it. It is only through marriage that men and women are enabled to embark upon their respective social careers, careers that are mutually dependent, since children are the capital on which they are built, and at the same time separate, since marriages themselves are fragile and, for men, they may be polygamous. Thus the social careers of a man and his wife are not necessarily parallel. (This point will be reintroduced during a discussion of the dissonance between a woman's social status and her symbolic status (the state of her social "virginity") in Chapter 7, Section II).
INTERPRETATION

Given polarization of the sexes outlined above, what is it specifically about Pharaonic circumcision that, as I have claimed, enhances a woman's socially defined femininity, her potential fertility? If, as I suggest, the minimization of a woman's sexual enjoyment and the covering of her reproductive organs is a symbolic act, what then is the nature of this symbolism, its meaning and its context?

The question is, I feel, best approached by first of all returning to informants' statements regarding the purposes of this custom, and taking these statements to be accurate. When questioned, both men and women responded with an opacity that frustrates most fieldworkers that girls are circumcised because "it is our custom" (adatna), and "it is necessary" (dururi, lazim). As mentioned earlier, however, my closer female friends volunteered somewhat more exegetically that the custom was intended to make women pure (tahir), clean (nazif), and smooth (na'im). As I began to learn the various uses and associations of these qualities, gradually piecing together what I was observing and what I was being told, it became increasingly obvious that there was a certain fit between this practice and others. A wide range of activities, concepts and what villagers call their customs (adat) appear to be guided by a group of interrelated idioms or metaphors, sometimes
explicitly formulated, but more often not. These idioms are, as I perceive them, components of an informal logic of everyday life (cf. Geertz 1973:17). In Hofriyat, they are processes and qualities relative to things and events phrased, when expressed, as passive participles, verbal nouns, and adjectives. They underlie both ritualized and non-ritualized behavior, providing a number of overlapping contexts which inform social discourse.

To determine adequately the symbolic context of female circumcision one must trace further applications of the qualities which define it: purity, cleanliness and smoothness. An interpretation of these qualities leads to further and further associations until one is faced with a complex network of relations in which certain basic idioms predominate. Such an interpretive analysis is much like the weaving and tying of an elaborate macramé: some threads must be left hanging in places, only to be caught up again at a later point and re-worked into the whole. With this caution to the reader, I proceed.

PURITY, BIRDS AND FERTILITY

The only situation other than male and female circumcision and female ritual purity in which I consistently heard people use the descriptive ūahir (pure) was in reference
to certain types of birds. Among domestic birds, pigeons are considered *tahir* while chickens are considered *waskhan* (dirty). The former are *tahir* because they splash around in water when it is set out for them and they reside above the ground in large tins which people suspend from the rafters of their verandas. Their meat, referred to as *lahma nazifa* (clean flesh) is a delicacy and pigeon broth a local panacea. Chickens, on the other hand, are regarded as filthy creatures which scratch in the dust, eat their own excrement, and generally make a mess of people's courtyards. Their meat is almost never eaten, as it, too, is considered dirty. Yet chickens are kept by villagers because they produce eggs, which are considered "clean food" (*akil nazIf*), food which "brings blood" (*byjeeb dum*).

Young unmarried girls who dance at wedding parties are often referred to as "*hamamat mashIn fi suk*", pigeons going to market. The girls consider themselves on display for prospective husbands, as it is usually at such affairs that arrangements for subsequent marriages are initiated. The dance performed by women at these parties is a slow and rhythmic forward step with arms extended. It is referred to as (*ragIs bi rugaba*), a dance from the neck, as it consists primarily of moving the head forwards and backwards in the controlled manner, as my informants describe it, of a little bird (*zarzUr*) or a pigeon walking along the ground.
Wild water birds, like those found along the Nile, are considered clean though, for the majority of villagers, inedible. Until very recently people had the cheeks of their young daughters marked with a small scar in the shape of a rounded "T". This is referred to by village women as derab et-ter, or bird tracks, tracks like those left by water birds walking on the beach. It is considered a mark of beauty, a feature which greatly adds to a woman's desirability.

One can thus outline a rather strong metaphoric connection between young circumcised girls (and, for that matter, older women) and birds associated with water. Both are nazîf. Both domesticated water-linked birds and girls are tahir. Girls are sometimes referred to as birds, in some circumstances they are said to act like birds. Inversely, birds of this particular category behave like humans since they "bathe".

Now, while I was in the village, I rented a hōsh from one of the local women ('Asma, introduced in Chapter 1). Gathering dust in the ceiling corners of the main room were four ostrich egg-shells, each of which was decorated differently from the rest. As I began visiting other households in the village, it became apparent that my room was typical in this respect. Questions as to the significance of these objects met with suppressed giggling from my female companions. They explained that these are manāzîr, visions or
views, things to look at. The idiom of "seeing" (discussed in Chapter 4) is strongly developed in Hofriyat. Someone is thought to absorb qualities of what is seen; correspondingly one may effect changes in something or someone by emitting visual influences (this is 'ain barra, evil or "hot" eye). Although the actual designs of these objects may be significant in themselves, they are highly variable, and, according to my informants subject only to the creative impulse of the painter; they may be painted by men or by women. When prodded further as to their significance my friends replied that ostrich egg-shells and similarly shaped gourds (now more commonly used) are so placed because the woman who sleeps in that room wishes to become pregnant. These objects are, however, permanent fixtures in the majority of homes; they are not put up and taken down at a woman's whim. They are not, in other words, signals in some sexual semaphore designed to dampen or to rally a husband's consummate attention. Rather, they are, if I be permitted so Freudian a statement, fertility objects. "We look at them because we want sons," said one informant.

As fertility symbols, these objects figure in several contexts. First of all, a man's testes are euphemistically referred to as his "eggs" of which the massive ostrich egg is considered an exaggerated specimen.
Furthermore, though villagers themselves make no such explicit connection, it is noteworthy that the object is something associated with birds. Of course, only the shell of an ostrich egg is used for decoration; the egg itself is removed by making a small puncture in the shell and draining off the contents. Ostrich egg-shells and their latter day counterparts, gourds of similar size and form, are prized for their shape, their smooth rounded surfaces, and their creamy white color.

Whiteness is a quality usually associated with concepts of cleanliness and of purity. Foods which are white are generally classed as "clean", and are thought to "bring blood", to increase the amount of blood in the body. In Hofriyat these are eggs, goat's milk, goat's milk cheese, cow's milk, fish, rice, sugar, and white flour. Of these only goat's milk and sugar may be considered staples; all are, to some extent, scarce or limited and expensive.

There is another group of foods considered to be "clean". Again, these are expensive. They are usually purchased only on special occasions or for guests. Some of the most common are tinned fish, tinned jam, oranges, bananas, guavas, and grapefruit. These are foods which are generally associated with Europeans, Egyptians, and Lebanese, that is, with people having light, or as villagers say, "white" skin. They are thought of as being especially clean because they are all, so
to speak, "contained" or enclosed and protected from dirt and dryness.

Hofriyati are very conscious of skin color. White skin is clean, beautiful, and a mark of potential holiness. I, being caucasian, was repeatedly told that my chances of getting into heaven, should I choose to become Muslim, were far greater than those of the average Sudani. This is because the Prophet Mohammed was white, and all white-skinned peoples are in the favored position of belonging to his tribe (jinis or gabila). Ranked in order of desirability, the skin color of villagers ranges from "light", asfar (yellow), to abmar (red, somewhat darker than asfar), to akhdar (green, darker still), to azrag (blue) or "dark". The term black (aswad) is reserved for southern Sudanese and "Africans", people who in earlier times could be enslaved.

One context in which the concepts of whiteness as desirable skin color, cleanliness, and smoothness figure prominently is that of women's cosmetics. Immediately prior to her wedding a young girl goes through an elaborate regimen of physical preparation for the first time in her life. To begin with, all of her body hair must be removed, excepting that on her head. This is done by using a combination of sugar, lime juice and water which is boiled until a thick, sticky concentrate remains. When it cools, the toffee-like substance called helawa (candy or sweet) is spread over the
skin and, like depilatory wax, quickly pulled away taking the hair with it. I am told that women cannot use razors for this purpose as do men, who shave their pubic hair. Women must experience "heat" and "pain" (harr) when they depililate, whereas men use a "cold" (barid) method of hair removal. It should be noted that infibulation, too, is referred to as harr, and that heat and pain generally are associated with acts of feminine purification.

After her skin has been cleared of hair the prospective bride takes a smoke bath (dukhāna). If such does not already exist, a small hole is dug in the kitchen floor or other appropriate spot indoors. Then it is filled with fragrant woods and lighted. The girl removes her clothing, wraps herself in a special blanket (shamla) made of goat or camel hair, and sits over the hole, taking care to envelop the rising smoke. She may sit this way for as long as two hours, or more, adding wood from time to time and gossiping with her friends. The bath is considered a success if, when she emerges, the top layer of her skin can be sloughed off, exposing a lighter and smoother surface underneath. To remove this dead layer she massages herself with a concoction of smoked dough made from millet flour and powdered aromatic woods. This is known as dilka. When all traces of dilka have been rubbed away, she oils herself and applies perfume. Then her hands and feet are stained with henna, the purpose of
which is both to cool and to ornament the extremities.

These preparations, which may take several days to complete, are intended to make her skin soft, smooth, clean, fragrant, and desirably lighter in color. (In fact, some women go to the extent of powdering themselves with packaged vanilla custard in order to improve the cast of their skin.)

After treatment, performed for the first time when she becomes a bride, and henceforward whenever she wants to attract the sexual attentions of her husband, a woman's body shares several qualities with the ostrich egg fertility object. Both are smooth, both are clean and "white", both are pure. What is more, the shape of the ostrich egg, with its tiny orifice corresponds to the idealized shape of the circumcised woman's womb. So, too, the cleanliness, whiteness and enclosedness of valued edibles evoke images of the bride and of fecundity.

A distinctive feature of objects herein described as "enclosing" is their ability to retain moisture. Similarly, a bride's cosmetic routine is supposed to prevent her from perspiring. Human sweating and the smell of sweating are considered gauche at all times, but at a wedding, especially despicable. What is more, the association between moisture retention and "pure" or "purified" women is photo-negatively expressed by the term for prostitute (sharmûta). Sharmûta means, literally, "that which is shredded or in tatters". But
in local parlance, *sharmūt* (masculine form) is meat that has been cut into strips and hung to dry. There is thus an implicit association between prostitutes (feminine form) and dried meat or flesh.

All of the above relations, which should become more firmly established as we progress, combine to signify that on the day of her wedding a young girl finally reaches a peak of potential fertility, defined in terms of the qualities whiteness, smoothness, cleanliness, purity, enclosedness, and imperviousness.

THE ALTERNATE FERTILITY OBJECT:
DIVISION OF LABOR, FLUIDS, REPRODUCTION AND ENCLOSEDNESS

We now turn to the web of symbolic relations that spin out from the alternate fertility object, the egg-shaped gourd. Such gourds (singular *gar'a*) may be used in place of ostrich eggs only after they have been preserved by drying in the sun. One knows that a *gar'a* is ready to be decorated and hung in a room if, when it is shaken, its seeds can be heard to rattle inside. The vocabulary of cultivation and of farming in general provides a figurative lexicon for most things having to do with human reproduction and, to a certain extent, with village social structure. The progeny of a man or a woman is referred to as his or her *jena* (fruit), or *zurīy'a* (crop, that
which is sown). A man's immediate descendants, the lineage section of which he is head, is also his zurīy'a.

As such, the fact that the appropriately shaped gourd contains seeds in an enclosed space is exceedingly significant. To begin with, native theories of conception have it that the fetus is formed from the union of a man's semen, spoken of as his seed, with his wife's blood. Sexual intercourse causes the woman's blood to thicken or coagulate and she ceases menstruation until after the baby's birth. While pregnant a woman carries her husband's future "crop" within her.

These ideas also relate to those concerning parents' respective contributions to the body of their child. Women told me that, although young people learn differently in school these days, a child receives its bones from its father and its flesh and blood from its mother. While an adequate description of village social structure must await discussion in Chapter 3 of this thesis, certain of its characteristics are relevant to the symbolic interpretation presented here. Just as the skeleton structures the body, so do endogamous patrilineal descent groups structure the village. But endogamy, though preferred, is not always possible in practice. What is more, adherence to endogamy is not a great concern of people entering into second or subsequent marriages. The upshot of all this is that sisters frequently
marry into lineages unrelated or only distantly related to each other. And, no matter what their descent affiliation, the children of such women are considered close relatives. Women thus serve to link together the various named descent groups in the village. People who belong to different patrilineages, yet acknowledge relationship, say that "bain nehna lahma wa dum", "between us there is flesh and blood". If it is through men that the social order receives its structure, its rigidity (its bones), then it is through women that it receives its fluidity and its integration (its blood and its flesh).

There are several other contexts in which fluids figure prominently as markers of feminity. The most important of these, for our present purpose, has to do with division of labor by sex. While cultivation is thought primarily to be men's work, fetching water from the wells for household consumption is traditionally considered women's work. The latter was made doubly clear to me in the following way: the archaeologists with whom I stayed for several weeks after coming to the area employed a local man to make sure that their water jars were kept full. When I moved into the village, I followed their example, and hired a most industrious young man to do the same. This arrangement worked amicably enough until, about two months later, he became ill. When he recovered, I was informed that he would no longer be
able to carry water. While he continued with his other responsibilities, such as going to market, the job of filling my water jars was taken over by his mother. It seems that as I learned more and more Arabic, and as my skin became progressively darker from the sun, I gradually transformed from a "white foreigner for whom it is prestigious to work in any capacity" into a "woman". Men do not perform women's tasks unless there is no woman available to perform them, let alone do women's work for a "woman"

Thus it is through their individual labors, farming and getting water, that men and women provide the household with its staple food, kisra. Kisra is made by first mixing dura flour with an almost equal amount of water. Then the batter is spread thinly over a seasoned griddle, and when dry the wafer like product is removed.

Now kisra batter is mixed by hand in a special type of container called a gulla. This is a squat, rounded pottery jar, about the size of an average pumpkin, having an opening at the top slightly larger than a woman's fist. It differs from water jars (singular zīr) in that the latter are far larger, capable of holding ten gallons of water or more. Zīrs are longer than they are round and made of a porous clay which permits sweating, hence cooling of the water they contain. Gullas, on the other hand, must be non-porous, they must not allow anything inside of them to seep out. This feature
likens them to other objects herein described as moisture retentive: foods that are contained, the cosmetically prepared body of the infibulated bride, all of which evoke further positive qualities such as cleanliness and purity, and, by extension, femininity and fecundity.

Significantly, besides serving as a container in which millet flour and water are mixed for kisra, the gülla has another function, relative to childbirth. If a woman miscarries when she is only a few months pregnant, the expelled matter is treated like menstrual blood and put down the latrine. However, should she require the services of a midwife to open her up, a different method of disposal is called for. The fetus is first wrapped in a cloth as for a corpse, then it is placed in a gülla and buried somewhere within the confines of the hösh, the house enclosure. The symbolism of this act is made more explicit when one considers what is done in the case of a stillbirth. If a baby is born but fails to breathe, its body is wrapped in a cloth and buried without ceremony just against the outer wall of the hösh. But should an infant expire having taken even one breath, then normal funeral procedure must be followed, and the child buried in the graveyard on the outskirts of the village.

Both the gülla and the hösh appear in this context as symbols for the womb. In the case of the gülla, it is an
object of daily life in which the fruits of men's and women's labors are mixed. The mixture when baked produces kisra the staple food, that which sustains life. It is important to note that only women mix and bake kisra.

Similarly, in the womb are mixed a man's seed and a woman's blood: substance and fluid, like grain and water. And this mixture when formed reproduces life, hence also sustains it. Again, only women, through their fertility, perform this reproductive task. There is, symbolically, no more fitting receptacle for an aborted "mixture" of male and female contributions than the gülla, the impervious container of unbaked "life".

There is a certain level of exegesis involved in this interpretation. One of my informants thinks that the gülla might be used for this purpose because in its shape it resembles the beyt el-wilāda, the womb, literally, the house of childbirth, and because in its size it corresponds to the belly of a pregnant woman. The "house" metaphor is significant, and we will return to it at the end of this chapter.

Earlier I stated that the hōsh, the walled enclosure of a household area, also symbolizes the womb. More accurately, it symbolizes an initial stage in the process of becoming human. The miscarried fetus has not, strictly speaking, been born; it does not emerge with a wholly developed human body. Its
progress is halted in the womb, and it must be disposed of within the ḥōsh. The still-born child emerges fully developed, but it does not breathe. Its progress is halted or fixed at the point of birth. As it has emerged from the womb, so it is buried against the outer wall of the compound. The child who is born and who breathes but then dies is indeed fully human, for breath is the essence of life. A child who has breathed is placed with other humans who have lived, who have passed from the ḥōsh and the village to the grave. Significantly, women, who are associated with birth and with the ḥōsh in this and several other contexts are not permitted to be present at a burial. Such is the responsibility of men. Women may visit the graveyard, but only after the funeral has ended.

Thus, the symbolism of village spatial organization in customs having to do with unsuccessful pregnancy expresses not only the physical relationship between mother (womb) and child. The metaphor also describes the unsuccessful emergence of an individual into society. The child who dies at birth skips over the social phase of being, going directly from the ḥōsh to the grave.
Generally speaking, enclosed areas in the village are considered to be clean and protected places. Hösh yards are swept daily, as are the floors of its rooms and verandas inside. Clean spaces, spaces which are inside, these are social areas. They are areas of relative safety, where one is least likely to become possessed by malevolent spirits (jinn ašwad, black jinn) hence to be driven mad (majnūn). Since jinn frequent open spaces such as the desert, ruins, and rubbish heaps, the insides of haishan are considered relatively safer than village paths, which in turn are relatively safer than the surrounding countryside.

Yet social spaces are not always bounded by high walls. While these are desirable, some houses in the village do not have walled-in courtyards surrounding them. Instead, the open area immediately adjacent to such a structure is marked off by a ring of stones or by a thorn fence (zarība). But however humble its boundaries, such an enclosure is regularly swept smooth to maintain the distinction between it and unmarked space.

The village, too, is bounded: to the west by farmlands and the river, to the north and south by other villages, and to the east by the desert (ekh-khala), "the emptiness". The
graveyard is located on the westernmost fringe of the desert, between the village and "emptiness". Thus as one moves eastward from the river to the desert, there is a shift from conditions of relative fecundity and abundance to those of relative sterility, with humans poised in between.

This in between space, social space, is organized concentrically: at the hub is the hōsh, the extended family and the place where life begins. Surrounding the hōsh in the village are neighbors and kinsmen, considered one and the same by local people: they are called nas garīb, those who are close, or garībna, our relatives. In nearby villages are distant relations and affinal kin. Beyond this one soon arrives at the periphery of the known social world.

It is appropriate to mention here, though it will be considered more fully in the following chapter, that social space is also bounded in an ideological sense. People marry garīb, close. They ought to marry within the patrilineage, preferably a father's brother's son or daughter, but given demographic limitations they try to marry as close as possible. Thus it is not surprising that the best or most prestigious marriage is the closest: between bilateral parallel cousins whose parents are parallel cousins. While it is stated that patrilateral parallel cousins are preferred spouses, my evidence indicates that matrilateral parallel cousins are also considered exceedingly close. If for some
reason one must marry a more distant relative he or she ought still to observe the preference for territorial endogamy. Neighbors are "close" by definition. And according to my information, all villagers acknowledge a plethora of consanguineal and affinal links to all other villagers. Social space as expressed through kinship and marriage thus replicates the social organization of physical space. Both are based on the principle of relative enclosure within a circumscribed "area", or interiority.

ENCLOSURE OF PHYSICAL SPACE: THE HUMAN BODY

The considerations above lead us back to some earlier relinquished threads in our argument. For significant with respect to the concept of relative enclosure are several relations in another domain, that which concerns the human body. With respect to established notions of esthetic propriety, a human face, male or female, is considered beautiful if it is characterized by a small mouth and by narrow nostrils. What is more, body orifices are places where potentially dangerous jinn might abide. Burial customs dictate that all such orifices including spaces between fingers and toes be washed, perfumed, and stuffed with cotton before the corpse is wrapped and taken to the cemetery. This is to ensure the expulsion of any lingering jinn and to
prevent the soul of the deceased from re-inhabiting its mortal remains. Thus, while orifices of the human body are necessary for sustaining life, they are dangerous, not esthetically pleasing if large, and not to be left open after death.

The idiom of closure is further dramatized by certain features of folk medicine as practiced in the village. Remedies are often based upon the assumption that pain and swelling are caused by things coming apart or opening. One common cure for headache or "open head" (ras maftuh) is first to wrap a band of cloth around the head, then to tighten this band by twisting it with a key or a piece of wood. Alternatively, the head may be closed by the application of hot irons to four equidistant points on the skull, starting from mid-forehead. Pulled tendons and ligaments are also treated by "fire" (nār): hot irons are placed at either end of the affected area, so that what has come apart may be fused together again by heat. The associations of heat, of fusing together, of closing, and of the esthetic preference for small body orifices once again call to mind the practice of infibulation.

THE HŌSH, THE WOMB AND SEXUAL DIFFERENTIATION: FULL CIRCLE

Throughout the course of this analysis, the idiom of relative enclosure is predominant. The hōsh, the womb and
many more objects of daily life, beliefs about the human body, about reproduction, about imperviousness and about the fertility potential of brides, all that I have outlined above, appear repeatedly in contexts that play upon this theme. These contexts culminate in further symbolic associations of the ḥōsh, the infibulated (enclosed) womb, and sexual differentiation.

As remarked in an earlier section of this chapter, the sexes are spatially as well as socially segregated. They occupy opposite sides of the dancing ground at ceremonies, are housed and fed in different households during communal feasts. The ḥōsh, too, is spatially divided into men's and women's quarters, having separate entrances for each. The "front" door, which has no specified orientation, is known as the "men's entrance" and is used by official guests and strangers. The men's room (diwān) is generally located in the front part of the courtyard. The back door is known as the "women's entrance", and is for the use of women, close male kin and neighbors. Women's quarters are situated at the rear of the compound as is the kitchen. If the ḥōsh be considered a political unit, internal or domestic affairs are the concern of women, while external affairs such as marketing are handled by men. While women are not, strictly speaking, secluded, there is a general feeling that they ought to remain within the confines of the ḥōsh unless officially visiting kin. Even
so, a woman when outside her hōsh is still "enclosed", for then she must wear her tōb, a garment consisting of nine meters of cloth wound around the body and covering the head. There is thus a fairly strong association of women with internal affairs, enclosedness, and the rear or interior of the hōsh, and of men with external affairs, non-enclosedness and the front of the hōsh. These complementary relations provide further images with which Hofriyati think about social reproduction, a subject to which we now return.

The men's entrance to the hōsh is known as ekh-khashm el-beyt, the mouth, opening, or orifice of the house. This term also refers to a group of kin. Properly speaking, a khashm el-beyt consists of several related lineages: it is a sub-tribe. But in Hofriyat, as elsewhere in Sudan (Barclay 1964:91), this term is used only to refer to people who live in or originate from a common hōsh (compound) or beyt (house), hence, to a lineage section.

Extension of anatomical terms to non-anatomical subjects, such as I have described above, is common in Hofriyat. For example, the supports of an angarīb are its "legs" (kur'a, singular). Moreover, doors and orifices through which things and people pass are "mouths" or "nostrils" (khashm, singular), and the insides of houses and other enclosed areas are "bellies" or "stomachs" (buton, singular).
From a converse perspective, however, non-anatomical terms are often applied to parts of the anatomy. Most important for our discussion, the word for "house" is explicitly associated with the womb. For the womb is referred to as the "house of childbirth", the beyt el-wilāda, and the vaginal opening is its khashm, its door or mouth. Thus there exists an implicit link between the khashm el-beyt, meaning the men's door or the courtyard and, metaphorically, one man's immediate descendants, and the khashm of the beyt el-wilāda, a woman's genital orifice. The men's door literally opens into an enclosed area occupied by a man's sons and daughters, his zuriy'a. The khashm el-beyt el-wilāda, the door of the womb, also opens into an enclosed area which is the more completely enclosed and purified by a woman's circumcision and infibulation. Just as the hōsh protects a man's zuriy'a, the enclosed womb protects a woman's fertility: her potential and, ultimately, that of her husband.

Pharaonic circumcision, a custom which, because of its apparent brutality, cannot but horrify the Western intelligence, is for women of Hofriyat an assertive symbolic act. Through it they emphasize what they hold to be the essence of femininity: appropriate fertility, the potential to reproduce the lineage or to found a lineage section. In that infibulation purifies, smoothens, and makes clean the outer surface of the womb, the enclosure or hōsh of the house
of childbirth, it socializes, or if the phrase be permitted, culturalizes a woman's fertility. Through occlusion of the vaginal orifice, her womb, both literally and figuratively, becomes a social space: enclosed, impervious, virtually impenetrable. Moreover, a woman's social virginity, defined by qualities of enclosedness, purity, and all the rest, must periodically be re-established at those points in her life, after childbirth and before remarriage, when her fertility once again is rendered potent.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. I am grateful to Ken Burridge, Nadia Abu-Zahara, Michael Lambek and Judith Shapiro for their many helpful suggestions and comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

2. The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Government declared it illegal in 1945, as did the May (1969) Revolution regime headed by President Nimieri.

3. This refers to a method of childbearing no longer practiced in Hofriyat, where a woman about to deliver would support herself by grasping onto ropes suspended from the main ceiling beam of a room.

4. This apparatus is also basic to smoke-bathing (later discussed) and to rope-delivery (note 3).

5. All of these explanations are common currency in the Western community in Khartoum, and among educated Sudanese who are frequently hard pressed to account for the practice.

6. 31 of 121 resident adult females between the ages of 16 and 55, or 25.6%; taking age 12 as the last possible year for the operation to be performed. This is considered rather late, the average age at circumcision being somewhere between ages 5 and 10.

7. Often, however, girls whose fathers wish to preserve them from the more severe operation are "kidnapped" by their grandmothers and Pharaonically circumcised nonetheless.

8. It has been suggested to me by several people that the habēbat are so adamantly pro-Pharaonic circumcision because they need to justify having experienced the mutilation themselves. While I do not doubt that this is one reason for the persistence of the custom, I think it insufficient as a complete explanation. The cultural context, described below, is supportive of the operation. Infibulation is considered a positive change to a woman's body, not something negative, as the term "mutilation" implies. This is, of course, the perspective of village women, and may differ from that of men.
9. Other factors influencing women's decisions to use contraceptives are considered in Chapter 7, Section II.

10. Lest it be thought that the habobat as a group have a vested (economic) interest in seeing the custom maintained, it should be mentioned that midwives are few and in the past inherited the profession from their mothers or maternal aunts.

11. It is certainly possible (even probable) that men do not share this view of female circumcision and its intended purpose. As Barclay (1964) and Trimingham (1965) suggest, their conception might well lean more towards the maintenance of chastity and sexual honor than towards infibulation as a means of enhancing fertility which I will argue is the feminine perspective. The two, chastity and "quality" fertility, are quite simply different sides of the same coin. For the only offspring considered socially and morally viable are those born of lawful marriages, most appropriately contracted between close kin. This point is taken up in the following chapter.

12. Women rarely mind and often prefer their husbands to frequent brothels, so long as they do not spend too much money in such establishments.

13. So pure are pigeons (hamam or hamamat) considered to be that persons of limited resources may substitute a pair these birds for the obligatory sacrificial ram at the 'Id el-Aqha, the Islamic Great Feast, or, for that matter, whenever animal sacrifice is called for.

14. "awlad", which also stands for children in a general sense.

15. Much of what follows appears to be based upon an ancient humoral approach to disease. Body fluids figure prominently in the assessment of relative health; likewise, heat and cold are significant qualities of various symptoms, treatments and preventatives.

    For example, blood may be considered too weak or too light, in proper balance, or too heavy, malodorous and black; certain foods are held to increase the amount of blood in the body when this is thought insufficient; female purification rituals generally are associated with heat while male purifications generally are associated with cold. Moreover, the spirit possessed say that zar spirits make known their presence by "inflaming" or by causing their hosts' hearts to "inflame". And spirits
often can be pacified by the application of henna to the extremities, said to draw heat from the body, or by the use of liquid -- cold -- perfume.

But this line of thought, however obvious to the anthropologist, is not otherwise developed in Hofriyat. It does not, per se, extend itself to edibles, which are considered "clean", or "poor", or "dirty". Hot and cold terms are applied to foods only in indication of relative temperature; they have little to do with medicinal properties, and nothing to do with the relative enclosedness and cleanliness of such comestibles. Clean foods may be either hot or cold; the essential criteria defining them as clean being color (white or light), cost and scarcity, sweetness in some cases, and relative protectedness from dirt and moisture loss.

Furthermore, as interesting as the humoral perception is, and as apparent as it may be in Hofriyati's medical logic, it is not systematically applied. Remnants of the Galenic or Alexandrian approach are merged with what are, perhaps, more ancient practices dating from Pharaonic Egyptian times and with ideas that are probably indigenous (Safi:1970). While it would be intriguing to trace out the various historical influences upon contemporary medical techniques in Hofriyat, such is beyond the scope of the present effort.

16. Males, on the other hand, are not permitted to witness childbirth.

17. I must add that I do not recall hearing people refer to the women's entrance as a khashm. It was always referred to as simply wahra' or bab el-wahra' back door.
It is interesting that the principal folk hero of Hofriyat and of much of the northern Sudan is a young woman, Fatna (Fatima) the Beautiful. Fatna combines all the positive qualities of a bride with intelligence, humor, and an uncanny (even naive) penchant for getting into and out of problematic situations, situations in which, for the most part, her potent fertility is threatened with inappropriate use. For the numerous stories in which she appears inevitably concern the prospect of her unorthodox marriage. Sometimes her betrothed turns out to be a brother from whom she has been separated since childhood. In other stories she is kidnapped and eventually married to an outsider and non-relative, the Sultan's son.¹

At least one story portrays her as unwittingly having committed incest and borne a child as a result. In her effort to conceal this fact from her brother and paternal uncle she unintentionally kills the child by hiding it in the kitchen smoke pit, where it suffocates. This episode calls to mind the strong association between the smoke hole and acts
Involving the purification and socialization of feminine fertility: smoke bathing and infibulation, discussed in Chapter 2. Moreover, the placement of Fatna's baby in the smoke pit is similar to practices associated with miscarriage, that is, with disposal of incompletely formed humans within the household enclosure. In the case of Fatna the Beautiful, however, her baby is healthy, though as explained below, not quite human since it is not the product of a sanctioned sexual relationship. Its burial takes place not only within the hōsh, but inside the kitchen, the women's domain within the hōsh, symbolizing, perhaps, the extreme interiority of the child's origin — a sexual union of brother and sister.

Fatna's predicaments revolve about the fact that the quality fertility of village women is appropriately exercised only in certain specified situations. In the first place, a woman must be married. Prior to becoming pregnant she must have been made a legal spouse of the man who has obtained from her father, brothers, or guardian the right to use her fertility. Should she become pregnant out of wedlock, whether before marriage or extramaritally, her male kin have the right, even the duty, to kill her for so dishonoring her family.

But sometimes, though rarely, a woman thus shamed escapes death and survives to bear her child successfully. Such children born outside of marriage, however, lack an essential
moral quality with which legally born children are innately imbued. Awlad haram, bastard children, are considered criminals by nature. They are said to be virtually incapable of socially acceptable behavior, unwilling or unable to clean themselves or to engage in civil communication with other persons. Should such a child survive it is severely stigmatized, feared and shunned by all whom it encounters. Only with great difficulty, say villagers, might one overcome its inherent disadvantages, eventually to lead an upstanding life. Thus, in a sense, socialization begins in the womb, and is bound to be successful only if the womb has been penetrated by an appropriately designated sire. Law and nature are mutually influential.

More than this, a child must be reared by its natural kin if it is to fulfill its potential and become a responsible, moral being. Once I was talking with a group of village women shortly after the July 1976 attempt by mercenaries and disaffected nationals to take over the Sudanese government. After the smoke had cleared, the death toll among civilians in Khartoum was said to be high and many children orphaned. Our conversation turned, as it so often did, to the subject of children. I was asked if, when I return to the village in some future year, I would bring with me the children I am expected to have borne in the interim. I ventured that perhaps I could adopt one of the children of Khartoum who had
recently lost its parents. My friends were horrified. Surely I would be murdered, they said, if I attempted to raise a child who was neither my own nor my spouse's, nor the child of a close relative. Such a child would have no reason to respect or to obey me. Freed from the moral constraints imposed by its natural family, it would certainly develop anti-social inclinations despite my best efforts to guide it otherwise. All of my informants' comments point unerringly to the fact that morality inheres in kinship. Social life, consisting as it does of patterned, controlled human behavior, depends upon the nurturance of offspring by their natural kin.

The above interpretation leads us to consider a second condition for the appropriate exercise of fertility: not only must parents be married, they should also be closely related. As I will later discuss, all kin, both consanguineal and affinal, are considered close to one degree or another. All, excluding full and half siblings, parents and siblings of parents, parents' spouses and siblings and children of parents' living spouses, are considered potential mates. The excluded relatives are those with whom sexual relations are deemed incestuous, with whom marriage would be "too close". While, especially in the case of first marriages, people are encouraged to wed their closest available relatives after these exceptions, ultimately they are not forced to do so. Thus it does happen occasionally that non-relatives marry.
Even so, it is still usual for spouses to be selected from within the four-village area. Of the first marriages where no kinship between spouses was acknowledged (7.8% of all known first marriages), only 4 (just under 2% of first marriages) were contracted between villagers and opposite parties from outside the immediate vicinity.

The system of marital preference in Hofriyat can be thought of in terms of the model of relative enclosure outlined in Chapter 2. Marriages between siblings or other prohibited kin would have the effect of completely enclosing, hence atomizing or isolating the individual khashm el-beyt or family. Marriages between kin and non-kin or between villagers and outsiders, however, are potentially dangerous. For such marriages could have the effect of opening the family and village to unfamiliar and possibly unsettling influences, and of randomizing the process of reproduction. If a village man does marry a non-relative from outside the village area, he is scorned by his neighbors as one whose wife is a ewe or a she-goat bought at market, so uncertain is her pedigree, so greatly has he to rely upon the word of unknown individuals to vouch for her character. Just as the market animal might seem a good deal at the time of its purchase only to prove otherwise once its owner gets it home, so, too, the wife previously unknown to villagers might seem sweet, honest and hard working at the time of her wedding, but prove difficult,
demanding and untrustworthy shortly thereafter. In like manner, a village woman who marries a non-relative or outsider takes a greater chance than does one who marries close. Harmony and co-operation in social relations are highly valued qualities most threatened by marriages between villagers and non-neighbors or non-kin. So, at the risk of stretching an established metaphor, we might consider the family, the khashm el-beyt, to be like the human body whose orifices, though necessary to sustain life, are thought dangerous and therefore best kept as small as possible. The orifices or openings of the family are the marriages of its members. Such openings are controlled by a graded preference for marriages of close kin, that is, of people between whom there already exists a modicum of moral obligation. An exploration of the idiom "close" (garlb) as it pertains to kinship and marriage, and of the importance of uterine ties for determining close relationship engages us for the remainder of this chapter.

PATRILINEALITY AND PATRILINEAL PARALLEL COUSIN MARRIAGE

When asked whom they marry or whom they ought to marry, villagers respond "we marry close, we marry our awlad 'amm." Strictly speaking, awlad 'amm are children of a paternal uncle, hence, patrilateral parallel cousins. In Hofriyat (and throughout the Arab Sudan) village social organization
consists, at least ideologically, of a variable number of patrilineal descent groups, the members of which trace common ancestry from a male kinsman who lived a minimum of four and a maximum of eight generations ago. At first glance, then, one might think that when villagers say they marry awlad 'amm, they are really saying they marry endogamously with respect to lineage. But this is not necessarily so.

In the first place there are countless problems associated with actual practice of patrilateral parallel cousin marriage. If demographic conditions are stable such that every couple reproduces itself exactly, a patrilineage soon ceases to produce parallel cousins. After two generations only bilateral cross cousins result (Figure 2). The regular occurrence of patrilateral parallel cousin marriage is possible, but only under certain conditions, namely, when brothers are able to marry patrilateral parallel cousins who are also sisters and this pattern can be repeated in successive generations (Figure 3), or, more commonly, when the population of a lineage is expanding (Figure 4). Given the unlikelihood of the former condition, and the temporal and geographic limitations of lineage expansion, it appears that awlad 'amm marriage is impracticable except for a restricted segment of the population at any given time.

Yet villagers say they marry awlad 'amm, and they express the view that virtually all marriages (save those few
Figure 2: Bilateral Cross Cousins resulting from Patrilateral Parallel Cousin Marriages

Figure 3: Marriages Between Pairs of Brothers and Pairs of Sisters who are Patrilateral Parallel Cousins
Figure 4: Patrilateral Parallel Cousin Marriage in an Expanding Minimal Lineage
portrayed as *mush garīb*, not close) conform to this description. Moreover, when informed that villagers marry their *awlād 'amm* it was made amply clear to me that this was not a simple indication of preference, rather, it was also a statement of fact. Since Hofriyati must be presumed at least as knowledgeable as the anthropologist about difficulties inherent in the practice of direct patrilateral parallel cousin marriage, and since we must accept that when villagers say they marry a particular class of relatives they mean just that, we are forced to seek additional significances of the term *awlād'amm*. The anthropologist's task, therefore, is to interpret her informants' descriptions by investigating the varieties of marriage in which spouses are said to be *awlād 'amm*.

Now, to a certain extent villagers can be said to marry *awlād 'amm* simply because they marry in the first place. Spouses become close or closer kin as a result of the nuptial tie: they are *awlād 'amm* after the fact if not before.

But this is not the only reason that Hofriyati say they marry patrilineal parallel cousins. According to Sudanese kin terminology the children of *awlād 'amm* are themselves *awlād 'amm*, for all first cousins are classificatory siblings. So the children of classificatory brothers are classificatory *awlād 'amm*, the children of classificatory sisters are classificatory matrilateral parallel cousins (*awlād khalat*),
and the children of a classificatory brother and sister are classificatory cross cousins (wad 'ammat bit khal: father's sister's son/mother's brother's daughter; wad 'ammat/wad khal: father's sister's daughter/mother's brother's son; bit 'ammat/bit khal: father's sister's daughter/mother's brother's daughter, Figures 5, 6, and 7.)

Classification extends far beyond relationships traced to a true sibling link in the grandparental generation, however. All individuals who trace relationship to a pair of true siblings, regardless of how remote the generation, are themselves classificatory cousins. Further, if generations are reckoned evenly, classificatory cousins are also classificatory siblings (Figure 8); if generations are unevenly reckoned, then generationally appropriate terminology is employed (Figure 9). While in theory classification of this sort may be applied to unlimited generational depth, in practice such precise calculation never goes beyond four to six generations from the present.

As long as classification in the first ascending generation reads "male siblings" then a marriage between the children of two men would indeed be a marriage of awlad 'amm, regardless of the number of male and/or female links in ascending generations. Since classificatory siblings are the children of brothers, or of sisters, or of a brother and sister, whether real or classificatory, there is no reason to assume that spouses who are awlad 'amm will have married
Figure 5: Two Examples of Classificatory Awlad 'Amm (Patrilateral Parallel Cousins)

Figure 6: Two Examples of Classificatory Matrilateral Parallel Cousins

Figure 7: Two Examples of Classificatory Cross Cousins
Figure 8: Classificatory Siblings

Figure 9: N is Ego's Classificatory Maternal Uncle (Khal)
endogamously with respect to descent group (unless they are direct first cousins) (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Lineage Exogamous Awlad 'Amm Marriage (Y and Z are different patrilineages)

We have now isolated another type of marriage which fits the designation awlad 'amm. But, while the meaning of the term awlad 'amm has been expanded, the problem has not yet been resolved. For not all "close" marriages are those of real or demonstrated classificatory patrilateral parallel cousins. Marriages between matrilateral parallel cousins, patrilateral and matrilateral cross cousins, and various other relatives are also considered "close".

Now, in a general sense, all marriages where kinship is so remote or so vaguely remembered that precise links cannot be demonstrated are marriages of awlad 'amm simply because descent ideology focuses attention upon agnatic relationships.
Even though spouses frequently trace prior kinship bilaterally, this fact may be disguised by a system of classification that emphasizes patrilateral links to the exclusion of others. Thus, when we are told that an individual is marrying his patrilateral parallel cousin, he may in fact be marrying his direct bilateral cross cousin (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Bilateral Cross-Cousin Marriage as a Marriage Between Awlad 'Amm
Kronenberg and Kronenberg (1965) have examined this phenomenon with regard to Sudanese riverain villagers. They show that cross cousin marriages (and, I might add, matrilateral parallel cousin marriages) do not necessarily violate a voiced preference for patrilateral parallel cousin marriages since patrilineal descent ideology permits uterine relationships to be suppressed in the computation of kinship (247). Excluding recent uterine links from Figure 11, we have the configuration diagrammed in Figure 12. Where the doctrine of descent is patrilineal, and a system of kin classification exists such that each generation replicates the relationships of its antecedent, uterine relationships merge into the

Figure 12: Figure 11, excluding Most Recent Uterine Links (after Kronenberg and Kronenberg, 1965:247, Fig. 5)
agnatic line. In Figure 12, X is Ego's paternal uncle by virtue of the fact that X's father was Ego's father's maternal uncle. In Hofriyati genealogies the actual uterine link is replaced by the classificatory agnatic link for persons related to a point beyond three or four ascending generations, though in some cases uterine relationship is submerged altogether.

This goes a long way towards explaining why the term *awlad 'amm* is used to describe prior kinship between spouses that is acknowledged but not demonstrated, hence fictional or historically remote. For it is presumed that if the families of spouses have been living in Hofriyat or vicinity for several generations they are somehow related. Such relationship is conventionally expressed as agnation whether or not the original link upon which declaration of kinship is based was matrilateral, bilateral, affinal or non-existent.

However, the comprehensive categorization of *awlad 'amm* rarely applies to relationships derived from a known sibling link in the first, second, and sometimes third ascending generations. Relationships between direct and classificatory matrilateral parallel cousins or cross cousins are traced with precision both through males and through females to at least the grandparental generation. But since real relationships and classificatory relationships begin to merge in subsequent ascending generations, effectively erasing traces of uterine
kinship, bilaterality of reckoning is limited to the present and to the immediate past. The memory of uterine kinship tends to be prolonged only when an ancestress, because she happened to give birth to a large number of surviving adult villagers, has come to occupy a pivotal position in recent village genealogies. Yet this, too, is generationally limited. No matter how important for determining contemporary social organization, women are never mentioned in genealogical calculation to a depth beyond four or five ascending generations. The memory of uterine relationship is erased because descent ideology is agnatic. So, when villagers say they marry awlad 'amm they state a simple truth: ultimately all marriages between kin are or become the marriages of awlad 'amm.

"WE MARRY CLOSE"

In the foregoing section awlad 'amm marriage was shown to be, in its widest application, marriage between kin however remotely related, however tenuous their actual kinship links. More narrowly, it is marriage between classificatory patrilateral parallel cousins, and, in the most restricted sense, marriage between cousins whose fathers are actual brothers. There is, in fact, a graded preference for marriages between kin who can demonstrate immediate kinship
over marriages between kin whose relationship is more remote. The former are closer than the latter. Marital preferences are, like village social space (Chapter 2), organized concentrically following a principle of relative closeness to an individual's nonmarriagable kin. Most immediate kinship between individuals of either sex precludes the possibility of marriage. But if a marriage regulation can be expressly formulated for Hofriyati, it would be that prohibited marriage among members of a sibling group ensures the most desirable status of marriageability among their respective offspring; and secondly that prohibited marriage between sibling groups, or marriageability between parents of two sibling groups ensures the next most desirable status of marriageability among their respective offspring. The prohibition of marriage between a man and a woman creates "closeness" not only between their respective offspring but between their siblings' offspring as well.

The closest marriages are those between first cousins. When a direct first cousin link is described, the appropriate relationship term is stated, followed by the word "ţawāli". ţawāli in Sudanese colloquial Arabic implies immediacy, duration, and elaborateness. Hence the phrase "awlad 'amm ţawāli" indicates a patrilateral parallel cousin relationship in the direct or immediate sense.
The next closest group of marriageable kin includes all classificatory cousins of the same generation, what we call "second cousins" (parent's cousin/cousin's child) both direct and classificatory of appropriate relative ages, and certain affinal kin. Such relationships are referred to as garīb (close) or garīb shādid (very close). Examples of marriages between relatives of this degree of closeness are given in Figures 13 through 15. Whereas in closest possible marriages relative generation overrides relative age (male older) in determining marriageability, in less close marriages the opposite is true.  

In the next class of "close" marriageable relatives, actual kinship becomes difficult to trace with any precision. Such relationships are said by informants to be "garīb, sai" (somewhat close, just close), "garīb sakīt" (literally: close, silent; meaning: close, but nothing more), or "'āila wahid" (of one family). These are relatives who trace distant and/or unconfirmable consanguineal or affinal kinship. Two types of "somewhat close" marriages between supposed consanguineal kin are explicitly distinguished: marriages in which relationship between spouses is referred to as "garīb bi sera", indicating closeness in a common line of descent, and those wherein relationship is referred to as "garīb bi rihmīya". In the first instance, simple agnatic links are emphasized, though the actual relationship may be considerably
Figure 13: Classificatory Cousins of the Same Generation

Figure 14: Second Cousins of Appropriate Relative Age
(Spouse and parent of spouse are direct or classificatory first cousins)
Figure 15: Four Examples of Garib Shādīd (Very Close) Marriages Between Affines (Marriage with sibling of parent's living spouse would be deemed incestuous)

more complex. The second type, literally, "close through uterine relationships" is, despite its apparent straightforwardness, even more elusive. Spouses whose relationship is described as garīb bi rihmiya (nine cases in all) were for the most part recently deceased, that is, parents or grandparents of my informants. While a few undoubtedly were related matrilaterally at some point, I believe that in several of these cases uterine relationship was presumed due to a lack of accurate genealogical
information and the fact that in all nine cases, spouses belonged to different named tribal groupings and at least one spouse in each marriage was from a different village. These conditions effectively rule out the presumption of recent agnation, even should the couples actually have been agnatic kin. Marriages based upon sera and riheinya relationship may be classed, together with those based upon distant affinal connections, in the generalized category of awlad 'amm marriage where kinship is acknowledged but not demonstrated.

Close marriages fall, therefore, into three distinct groups, defined by the degree of prior kinship said to obtain between spouses. Marriages of what I will for convenience term the first degree of closeness are those in which spouses are depicted as garib ṭawāli, immediately close or directly related. In those of the second degree of closeness spouses are garib or garib shadīd, close or very close. (Many informants, when describing a relationship as garib, lengthened their pronunciation of this word and pitched it at a higher tone than usual. This is an indication of intensification, applicable in other contexts as well, and similar to that conveyed by the word shadīd (lit.: strong).) In marriages of the third degree of closeness, spouses are garib sai, somewhat close. Marriages in which no prior relationship between spouses exists may be assigned to a fourth degree of relative closeness, described as mush garib, not close.
MARRIAGE PREFERENCE: CROSS VERSUS PARALLEL COUSINS

Marriages between first cousins are considered more appropriate than marriages contracted with less closely related kinsmen. Further, marriages between first cousins are themselves ranked in order of desirability, as are those of the second degree of closeness and those between more distantly related kin. There is a stated preference for marriage with one's patrilateral parallel cousin, one's wad 'amm (father's brother's son) or bit 'amm (father's brother's daughter) ِتَوْلِي. This preference is borne out statistically, as the data presented in Table VIII confirm: 22.4% of all first marriages are of this type. After this, my informants consider matrilateral parallel cousin marriage, marriage between اِذْلَدُ خَلاطَي تَوْلِي, best. Next most desirable are cross cousin marriages. While there is no expressed preference for marriage between mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's son over that with father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's son, the former is more prevalent statistically (Table VIII).

There are several ways to interpret this apparent scale of marital preference. First, while patrilateral parallel cousin marriage is accepted as the most appropriate match by men and women both (in keeping with the dogma of patrilineal
TABLE VIII:
MARRIAGES BY TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPOUSES
AND BY SEQUENCE OF SPOUSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPOUSES IN DEGREES OF CLOSENESS</th>
<th>FIRST</th>
<th>SUBSEQUENT</th>
<th>COMBINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. FIRST COUSINS &quot;TAWALI&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral Parallel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrilateral Parallel</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrilateral Parallel</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral Cross</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBD/FZS Cross</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FZD/MBS Cross</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2(1) CLASSIFICATORY FIRST COUSINS

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
|                                                      | #     | %          | #        | %        |
| Bilateral Parallel                                   | 1     | 0.5        | 0        | 0.0      | 1        | 0.34     |
| Patrilateral Parallel                               | 17    | 8.3        | 3        | 3.3      | 20       | 6.73     |
| Matrilateral Parallel                               | 10    | 4.9        | 4        | 4.3      | 14       | 4.70     |
| MBD/MZD Cross                                        | 8     | 3.9        | 0        | 0.0      | 8        | 2.70     |
| FZD/MBS Cross                                        | 1     | 0.5        | 0        | 0.0      | 1        | 0.34     |
| Subtotal                                             | 37    | 18.1       | 7        | 7.6      | 44       | 14.81    |

(ii) SECOND COUSINS "TAWALI"

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
| Patrilateral Parallel                               | 8     | 3.9        | 0        | 0.0      | 8        | 2.70     |
| Matrilateral Parallel                               | 3     | 1.5        | 2        | 2.2      | 5        | 1.70     |
| Cross (a)                                            | 8     | 3.9        | 4        | 4.3      | 12       | 4.04     |
| Subtotal                                             | 19    | 9.3        | 6        | 6.5      | 25       | 8.44     |

(iii) CLASSIFICATORY SECOND COUSINS

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
| Patrilateral Parallel                               | 9     | 4.4        | 2        | 2.2      | 11       | 3.70     |
| Matrilateral Parallel                               | 1     | 0.5        | 0        | 0.0      | 1        | 0.34     |
| Cross (b)                                            | 1     | 0.5        | 3        | 3.3      | 4        | 1.35     |
| Subtotal                                             | 11    | 5.4        | 5        | 5.5      | 16       | 5.39     |

(iv) AFFINES "AILA WAHID" (c)

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
|                                                      | 7     | 3.4        | 2        | 2.2      | 9        | 3.03     |

3(1) AFFINES "GARIB SAI" (d)

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
|                                                      | 5     | 2.4        | 15       | 16.3     | 20       | 6.73     |

(i1) "SERA" (e)

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
|                                                      | 22    | 10.7       | 16       | 17.3     | 38       | 12.79    |

(iii) "RIHMIYA" (f)

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
|                                                      | 6     | 2.9        | 3        | 3.3      | 9        | 3.03     |

4. SPOUSES NOT CLOSE

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
|                                                      | 16    | 7.8        | 28       | 30.4     | 44       | 14.80    |

TOTALS

|                                                      |       |            |          |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|----------|
|                                                      | 205   | 100.0      | 92       | 100.0    | 297      | 100.00   |

a over 18 possibilities
b over 384 possibilities
c "one family", terms for first cousins are attached to individuals related by a marriage in the first ascending generation
d "just close", in the first ascending generation. Spouses related by a marriage in the second or third ascending generation
e distant lineal relationship, primarily agnatic, where spouses usually have the same sub-tribal affiliation
f distant lineal relationship, primarily uterine, where spouses usually have different sub-tribal affiliations
descent, also accepted by both sexes), the same might not hold for subsequent preferences. Most of my informants are women, and it is quite possible that their judgements differ from those of village men. Investigating marital preferences in Burri, a suburban village near Khartoum, Barclay (1964) found that his male informants married matrilateral cross cousins more frequently than they married matrilateral parallel cousins, though both of these marriage types were less prevalent than that with father's brother's daughter (120). Kennedy, working in Nubian Egypt, found yet another variation of the scale of diminishing marital preference. After patrilateral parallel cousins, next most desirable were patrilateral cross cousins, then matrilateral cross cousins, and finally (among near relatives), matrilateral parallel cousins (1977: 54).

Leaving aside the sticky problem of local variation in culture and in social organization, it may be that marital preferences are not the same for all members of a population. The women of Hofriyat might simply want their sons to marry daughters of their own siblings rather than daughters of their husband's sisters. For a woman's relationship with her sister-in-law is frequently riddled with tension. In many ways the two are rivals for her husband's attention and for the moral and financial support he bestows. The bond between brother and sister is exceedingly strong in Hofriyat, and is
hardly mitigated by their respective marriages. Moreover, the
tendency towards matrilocal residence (Chapter 1, also noted
by Barclay (1964: 88) for the village of Burri) and for
matrifocal groupings among women could well foster such
secondary preferences for marriage with maternal relatives.
As the reader will recall (Chapter 1), mothers are quite
influential in helping their sons to choose appropriate mates.
It is a man's mother who prepares for him a list of potential
brides, and it is she who advises him in making his selection.
On the other hand, women are married to men chosen by their
fathers and their brothers. So, given the way that marriages
are arranged, and the close bond that exists between brothers
and sisters, it is easy to see why mother's brother's
daughter/father's sister's son marriages occur more frequently
than do marriages between men and their father's sister's
daughters.

But this does not fully explain the superordinate
preference for matrilateral parallel cousin marriage. In
addition to my female friends, my principal male informant
considers a match of this sort to be more desirable than one
between direct cross cousins, though I must say that both
types are thought good, and any difference between them
slight. Why a preference for marriages of parallel cousins
over marriages of cross cousins? I submit one potentially
fruitful interpretation might be that parallel cousin marriage
is more consistent with the prevalent organizing idiom of enclosure. Marriages between parallel cousins are relatively less open than are marriages between cross cousins, for when parallel cousins marry, the families allied by the union stand in balanced relationship to one another. The genealogical calculation whereby spouses trace prior kinship is symmetrical. Symmetrical, too, are the rights and obligations by which their respective families are bound. Moreover, same sex siblings inherit equal shares of the property of their parents, and one may replace the other in a marriage following the latter's death.

On the other hand, when cross cousins marry, the respective families of the bride and of the groom stand in asymmetrical, unbalanced relationship: a brother remains morally responsible for his sister even after the latter's marriage. He is her legal custodian. He inherits twice the amount of property as does she at the death of their parents. Further, a woman relies upon her brother to support her in matters of disagreement with her husband. Circumstances such as these make marriages between cross cousins somewhat more problematic, somewhat more prone to disquiet than those between parallel cousins. Again, it is interesting that the relative simplicity of expressions describing parallel cousin relationship (awlad 'amm, patrilateral parallel cousins; awlad khalat, matrilateral
parallel cousins) as opposed to the more cumbersome terminology employed to describe the varieties of cross cousin relationship (i.e. wad 'ammat/bit khal, father's sister's son/mother's brother's daughter, etc.), underscores the symmetry of the former and the basic asymmetry of the latter.

Table IX is a compilation of all known marriages (186) involving villagers where kinship between spouses is considered garīb ṭawāli (first degree) or garīb shadīd (second degree). Over 70% of these are contracted between real or classificatory parallel cousins (same generation) or between real or classificatory second parallel cousins (one spouse and a parent of the other spouse are parallel cousins). While almost half of these marriages show spouses who are patrilateral parallel cousins, thus verifying the existence of a strong bias in favor of agnatic kin, it should be remembered that in practice a traditional preference for marriage with father's brother's daughter or son disguises what is oftentimes bilateral kinship computation.

Those marriages which are most desirable, which are so close they betray a history of close (ṭawāli) marriages in ascending generations, are those rare cases involving double parallel cousins, spouses whose fathers are brothers, whose mothers are sisters, and (usually) whose grandparents are also siblings (Figure 16). This is the ideal match, balanced and symmetrical in all respects, where kinship
## TABLE IX

**Comparison of All Marriages Where Prior Kinship Between Spouses Is of the First and Second Degrees of Relative Closeness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Marriages, Degrees 1 &amp; 2 Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parallel Cousins</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrilateral</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrilateral</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross Cousins</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBD/FZS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FZD/MBS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse &amp; Parent of Spouse are Cross Cousins</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Close Affines</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is at once traced patrilaterally, matrilaterally and bilaterally, and enclosure of the extended family group, the khashm el-beyt, is as perfect as possible in a social world.  

Figure 16: X and Y are Bilateral Parallel Cousins

OTHER IMPLICATIONS OF CLOSENESS

When villagers say they marry close, not only do they mean that they marry kin, they also mean that they marry their neighbors. Physical proximity confirms genealogical relationship, and in some cases it can be said to create kinship where none is demonstrable. Marriages between co-residents of Hofriyat occur with regularity. If we may be permitted to generalize from information presented in Table X,
village endogamy occurs roughly half of the time when individuals are entering their first marriages. This is a large proportion considering the size of the village, no more than 650 residents when those persons temporarily living elsewhere are included. More significantly, about four-fifths of all first marriages involve spouses from within the village area of which Hofriyat is part. (The village area comprises four virtually contiguous villages extending three to four kilometers along the Nile at the easternmost edge of the fertile plain.) At the time of fieldwork, the majority of area endogamous first marriages noted for Hofriyat residents, other than those between two Hofriyatí, were contracted with residents of adjacent villages. Beyond these limits geographical distance, like genealogical distance, diminishes the probability of first marriage.

As Table X also shows, there is a tendency for persons initially to marry within their own sub-tribes or major lineages, loose groupings of agnatic kin who demonstrate descent from common eponymous ancestors. Sub-tribal endogamy is not a strongly voiced preference, however. Many people who claim ignorance of the tribal affiliations of their grandmothers or of their brothers' wives nevertheless are fully aware of the degree of kinship that obtains between these relatives and their respective spouses. Thus I am inclined to think that sub-tribal endogamy is merely a by-
TABLE X
PERCENTAGE COMPARISON OF FIRST AND SUBSEQUENT MARRIAGES
WITH RESPECT TO TYPE OF ENDOGAMY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FIRST</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>SUBSEQUENT</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MALES %</td>
<td>FEMALES %</td>
<td>MALES %</td>
<td>FEMALES %</td>
<td>MALES %</td>
<td>FEMALES %</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BETWEEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traceable Kin</td>
<td>76.7&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>66.7&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>28.7&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>38.1&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Endogamous&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>70.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Village Endogamous&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>31.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Tribally</td>
<td>61.5&lt;sup&gt;g&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>62.4&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>47.3&lt;sup&gt;i&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>48.6&lt;sup&gt;j&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Extreme limits: 67.6-79.4, known & unknown cases (N=238)
<sup>b</sup> Extreme limits: 57.6-71.2, " & " " (N=295)
<sup>c</sup> Extreme limits: 23.1-42.6, " & " " (N=108)
<sup>d</sup> Extreme limits: 31.4-49.0, " & " " (N=51)
<sup>e</sup> N's exclude cases where neither spouse was born in the area
<sup>f</sup> N's exclude cases where neither spouse was born in the village
<sup>g</sup> Extreme limits: 58.0-69.9, known & unknown cases (N=238)
<sup>h</sup> Extreme limits: 52.9-68.1, " & " " (N=295)
<sup>i</sup> Extreme limits: 32.4-63.9, " & " " (N=108)
product of the stated preference for marriages between close kin.

All preference for close marriage decreases sharply when people marry for a second time. Then the field of potential spouses is considerably wider both for men and for women, with the most significant change being that marriages between traceable kin are much less common. The fact that close kinship need not obtain between those who wed for the second time effectively enhances integration of the village area by extending the range of marriageable "close" kin for the offspring of a sibling group (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Second Marriage Extends the Range of Marriageable Kin. A marriage between Ego and the daughter of one of his parent's siblings is most desirable, although marriage to a daughter of one of his father's other wife's siblings would also be considered close.
Earlier it was noted that individuals who are considered *garīb shadīd* or *garīb sai* (second and third degrees of close kinship) need not be consanguineal kin. Marriages between near affines are also desirable and are classed as one or the other of these types depending upon the relative remoteness of the link to which they are traced. The multiple marriages of men and of women (simultaneous or serial marriages for men, serial marriages only, for women) provide contexts from which future close marriages might result. For multiple marriages create close relationship and marriageability in subsequent generations where none would have existed otherwise. This is true in a limited sense when a man increases the number of his descendants by having children with more than one wife, since the children of each wife are recognized as siblings of the children of all other wives. All bear their father's name, all are readily identifiable as members of the same extended family, the same *khāshm el-beyt* (though in fact they usually live in different *ḥaššan*, each wife being domiciled separately). In genealogies they are rarely distinguished, and marriages between children of patrilateral half-siblings are equivalent to marriages between children of full siblings.

However, a woman's children by two or more husbands belong to the households and descent groups of their respective fathers. Even so, they are considered siblings for the purposes of marriage. Thus, children of matrilateral
half-siblings are considered highly appropriate mates. Here we have an example of how marriages of the first degree of relative closeness (tawāli) may be contracted between individuals from different lines of descent.

Before considering the significance of uterine relationships in Hofriyat, some further implications of multiple marriage for determining subsequent marriageability should be mentioned. Should an individual marry the child of his or her father's wife's sibling or, conversely, the child of his or her mother's husband's sibling (as in Figure 15), such a marriage will be classed as garīb shādīd. A variation of this, involving the principle of relative age, can occur upon dissolution of the marriage through which affinal relationship is traced (a and b in Figure 15, supra). All relationships of this type are subject to classificatory extension in subsequent descending generations, though marriages between remote affines are classed as garīb saī, only somewhat close.

But multiple marriage also creates a type of kinship which it is tempting to describe as fictional, though villagers consider persons who marry on the strength of such a relationship to be garīb saī, or sometimes, garīb bisīt (a little close). Such kinship obtains between the descendants of siblings of two women who were married to the same men, or of two men who were married to the same woman (Figure 18). In
the absence of more direct links, the marriages of their respective consanguineal kin to a single pivotal individual establish a certain degree of prior closeness between potential spouses.

Figure 18: Prior Closeness in a Marital Relationship
Determined by Marriage of Parents' Siblings to a Single Individual

THE IMPORTANCE OF UTERINE KINSHIP IN VILLAGE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Throughout the foregoing discussion it has become increasingly apparent that in determining relative degrees of close kinship much depends upon relationships traced through women. This is true even though the ideology of patrilineal descent conceals female links in genealogical reckoning beyond four or five generations from the present. The continuous coalescence of uterine links with agnatic relationships makes discrete and cohesive descent groups appear to be far more
common than they actually are. For unless there happens to be heritable property (notably land) of sufficient quantity to warrant co-operative effort on the part of heirs, corporate agnatic descent groups as such do not exist. At the time of my fieldwork there were only two such groups in all of Hofriyat. As expected, in neither group are determinant relationships exclusively agnatic. In one bilateral inheritance as a result of intramarriage has enhanced corporateness and group identity, whereas the other began to take shape when a group of siblings inherited their mother's property. While the two groups are closely related, it is only in recent years that this kinship has been seen as grounds for intermarriage.

Cases 1 and 2

Individual A claimed certain flood-lands and wadi plantations that were duly registered to him in 1906. His first wife died giving birth to his daughter B (Figure 19), whereupon he married his deceased wife's sister through the sororate. His second wife bore him two sons who survived to adulthood.

Because A was the only surviving offspring of his parents, B his daughter, and C and D his sons, were precluded from marrying patrilateral parallel cousins. B married her
father's and mother's distant agnatic kinsman (agnatic links are those presently remembered, although closer uterine relationships may have intervened). C married his classificatory matrilateral parallel cousin, who was also his affine through the second marriage of his mother's brother's wife. C later took another wife to whom he was not related. Finally, D married his mother's sister's daughter. When A died, his property was divided into five equal parts: in keeping with Islamic inheritance rules, A's sons each received two shares to his daughter's one. While it is difficult to know for sure at this point, I believe that all three of A's children must have inherited small amounts of land from their respective mothers, as well. 7

Case 1

C and D, who had worked together with their father prior to his death, decided to continue this arrangement even though they now held separate shares of land. Their numerous descendants married amongst themselves as much as possible, 8 thereby strengthening the corporate unit (Figure 19, for one descending generation only). C and D are now dead, but their property, though extremely fractioned in principle, is still farmed co-operatively by their offspring and their offspring's children and grandchildren.
Figure 19: Case 1 -- Marriages within a Corporate Descent Group
(For descendants of "B" see Figure 20)
There is, however, some evidence that this group is beginning to disintegrate. As a general rule, while households may co-operate in farming, each takes a portion of the harvest that corresponds to its actual holdings. Because in this case owned land must be shared among a growing number of descendants, many members of the group have found it necessary to rent additional space for cultivation in order to support their families. As land per person decreases in amount, some of the youngest men will be forced to seek work outside the village. Even now a few have married kin other than members of the corporate unit.

Yet, some families in the group whose parents and grandparents produced fewer offspring do not suffer as greatly from land fractionation. Such families prosper, they have been able to acquire additional land by lease or purchase or have otherwise diversified their interests, and their children rarely marry distant kin.

Case 2

The descendants of A's daughter, B, form the other corporate group in Hofriyat, though this is far smaller than that consisting of her half-brothers' heirs. While there is no doubt whatsoever that B's considerable inherited property contributed greatly to the corporate activity now engaged in by her descendants, the group is, of course, named for the
lineage to which her husband belonged. B had two sons, both of whom are still living, and one daughter, now deceased. One son married a non-relative. The other first married his mother's mother's brother's son's daughter, his classificatory cross cousin. Then, after this woman's death, he married his mother's mother's sister's daughter's daughter, his classificatory matrilateral parallel cousin or bit khalat. B's daughter married her brother's first wife's father, her mother's mother's brother's son, but only after the death of his first wife. Thus, both of B's children who married relatives married their matrilateral kin (Figure 20).

B's children's children are much intramarried, though a preponderance of female offspring has limited the extent to which the three families have been able to avoid marriages of their children to more distant kin. Interestingly, one of B's son's daughters is now married to her mother's sister's son, a descendant of B's half-brother (and matrilateral parallel cousin) D. Thus, while one corporate group (that of C's and D's heirs) is showing signs of disintegration, one part of that group and members of a related group may have begun to join forces. Through repeated close marriages of this sort there eventually may form yet another corporate entity. And if so, the resultant group will not be based solely upon agnatic kinship links, though inevitably this is how it will appear to members of descending generations.
Figure 20: Case 2 — Marriages of B's Children and Grandchildren
Case 3

There exists strong evidence of at least one case where a corporate group is in the process of formation and will soon emerge as such if favorable conditions persist. In this instance, an old woman N was divorced when very young. Her only child, a daughter, continued to live with her in her parents' home after her husband's departure. Upon her parents' deaths, N was permitted by her siblings to continue living in their house, and in 1976 she was considered its sole owner. N never remarried, but worked to support herself and her daughter by selling cooked food to villagers, and by purchasing and distributing the raw materials for several cottage crafts that occupy village women in their spare moments. N also markets the finished products in Kabushiya, and over the years has otherwise diversified her trade. Through her entrepreneurial activities she has been able to amass a respectable amount of money. Twice now, she has taken herself on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

When her daughter married, she married N's brother's son, an industrious farmer, but one who owned no land. N gave money to the couple with which to purchase a small amount of land that someone living outside of Hofriyat wished to sell. Since that time the family has been acquiring land little by
little. N's daughter and husband continue to live with N in her house. Moreover, N's daughter's daughter also lives here with her husband who is both her father's brother's son and her mother's mother's brother's son's son. Another of N's grand-daughters recently married her father's wad 'amm tawālī, who is, therefore, her mother's mother's brother's son, a man considered the most enterprising non-landed farmer in Hofriyat. The men of this group, husbands (matrilateral kin) of N's descendants plus her daughter's son (see Figure 21, below), presently co-operate in agricultural pursuits. It
remains to be seen if in succeeding generations their offspring will also marry among themselves and thus help to consolidate the group. This case is most instructive, in that it provides a succinct example of how, over time, a corporate kin group based initially upon uterine relationships may become a corporate patrilineal descent group in fact, as well as in genealogical fiction.

***

In spite of the way they may be presented by Hofriyati informants, in actuality village genealogies are not discrete. Various lines of descent are not strictly isolable, though, as demonstrated earlier, the dogma of patrilineality makes them appear to be so at least in ascending generations. As we have seen, women frequently occupy important positions in recent kinship reckonings. While the genealogical positions of women are not enduring as are those of (some) men, they are nonetheless crucial for determining marriageability and for deciding inheritance.

This importance is acknowledged by all Hofriyati. For when gathering genealogical information with the help of older men whose expertise lay in the keeping of family records, I found that they employ two distinct forms of presentation. Predictably, they begin by relating a "nisba awlad 'amm", that is, a line of descent traced exclusively through males. Such
A genealogy starts with the name of a male ancestor and is followed by a systematic listing of his descendants (eliminating some who died leaving no offspring or whose sole progeny were female) and includes indication of the lines along which fissioning has occurred. Information about daughters and marriages was provided in this context only at my persistent request.

The other method by which (male) informants impart genealogical information stresses interrelationship, as opposed to fissioning, among the lines of awlad 'amm. This is referred to as a "nisba awlad khalat", a genealogy of the children of maternal aunts. It consists of listing, for a single ascendant generation, a group of sisters and their respective, usually multiple, husbands. Now, while marriage with a near kinsman is indeed preferable, sometimes marriageable close kinsmen do not exist and sisters must marry further afield. Moreover, as noted earlier, people contemplating second marriage are not constrained to marry "close". Thus it often happens that the non-kin husbands of sisters are themselves non-kin or remote relatives. A nisba awlad khalat shows how several families mutually distant or unrelated if patri-genealogies alone be considered, are in fact closely related when uterine links in immediate ascending generations are filled in. And such links are grounds for future close marriages between the members of previously
unrelated descent lines. The explicit tracing of matrilateral kinship through sisters and their descendants provides whatever fluidity and integration there exists in village social organization. As described in Chapter 2, uterine relationships supply metaphoric flesh and blood that bind together the "bones" of Hofriyat society, its various and increasing lines of awlad 'amm.

CONCLUSION: FATNA'S DILEMMA

In sum, prior kinship is traced through one or both parents of each spouse when determining eligibility for marriage. Table XI presents a breakdown for spouses of either sex entering first or subsequent marriages where relationship is genealogically demonstrable, of the parent through whom kinship to the opposite spouse is reckoned. It will be seen that both sexes show a greater tendency to trace through fathers than to trace through mothers where first marriages are concerned, and that this tendency is, as expected (page 128), somewhat more marked for females than it is for males. Nevertheless, roughly a third of all first traceable marriages both for men and for women are contracted with a matrilateral relative.

In contrast, Table XII presents data for all known traceable marriages between consanguineal kin with respect to
### TABLE XI

**RELATIVE OF MARITAL AFFILIATION** (parent or other kinsman through whom prior relationship to spouse is traced) **FOR ALL FIRST AND SUBSEQUENT MARRIAGES WHERE PRIOR RELATIONSHIP IS TRACEABLE (all "close" kin and distant affinal kin), MALES AND FEMALES DESCRIBED SEPARATELY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIVE OF MARITAL AFFILIATION</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th></th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FIRST</td>
<td>SUBSEQUENT</td>
<td>FIRST</td>
<td>SUBSEQUENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATHER</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTHER</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATHER AND MOTHER EQUALLY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SISTER*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRST WIFE*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISTANT KINSMAN,* EXCHANGE MARRIAGE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS:</strong></td>
<td>166</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Marriages where spouses are affinally related only
the furthest kinship link to which prior relationship is traced. Here it will be seen that kinship ultimately was calculated 42.4% of the time to an ancestral pair of brothers. However, 27.7% of the time computation led to an ancestral pair of sisters, and 23.1% of the time to an ancestral brother and sister, with some minor variations comprising the remainder. What is most striking here is the frequency with which prior kinship ultimately is traced to one or more women (over half of the time) in spite of the voiced preference to trace relationship exclusively through males. What is even more significant, relationship to an ancestral sibling pair is calculated through any combination of male and female links, bearing in mind the expressed preference that the relatives of both spouses in the first ascendant generation be male, and following down the scale of diminishing preference that the immediate ascendant relatives of both spouses be female, and so on.

Considering all that has been discussed, we are left with the inescapable conclusion that kinship in Hofriyat is reckoned cognatically.\footnote{9} Just as villagers recognize that both male and female contributions are necessary to the conduct of any enterprise, whether ceremonial, economic, or reproductive, so do they trace kinship both through males and through females when formalizing the prior relationships upon which marriages, in some respects the focal social groupings of
### TABLE XII

**ANCESTRAL PAIR TO WHICH MARRIAGES BETWEEN TRACEABLE KIN ARE TRACED, CONSANGUINEALLY TRACED MARRIAGES, ALL KNOWN CASES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ULTIMATE LINK TRACED TO</th>
<th>LINEALLY TRACED MARRIAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHERS</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SISTERS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROTHER &amp; SISTER</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAIR OF BROTHERS &amp; PAIR OF SISTERS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO PAIR OF BROTHER &amp; SISTER</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASSIFICATORY BROTHERS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASSIFICATORY BROTHER &amp; SISTER</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>177</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hofriyat society, are based. Not only is prior relationship between consanguineal kin traced cognatically, so too is kinship between marriageable affines. Table XIII shows that over half of all known marriages between prior affines are traced to the former marriages of kinswomen whether or not the immediate relative through whom relationship is computed is male or female, and regardless of the sex of the individual from whom relationship is traced. While I would not go so far as to state that the sex of a relative is unimportant in determining prior kinship between spouses in Hofriyat, I do maintain that its significance is contingent, and limited to the first ascending generation where there exists both a jural and a statistical preference for tracing through a set of males.

TABLE XIII

ULTIMATE RELATIVE THROUGH WHICH MARRIAGES BETWEEN AFFINALLY TRACED KIN ARE TRACED, MALES AND FEMALES DESCRIBED SEPARATELY, ALL KNOWN CASES (N=58) (NUMBER OF AFFINALLY TRACED MARRIAGES=29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KINSHIP TO SPOUSE ULTIMATELY TRACED THROUGH THE MARRIAGE OF:</th>
<th>AFFINALLY TRACED MARRIAGES</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MALES</td>
<td>FEMALES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE RELATIVE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE RELATIVE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ultimately, then, when Hofriyati say they marry close, or when they say they marry *awlad 'amm*, they are using conventional idioms, idioms which signify that they in fact marry cognatic kin and are biased in favor of patrilateral relatives. It is some sort of prior kinship between spouses that is important above all else. For prior kinship, no matter how it is traced, binds potential spouses in a complicated web of social and moral obligation that is but strengthened by their marriage. It is only when biological parents are socially, morally, and legally obligated to each other that their offspring may develop into moral beings and become true Hofriyati. The closer, the more immediate the kinship between spouses, the more certain the outcome of this process, hence, one might think, the more appropriate the use of fertility.

Behaviorally, however, marital preference is existential. In those cases where extended families are also corporate units, closest marriages are both economically feasible and morally proper. But individuals sometimes forfeit opportunities to marry their preferred closest available relatives if other more distant matches, traceable in hundreds of different ways, appear to hold greater social and economic promise. The potential benefits thereby to be gained must be weighed carefully against the possibly pernicious effects of opening more widely the *khashm el-beyt* through marriages with
less immediate kin or non-kin.

Thus phrased in practical terms is the dilemma of Fatna the Beautiful: to whom does she entrust her fertility, her potential, and that of society as a whole? If she entrusts it to her brother, the kinsman to whom she is most morally obliged, her fertility is not used in a socially appropriate way. For her family then faces the possibility of becoming isolated, a dangerous mistake in this harsh land of scarce resources. On the other hand, to entrust her fertility to an outsider is an equally dangerous move, despite the possibility that the outsider in question may turn out to be a Sultan's son, a wealthy and powerful man. The perils of Fatna explore all facets of the dilemma with which villagers are confronted: how close is too close or close enough, and more tellingly, how distant too distant?
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. F.T.C. Moore (1975) provides a structural analysis of several "Fatna" tales, some of which are present in my own collection. He, too, finds that the stories explore difficulties in the practice of close marriage. Although our respective analyses are complementary, he pursues the problem from a different angle than that presented in this chapter.

2. Here, again, ideas having to do with cultivation parallel those concerning human reproduction: In Chapter 1 it was noted that onions are the most important (and prestigious) crop grown for profit in Hofriyat. There are basically two methods of producing onions for sale or consumption: first, people reserve some onions from last year's crop. The largest and best of these are planted four or five to an irrigation plot (hod, about 2m x 3m) and allowed to grow to maturity. When they flower, their seeds are carefully collected. Months later, in November or December, the seeds are scattered densely throughout the hod wherein grew the parent onion, itself referred to as the fahl or stallion. After about a month the seedlings have begun to form bulbs and are transplanted in orderly fashion to surrounding empty food. The seedlings are referred to as musmus. When fully grown, in late June or early July, there are the best and sweetest onions, much in demand throughout the country.

   However, the demand for onions is continuous, and people frequently complement their musmus crop with an earlier crop planted from last year's smallest reserved bulbs, what we think of as "onion sets". Although they circumvent the usual prolonged process of growing an onion from seed (in the "home" of its legitimate sire, surrounded by its "siblings") and may make a quick profit by being able to supply onions at a time when musmus are still immature, farmers say these onions, called "alwad haram", are definitely of inferior quality. (See Macmichael 1920, pp. 239-40 for a discussion of onion growing in Sudan.)

3. As more generally has been noted by anthropologists from Morgan to Levi-Strauss and beyond.

4. Needham discusses relative age with respect to kin terminology, noting that a single class of kin may include individuals of various ages (1971: 20). In
Hofriyat, if potential spouses are direct first cousins it is possible for an older woman to marry a younger man, though the differences in their ages ought not to be great. In all other cases, regardless of spouses' respective relative generations, the husband ought to be older than his wife. This appears to be more important for determining marriageability than the explicit tracing of known prior kinship, though the latter is undeniably significant. It is not uncommon for a man over the age of 50 to take an adolescent bride; the converse would never be permitted to occur.

5. It has occurred to me that when we speak of marital preference as something which concerns individuals and their ascendant or descendant kin, we could be missing a crucial point. In Hofriyat, where all same sex siblings are equivalent with regard to marriage, marital preference should perhaps be viewed from the perspective of the sibling group. For example, in certain situations, if one brother marries his father's brother's daughter, this might be sufficient to perpetuate conditions of "enclosure" within the extended family, leaving other brothers and sisters freer to marry further afield (possibly then to solidify relations with matrilateral or other kin). This idea is not yet thought out, and is offered here as gratuitous speculation.

6. Where "extreme limits" accompany "known cases", there are gaps in my information. The lower limit was determined by combining known cases with unknown cases, assuming that all unknown cases are negative with respect to the characteristic described. The upper limit was determined similarly, here assuming, however, that all unknown cases are positive with respect to the characteristic described. For "Marriages Between Traceable Kin" I have reason to believe that the percentages worked out for known cases are only fairly accurate. Most of the unknown cases are people who have moved away from the village or have died, leaving no close kin behind with whom I could check prior relationship. It is unlikely that all of these couples are non-relatives, but somewhat less unlikely that all are traceable kin. For "Sub-Tribally Endogamous Marriages" the same applies, except that here I tend to trust the lower estimate: when people do not know the sub-tribal affiliation of one partner in a marriage, I think it rather unlikely that this will be the same as that of the known partner and fellow Hofriyati.
7. Inferring from land records which show that B's mother's brother and her male patrilateral parallel cousin both held land in their respective names.

8. In all, eight contemporary marriages (61.5%, compared to the statistic of 22.4% for first marriages in the rest of the population) have been between patrilateral parallel cousins. One marriage is between bilateral cross cousins, three others have been to matrilateral parallel cousins in other landed families, and only one to a remote matrilateral kinswoman.

9. I am extremely grateful to Ken Burridge for pointing this out to me. I do not know why I did not notice the obvious cognation in relationships I was describing before this, except, perhaps, that I was looking for patrilineal descent groups, the existence of which anthropological (and, it seems, Hofriyati) ideology has heretofore decreed (as noted by Leach (1961) and by Needham (1971)). While the problem of cognatic descent in Sudan is most intriguing, a full treatment of it is beyond the scope of this thesis and must await development in later publications.
CHAPTER 4

BOUNDARIES: PARAMETERS OF THE INTERIORITY IDIOM

IN THE FIELD, NOVEMBER 16, 1976

It is another clean-cool day, refreshingly still and cloudless. Zaineb, Samira and I walk single file beneath a young sun on the high firm ground of the railway track, following it south towards Kabushiya and the station. Two fellow Hofriyati are leaving this morning by train on the first leg of their pilgrimage to Mecca. We have come to see them off.

At Kabushiya a great many pilgrims and their wellwishers from other villages have gathered in colorful abandon, the women obviously enjoying a rare outing and the chance to see distant kin and revive old acquaintances. A number of them greet me; most by now seem to know who I am and are not surprised by my presence.

The train arrives. Travellers board, loaded down with baskets of provisions for their long and arduous journey. *Ma'a sallāma's* are hurriedly called through coach windows and within moments the train is gone and the crowd begins to disperse.

An old man whom I have never before seen stares at me throughout the pilgrims' departure. As the train pulls out of
the station, he approaches Samira and with a gesture asks who or what I might be. My friends, long accustomed to such reaction whenever I should accompany them outside the village, tell him that I am Samira's bit 'amm, her father's brother's daughter. They have a difficult time keeping straight faces while the old man searches his long and undoubtedly clouded memory for the name of Samira's relative who had fathered a light-eyed child. His puzzlement deepens but my friends are relishing their joke and appear reluctant to end the charade. At last I can stand it no longer and tell him the truth. "I have come from Canada", I say, "to live for a while in Hofriyat." Disbelieving, he looks me in the eye for a second or two, then turns to Samira and asks, "Does she eat kisra?"

"Yes", Samira answers.

"Well, then, she is Sudanese."

FOOD AND IDENTITY

Scenes similar to that just described were commonplace during the months I spent in the field. People, upon learning that I lived in the village, and what is more, that I did not employ a cook, invariably asked, "What does she eat?" My alimentary habits were a central and leading concern among all whom I met. Like the karro driver who first brought me to Hofriyat after the departure of the archaeological crew, such
people generally felt that being non-Sudanese somehow precluded me from eating Sudanese foods, as if, in order to preserve my Canadian-ness, my Khawaja identity, it was incumbent upon me to consume Western foods, and further, to eat them at a high table using plate, knife and fork. But, contrary to popular misconception, I frequently ate Sudanese foods in the company of villagers and on such occasions used no special tools or preparations, a trivial and in no way unpleasant feat. Because I did this, however, my neighbors boasted widely that I had become Sudanese, or better, Hofriyati. Although I endeavored to follow local custom wherever possible in other matters as well, the fact that I ate kisra at communal meals alone ensured a large measure of acceptance among villagers and non-villagers alike.

I soon came to appreciate that in a very real sense what one eats in Hofriyat determines or identifies who and what one is. The act of consuming or incorporating has symbolic significance, providing a further expression of the enclosure idiom so prevalent throughout Hofriyat life. Consuming, making that which originally is independent and external to one's body an essential part of oneself is, as we shall see, a powerful metaphoric operation. As with the qualities of cleanliness, purity and smoothness, associations of which were traced in Chapter 2, and of closeness, discussed in Chapter 3, a consideration of food and of eating leads us to explore
still other associations and related metaphoric contexts, all of which ultimately are informed by the primary organizing concept of interiority.

The consumption of certain foods and the avoidance of others aid in establishing both group and individual identities. Reliance upon kisra, the riverain staple made of millet flour, water and a touch of salt, marks off Arab Sudanese (especially sedentaries) from other population groups. As mentioned above, one who regularly eats kisra is considered either to be or to become "Sudanese" (Hofriyati). Another, perhaps more apparent context in which foods signal differences between peoples is that of religion: prohibitions on the eating of pork\(^1\), shellfish, blood and other items distinguish Muslim Sudanese from their non-Muslim countrymen. Thus, a basic similarity of diet is characteristic of Hofriyati as a group.

However, not all villagers eat the same foods. And such dietary differences as exist are not simply matters of personal preference which one might expect to find among members of any human society. Often they result from self-imposed restriction. There were countless occasions on which I was invited to dine with a group of women. At such times it was all but inevitable that one or more guests would deny themselves some dish or ingredient, remarking, "Ašlu, ma bākilo ("Never do I eat it"). For many, such prohibition
undoubtedly has practical significance: the most commonly avoided food is milk. Those who refuse it typically say it causes them nausea or other digestive disorders, facts which may point to lactose intolerance, common in African populations. But there were numerous idiosyncratic avoidances where practical benefit was less readily apparent. Several people, most of them women, told me they do not eat one or more varieties of "small meat" (lahma saghira), that is, pigeon, fish and eggs, all prestigious foods associated with female fertility. Others avoid "large meat" (lahma kahira), goat, mutton and beef, except on ceremonial occasions and even then profess reluctance. Personal avoidances may also be extended to certain types of oil, cheeses, herbs and spices, certain types of kisra (depending on the variety of millet used, and whether or not the mixture is allowed to ferment slightly before baking), leavened bread, vegetables such as okra, eggplant, squash or greens and the sauces made from them.

In Hofriyat, food avoidances appear to have a particularizing function. More than anything else they serve to promote the uniqueness of individuals, to establish differences among people where otherwise (as in the case of sisters) there exists a good deal of social similarity. In short, they are assertions of personal identity.
Further, many of the foods eaten or avoided have symbolic significance. They are inherently related to such qualities as purity, cleanliness and fertility. Their consumption or avoidance by village women thus might serve to encourage or to emphasize in these individuals the desirable physical characteristics with which they are associated.

Food is also used in the formulation of messages whereby people lay claim to prestige or to social status. Scarce or expensive foods like those described in Chapter 2, those which are "white" or enclosed, usually are reserved for guests. Serving them is a mark of gracious hospitality. A guest, typically a non-relative or an in-law who is not also immediately "close", is at some point expected to return the favor when he or she plays host, while increasing the variety of foods or elaborating upon the dishes prepared. Over time, such a system could result in a kind of culinary potlatching, though the meager resources of villagers place limitations upon the extent to which hospitality might be permitted to amplify. On a smaller scale, however, women frequently gauge the warmth of their reception when visiting the homes of non or distant kin by the sweetness of the tea they are given to drink: there should be sufficient sugar to render it palatable and not bitter. Variations may be read as mutual status messages of one sort or another. I am afraid that when I began visiting villagers' homes I was sometimes unable to
drink much of the syrupy tea so often served and, without then realizing it, likely offended many a host who was extending a cautious welcome by making the brew especially sweet.

In a similar vein, men engage in status jockeying through the physical appearances of their respective wives. For if one has a corpulent wife it is considered a mark of prosperity. Her size is an obvious sign that such a woman is well provided for, need not work hard, and may spend a great deal of time entertaining friends and kin or being entertained in turn. Large women are deemed beautiful and healthy, they are living reflections of their husbands' ability and concern. In the village, women almost never diet to lose weight. They do, however, eat certain foods in addition to those served at family meals with the expressed intention of gaining weight and building strength. For an important quality of the ideal woman in Hofriyat is that she be a good consumer when provided the opportunity, and women consider this both a sign and an integral privilege of marital status.

In the case of host and husband, individuals assert social position not through personal food avoidances, but by providing comestibles for others. These others, guests and wives, help affirm status claims through consumption of foods thus provided. Here, then, provision and consumption aid in the establishment of mutual relationship and of individual social identity.
CANNIBALISM

The various significances attached to the ingestion of food items are, as noted above, further expressions of the idiom of relative interiority which informs countless areas of life in Hofriyat. But there are limits, internal as well as external, to what is considered appropriate in terms of that idiom. Boundaries exist at either end of the interiority-exteriority continuum. Only a certain range of behaviors, only certain types of human interaction, are deemed fitting and proper. For example, I have already described the imperative that Hofriyati marry "close". Marriages between non-kin and non-Hofriyati are the least desirable sort as they fail to fulfill the interiority obligation in any of its forms. Marriages between brothers and sisters, on the other hand, are forbidden, for such unions are considered too close, hence, would overstep the boundary which prevents interiority from achieving ultimate expression in the human world. Humans, then, are ideally poised somewhere in between these two extremes. And, violations of relative interiority, those acts which enable us to discover the boundaries of the Hofriyati world, are of two types: they may be violations of positive (too close) or of negative (too distant) excess.
To return to our consideration of food and propriety in marriage, we have seen that the normal relationship between a husband and his wife is that of provider to consumer. Interestingly, violations of this model are expressed metaphorically as food violations. In Hofriyat a woman's property, her goats, her clothing and jewelry, belong to her exclusively. Her husband cannot dispose of these things unilaterally, without first obtaining her consent. But, despite this understanding, men sometimes sell their wives' animals and gold, neglecting to inform them until after the transaction is completed. If she has been slighted in this way a woman may be heard to complain, "zoji akulni", "my husband has eaten me." Here consumer becomes provider, the roles of man and woman are reversed. But more than this, consumer becomes, at least metaphorically, that which is consumed. Violation of a woman's personal property is seen as an anti-social act, an act akin to cannibalism. For her husband, in taking her possessions to be his own, goes too far in the direction of interiority. He violates her integrity, her identity, her independent existence. In a sense he subsumes her being with his own. Like Fatna's crime of incest depicted in Chapter 3, his is a violation of excess, the over-determination of closeness.

There is another situation in which a woman might accuse her husband of wishing to devour her, and that is when she
feels herself unjustly overworked. Here, too, there occurs a breakdown of the provider-consumer relationship. Her husband ostensibly has adequate resources to provide for his wife and family but withholds funds, possibly with the hope of taking a second wife. When a woman must cultivate in order to make ends meet as well as perform her other not insignificant domestic tasks because her husband has abnegated financial responsibility, she will claim that he is eating her. He uses money freed by her labor for his own ends such that, in a round about way, his wife becomes provider and he, consumer. The husband is draining his wife, using her up as it were, without replenishing that which he takes, and for this he is considered a "cannibal".

Now, accusations of cannibalism may be invoked in circumstances where the organizing idiom of relative interiority is breached either by positive or by negative excess, as the following incident will illustrate. One day I went to a nearby village in the company of Medina, Zaineb's teenaged daughter, to visit some of her relatives. As we walked along a narrow passageway between baishan, we passed an elderly gentleman who greeted us in customary fashion. Medina, normally courteous and outgoing, barely acknowledged his words. Immediately she increased her pace in an effort to put distance between the man and ourselves. When we were safely away, I asked her why she had behaved so strangely.
"He is a sorcerer", she replied, "He eats people." I thought he looked rather harmless, and asked how she knew this. Medina told me that the man was very rich, but that he had inherited his wealth from his wife who had died leaving no other living kin. This, it seems, was enough to make him suspect; he was at least metaphorically cannibalistic. Confirmation, however, came in the fact that for several years he had lived as a tradesman in the Southern Sudan among Azande, who, for Northern Sudanese, are reputed to be cannibals and sorcerers all. Not only had this man assumed the role of consumer to that of his deceased wife as provider, he had left his home, by himself, to settle for a long period of time in a place which villagers consider foreign and dangerous and where all with whom he came into contact are noted for their magical powers. These circumstances led some people to fear him as a cannibal-sorcerer (sahār) upon his return, a fear which is diminishing as social contact with the man increases.

Those who persistently behave in ways considered nonsocial or anti-social are held to be cannibal-sorcerers in the literal sense. Near Hofriyat there is only one other man with this reputation, and he has earned the title because he is something of a recluse. He is middle-aged, unmarried, and lives alone just outside the village limits in the desert, close to the graveyard. As these behaviors are socially
inappropriate some say he must also be a cannibal, though others attribute to him only a lesser malignancy, possession of an evil eye.

Briefly, then, violations of social norms based upon the organizing principle of relative interiority frequently are expressed as cannibalism, both actual and metaphoric.

THREE BROTHERS

As seen from the foregoing section, transgressions of the idiom that informs Hofriyat life are depicted as causing centripetal excess: villagers who become either too close or too distant ultimately are seen as people who, in some way or another, consume fellow humans. Society implodes, folds in upon itself, when members overstep its inner or outer limits. So, too, when a villager becomes the victim of a perceived violation of "closeness" his or her response tends towards excessive interiority: typically, such individuals are said to desire death (dair am-môt) and might well attempt to take their own lives. Witness the following case.

At the end of July, Seyfadin married the daughter of his father's brother's son (his bit wad 'amm). At that time he lived with his father and his two brothers, 'Isa and Jaffar, and their respective wives and children in his father's hōsh. One of these brothers, 'Isa, and his family then occupied free
of rent rooms that villagers said Seyfadin had built for himself several years earlier but had not as yet used. Prior to his marriage Seyfadin informed both of his brothers that after the wedding he wished to assume occupancy of his house, and warned 'Isa that he should make other arrangements for accommodation.

Now Seyfadin is the youngest of the three brothers and the most industrious, according to my village friends. He worked hard to accumulate enough money to stage an elaborate wedding, one during which there was feasting and dancing every night for a week. His older brothers have the reputation for being somewhat lazier; whereas in the past they had combined rental farming with house building, it seems they are presently content to rely solely upon the meager returns of the latter to support their growing families.

Soon after his wedding, Seyfadin told his brother 'Isa and 'Isa's wife that he definitely planned to move into his house with his bride after the 'Id es-SaghIr, the feast that follows the fasting month of Ramadan. Apparently he reminded 'Isa of his plans every day during August and September, yet 'Isa made no move whatever to build his own house. The 'Id took place from September 25th to the 28th. On the latter date Seyfadin gave 'Isa 10L towards the start of a new house, and asked him to remove his furniture, suggesting that 'Isa and his family might reside temporarily with his wife's mother
and sister who occupy adjoining houses in a large courtyard in another section of the village. Still 'Isa did not vacate the house he had lived in since its construction seven years ago.

In the days that followed I learned that all three brothers had contributed their labor to the building of that house; Seyfadin, however, had supplied the wood and other expensive materials. While all agreed that Seyfadin had contributed the lion's share to the project, 'Isa and Jaffar felt that they, too, had a right to use the building. Moreover, 'Isa felt that his prolonged occupancy had established his claim to live there on a permanent basis.

At noon on September 29th, Seyfadin went to the disputed house. 'Isa was not at home. He told 'Isa's wife to gather up her belongings and to vacate the premises. She refused. They quarelled heatedly; in the fray he hit her with his walking stick and threatened to upset the table upon which she kept her kitchen equipment. At this, 'Isa's wife fled to her sister's hosh.

By now the entire village had been alerted to the argument. 'Isa's wife's sister threatened to send to Kabushiya for the police but was prevented from doing so by the informal council of men that quickly took shape outside her door. All returned to Seyfadin's father's hosh to talk the matter out.

While the talks were proceeding, 'Isa and Jaffar arrived. Both claimed that it was Seyfadin who was in the wrong, that
in fact the house belonged equally to all three brothers. Upon hearing this, Seyfadin grabbed his knife from its cinch on his left arm and moved to plunge it into his heart. Immediately Seyfadin's father, his mother-in-law, sister, brother's wife (wife of Jaffar), and brother (Jaffar) rushed forward and attempted to wrestle away the knife. His mother-in-law and sister-in-law were badly gashed as Seyfadin struggled forcefully to prove the truth of his position and expose his brothers' treachery, thus to salvage his tarnished honor by this final act. It was with considerable effort that his relatives managed to remove the knife from his grasp; Seyfadin himself was unharmed.

The women were then sent out of the room. The men of the village convened to assess the situation, and came to what all considered an equitable solution: Seyfadin was to pay each of his brothers 16 for their respective shares of the house, which 'Isa was made to vacate immediately. At the same time, all three brothers were forced to agree to co-operate in building 'Isa and his wife a new home. Thus was the bond between brothers reaffirmed.

Later I asked my friends why Seyfadin should wish to kill himself over what seemed a rather trivial matter. The answer came simply, "He is angry with his brothers, they said he was wrong, he wishes to die." It appears that such response is not considered unusual; violation of the normally supportive
relationship between close kin frequently leads to threatened (or actual) suicide. When a dispute of this nature occurs such violence as erupts is not directed to offending kinfolk straightforwardly, but obliquely: it is directed inward, towards the victim himself. It is through suicide, in a sense the consumption of self, that an individual might best avenge the wrongdoings of closest kin. In Hofriyat, the "desire for death" is the idiom by which this is expressed. Even if one does not actively seek to take his own life, he (or she) who feels wronged might in fact give up the will to live, refusing to eat, thus becoming ill, eventually to perish. Perhaps it would not fall too short of the mark to suggest that demise of the supportive relationship between closest kin is a message which villagers ultimately interpret to be the death of self.

Discussed in the next few sections of this chapter are several other instances of what I am calling "boundary violation", idiomatically expressed as consumption or incorporation, and their various consequences for the people of Hofriyat.

STRONG EMOTION, CLOSE KIN AND VIOLATION OF BODILY INTEGRITY

Self-control and dignity are qualities highly valued by Hofriyati. The display of strong emotion is something to be
avoided, though it is tolerated more readily in women than in men. Often when an individual experiences anger towards kinfolk or grief at their loss, or is extremely anxious over their well being, she claims to be ill. She explains that she is being eaten up by excessive emotion, consumed by something like a fire within. Here, then, the metaphor of eating/consuming is used in a general sense to describe situations in which things that are normally under control, regulated by the relative concepts of harmony, balance and closeness or interiority (as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3) go awry. By way of further example, one is said to be consumed by fever, by pain, by hunger, or by a thorn that has punctured the skin. In such cases we see consumption as a passive construct: in company with the woman who feels herself mistreated by her husband, one who experiences physical discomfort or emotional excess is consumed. Here, too, to be consumed is to experience violation of self, in this case a violation of bodily integrity.

AWLAD LEBAN

There is at least one other context, however, in which the act of consuming is highly significant. As mentioned earlier, Hofriyati feel that, in a sense, one is or becomes a particular type of person as a result of the foods one
ingests. Nowhere is this more readily discernible than in the case of mother's milk.

Sometime around 1930 two young sisters, Howari and Saida, who were also neighbors gave birth to sons in the same month. Throughout the days following their respective periods of confinement they visited each other repeatedly, as is local custom, keeping company while their husbands were away in the fields. One day when Howari was busy outside the house, her baby began to cry. Thinking that he must be hungry, Saida picked him up and nursed him.

In 1976, Saida's youngest son (aged approximately 25 years) wished to marry the daughter of one of Howari's eldest sons. But the match, which was otherwise close and therefore desirable, could not be sanctioned by local religious authorities. Whether wittingly or not, Saida's action in nursing her sister's son had created a bond of natural siblinghood between her children and those of Howari. Thus it would have been incestuous for Howari's son's daughter to marry her father's mother's sister's son, for this man had in local reality become her father's brother (Figure 22).

It matters not that the women in question were sisters. When two or more children, even those who are previously unrelated, ingest the milk of one woman, they and all of their siblings automatically become awlad leban, milk children, and are considered to be true siblings at least for the purposes
of marriage. Shared consumption of a vital fluid, mother's milk, is enough to create close kinship where none might have existed otherwise.

FIGURE 22: "MILK CHILDREN"

MUSHĀHARAḤ I: DESCRIPTION

Ideas about consumption or absorption into the body also surface when we consider beliefs and customs having to do with another essential female fluid, blood. Women in particular are thought prone to illnesses involving loss of blood or hemorrhage, called nazīf, and not to be confused with periodic menstrual elimination. Such ailments and their cures or preventatives are collectively referred to as mushāharaḥ. A woman is likeliest to suffer mushāharaḥ hemorrhage at childbirth or at her circumcision, and for this reason some authors consider the customs associated with such occasions to be life crisis rituals (c.f. Trimingham 1965: 171). A woman
who is afflicted with blood loss at such times becomes particularly vulnerable to spirits (zairan and other jinn) which might enter her body through its orifices and take possession of it.

The causes of female hemorrhage and its cures were related to me as follows. A woman who has given birth or a girl newly circumcised must wear a gold ring of the type known as "ginay Musri", Egyptian guinea. This is one of a number of charms known collectively as jirtig worn by boys and girls at their circumcisions, men at their weddings, and to a modified degree (the gold ring described above being thought sufficient) by brides, and by women throughout a difficult pregnancy but especially at the time of childbirth. Should a woman who has recently given birth or a newly circumcised girl neglect to wear such a ring, and should she then happen to see a woman wearing gold, immediately she will begin to hemorrhage. Tayib notes that this illness is caused by the "mushāharah spirit of gold" which, after departure of the offending visitor, must be exorcised by making the afflicted woman wear gold herself (1955: 146). Although my informants made no mention of a particular "spirit of gold", it was frequently stated that such nazīf could be the work of zār spirits and other varieties of jinn, more fully discussed in subsequent chapters.
Both a woman who gives birth and a newly circumcised girl will suffer uncontrollable hemorrhage if visited by persons returning from a funeral or others who have looked upon a corpse and who have not taken precaution to erase the effects of death from their vision. In order to prevent such occurrence, a bowl of Nile water containing some millet dough and an axe head (or some coins) is placed outside the door to the room in which the girl/woman is confined. Her visitors must first look into the bowl, after which they may enter the room with impunity. If a bowl of river water is not provided for the purpose, guests should gaze into a well and see therein a reflection of the stars before proceeding to their destination. Should a female suffer nazIf as a result of third party association with death, she herself may yet counteract the affliction by gazing into a bowl of Nile water in which has been placed a gold coin, or into a well in which she sees the reflections of stars shortly after sundown.

For the pre- or post-parturient women, mushāharah illness may be brought on if she happens to see the blood of circumcision. Since the affliction is also said to cause a lack or a weakening of her milk, it might well jeopardize her child. And in pregnant women who have not yet come to term, miscarriage or stillbirth might result.

One of my friends recounted the following incident, a typical case of mushāharah and its cure:
When I gave birth to my youngest daughter, the pains came on very quickly. There was no time to prepare for the birth. My eldest daughter was pregnant at the time and she came to assist me. She was wearing her ginay Musri. I was wearing no gold and I became ill with nazif immediately. I lost much blood. Then my daughter gave me her ring to wear and I began to recover. Afterwards, my husband's brother came to visit me. He had just circumcised a young boy and had some blood on his shirt. He forgot to change his clothes and I saw the blood and again began to hemorrhage. I had no milk for my baby. Then my brother-in-law got some water from the river, put it in a white bowl and put a gold seal (khātim, the ginay Musri ring ostensibly made from a coin bearing the face of a monarch) on the bottom and he made me look at it and I became well.

Thus, mushāharah hemorrhage is associated with seeing gold when you are wearing none, with seeing someone who has seen death, and with seeing the blood of circumcision. It might also result if a pregnant woman or a recently circumcised girl sees a gypsy. Gypsies, known as Ḥalib in Hofriyat (some say because they are nomadic and once lived almost exclusively on milk from their animals -- halab means milk -- others because they originate from Aleppo -- Ḥalab in Arabic -- a town in Syria) are itinerant traders and blacksmiths whose abilities in salesmanship have earned the women among them a reputation for being just a little too brash, too familiar, and too undignified for the liking of Hofriyati. If such a one enters the courtyard of a woman or a girl in confinement, immediately the door to the room in which the invalid lies is shut and closely guarded so as to prevent the two from coming into visual contact.
The point I wish to emphasize here is that all mushāharah beliefs have to do with the transmission of debilitating and restorative effects by means of sight. Seeing, it appears, is simply another means of incorporation. The essence of that which one regards is absorbed by the eyes and may then be transmitted, as if through some Newtonian ether, to others upon whom one casts a gaze. This is also the basis for belief in the evil eye prevalent among Hofriyati. For it is held that, often unbeknownst to an individual who commits such an offence, one's appreciative look might well bring misfortune to the person or thing admired. With respect to mushāharah, should a woman be brought into contact with such dangers as death at points in her life when she is exceedingly vulnerable, when her precarious gift, fertility, is made potent or is somehow imperiled, then the resultant mixing of experiential domains cannot but bring her harm. Her fertility when activated in marriage ought to cause retention of blood (pregnancy, discussed in Chapter 2), but when damaged hemorrhage results. Damage occurs when the essence of death is mixed with that of birth\(^5\), when she who sheds blood in childbirth absorbs the essence of circumcision blood, when a normally reserved and dignified Hofriyat female weakened by
circumcision or by childbirth is brought into ocular contact with the unreserved, unconfined, and, by Hofriyati standards, undignified gypsy, the antithesis of village womanhood. Her susceptibility is somewhat lessened if she wears the gold khātim ginay Musri, the "ring of the Egyptian coin", for this is said to appease Solomon, the overlord of jinn spirits, spirits which abound in Hofriyat ready and waiting to take advantage of a woman's physical and ritual defenselessness whenever the occasion should arise. But if the wearing of gold affords her a measure of protection from jinn, neglect to wear it may increase her vulnerability should she then see gold on another when in such a weakened state. Here the strong power of gold, instead of turning away jinn, may in fact be directed towards the woman herself, whose fertility is then put to greater risk. Moreover, the wearing of gold is symbolic of the bride, of womanhood at its peak of purity and potent fertility. When worn by the nufāsa, the woman in childbirth, it helps to offset the impurity of delivery, the opening of the vaginal orifice and the shedding of what is called "black" blood.

One who has absorbed a potentially dangerous sight must rid herself of the negative influence by visually transmitting its essence to a reflective object in a white bowl containing Nile water or to a reflection of the stars in a well, whereupon the influence is shattered, refracted and dissipated
by the water, hence rendered innocuous. Often, too, reflection is used as prevention for effects of the evil or "hot" eye: fragments of mirrors typically are plastered into the sides of doorways so that persons entering might at a glance divest themselves of pernicious visual emissions.

There are several other associations of the ritual complex known as mushāharah that call to mind symbolic contexts discussed in earlier chapters (especially Chapter 2). In the bowl of river water designed to disarm noxious visions are placed some millet dough (ʽajīn) and a metallic axe or hatchet head or a few coins. These items have certain significances in and of themselves. Water is associated with female labor, the axe head or coins with farming or male labor, and millet dough is the combined contribution of men's and women's subsistence activities. While not explicitly stated by informants, it seems reasonable to suggest that these objects provide a positive replacement for the negative visions jettisoned at such points of entry. The combination of elements seen by guests shortly before entering a confinement chamber reads as an affirmation of fertility, and the essence of this message will be transmitted visually to the female whose own fertility is in jeopardy and upon whom guests have come to call.
The symbolic significance of doorways as essential orifices and transition points is also reiterated in the mushāharah context. So, too, is the importance of inner space. The white bowl filled with Nile water must be placed just outside the khashm el-bāb, the doorway (literally, the mouth of the door), to prevent dangerous influences from penetrating the highly charged space within. Women undergoing a rite of passage, more so than men, are required to stay inside such a room for the duration of their supposed vulnerability, usually for forty days.6

INHALATION

Consumption and visual absorption are not the only methods by which Hofriyati symbolically or actually, wittingly or unwittingly, might incorporate that which originates in the external world. Smells, like visions, may have positive or negative effects on human well-being. Bad odors can cause illness. The smells of sweating and of the blood of childbirth are two which make women particularly vulnerable to possession by spirits. By way of protection, the interiors of confinement chambers and bridal rooms are fumigated with incense almost continuously, the types of incense varying according to occasion.
Moreover, a great many physical, emotional and social ailments are remedied by inhalation: an afflicted individual is made to sit over an incense brazier and to breathe the fumes of certain herbal medications or, in some cases, the smoke from a burning paper upon which has been written a passage from the Quran.

Again, perfume is used in abundance both by men and by women. It is a mark of purity and cleanliness, liberally sprinkled over guests at a wedding and on the aromatic woods burned in the bridal smoke-bath. It is mixed with Nile water in the mushāharah bowl where, as the last scent perceived before entering, it acts to protect visitors from the pernicious effects of breathing unsavory odors in the room where a woman has given birth or where a young girl has been circumcised.

ORIFICES AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

Just as one's state of being is to some extent predicated upon that which one ingests, so, too, that which one perceives (by way of vision of olfaction) affects his/her social and physical constitutions. Negative perceptions, whether sensed directly or sensed through the faculties of others, are violations of bodily integrity. They make one vulnerable,
"open" to further violation in the form of spirit possession or some other illness.

Once again we return to the importance of body orifices which, like doorways, are points of transition between exterior and interior spaces. Interiority, whether a quality of courtyards, chambers within courtyards, wombs, human bodies or close kinship, is an extremely significant value for life in Hofriyat. As with other forms of passage through other orifices, sensory passage from the external world into a human body and transmission of internal sensory messages to the outside are dangerous processes, and ones which must be closely regulated.

TYING AND BINDING

It was noted in Chapters 1 and 2 that women tend to enjoy greater residential stability than do men. Women spend a great deal of time in their parents' homes, and wives move to urban centers much less frequently than do their husbands. Women, it might be said, comprise the stable center of village society.

The idea of binding or of fixing in place is an idiom well developed in Hofriyat and one which bears significantly upon the position of women as individual symbols of interiority (brides) and as the collective social core of
village life. When a couple marries, the feki (religious leader) ties a knot in a rope in the local mosque, an act which symbolizes the fact that the man and woman are henceforward bound to one another. But the rope is controlled by the husband, who may tie still other knots in it as he takes other wives, or who may "loosen" a knot should he wish to divorce (talug, meaning also to loosen or set free). Hofriyati women quote an old adage when describing the preferred marital situation: "asen wahid mara fi-l-hubal", "better one woman on the rope". The rope then, is a man's marital life. It is seen as something which he, in a sense, possesses, and with which he may bind various women to himself as his wives.

Women feel the fixity of their marital positions quite keenly, especially if they are unhappy in a marriage and would just as soon be set free. Under normal conditions, however, a woman cannot sue for divorce; such is the prerogative of men alone.

The concepts of binding and of loosening appear in other contexts, the most significant of which is that concerning hair. When a woman becomes a bride her hair is braided (meshat) into hundreds of tight thin plaits which closely follow the contours of her head. A young girl might wear her hair in braids before marriage, but she undertakes this more elaborate coiffure for the first time prior to her wedding.
Great importance is attached to hair. Its cuttings are collected assiduously, then burned lest they be used against the owner for the purpose of casting a magical spell. Sudden headache is thought to be due to someone trampling hair trimmings of the afflicted (see also Nalder 1935: 239). One informant told me that hair must not be left on the ground because birds (which are, as we have seen, symbolic of fertile womanhood), might catch it in their feet and be prevented from flying. But more than this, perhaps, is the direct association of hair with feminine sexuality, with potent fertility.

For a girl who begins to menstruate must also begin to cover her hair when in the company of men. This she continues to do throughout her childbearing years. No other part of her body must be shielded so carefully from masculine view. I was told that in the past when clothing was worn less copiously, women who might otherwise be perfectly naked were nevertheless quick to conceal their hair should a man appear. Except under certain conditions to be discussed below, exposure of a woman's hair to men, most especially to men who are not close kin, is an embarrassment, a moral impropriety. A woman covers herself, they say, because she is ashamed (khajlana).

But married women do not always wear their hair plaited and covered. There is at least one occasion on which the hair is best if left loose, and that is when a woman dances at the
wedding of another. This is where she performs the ragis bi rugaba, the dance from the neck (Chapter 2) in which she languorously mimics the slow-motion strut of a pigeon. During the dance her hair should be long and unbound, and must be uncovered. Young men, who dance separately, approach her singly or in pairs while she continues on in rhythm apparently unheeding. They bend their heads towards her, snapping their fingers as they do. This motion is called "asking for the shabal" and is a compliment to her grace and beauty. Should she wish to acknowledge the compliment, the dancer flicks her hair at the men with a quick toss of her head and then resumes step. With this she "gives the shabal", an action said to confer luck (huzz) upon the man or men for whom she performs it. On several occasions I have seen mothers holding infant sons approach a dancing woman so that she might convey the shabal to them as well.

According to informants, the effects of shabal are, in a secular sense, similar to those which baraka (blessing) confers on a spiritual level. Baraka is sacred power with which one is or is not naturally imbued. While baraka itself is a gift of Allah, most often resident in certain holy families, the effects of baraka are open to all and are transmitted by contiguity. Rubbing oneself with sand from the grave of an acknowledged saint or being spat upon by a powerful feki as he utters a passage from the Quran are two
methods whereby such benefit might be acquired. So, too, in giving the shabal women transfer the positive effects of their power onto men by touching them with their loosened hair, the symbol (and perhaps the locus) of unleashed feminine potency.8

NAHNA BEHA'IM

Metaphors, idioms and their respective applications outlined earlier and in the present chapter constitute multiple variations on the theme of interiority. But in particular, the ideas of closeness, of consuming, and of tying convene to illuminate the one metaphor by which women describe themselves. "Nehna behā'im", they say, "we are cattle". This statement has several implications, being uttered, as it was, in a variety of contexts. First of all, women say they are cattle because, like their animals, they mate with close kin. When I was collecting census information and asking questions about preferred marriages, my female informants often commented "aye, nehna behā'im" (indeed, we are cattle) and went on to explain that cattle are not very discriminatory, and are wont to mate with their own siblings and offspring.9 The statement is, as the reader undoubtedly will observe, hyperbolic and not without humor, yet it is descriptive nonetheless.
Again, most families in Hofriyat own a small number of livestock: goats are most prevalent and are kept mainly for their milk, but in some households the herd is augmented now and then by a few sheep or by the occasional cow. When not set to graze these animals remain penned or tied in a small corner of the hōsh or are housed outside in thorn enclosures (singular, zarība). Whenever my friends wished to impress upon me the harsh realities of village life they invariably would say, "we are cattle", noting that they live like their goats, close together in tiny crowded rooms and haishan in the dust of the desert, and that, like their animals, they subsist on the poorest of foods. Moreover, like their goats, they are penned up most of the time in household enclosures.

Yet other significances of the metaphor emerge when we give further consideration to idioms that express aspects of women's daily lives. Domestic animals are valuable, they are expensive to acquire and to maintain. If they are well nourished they provide rich and plentiful milk and reflect the prosperity of the family to which they belong. Similarly, women are socially valuable. As wives, they are expensive to acquire (most of the wedding is paid for by the groom) and to maintain. Moreover, a husband whose wife is well nourished establishes for himself the reputation of being a good provider, a quality which enhances the esteem in which he is held by his peers.
Domestic animals consume the fodder secured for them by human labor and convert it into meat and milk for the benefit of humans. Although animals are sometimes killed for meat, household herds are kept primarily for their milk. Those animals that are extremely fertile and produce a great many live young are considered most valuable, becoming family pets, hence never eaten.

In like manner, women are both consumers of foods acquired by the husbands' labor, and reproducers. They are "kept" (and not divorced) by their husbands primarily for their reproductive abilities: for, if a woman does not become pregnant fairly soon after her wedding, or if her first child happens to be a daughter, she stands a good chance of being put aside. And, while animals provide humans with food, women frequently see themselves as becoming like food. They complain of being eaten when overworked because of their husbands' neglect, or when their personal property, including livestock, is disposed of by their husbands without consent. Moreover, just as sheep and goats are tied up at night and are in other ways bound to and dependent upon their human owners, so, too, women see themselves as being tied to their haishan and to the villages in which they live, and as bound to their respective husbands by the knotting of the nuptial rope.

In likening themselves to domestic animals women also confess their lack of worldly and religious sophistication.
Virtually none are literate. People who are unschooled or whose understanding of the subtleties of Islam is remiss generally are referred to as *nas behā'im*, "cattle people". Moreover, as cattle follow one another in herds, so women say they follow custom and the wills of their husbands (see also Trimingham 1965: 24).

The metaphor *nebna behā'im* crystallizes for village women the position they see themselves as occupying in the scheme of their world. They are the inner aspect of village life, enclosed, domesticated, bound by custom and by husbands and kin, living symbols of the organizing concept of interiority and as such particularly ill affected by its violation. It is in reference to this view of themselves, a view which is both dryly (evenly cynically) humorous and at times pessimistic, that a great many experiences with husbands and with non-villagers are evaluated and acquire significance. And, in many ways, it is this metaphor and its implications which lie at the heart of *zar*, the cult of spirit possession to which our attention now shifts.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Once I was given a slab of bacon by some British friends in Khartoum. My female friends in the village were keenly interested in this "new meat" and wished to try some. I was somewhat reluctant, and told them again that it was lahma khanzir (pork), but they were not to be deterred. Not wishing to be so presumptuous as to teach them their own religion, I nevertheless felt I had to ask if pork was not forbidden by Islam. They were quite surprised by this revelation, and went off in search of a kinsman to ask if I was correct. It seems that since they never before had the opportunity to eat pork, the question of its prohibition had never been raised.

2. In Hofriyat and elsewhere in the Arab Sudan when someone slaughters a sheep or a goat the animal's internal organs, its liver, lungs, kidneys, spleen and stomach, are washed, then cut up and eaten raw mixed with some lime juice, onions, peanut butter, salt and cayenne pepper. This dish is known as marâra (literally, "bitterness" or "gall", possibly because after an initial washing the animal's lungs are blown full of air and then the contents of the gall bladder poured into them just before cutting and serving). Ideally, marâra should still be warm with life when consumed, for this indicates that the animal has been freshly slaughtered and as such is an affirmation of hospitality. So, albeit reluctantly, I tried marâra on a few occasions. To my surprise, I found it not altogether unpleasant; however, I became concerned that in eating raw meat I was increasing my chance of contracting a major parasitic infection. Thus when next offered marâra at the home of a good friend I mentioned, with hesitation, for I did not wish to offend, that I would prefer it cooked and asked if I could put a bit on the fire. My fears of giving offence were ill founded. It seems that at least one other woman in the village avoided eating raw marâra, so this was seen as a legitimate preference on my part, and in time contributed to my village identity.

3. The ubiquitous though at times inexplicit influence of Levi-Strauss on my thinking about symbolism in Hofriyat is gratefully acknowledged. Many ideas presented here and in other chapters were stimulated in particular by The Savage Mind (1966).
4. See also Ahmed el-Safi 1970: 20, Barclay 1964: 211-213, Crowfoot 1922: 23, Hills-Young 1940: 333, el-Tayib 1955: 146-147, and Tringham 1965: 171, 180. The term mashāharah is derived from the Arabic shahr, "moon" or "month". According to Tayib, "this term was applied to all apparently inexplicable ailments to which a pregnant woman was exposed, and which would cause a miscarriage or a difficult birth, if not treated and dispelled at once." (1955: 146)

5. Though not, strictly speaking, part of the mashāharah complex, another association between blood and pregnancy is relevant here: during his wife's pregnancy a man is prohibited from slaughtering animals, lest his shedding of animal blood should induce miscarriage in his wife. The association is one between husband and wife alone, for at such times a man can commission a neighbor or a kinsman to slaughter on his behalf. Here, too, it is the mixing of distinct domains of experience having to do with blood that must be avoided.

6. Barclay notes an intriguing wedding practice among residents of Burri near Khartoum which makes use of the elements interior space, doorways, kisra dough and fertility. Although I have no evidence that such a custom is or ever was practiced in Hofriyat, the passage is worth quoting nonetheless, for it presents yet another symbolic construction built up from those elements with which we are presently concerned:

In the late afternoon the groom takes a small pot, places kisra dough in it, and puts it on a fire that is usually located outside the door of the house. After this there is a procession in which the groom and his friends gather palm and lemon branches and return to the house to decorate the room in which he and his bride will stay; such branches are not removed until the first child is born. Before entering the house the groom takes a sword and breaks the pot containing the kisra. The next morning the contents will be served with milk. If the kisra is cooked well, it means the first child will be a boy. If not (ie. if it is watery) it will be a girl. (1964: 256-257)

7. In this it is similar to other feminine cosmetic routines which must be "harr", hot or painful.

8. Tying and loosening are also the idiomatic bases for much of the magic that villagers practice or from which they
seek relief. If someone wishes to cast a spell on another, he or she visits a practitioner of 'amal (injurious magic, see also Ahmed el-Safi 1970: 23) who for a fee, makes knots (‘ugda) in a string while murmuring appropriate incantations. The knots, which are then buried or thrown in the river, are said to "bind" the intended victim. Knots which cause such injury are known as rubāt (binding) and the person to whom the rubāt is directed is called marbut (bound) (Ahmed el-Safi 1970: 24). Thus, the victim is made powerless to stop the perpetrator from alienating the affections of his or her spouse; or, the victim is rendered sexually impotent, bound to a place through paralysis, or prevented from eating as though his or her hands were bound (see also Naider 1935: 236 and Trimingham 1965: 170). To undo such damage the victim enlists the aid of a feki who locates the offending knots using magical means or countermands the spell with a charm, thereby loosening the victim from the perpetrator's grasp.

The idea of "loosening" appears in other contexts as well: When a woman has given birth, her husband slaughters an animal in sacrifice. This action is called the ḫulāla, the "loosening". As such it calls to mind the fact that pregnancy is thought to be a quickening or coagulation of a woman's blood, hence birth itself is a loosening of that blood. The ḫulāla ritual, and another of the same name associated with the Hofriyati wedding, are discussed at greater length in Chapter 10.

9. As the reader will recall from Chapter 3, a woman who is unknown to villagers and who marries a village man is referred to as a ghanamiya min es-sūk, a ewe or she-goat from the market, yet another association between women and livestock.
PART II: INTERFACE — CONTEXTS OF SPIRIT POSSESSION
Up to now I have barely referred to the promised focus of this thesis, the spirit possession phenomenon known as zar. It was of first importance, I felt, to ground the reader, to provide some indication of the context of quotidian life as lived by people in Hofriyat, thus adequately to situate zar. Before actually describing zar, however, I propose to discuss what might be considered the major implications of Part I for the remainder of the dissertation.

In large measure it is the pervasive idiom of interiority or enclosure that informs what Hofriyat do and what they say they do. But, as we have seen, interiority is a relative value. At the level of social organization, for example, human relationships are rather inexplicitly scaled as to the quality of relative closeness that obtains between participants: siblings and other primary kin are thought "closest" to each other, but, for the purposes of marriage, they are too close. First cousins are somewhat less close than are true siblings with regard to mutual rights and obligations in a jural sense, but they are preferred "closest" mates. Marital preference as well as obligation diminish as one considers persons located at points of reference more and
more distant, both genealogically and geographically, from the Hofriyati individual. Still, marriages to non-kin from outside the village area (and its components in the larger cities) are permissible, though certainly not most desirable. Prohibited are marriages between Hofriyati and non-Muslims, and, though marriages to Muslim strangers and foreigners might be allowed under certain conditions (as in the case of second marriages), the likelihood of such alliances is negligible.

Here Hofriyati social relations, based as they are upon the principle of relative closeness, might be depicted as forming a series of ever widening concentric circles. At the center stands the nuclear family, importantly, a group of siblings. Radiating outward one finds in successive rings more distant kin and co-villagers, non-kin Muslim Sudanese, and at the outer limits, strangers. Yet these circles are not permanent structures. They are but transient configurations: mutable, shifting in their boundaries and composition as strangers become familiar and as non-kin become kin through marriage and assume obligations toward one another that previously they did not hold. So, if as a sociocultural paradigm interiority embodies guidelines for what Hofriyati ought to do (if, following Geertz 1973:93ff, it is a "model for"), as such it is by no means inherently determinate.

Boundaries between what is and what is not definable as Hofriyati, between that which is compatible with interiority
and that which is patently exterior to that cultural reality, are not always rigidly drawn. That such boundaries exist is indisputable. But they are obscure; certain marriages (or, for that matter, behaviors) which might be classed as inappropriate in one set of circumstances might well become acceptable in another. For example, mythical Fatna's marriage to the Sultan's son is deemed appropriate because, in spite of the fact that he is a non-relative, he is wealthy and powerful, and these attributes are valued almost as highly as are those of close kinship. But neither wealth nor power, nor, indeed, any form of social advantage is in itself an absolute criterion. All such factors must be combined and weighed against each other in selecting an appropriate mate. Thus, an explicit line, a clearly defined circumference to village reality does not exist, and this is at once the bane and the bounty of Hofriyati culture. It is, as we shall see, one of the salient issues addressed through the zar.

Now, as Falk-Moore (1975:219ff) suggests, social life is never without some lack of specificity:

Established rules, customs, and symbolic frameworks exist, but they operate in the presence of areas of indeterminacy, or ambiguity, of uncertainty and manipulability. Order never fully takes over, nor could it. The cultural, contractual, and technical imperatives always leave gaps, require adjustments and interpretations to be applicable to particular situations, and are themselves full of ambiguities, inconsistencies, and often contradictions. (1975:220)
Importantly, in Hofriyat such gaps and ambiguities as Falk-Moore describes are often built into situations in consequence of the idiom by which they are informed. "Interiority" or "enclosure" admits by its very nature, by its relativity, a certain openness, fuzziness, or to use her phrase, indeterminacy. To some extent it anticipates the gradual permutation of the known social world and provides an idiom both for its negotiation and for its comprehension.

But sometimes that idiom is inadequate to the task. As we shall explore within, sometimes the attention it demands to be focused upon the necessity of enclosure detracts from the positive value of "openness" in the lives of Hofriyati, of, for example, the benefits to be derived from cultivating relationships with outside groups. This last is also a problem which villagers may be led to confront through zar, through the spirit possession experience.

Though interiority as a symbolic framework rarely is articulated, it is undeniably expressed in and informative of a great many ritual and non-ritual activities and attitudes. It emerges through interpretive analysis (Part I) as a cardinal component of Hofriyati belief. And once again the relativity of enclosure is manifest, but here it is not the indeterminacy of external boundaries that is stressed so much as the fact that internal boundaries must also exist: enclosure for living Hofriyati can never be complete.
Such hesitant demand for openness in spite of the necessity for enclosure is perhaps best symbolized in beliefs and practices surrounding the human body. Body orifices are life threatening: they are potential entrées for spirits and for other maladies; they may be otherwise misappropriated. Yet they are also inevitable. Hence, they are exceedingly ambiguous. Villagers, in a sense, must compromise: surgically reducing the size of what is perhaps the most significant and the most ambivalent such opening, that through which all humans must pass at the point of birth, while valuing relative smallness of size with regard to others and surrounding these with ritualistic precautions (i.e. activities to thwart the evil eye, the mushāharah complex of beliefs and customs, separation of the functions of the right and left hands, etc.). Such measures may not reduce the ambiguities associated with body orifices\(^1\) so much as they call attention to that which Hofriyati find so meaningful yet so paradoxical: the need to protect from violation both individual integrity and that of the village as a whole, and the practical impossibility of accomplishing either. Absolute closure of physical openings means, and in burial customs signifies, death for the individual and, by extension, for society. For humans, social life and physical life are one and the same. Such life in this world requires openings: doorways, mouths, eyes, ears, indeterminacies in social structure. Through
these orifices individuals are linked to other individuals and situated in the sensible world. Humans, however unwillingly, must admit their imperfectibility and their need for other humans, their need for exteriorization. For, indeed, only Allah is one unto himself, invariant perfection, complete and absolute in all regards. Only Allah, then, is absolute interiority. Villagers can hope to approximate that absolute, that transcendent ideal, in but relative measure.

Reluctantly then, Hofriyati observe some degree of openness to be necessary to human life both socially and physically, and also, I will venture, ideologically. In subsequent pages we tentatively explore this last problem, one that is posed by the vicissitudes of history in this part of the world. For it, too, receives expression through the zar. It is in the possession context that villagers are provided the occasion to contemplate their everyday reality, to reflect upon the fact that just as marriage "close" is and must be situationally defined, and just as body orifices cannot be blocked completely if one is to remain alive and society continue, so villagers, if their culture is to survive, should be aware of alternate lifestyles and other cultures, though selective in appropriating their features.

Now the idiom of relative enclosure solemnly stresses the danger of unmitigated, uncontrolled openness. Unregulated marriage, lack of restraint, lack of respect for the integrity
of others, lack of dignity, promiscuous mating, all of these and more signify that which is external to Hofriyat and its environs. Such behaviors are pernicious and threatening; they could lead to chaos. When clear-cut violations of propriety occur within the village area, offending individuals may be likened to wild animals or to cannibal-sorcerers, beings well beyond the reach of the rules and ideals of Hofriyati life.

Yet even when we consider village morality, propriety and impropriety appear as contingent qualities, subject to a certain amount of interpretation. The idiom of relative enclosure frames and informs behavior, it does not ultimately determine its course. Though guided by a number of "shoulds" and "oughts", people contextually define and redefine appropriate action independently, and not always altruistically. So, here again Hofriyati are faced with indefinite boundaries, with a grey area poised between ideal right and undisputed wrong, an area of the possible if not the probable, indeed, an area which provides sustenance for the spirit possession phenomenon, as we presently shall see.

That the interiority paradigm itself prepares the way for such situational interpretation as I have described is tacitly recognized by Hofriyati. Villagers maintain that human nature, imperfect in essence, is also variable in manifestation. Just as human bodies are inherently diverse with respect to such attributes as orifice size and skin
coloring, so people are acknowledged to have different "natures" (singular, tabI'a): personality quirks, more or less characteristic behaviors and responses, food preferences, and so on. It is an accepted fact that, despite shared ethics and rules of propriety, not all people will react precisely alike given a particular circumstance. Moreover, the individual himself is considered changeable; his responses to similar situations at different points in time may be quite disparate. And should an individual's behavior fail to conform exactly to Hofriyati norms and ideals, this is his entitlement and his responsibility. If disputed, a person should not presume to enforce his construction of an event; the most he can and should do is publicly state his case in an effort to garner support. For an attempt to impose one's views and one's will on another is again to puncture that individual's integrity. Thus, in much the same way as Wikan (1977) describes for Oman, Hofriyati place the onus for morally appropriate action upon the individual, in a further expression of relative interiority. As Wikan writes,

It is up to every person to behave as correctly -- i.e. as tactfully, politely, hospitably, morally and amicably -- as possible in all the different encounters in which he engages, rather than to demand such things of others. To blame, to criticize, or sanction those who fall short of such ideals is to be tactless and leads to loss of esteem.... it is not for me to judge or sanction them, unless the person has offended me in the particular relationship I have to him. (1977:311)
When I first arrived in the field and began learning my way around Hofriyat I was struck by the lack of overt conflict among the several women of my acquaintance. Initially I felt they wished to portray a harmonious image of village society, and that once my presence in their midst had become commonplace, the inevitable discord would rise apparent to the surface. But it did not. That tension and discord exist in Hofriyat is unquestionable. For the most part, however, these feelings are kept "inside": rarely does hostility boil over to produce a confrontation such as that which we observed between brothers in Chapter 4. Open displays of emotion are undignified, they run counter to the ideals which Hofriyati strive to maintain. Moreover, one must respect the integrity of others if one's own integrity is to be respected. Humans must be tolerant of each other. But this leaves the Hofriyati individual with the problem of how to express dissatisfaction with his/her situation without damaging the public self image of those with whom he/she dissents, a problem for which the spirit possession idiom provides a partial solution, however unwittingly the individual might employ it in this vein.

The twin Hofriyati concerns for tolerance of diversity in others' behavior and for maintenance of interiority conceal something of a paradox: one must be willing to accept indeterminacy in others' actions while seeking to minimize it in one's own. But, although one ought to cultivate ideal
qualities such as self-control and dignity, qualities which liken the individual to others in village society and render interaction more predictable, yet there also exists the often subtle desire to distinguish oneself from these others. These sometimes conflicting interests lead to or derive from a view of the self as something fragmented, where individuals relate to each other not as whole entities, but in aspects of themselves. Witness the following incident:

In reading Wikan's article (1977) discussed above, I was struck by the resemblance of an incident she relates concerning a known Omani prostitute (312) to one of my own field experiences. When having tea one day in a neighboring village, I met a beautifully dressed young woman, Nur, who told me that she was a divorcee and lived with her sister in her brother's otherwise empty house. In the course of a conversation about marriage, Nur revealed that although she had no children, she was in no immediate haste to remarry. While her desires differ radically from those of most women in the district, no one present questioned her on this issue or scoffed. They seemed merely to accept it as her "nature". Later, back in Hofriyat, I mentioned the encounter to one of my friends. "Yes," she said, "that woman is matlūga [literally, a 'loose woman']. She exchanges her company for favors and gifts." My friend's meaning was clear. Yet I found it difficult to believe, since Nur had been so warmly
received by other women present when she had entered the room. She had not been shunned or made to feel uncomfortable in any way. Knowing how upstanding a woman was our hostess of that afternoon, I thought my Hofriyati friend to be mistaken. So I asked someone else about Nur. And my puzzlement deepened when the story was confirmed. Reasoning in a way which has no foundation in Hofriyat, I asked why, if Nur's illicit activities were so well known, did other women associate with her so freely? Would such women not also be suspect? The answer was no, not so long as they refrained from visiting Nur in her home. Nur's violations had never been proved, for her brother in Khartoum apparently had no knowledge of her behavior and other villagers were unlikely to inform him. Significantly, Nur's alleged prostitution was solely a matter between herself and her brother, her only living male relative. If in her dealings with others she observes proper decorum and does not give offence, there is no reason for them to shun her. Her supposed immorality is none of their affair, and is she not, after all, a most amiable woman?

Wikan's conclusions with regard to the Omani view of the individual are also applicable, then, to Hofriyat. In Oman, as in Hofriyat, "the conceptualization of the person is subtle and differentiated. One act or one activity is only one aspect of a person, and only one facet of a complex personality" (1977: 312).²
In Hofriyat this notion of a multi-faceted personality extends itself to the spirit possession phenomenon. For some facets of an individual's character may be attributed, not to caprice, but to the intervention of spirits in the lives of their human hosts. Moreover, possession, as we shall see, provides the individual with a means to interpret qualities and experiences in himself that are incompatible with those demanded or expected by mainstream Hofriyati culture.

Now, as noted, human interaction in Hofriyat always takes place in the face of some uncertainty; human relationships are never "closed", immutable or wholly determined. In earlier chapters it was observed that individual desires often wrestle with kin and marital obligations, and that a significant tension exists between the respective social worlds of men and women. When areas rife with potential ambiguity such as these are manipulated they become more apparent. When expectations and the actions of others fail to mesh, or when customs, rules and reality clash, individuals may find themselves cast in untenable positions, without obvious recourse. And importantly, should such a situation go unredressed an individual who perceives himself victimized might well fall ill (Chapter 4).

As Constantinides (1977:65) notes, illness is a broad concept in Northern Sudan:

[It] includes individual symptoms of all the local endemic diseases and a whole range of other organic
ailments, as well as behavioral symptoms and a variety of social distresses such as anxiety about conflicts or problems in the home.

When we delve into the possession idiom in subsequent chapters we learn that possession is considered to be a form of sickness in Hofriyat and is associated with tension and interpersonal conflict. Moreover, we will see that more than men, it is women who, upon finding themselves in difficult or untenable situations, tend to express such affliction as illness. At the risk of anticipating some of our conclusions, we may say that in Hofriyat women are somewhat disadvantaged relative to men when it comes to handling the indeterminacies and ambiguities of social situations. Subject as they are to overt control by males, women often feel unable to articulate their interests to their husbands, or to express conflicting views. Furthermore, the relative limits of appropriate behavior are far wider for men than they are for women. Men, for example, may have up to four wives at once; they may travel outside Hofriyat at will and go where they wish within the village whenever they desire to do so; they may behave licentiously without permanent injury to their reputations. On the other hand, wives find themselves more restricted than are their husbands by rules and implicit social expectations, as well as less able to maneuver within and around the same. Thus it is not surprising that women sometimes see themselves as the victims of husbands who subtly or blatantly manipulate
ambiguities in the marital relationship for their own ends, a topic which is taken up in several chapters in this part of the thesis. Husbands, and men in general, are held by women to be capricious and inclined toward selfishness.

The polysemous metaphor which women use to describe their plight, "nehna behā'im" (we are cattle), expresses the perceived ambivalence of their position relative to males, notably husbands and fathers, rather well. Like domestic animals and, for the most part, unlike men, women are "edible" (their assets and their labors may be misappropriated by their husbands), "saleable" (they may be married off against their wills, even to outsiders, so becoming like she-goats bought at market), "disposable" and "replaceable" (wives may be divorced for little or no reason, and without recourse), "accumulable" (a man, but not a woman is entitled to be polygamous), and frequently unindividualistic (in that women are all exhorted to behave with restraint, and to a great extent they lack the wherewithal to articulate individual opinions in male company). Yet women, again like domestic animals, are extremely valuable. Just as cattle are a prime source of wealth for Hofriyati, so women give to men the ultimate source of their pre-eminence, their social wealth, in bearing descendants. The one powerful bargaining card women have, both individually and collectively, is their fertility. But because fertility, like husbands, is not always predictable or
controllable, it is in essence a wild card, and may be of no help at all. Herein lies a major source of ambiguity: women see themselves as being individually dispensible and collectively indispensable at one and the same time. Theirs is a conflicting self-image indeed. And, though valued and protected by men as a class and by society as a whole, as the various restrictions by which they are bound will attest, Hofriyati women sometimes come to feel undervalued by their respective husbands who are often absent from the village for long periods of time (Chapter 1) and may otherwise be neglectful of their wives and children. Hofriyati women, we might conclude, are somewhat more prone to experience apparently insuperable paradox in themselves and in their conjugal relationships than are Hofriyati men, paradox which leads many women to claim that they are spirit possessed.

The stage is now set for us to commence an investigation of zar. Chapter 6 describes the phenomenon in some detail, and, since both topics are considered at greater length later on, provides a quick gloss of zar ceremonials and of spirit types. In Chapter 7 we investigate interconnections among the often ambiguous marital situations of women, fertility, and spirit possession. Chapters 8 and 9 document case histories of the affliction in an effort to elucidate the richness of the possession idiom, its multiple facets and significances. In Chapter 10, the last in this part of the thesis devoted to
contexts of spirit possession, zar ritual symbolism is examined. I discuss its relation to the symbolism of interiority, to symbols that figure prominently in the Hofriyati wedding, a ceremony which zar in many ways resembles.

Thus Part II focuses upon those whom the spirits afflict: those who experience possession in themselves, and their location in the Hofriyati world. It deals with relationships that obtain between and among the dramatis personae of zar: human to human, human to spirit. Relationships among the spirits, their associations and their potential meanings for those whom they influence, though not ignored in this portion of the dissertation, are more properly reserved for separate treatment in Part III. It is there that we shall consider zar abstracted from the contexts of its incidence, as a culturally constituted system of meaning in its own right. For it is only in effecting this shift of emphasis that we can begin to appreciate the dynamics of spirit possession in Hofriyat, only in focusing temporarily upon now one, now the other pole of the possession dialectic that we may render explicit what Crapanzano (1977a:11) describes as the "anthropology and the demonology of the system."
NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. For, as Radcliffe-Brown (1939) noted, ritual procedures may precipitate anxiety over their proper performance as much as they allay anxiety over that which is beyond practical human control (cf. Malinowski 1931, 1948).

2. The continuation of this quote is relevant to Hofriyat as well. Wikan writes,

The fact that persons are not prepared to sanction each other for their behavior towards third persons does not mean that they are uninterested in observing and judging such behavior. Particularly Omani men are concerned about their own and each other's integrity as whole persons. They have an image of themselves which they cultivate and seek to perfect, and honour and public renown which they carefully build and protect. They also observe others closely so as to develop an understanding of their character and qualities — in part so as to know whether to cultivate or to avoid relations with them, depending on what their judgement on these matters might be. (1977:313)
CHAPTER 6

ZAR

DESCRIPTION, ORIGIN, AND EXTENT

Zar refers to a group of spirits, the illness they can cause by taking possession of human beings, and the rituals necessary for their pacification. The phenomenon is not restricted to the area of Hofriyat, but is found throughout Northern Sudan (Barclay 1964, Constantinides 1972, Trimingham 1965, Zenkovsky 1950), and variations of it appear under the same name in Egypt (Pakhouri 1968, Kennedy 1967, Saunders 1977), in Ethiopia (Leiris 1958, Messing 1958, Young 1975), and in Southern Iran (Modarressi 1968).

The term zar is variously held to derive from Persian (Frobenius 1913, Modarressi 1968) or from Amharic (Kennedy 1967, Seligman 1914, The Encyclopedia of Islam 1934:1217). With Barclay (1964:197), Constantinides notes that some writers "assume the essentially non-Arabic form zaar to be a corruption of an Arabic term meaning 'he visited'" (1977:65, note 6). Regardless of its actual etymology, women in Hofriyat generally refer to the phenomenon as zahr, thereby assimilating zar to the Arabic term meaning "he became visible, perceptible, manifest" (cf. Wehr 1976:583). This
last is instructive, for it is through zar possession rituals that the spirits appear in corporeal form by entering the bodies of humans and temporarily displacing or subsuming their respective Hofriyati selves.

The origins of the cult are as obscure as are those of its appellation: a variety of authors have suggested Persia, Ethiopia, Egypt, or Southern Sudan as its starting point. Since a detailed synopsis of proposed sources for the zar and an account of its history in Sudan are beyond the scope of the present endeavor, the reader is referred to Constantinides (1972) for an exhaustive and highly readable discussion of these issues. Whatever its genesis, the cult was without doubt as eclectic in its earlier stages as it is today, shaping itself to beliefs in spirits, spirit possession, and curing prevalent in those areas to which it spread.

According to Constantinides, zar was well established in Sudan by the mid 1800s, and by the end of that century the cult had gained such a wide following throughout that it was condemned at Islamic conferences, denounced publicly by religious leaders as 'innovation' and 'unorthodox' and decried in the Arabic press. (1972:35)

Though still regarded thus by the majority of religious leaders in Sudan, zar is tolerated nonetheless. For however negative their respective attitudes towards the cult and its practices, most Muslim clergy participate at least minimally
in zar belief: zairan (plural) are considered similar to and in some cases one with the class of spirits known as jinn, whose existence the Quran substantiates.

Lest the spirit possession phenomenon be thought unique to groups professing Islam, the relationship of zar to other such cults in Africa should be emphasized. Earlier it was noted that zar is practiced in Christian Ethiopia. Among the Sidamo of southern Ethiopia a similar cult, shatana, has been described by John and Irene Hamer (1966). In Chad one finds liban sheitan (Constantinides 1972:25); among Segeju Swahili speakers in Tanzania a comparable curing cult is shetani (Gray 1969). Masabe spirit possession among Tonga of Zambia (Colson 1969) shows marked resemblance to the Sudanese zar, as, indeed, do all of the following: sar in Somalia (Lewis 1966, 1969, 1971a, 1971b), bori in Nigeria, Morocco, and Algeria (Tremearne 1914), jnun curing activities of the Hamadsha brotherhood in Morocco (Crapanzano 1977b), trumba and patros in Mayotte, Comoro Islands (Lambek, 1978, 1981), saka or pepo among the Taita of Kenya (Harris 1957), hauka among the Songhay (Rouch 1954), and Takuka among the anthropologically famous Ndembu of Zambia (Turner 1974:250). What these cults share is a focus upon relieving illness or other individual distress thought to be caused by spirits which generally are held to be of foreign origin.
In Africa, then, the incidence of spirit possession is widespread, and many of the above listed cults are frankly related as similarities in their names would suggest. Several, for example, are known by variations of the Arabic term *sheytan*, meaning "devil". Further, in Sudan two forms of the *zar* have been distinguished, *zar-tumbūra* and *zar-bori* (Constaninides 1972, Zenkovsky 1950), and Constantinides points out an explicit link between *zar* and the West African *bori* cult, the result of increased contact between Sudanese and West African pilgrims to Mecca during the period of relative stability that followed Mohammed Ali's conquest of Sudan in 1920-21 (1972:31). Yet another indication of relationship is the fact that the possessive spirits in several of these cults are referred to as "winds": *pepo* in Swahili (Gray 1969:175), *rib* in Arabic. But despite their obvious historic connections, such cults are by no means uniform throughout the continent. They show significant local variation, merged as they have been with extant beliefs and social situations.

THE POSSESSION CONCEPT

When we speak of spirit "possession" in Hofriyat, or more generally, in Northern Sudan, we use indigenous terms. The salient qualification of a potential *zar* cultist is that
"'inda rib", "'inda zār", or "'inda dastūr": "she has a spirit". An individual is henceforward considered spirit possessed (or possessed of a spirit) if at any point in her life she is diagnosed as being under the influence of a zār. Usually such influence takes the form of affliction, notably illness. However, zār affliction may graduate to a more positive concern on the part of the spirit for its host's wellbeing as the relationship between the two entities stabilizes and matures. Once possessed, always possessed: zairan never totally abandon those humans whom they have chosen as their hosts.

Moreover, one who "has" a spirit has so on a continuous basis. She is thought possessed at all times, whether in or out of a state of trance (cf. Barclay 1964:196, Constantinides 1972:22). For zairan are said always to be near, or in local parlance "above" (fōg) those whom they possess.

Though a possessive zār does not permanently inhabit its human host, it is yet thought capable of infiltrating her body at will. And the entrance of a spirit into the body of its host always occurs when the latter is in a state of trance. Trance may precede the spirit's entry or may be coincident with it. But because spirits are thought to affect their hosts at other times and in other ways than by taking up residence in their bodies, trance is but one manifestation of spirit possession in Hofriyat. Most frequently it occurs in
ritual situations, though zairan have been known to descend (nazal) into their hosts at other times, in the context of daily life (cf. Barclay 1964:198).

Now it should be made clear that questions concerning the existential status of spirits and the facticity of possession are not posed in this thesis, except to the extent that they are raised by the villagers themselves. Possession is a "social fact". Just as its reality goes unchallenged in Hofriyat, so do I herein accept it as real. In taking this stance I attempt, as Crapanzano exhorts, to remain faithful to my subject and to "resist the reduction and consequent distortion of the spirit idiom into a second idiom, the 'psychological' idiom, in which we in the Western world feel more comfortable" (1977a:11).

Possession is real not only for the possessed in Hofriyat. Spirits and spirit possession are actual even for those who have no first hand experience of them, and regardless how hotly they might dispute the proper course of treatment for that affliction, as discussed below. I would not deny that Hofriyati, like participants in any culture, probably entertain doubts concerning the validity of their shared beliefs from time to time. But cosmological mavericks they are not. Spirits are "givens" in the world of Hofriyat. Skeptics and true believers alike tacitly agree to operate under the umbrella of their veracity.
When in subsequent chapters we discuss case histories and circumstances of zar possession, I shall follow Crapanzano (1977a) in maintaining that spirit possession is a consensually validated, ritually confirmed belief that provides an idiom for the articulation of a certain range of experience. He explains,

By articulation, I mean the act of construing, or better still constructing, an event to render it meaningful. The act of articulation is more than a passive representation of the event; it is in essence the creation of an event. It separates the event from the flow of experience, from what Alfred North Whitehead saw as "merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaningless". It gives the event structure, thus precipitating its context, relates it to other similarly constructed events, and evaluates the event along both idiosyncratic and (culturally) standardized lines. Once the experience is articulated, once it is rendered an event, it is cast within the world of meaning and then may provide a basis for action. (1977a:10).

In this special sense, possession is meaningful for both possessed and non-possessed, though of course the quality of meaningfulness, what one does or does not derive from one's own possession experiences or from those of others, will probably vary from person to person. Moreover, belief, while doubtless present and enriching to the possession context, need not be considered an issue here. For possession is, at the very least -- and this is quite a lot -- a mode of interpersonal communication (cf. Lambek 1980). For some Hofriyati, this may be all that it is. But for others, I will suggest, it is indeed far more.
Thus having sketched the theoretical perspective I propose to follow in this part of the dissertation, the two poles of the possession dialectic described at the end of Chapter 5 can be more accurately distinguished. In Part II our focus is upon the articulatory aspect of zar in considering the contexts of possession, while in Part III our attention shifts to its semantic aspect. This distinction between event and meaning, syntagmatics and paradigmatics (cf. Lambek 1978), though important for enabling us to discern the complexity of the possession phenomenon, is admittedly artificial. It is a question of heuristic emphasis, nothing more. Meaning, then, is not subtracted from our rendering of possession contexts; certain aspects of that meaning, however, are given more intensive treatment in Part III. A bridge between these two foci is provided in Chapter 10, where symbolism made apparent through a consideration of possession case histories and emerging in discussions of the zar ceremony is related to the idiom of relative interiority depicted in Part I.

THE POSSESSED

In Hofriyat, as elsewhere in Sudan (Barclay 1964:196-206, Constantinides 1972, 1977, Trimingham 1965:174-177, Zenkovsky 1950), zar possession activity is mainly though not
exclusively the province of women. It is for this reason that I have adopted the convention of referring to a possessed individual as "she".

Roughly 40% of married Hofriyati women claim to have a zar affliction, whereas I had trouble finding a handful of men from the entire village area who acknowledge themselves to be possessed. In Hofriyat only three resident adult males (or 4% of the non-migrant male population) are zar adepts: two of these have held the appropriate ceremonies, one when he was only 13 years of age. Two men born in the village and now living elsewhere are known to have spirits, and I obtained information concerning ten others from the general vicinity, five of whom were deceased prior to the time of my fieldwork. All had drummed the zar at least once during their respective lives.

If, as I suggest (following Crapanzano), spirit possession is a public idiom for the articulation and interpretation of experience, why should there exist such sexual imbalance among those whom it affects? One avenue of inquiry might be to ask whether the range of experience that possession renders coherent or constructs is more characteristic for females in Hofriyat than it is for males. Here Lewis' (1971a) view of zar possession as a strategy used by women both to express and to redress subordinate social status might be relevant. Yet I cannot help but feel that as it exists
Lewis' perspective places undue emphasis upon the proposed intentionality of subjugated women and, in consequence, tends to underevaluate the undisputed facticity of spirits in the Sudanese world. More importantly, and as others have noted, much depends upon the perceptions of those supposedly subjugated. If the possessed do not feel downtrodden by men, is it proper to conceive of spirit possession as feminist rebellion? Lewis maintains that those males who are attracted to spirit possession generally exhibit subordinate social status and may be classed as marginal with respect to the mainstream of male society (i.e. ex-slaves) (1971:101ff). Yet, as will be shown in Chapters 8 and 9, Hofriyati males who confess possession are drawn from all social statuses: landed and non-landed, well-to-do and poor alike. Here it seems that male possession depends as much upon whether there is a history of zar affliction in one's family as it does upon one's perceived marginality. Zar is more subtle and more complex than an analysis of it solely in terms of subjugation and subordination will permit us to descry.

As I intend to illustrate in Chapter 7, and again in Chapters 8 and 9, some women do feel subordinate to males, but these feelings derive less from the actions of men as a class than from the individual actions of certain men, notably husbands. Moreover, the problem which these men are apt to cause is not that they or village culture as a whole
deny their wives access to elevated social status (the position of respected ḥabība), but that they sometimes, and often inadvertently, block women's legitimate attempts to achieve it.

Yet the point remains that Hofriyati women may be more likely to interpret certain experiences as spirit possession than are Hofriyati men. Important to consider here are conflicting interpretations given possession activity by Hofriyat culture, and particularly by Islam. Strictly speaking it is considered reprehensible and abhorrent (makruh), though not forbidden (ḥaram), for Muslims, men or women, to traffic with spirits. And local men for the most part adhere to the orthodox Islamic view that possessive spirits should be forcibly dislodged from the body, hence, exorcised.

It is the central concern of the zar cult, however, to accommodate and to socialize such spirits. Cult adepts insist that if one's illness is caused by a zar, no amount of traditional Islamic or modern Western medicine will effect a cure. Attempts at exorcism serve merely to exacerbate the problem. Symptom remission can be achieved, but only when the afflicted individual agrees to hold a propitiatory ceremony on behalf of the as yet un-named (inchoate) afflicting spirit. By means of this ceremony, often held long after the initial illness has dissipated, the possessed enters into a contractual relationship with the spirit responsible for her
earlier lapse from health. During the ritual the afflicting spirit is encouraged to descend into the body of the patient, who is or thereby becomes entranced. Speaking through her it reveals its identity and makes known its demands, in return for which it agrees to restore, and ostensibly to refrain from further jeopardizing, her wellbeing. Henceforward human host and possessive spirit are thought to be joined in an ongoing but unequal partnership: the possessed can hope to rely on the spirit's compliance in maintaining her health only so long as she regularly attends the ceremonies of others, associates herself with clean and sweet smelling things, abstains from traditional mourning behavior, and is not given over to strong emotion. Violation of these conditions would offend the possessing zar, making her vulnerable to its retaliation, again in the form of illness. "Curing" zar possession illness is thus a matter of establishing reciprocal exchange obligations between host and spirit; the ideal relationship between possessed human and possessive zar is one of mutual accommodation.

But most village men, who consider themselves pious and orthodox Muslims, denounce such propitiation of spirits as the ceremonial discussed above entails. As earlier established, however, they do not deny that zar spirits exist. Now, the classification of spirits varies somewhat from area to area in Sudan (Constantinides 1972:102-104,Trimingham 1965:171ff).
For the people of Hofriyat and its environs, zairan comprise a distinct class of jinn, the generic term for mischievous and crafty invisible beings well known from Arabic folklore. Jinn populate a world parallel to our own and contiguous with it, but invisible to humans. Typical of their numerous exceptional attributes and capabilities, jinn may transform themselves into animals, assume human shape, or take possession of living humans at will.

Significantly, because jinn are mentioned in the Quran (CXIII, LXXII) and zairan are thought of as a type of jinn, men actively uphold and participate in zar belief. But, with few exceptions, this is where their public support for the cult stops. Attendant curing rituals of the zar are decried as pagan, almost to a man. Despite this often weighty opposition, however, the cult thrives and its rituals are well attended even by the most submissive and most religious of wives. For the majority of women, who are less closely in touch than are men with current religious opinion, firmly believes that zar ritual falls within Islam's purview (cf. Constantinides 1972:98). Those who counter male opposition to the cult say that it is better to feel good and to be healthy in this world than to be miserable and "broken" by spirits; and as for their chances in the next world, adepts should rely upon the mercy of Allah.
Indeed, zar is the focus of lively debate between male and female Hofriyati. As we see in Part III, most local men tend to locate zairan somewhat differently than do local women in a typology of spirits. But if men adamantly defend their interpretation as correct in the eyes of Islam, privately they are not so intractable (cf. Barclay 1964:206). Often hesitant, unsure that popular Quranic medicines will effect a cure, or fearing reprisals of the powerful spirit if it is put off, many permit and even encourage their zar possessed womenfolk to conduct the illicit propitiatory ceremonies. Many, too, provide money with which to meet the spirits' demands.

Still, given the orthodox stance to which they adhere, notwithstanding private ambivalences, it is unsurprising that few men risk acknowledging zar possession in themselves. Though some may suspect they are possessed, few have self confidence and security of position enough, or have so little to lose and so much to gain by it that they hazard admission of the affliction. Those who do rarely attend the ceremonies of other adepts as the spirits demand, although several have sponsored rituals of their own in the past. Such men as these are regarded askance by their less heretical male neighbors.
POSSESSION AS ILLNESS

Zar possession in Hofriyat begins with illness. As is true for possession syndromes noted elsewhere in Africa (i.e. Lambek 1978, 1981; Young 1975), this illness may be considered either spirit-induced or spirit-intensified. But not all illness is associated with possession. Villagers admit a wide range of diseases to be the result of natural causes, and only those whose symptoms are fairly generalized fall suspect of zar infliction. Headache, nausea, anorexia, lassitude and apathy, depression, trouble sleeping, harrag ruh or "inflamed soul" (anxiety, worry), proclivity to be saddened by the least little thing, refusal to speak, inability to move about -- being "broken on an angarib" -- all of these are symptoms which Hofriyati relate to possession. But how one decides if these symptoms are indeed signs of possession and not attributable to other causes remains for the sufferer problematic.

Now for various reasons one might resist diagnosis of zar possession. It is not necessarily "good" or desirable to have a spirit. Possession is seen as a life-long affliction, one which intensifies already tangible constraints upon the behavior of the human host. And the rituals and daily observances necessary to restore and to maintain her health may be costly and time consuming. Earlier we noted that
through her initial ceremony the possessed hopes to reduce possibility of further illness by engaging her spirit(s) in a reciprocal exchange agreement. But even if she assiduously follows the spirits' requests in this matter, she cannot be guaranteed freedom from spirit attack. For za'iran are inherently amoral; their behavior is predictably capricious and unpredictable even when they profess Islam or are drawn into contractual relationships with humans. What is more, it is possible for a human to host more than one spirit at a time. Thus a woman might just have reached a relatively stable phase in her relationship with one spirit, only to fall suddenly ill as the result of an attack by another. All of these factors combine to mitigate a woman's readiness to accept spirit possession as the proper etiology for her sickness.

So, unless a patient has a previous history of zar possession, has experienced some sign (i.e. a dream) that her illness is spirit caused, or privately wishes to "have a spirit" (and here she risks being accused of dissimulation), she first looks elsewhere for relief. Villagers say that before she tries any other remedy an afflicted individual should seek the advice of Western medicine. If that is unsuccessful, then she should consult an Islamic holy man who will refer to "the books", el-kutub (the Quran, Hadith or traditions of the Prophet, and ancient Arabic manuals
concerning medicine, astrology and magic), prepare the requisite charms and potions, and administer them to the patient. These last usually consist of appropriate passages from the Quran, the essence of which is then "consumed" in one of the following ways: either the passage is written in carbon ink upon a tablet, washed off into a glass and drunk, or it is written on a piece of paper that is subsequently burnt and its fumes inhaled by the sufferer. Only as a final resort, when all other cures have failed, and when she has been assured and cajoled by others that she has a zar and is therefore certain of some support for such a diagnosis, will she accept that her illness is spirit caused.

Many of the symptoms associated with possession are, as mentioned earlier, relatively generalized. In fact, they may be linked with any number of diseases, both natural and spirit inflicted. But most are expressly associated with those situations which Hofriyati consider stressful or anxiety producing (cf. Chapter 5). Regardless of sex, individuals in mourning, those embroiled in domestic disputes, worried over the health and wellbeing of a loved one, or troubled about money, may claim to suffer such symptoms whether or not an eventual diagnosis of spirit possession is obtained. Inversely, persons experiencing stress sickness are, if not already so afflicted, considered likely targets for spirit attack, though not all of these succumb.
The relationship between zar possession and both mental and physical stress, and the probability that certain individuals and not others will become possessed, are topics addressed in subsequent chapters. Here, however, it should be noted that, strictly speaking, the zar possession context is not applicable to persons suffering severe psychological distress. If one could characterize the "typical" zar patient in psychological terms (something which this thesis seeks to avoid), we would have to say that at worst she is mildly neurotic (cf. Constantinides 1977:65) and seeking adjustment to a difficult life situation: hence, relatively normal. But there are significant variations here, so much so that Messing, studying zar in Ethiopia, concluded "the 'zar' is a catch-all for many psychological disturbances, ranging from frustrated status ambition to actual mental illness" (1958:1125). Yet, according to Hofriyati, zar spirits cannot cause one to become psychologically incapacitated, nor can they cause illness to the point of death. Zairan, moreover, would not wish their hosts so debilitated that they could not accede to their demands. Persons who evince severe physiological symptoms are seen as suffering naturally caused illness, illness that is the result of the evil eye or sorcery, or illness caused by malevolent jinn. And while zar may be considered a component of such grave malady, never is it held to be pre-eminent. On the other hand, persons who
evince severe psychological symptoms are generally thought possessed (as opposed to merely affected) by the aforementioned malevolent *jinn*, which are not open to coercion in the manner of *zairan*. All agree that treatment for the latter affliction is exorcism; the negotiation of any other form of cure is deemed fruitless.

This leads us to a further point: *zar* spirit possession requires a good deal more control than those who are gravely ill can muster (cf. Crapanzano 1977a:15, Lambek 1978:382). Acceptance of *zar* diagnosis initiates a process of accommodation to the affliction. One must learn to be possessed: the new "recruit" must acquire the ability to enter trance while maintaining a certain level of awareness of her surroundings. And she must internalize the cultural constraints on individual behavior in trance (cf. Lambek 1978:379). For example, if a certain possessive spirit is aggressive by nature (as agreed upon by adepts), the entranced individual who is temporarily inhabited by that spirit must learn to control its aggression, to channel it into culturally accepted venues so that no one is hurt when the spirit descends. Moreover, the spirit entity itself must "make sense" to those who interact with it in ritual and non-ritual situations: its enactment by the possessed must be drawn from the known corpus of spirits and spirit species whose general characteristics, while not invariant, are nonetheless
sufficiently constant as to be recognized easily by adepts. The permutations of spirit behavior must be logically consistent with the personality of the spirit as it has revealed itself to other humans, though all agree that a particular spirit might choose to manifest different aspects of its character in possessing its various human hosts.

However greatly it may resemble a dialogical situation, wherein a woman, in the role of spirit, converses with her human audience, źar trance behavior might be better considered the construction of a text (cf. Ricoeur 1976) or, more accurately perhaps, the idiosyncratic performance of a cultural text (cf. Geertz 1973). While indeed it is all of these, in ritual situations at least, greater emphasis accrues to the lattermost respect. The host in trance produces something, a "text"; spirit behavior, which takes shape as an event. That which is produced, the text event, is to a certain extent bound by rules of production (i.e. the state of entrancement, the appropriate stage in ritual action, etc.), in much the same way that works of literature are constructed according to genre (novel, poem, etc.). Now the dimensions of textual meaning are both intentional (what the author — host/spirit — means to say) and semantic: a text has "sense" (internal coherence) and "reference" (ostensive and non-ostensive meaning "in the world") (cf. Ricoeur 1976). But if possession trance behavior is indeed a text, its intentional
meaning is more than usually problematic: here the creator of the text disavows authorship. It is not she who acts in trance, but the spirit, an alien existent. Yet through all of this the audience continues to see the same human being whom they saw prior to her entrancement. For the "readers" of the spirit text, consisting not only of the audience but also of the possessed herself, to be convinced that it is truly a spirit which engages them in discourse, the text performance must be virtually transparent: semantically autonomous, freed from ostensive human input. The spirit (entranced host) must make almost exaggerated use of those meanings that publicly enunciate its presence, thereby eliminating or repressing any hint of human intent. Thus is attention focused upon the semantic "pole" of meaning: spirits are seen to act in stereotypical ways which serve to identify them as spirits.  

They swagger, strut, are impolite, give commands or refuse to answer when spoken to, none of which behaviors are typical of Hofriyati humans. In their antics spirits (read humans) reveal other characteristics as well, those specific to particular zairan. Zär being in the human world has all the appearance of a well staged vaudevillian burlesque. Hence human intentionality, what the possessed means to communicate through the spirit idiom, though an important dimension of textual meaning, is not necessarily related to what is said in any direct way. How the spirits behave when inhabiting the
bodies of their hosts has far more to do with public recognition of them as spirits than it has to do with the message a human host might wish to convey. Cultural meaning: spirit intentionality and spirit semantics, product and proof of spirit facticity, override and suppress human intent in possession trance. The woman who can successfully enact such drama is thoroughly familiar with the generalized "roles" she might, as spirit, be called upon to play. But she must be able to bracket her own not inconsiderable concerns in deference to those of the zar.

In contrast, and with license, we might perhaps consider the behavior of a gravely disturbed individual as focusing upon human intentionality to the neglect of semantic coherence. Such a one might well claim to be zar possessed, but if she cannot sustain the demand for cultural congruity she will fall by the wayside, classed as misdiagnosed. She is seen as engaging in idiosyncratic fantasy, something which zar patently is not. She may be accused of "playing" with the spirits, an act likely to produce dire consequences in the form of spirit wrath. Alternatively, however, zairan, who are quite unscrupulous, might be seen as teasing the unfortunate, for actually possessing her would net them little in the way of human delights. Whatever the therapeutic benefits such a person might experience in continuing to attend zar rituals, cult adepts will say of her "kazzāba", she is a dissimulator,
"ma 'inda rih", she does not have a spirit.

HE SAID, SHE SAID

Now I have mentioned that the identities of possessed human and possessive spirit are, theoretically, distinct. Indeed, it is an essential task of the żar curer (sheikha, soon to be discussed) to establish and to reaffirm this distinction both for the possessed herself and for the public at large. But in practice the separation between host's identity and that of possessive żar is not always readily apparent. Examine the following excerpts from the possession narrative of Zaineb, whose affliction provides the basis for discussion in Chapter 8.

At a wedding Zaineb attended around 1960 two women began playfully to sing the chants associated with certain żairan. These spirits, having been summoned by their chants, descended into the bodies of other women present who happened to be their hosts, thereby causing them to experience possession trance. It was then decided to perform an impromptu ritual, and Zaineb describes what took place as spirit after spirit appeared in their midst. Note that the possessive spirits here are male, while those whom they possess are female:

My mother's brother's new wife, she began to cry.... Then she got up and she said [in a male voice], "Unless you put on a ceremony for her!" [i.e. she would not recover] .... And he said, "I want a dress like the
dress of Zaineb there, and I want henna and incense!"
.... He also said he wanted a white ram.
There was another, she was possessed by an Ethiopian zâr.... When she "descended" [performed the trance dance] she said, "You must make coffee for him right now!" They made him coffee and she drank it...and they brought coffee and they drank and she became quiet and she stopped.
And another woman said, "I want," and they did it for her, for this Nyam Nyam Kubaida [Azande cannibal spirit].... she said, "Bring him meat, raw meat." She would eat.

The reader will observe that goods and comestibles were to be obtained for the spirits but were to be worn, consumed, etc., by the women whom they possess. The demands of zairan for food, clothing and jewelry are to be enjoyed by them, but through the senses of their human hosts. Yet, while invariably it is the spirit which desires, it is not always the spirit which speaks (or is thought to speak). When Zaineb discusses her mother's brother's wife she remarks that "he [spirit] said, "I want,...." but elsewhere, that "she said [in a male voice] 'Unless you put on a ceremony for her.'" Again, "she said, 'You must make him coffee.' ...they made him coffee and she drank it." And finally, "Another woman said, "I [spirit] want' and they did it for her, for this Nyam Nyam Kubaida.... she said, 'Bring him meat..." She would eat."

So although the identities of host and spirit are thought distinct and even here remain functionally independent, it appears as if they merge somewhat or coalesce during possession trance episodes. Both host and spirit are present
in the host's body to varying degrees. The host is said to perceive, to speak, to eat, to perform the activities witnessed by the audience of onlookers, but it is the possessive spirit which motivates such actions and often its voice which is heard. Thus the personality of the human host is submerged in deference to that of the zar; yet the host's awareness of her surroundings is not necessarily diminished. Those who experience possession trance say instead that their perceptions are both augmented and altered in accordance with the identity of the possessive spirit. (This alteration of perception is more fully considered in Chapter 12.)

The coalescence of spirit and host may be tacitly recognized, as when Zaineb notes that they (spirit and host) drank the coffee provided. Sometimes, too, a possessed individual comes to think of herself as a plurality. When I asked another of my informants (Asia) whether she had mounted a zar ceremony of her own she replied,

Never yet has that happened. Only, if there is a zar party going on in the area, we bathe, we put on perfume, and we change into good clothes, and we go over to the ceremony. We descend (in trance) and then we come back, I myself.

Now the apparent coalescence of two distinct identities in one human body provides ample possibility for confusion. Possession trance, at least as observed in others and perhaps as experienced in oneself, remains a rather ambiguous event. Just who is doing what is not always clearly defined. Were it
to be so, and were the spirit alone considered present in the body of its host, then undoubtedly Zaineb would have phrased the above quoted remarks differently. She would have said, "He [spirit] said [not she said], 'Unless you put on a ceremony for her!'" But she did not. The ambiguity, the risk of confusion, is, perhaps, the key to understanding the possession trance event. For it is precisely this which allows individuals, possessed and non-possessed alike, to make of it what they wish. While individuals are schooled to distinguish the identities of zairan from those of the humans whom they possess, in actual trance episodes the two are brought into intimate and potentially perplexing association. Thus might spirit identity and human identity become metaphors for each other, metaphors in a negative or a complementary sense as well as, perhaps, in a positive one. She is he (spirit); She is not he (spirit): Both are equally descriptive.

Hence the interpretation of a possession event is not actually given in the event, despite the fact that certain demands for textual coherence must be met if the episode is to be considered genuine (neither dissimulation on the part of the human host nor "play" on the part of the zar). The lack of precision in that which is taking place permits both host and audience to experience several events at the same time, or, more accurately perhaps, to experience the same event on
several different levels at once. The range of potential interpretations to be derived from the event is, therefore, immense.

The reader, then, is cautioned that in what follows in this and in subsequent chapters the distinction between human host and possessive spirit may not always be explicit. In order to avoid confusion as far as possible and to be accurate in my reporting of possession events, I shall, in referring to spirits, employ neutral terms: "it", "which", "that", as opposed to gender terms: "she", "he", or animate terms: "who", "whom", etc. This format will be followed except when Hofriyati themselves speak about spirits and possession phenomena, for then gender terms appropriate to particular spirits will be reported as they were related to me by informants.

ACCEPTING THE POSSESSION ETIOLOGY

An individual who does not suffer grave psychological disturbance and is thus quite capable of sustaining the temporary confusion of identities about which we have been speaking, who falls ill, and whose symptoms are not successfully alleviated by other therapeutic means, still might not accept the proposed diagnosis that she is possessed. While friends and relatives undoubtedly will encourage her to
do so, she may resist, claiming a lack of resources to stage the requisite propitiations. Adepts are agreed that such reluctance is likely to intensify the patient's problem. Ultimately it can have but one effect: the inevitable rituals will have to entail more lavish expenditure than usual in order to mollify spirits affronted by the woman's unyielding behavior or that of her husband in refusing to sponsor her cure. One who refuses to accept zar as the final diagnosis of her ailment eventually may be convinced if her symptoms do intensify or seem to be unduly prolonged. The role of suggestion here is at once apparent: social pressure to give in to zar etiology could well create additional anxiety in the patient, whose initial symptoms, too, may be stress related.

On the other hand, resistance may be interpreted as an act of "good faith", for it shows that the patient does not actively seek to be spirit possessed, but becomes so against her will. Resistance, then, validates the diagnosis of her illness, albeit obliquely. This is significant, for if zar possession does serve to articulate a certain range of experience (supra), of which illness may itself be part, the individual who, whether consciously or not, wishes to make use of that idiom can do so only through the context of illness. The person who dances at zar ceremonies but who has not previously been made ill by the spirits is considered a fake.

Thus, as Lambek (1978:8) states, "were it not for possession,
individuals might never feel sick in the first place."

There is, of course, another side to this coin, and examining it reveals the essential tautology of zar possession. As noted earlier, people recognize a variety of circumstances that increase vulnerability to spirit attack: suffering effects of the evil eye, mourning, smelling bad odors, being tired and overworked, experiencing fear, worry or anxiety, eating "poor" foods, sweating, feeling depressed and apathetic, and being sick from natural causes are several of those commonly mentioned. As human behaviors and conditions these are considered less than ideal, and especially so for women. Yet they are not extraordinary human situations: obviously they are life occurrences that every one must expect to experience at some time or another. But when a woman, for example, feels anger, an emotion which Hofriyat culture admonishes her to control, her fear of becoming possessed in consequence might well precipitate illness that is later interpreted as zar.

However, Hofriyati women do not overly trouble themselves about questions of causality: zairan are capricious; while they are more likely to possess a vulnerable woman they might also create the conditions for vulnerability if they find the prospect of possessing her particularly attractive. Certain circumstances, such as the death of a relative and attendant mourning behavior, are not seen to be "caused" by spirits.
When a bereaved woman experiences possession illness it is because the spirits have been denied their due or because they wish merely to take advantage of her unhappy situation. But a relatively diffuse condition such as apathy may be more subtly related to zār such that cause of the affliction and its effect are virtually indistinguishable. If, for example, a woman claims to be zahajana, weary or depressed, and should she have reason to suspect spirit possession as the root of her problem, she will explain simply, "da zār", that is zār. Here the woman's discomfort may derive from the mere presence of the spirit reminding its host that she must perform certain acts (shoghul, or "work"), i.e. smoking a cigarette, bathing with perfumed soap, on its behalf. On the other hand, if her depression is not spirit inflicted it may nevertheless occasion a spirit attack. For zairan are said to become "inflamed" when their hosts are unwell or otherwise out of sorts. They wish the latter, through whom they experience the human world, to take good mental and physical care of themselves. Hence, paradoxically, they demand of their hosts avoidance of those conditions which they themselves might inflict and over which humans apparently have little or no control.

Zairan are thought to enjoy the business of possessing humans. They are said to love cleanliness, beauty, and expensive humanly produced finery: gold, silver, luxurious
clothing, delicate perfumes, soaps, henna, in fact, all things deemed essential to the Hofriyati feminine ideal. Though ambivalent in most regards, hedonism is the one pursuit zairan attend to with singular interest. And if thwarted in this they can be vindictive. Moreover, despite the existence of prior contractual arrangements with their respective hosts, zairan rarely refrain from taking advantage of a situation that promises to bring them pleasure. These desires they articulate through the illnesses they inflict upon humans and through the ceremonies designed to restore the zār-possessed to health.

DIAGNOSIS AND DIAGNOSTICIANS

Initial stages of the diagnostic process were outlined briefly in earlier pages of this chapter. Following unsuccessful attempts to secure relief of symptoms using Western and traditional Islamic medicines, however, a sufferer does not immediately assume that she has a zār. Spirit affliction should be confirmed in a patient ('ayana, or "sick one") before proceeding further towards a cure. Confirmation can be obtained in one of the following ways: the patient may have been warned by an Islamic holy man in the course of religious therapy that she has a rib el-ahmar, a red spirit or zār.
On the other hand, if possession is suspected she may enlist the aid of a *sitt el-'ilba*, a "woman of the box" (or *tin*, in reference to the box in which *zar* incense is kept). Usually such a woman is a *zar* adept whose relationships with possessive spirits are especially well developed. She takes a coin from the patient and a bit of cloth that has been in contact with the patient's body. She fumigates these items with incense of the *zar* and places them under her pillow upon retiring. These items are known as "keys" of dreams (cf. Constantinides 1977:68). When she awakens she informs her client as to whether she dreamed of *zairan*, and, if so, what they demand in return for restoring her to health (i.e. a ceremony of particular length). Some say the *sitt el-'ilba* need not dream to divine *zar* illness, that she is able to "see" the answer to one's questions merely by opening the incense *tin*.

The *'ayana*'s own dreams also might point her in the direction of *zar*. If she dreams of henna or of smoke, if she sees a man in her sleep who tells her she must wear a beautiful *töb*, or if she sees chairs or whiskey or anything else normally associated with *zar*, these things she is unconsciously bound to repeat upon waking. Others familiar with *zar* and its manifestations then interpret the dream for her, suggesting that it indicates possession.
Not infrequently it happens that a sick woman will become spontaneously entranced (ghabiyana or "absent") while at home. Should this occur, a zar sheikha is summoned. A sheikha is an adept who, over time, has cultivated mature and controlled relationships with the spirits, especially those by which she herself is possessed. These, for their part, generally cooperate with her in diagnosing possession in others; they are willing to speak with her and to reveal their identities when afflicting one who is her patient.

A potential sheikha, who may or may not also be a sitt el-'ilba, learns about zar (how to invoke the spirits, what are their respective characteristics and demands, how to bargain with them) through long apprenticeship with established curers. Usually the proclivity is passed from woman to woman in the maternal line: a woman whose mother or whose mother's sister is a sheikha is most likely to advance to that position herself.

When called to the home of a sick woman, a sheikha brings with her the various types of incense associated with the zar. With these she fumigates the patient, thereby calling upon the afflicting spirit to descend and manifest itself. If the spirit reveals itself in the entranced patient, the sheikha, who normally does not enter possession trance at such times but instead remains her "Hofriyati self", then converses with it and attempts to discover its desires. She coaxes the
possessive zär to divulge its identity, or at least to make known the species to which it belongs, asking whether it is an Ethiopian spirit or a European, and so on. Often, however, the latter is sufficiently implied by the spirit's demands should these be disclosed at the initial incensing.

Not all spirits are articulate at first, especially if the woman whom they choose to possess is a novice. They may manifest themselves in grunts and screams, or they may speak a "foreign" language not immediately intelligible to the sheikha or to others present. The spirit (read patient) and the sheikha proceed to negotiate an understanding: the woman in trance thus begins to learn how to be possessed, her spirit(s) begins to assume shape and character as the hints and questions posed by the sheikha are assimilated and confirmed or modified. In this both are guided by shared, though perhaps at this point unequal, competence in the language that is zar.

Even if the 'ayana has not previously suffered zär affliction undoubtedly she has internalized a certain amount of information concerning the spirits and their attributes. She has likely attended zär ceremonies from an early age, and among her relatives there will be several who are spirit possessed. Thus, most women in Hofriyat have sufficient zär competence to be able to embark upon the negotiation of a cure under the guiding hand of a sheikha should they find
themselves to be possessed.

If during her house-call the sheikha has not successfully drawn the afflicting spirit into dialogue but has reason to believe that the woman is nonetheless zar possessed, she may call for a test (tajrüba). This is a trial drumming session that is held indoors on three consecutive nights. The 'ayana meets with several zar adepts and the sheikha who together carefully perform the roster of zar incantations known as "threads" (khuyüt). The tajrüba is much like a miniature zar ceremony: incense is burned, and various items associated with the spirits are made available to the patient. The spirits are called upon to descend, not only into the patient but into their other hosts as well. Yet attention is directed to the former: the sheikha observes her closely, noting those songs to which she responds with exaggerated movement or during which she appears discomfited. There is a chance that the patient will go into trance at this point and her possessive spirit identify itself. However, should this fail to occur zar is not ruled out as the source of her illness. For the patient's unwillingness to accept the fact of her possession might prevent the spirits from descending; alternatively, the spirits might be reluctant to place their cards on the table just yet: they may decide to hold off negotiating with the sheikha (and, vicariously, the patient herself) until they receive assurances that a ceremony will be held for them and
at least some of their demands will be met.

Now it is important to note that, however much this is denied by the Hofriyati, when the sheikha is summoned to consult with a patient whether at the latter's home or in a trial ceremony, spirit possession is the foregone diagnosis. It is presumed at this point by all concerned observers that the 'ayana is plagued by a zar. She herself has very little choice in the matter; what she must do is accept this etiology of her illness: she must become wholly convinced of the spirit's presence. Part of the sheikha's task is to awaken in the patient a recognition of the alien being inhabiting her body, to assure the patient that her personality and that of the spirit are separate and distinct (cf. Lambek 1978 passim). On the other hand, what it behooves the sheikha to discover is the identity of the novice's possessive spirit(s) in order to establish the basis for a cure. Just as the patient gradually is socialized to accept possession as the root of her affliction and to construe her experience in these terms, so, too, is the spirit socialized to communicate with the sheikha and with other humans whom it meets.

I should clarify the sheikha's role here, as I do not with to imply that she is a cult leader in the standard sense. In Sudan's larger towns, zar is indeed an organized cult (Constantinides 1972). There are a number of full-time practitioners, both male and female, who are well paid for
their services and respectively attract fairly large followings of possessed. They maintain clinic-like establishments in their homes where patients might reside while undergoing therapy, and they exercise a certain degree of authority over those to whom they minister. Some such sheikhat (plural) sell or lend paraphernalia (clothing and other accessories) appropriate to the various spirits and with which the latter demand their hosts attire themselves upon entering them during ritual trance.

In Hofriyat, however, zar is much less formalized. Those who become curers still do so by discipleship to an established sheikha, or by association with female matrikin who are also curers -- this much is the same. But in most other respects the rural cult is quite different. Here sheikhat have no permanent followings; they are paid a minimal amount for their services, generally scaled to what the 'ayana can afford to pay. If they preside at a ceremony, they receive a piaster or two from adepts who attend. In addition, a sheikha may be given a gift by her grateful patient. But my companions frequently remarked that all such donations were made on a voluntary basis. Thus, unlike city sheikhat, those in the vicinity of Hofriyat set no fees for their work. (The only exception to this rule is a male curer whose powers derive from zar spirits but who deals equally with matters external to the cult, discussed in Chapter 8). Moreover,
rural sheikhat attempt to exercise no authority over their clientele and do not object if more than one curer is called upon to deal with a difficult case. The general impression I received of the rural zār complex was that it is relatively unstructured, and its personnel relatively unspecialized and uncompetitive. Sheikhat and adepts alike are united by their mutual concern for preserving good relations with spirits and for safeguarding the health and wellbeing of the latter's respective hosts. Theirs is, in many ways, a pleasurable association in spite of its concern with illness, and it reminds one of a social club which occasionally convenes to discuss common interests. While I do not wish to carry this analogy further, I would suggest that the informality of the rural cult is inevitable; it stems from the fact that most adepts here interact with each other on a daily basis. Most are kin and neighbors; all know each other's circumstances, financial resources, and domestic problems in minute detail. In Hofriyat, then, the group of zār adepts, by the very nature of its composition, is far different from the cult groups one finds in the cities where membership is somewhat more eclectic and relationships between adepts and their curers more strictly professional.
CEREMONY

In this section I propose briefly to describe the zār propitiation ceremony. Certain details touched upon here will be considered at greater length in subsequent chapters.

When a diagnosis of possession has been accepted by the patient, she agrees to hold a zār ritual at an undetermined future date. In order to do so she must obtain a commitment of financial support in this venture from members of her family. Importantly, her husband should be willing to contribute funds, but if he refuses her sons and/or her brothers may step forward to allow the ceremony to proceed.¹⁰ The expenses of a rural zār may be in the neighborhood of 20 L to 30 L or more (in 1976 roughly $50 to $75 U.S.),¹¹ depending upon the nature of the cure: if it is the patient's first ceremony it must be more elaborate and longer in duration than any propitiation she is likely to mount in future. As with other village events those who attend can be expected to help defray the cost by bringing sugar or some other small gift for the patient's household. Whatever monies are collected go to supply incense and perfume for the ceremony, tea, cigarettes, a sacrificial animal, plus more specific demands of the particular spirit(s) to be placated, such as new clothing or special foods to be consumed by the novice host on its behalf. Expenditures associated with a zār ceremonial, even in a rural
area such as Hofriyat, are high relative to the resources of most villagers.

A patient who is the focus of a curing ritual is referred to for that duration as the "bride" ('arūs) of the zar, an intriguing designation further explored in Chapter 10. Throughout the ceremony, which lasts somewhere between three and seven days (always, however, an odd number of days, for odd numbers are considered propitious), she remains in virtual seclusion, associating with no one who is not in some way associated with the zar. Unless her husband also is possessed and regularly attends zar rituals, she ought to avoid seeing him altogether. It is imperative that she abstain from sexual activity; in addition, she must do no work. Others cook for her, look after her children (unless she is nursing), clean her house, bring water, and so forth. The patient should not go out into the village, but should remain within the walls of her hosh. These restrictions apply for a full week following completion of the ritual.

Every day during the ceremony adepts gather in the patient's home or, less commonly, in that of the officiating sheikha. The time to start "drumming the zar" varies with the weather, but things rarely get under way before late afternoon. Zar singing and drumming extend far into the night, sometimes ending just before dawn, with women occasionally leaving the ceremony for a few moments in order
to pray, to fix the evening meal for their respective families, or to put their young children to bed.

A zār ritual preferably takes place indoors, but if numerous guests are expected (as usually is the case) it may be staged outside, yet within the hōsh. When it is about to start the 'ayana is led forth and made to sit on a mat. If this is her first cure she generally dresses in a white jelabiya, a long, loose shirt typically worn by village men, with two strips of red cloth crossed over her chest and secured at the waist. She faces east, the direction of Mecca; alternatively and more commonly in Hofriyat she may be set to face the front door of the hōsh, the khashm el-beyt. Those who are to play the zār instruments, consisting of a dallūka (large decorated pottery-based drum stretched with goat hide), a tusht (wide and shallow aluminum wash tub), a nugerishan (hollow metal instrument which when struck sounds not unlike a cow-bell) and one or more empty jerry-cans, arrange themselves to the left of the 'ayana. The sheikha normally sits to her right. Remaining attendants are situated facing each other in two rows which adjoin that of the patient and musicians at right angles with an open area being left in the center. This opening functions during the ritual as a theatrical stage for the activities of spirits. The party is arranged, then, roughly in the shape of a "U" which has its open end either facing the door or facing east. This area is known as the zār
mIdan, the open area, arena, or sphere of activity.

When all are assembled a lighted incense burner is passed around and each woman is careful to fumigate her body orifices, potential entrées for spirits, as discussed in Chapter 2. The drummers begin, first calling down blessings for the group from Mohammed the Prophet and from several well known Muslim saints. Then the zairan are marshalled by a song addressed to them as a group. After this, adepts commence to drum the "threads" appropriate to each spirit in turn, in consecutive order and in keeping with the particular species to which each belongs. Those who wish to do so join in singing the incantations. The atmosphere is lively: when the group "pulls the threads" of a spirit by which a woman is possessed, the latter dances in accompaniment, rocking to and fro or bobbing quickly up and down from a kneeling position as the spirit's pressure on her head intensifies. She may choose to dance standing, though this posture generally is reserved for those who have held sacrificial rituals of their own in the past. Several women, all of whom are possessed by a single spirit, may dance in this manner during that spirit's thread. And one or more of these may enter trance and begin to manifest the characteristics of the spirit. Usually the spirit can be relied upon to quit the body of its host at the end of a song, but in some it is especially tenacious and may remain within her for some time afterwards. If a woman thus
appears deeply affected, the sheikha will attempt to speak to
the spirit, coaxing it to reveal its demands and bargaining
with it should these be considered outrageous.

It is fully expected that the patient will become
entranced in this manner at some point during the evening.
And when the afflicting spirit (or spirits) takes control of
her body while the kheyūt (thread) appropriate to its identity
is being drummed the cure can begin in earnest. Members of
the audience, who were led to suspect the species identity of
the spirit because of earlier diagnostic indications, now have
their suspicions confirmed. Should the woman dance for more
than one species of spirit there is no real problem: hers will
be seen as a case of multiple possession, a condition more
common than it is rare. Yet the spirit most strongly
expressed in ritual trance and belonging to the species first
manifested, whether in the dreams of a sitt el-'ilba, or in
the dreams or visions or non-ceremonial trance of the patient
herself, is the spirit generally held responsible for the
patient's current illness. It is this spirit which, above all
others, must be mollified. The entrainment of its new host,
therefore its manifestation through her physical being, brings the
formerly diffuse spirit whose identity up to this point has
been a matter for educated guess firmly within the realm of
the choate. Its character is revealed, its presence now
expressed in human dimensions. Moreover, the patient's
experience is objectified and externalized: it, too, assumes choateness.

The spirit responsible for the 'ayana's affliction thus becomes accessible to the audience, open to dialogue with recognized curers and with the patient herself through the latter's mediation. It has been successfully socialized to the point where it is willing to negotiate restoration of its host's wellbeing in human terms, that is, in exchange for certain items of human manufacture or production. This is perhaps the most crucial phase in the curing process. For it establishes the fact that all parties concerned are at least open to communication, and entails a tacit recognition that both host and intrusive spirit agree upon a code in which meaningful communication might take place.

This development in itself can be expected to alleviate some of the patient's symptoms, but not all. While her condition is likely to improve during the course of the ritual, she generally begins to make a real recovery following the sacrificial meal on its final evening.

The sacrifice demanded by the zar is a sheep or goat (or one of each) of specified markings, the type depending upon the identity and color associations of the spirit in question. The animal is first washed and dyed with henna on the top of its head or on its back; then, just before it is to be slaughtered, it is led into the mīdān and held in place in
front of the 'ayana, the sheikha, and the musicians. A multi-colored cloth called a garmosos (considered in Chapter 10), whose principal function is to cover the head of a bride at her wedding, is draped over the head of the animal. Burning incense is thrust under the cloth as attendants perform a chant addressed to all zairan. The drumming of this chant is considered a success if during it the animal "descends", or bobs its head up and down in the manner of a woman inhabited by a spirit. Such activity is interpreted as a sign of the spirits' acquiescence with regard to the sacrificial transaction. Following this episode the animal is led from the ınıran and slaughtered, whereupon some of its blood is caught in a bowl. The 'ayana then steps over the blood and carcass of the victim seven times. Afterwards the collected blood is used by the sheikha to anoint the patient's forehead, areas of the patient's body that have been particularly painful or troublesome, and her clothing. The bowl is then passed to other adepts, who dip their fingers in its contents or drink a bit (an act expressly forbidden by Islam), and place a piaster or two on top.

A sacrificial meal (karama) of fatta (grilled meat, bread, rice, onions and garlic moistened with broth) is prepared by the patient's female kin and neighbors, and all in attendance are invited to partake. The bones of the animal are carefully reserved along with the bowl of (now dried)
blood and the head, all of which figure in a ritual that takes place on the following day. After dinner the party usually disperses, though sometimes drumming is resumed.

On the night of the karama, the sacrificial victim's head is boiled. The next day the sheikha, the 'ayana, and several zār adepts meet once again in the beyt ez-zār, the place where the ceremony was held. After drumming several threads and invoking the spirits with incense, the head of the goat or sheep is brought out on a tray. The sheikha then performs the ritual known as fakka-t-er-ras, "opening of the head". While the tray is held above the patient's head, the sheikha pulls apart the animal's jaws. The patient is then made to eat the "head meat", especially the sensory organs (except the eyes) and the brain. Some informants insisted that she must eat all of this meat, others that small amounts of each type would suffice.

Subsequent to the "opening of the head" there is a procession to the Nile. The patient, the sheikha(t), and others carry in a basket the blood-caked bowl, the bones and skull of the sacrificial victim, and some sweets to the river bank. Once there, the officiating sheikha and the 'ayana go into the water a little way and wash their faces, arms and legs. The contents of the basket are tossed into the river, and the bowl containing the animal's blood is carefully rinsed. Then all return to the patient's home.
Once there, the patient changes clothing, perfumes herself, and moves to a room other than the one she has occupied for the last seven days or so. Incense is lit once more and the woman's body orifices fumigated. The ritual is now concluded, though the patient is admonished to remain in semi-seclusion (avoiding her husband) for a further seven days.

Having thus acceded to her spirits' demands and provided a sacrifice on their behalf, a woman hopes henceforward to remain untroubled by zairan. Yet she is enjoined to pay attention to her spirits, to perform every day such rituals as they desire, and to refrain from negative emotion and association with dirt for the rest of her life. Failure to do these things undoubtedly will precipitate another spirit attack.

Thus it is apparent that possession "cure" is an ongoing process, one of continuing spirit socialization and human accommodation, expressed as exchange. Just as humans are imperfectible and variable in their inherent characteristics, their "natures", and may for one reason or another neglect the zar, so, too, spirits, far more ambivalent and capricious than are their human counterparts, may never be socialized completely. It is a comment upon both human and spirit natures that relationships between individuals, which ought ideally to be reciprocal and mutually beneficial, actually are
acknowledged to be ambiguous, and may be distorted through
carelessness or self-seeking behavior.

So it sometimes happens that a woman who has acquiesced
to her spirits' demands, who has been diligent in following
the spirits' instructions regarding her comportment in day to
day affairs, may be smitten with possession illness for no
other reason than it is the spirits' whim. Should she suffer
a relapse of her illness she may again hold a curing ceremony,
though this need not be as elaborate as her first.

SPIRITS

Throughout this chapter I have referred to zairan
generally, only once or twice hinting at the characteristics
of individual spirits. I have mentioned that zairan are
variously called "winds" (sing. rih; pl. rowban), and
specifically red winds, or dustür (the etymology of this term
is considered in Chapter 10), and are considered to form a
particular class of jinn. Zairan are essentially amoral,
capricious, pleasure seeking, and self-indulgent. In these
qualities they are what Hofriyati are not and ought not to be.

Similarly, zār species and individual spirits originate
in environments alien to that of the village. Not only are
they spirits, they are spirit members of distinct non-
Hofriyati ethnic groups. Although zairan themselves are
properly considered in Part III, here we must note that the zar world parallels that of humans. Hence, differences among spirit species are roughly equivalent to differences thought to obtain among human cultures. And each zar species contains many individually named spirits, each of which has some distinctive trait that marks it off from the rest. Thus species, and within species, spirits themselves, are differentiated not only on the basis of ethnicity but also according to such characteristics and associations as color, style of dress, typical gestures, ceremonial demands, and types of illness they are thought most likely to precipitate. When evoked in zar rituals, spirits appear sequentially, one by one as their threads are drummed, in the following general order:

1. Holy Men (and women, usually their daughters):
   Darawish
2. Ethiopians: Habish
3. Westerners: Khawajat
4. Pashas: Bashawat (usually Egyptians and Turks)
5. Nomadic Sudanese: 'Arāb
6. Syrian Gypsies: Halib
7. West Africans: Fellata
8. Southern Sudanese: 'Abīd, Khudām
9. Witches and Crocodiles, said to be Azande: Sahār, Nyam Nyam.
CONCLUSION

In this chapter some general characteristics of the *zar* possession phenomenon have been outlined in order that we might in subsequent chapters consider the contexts of possession: who specifically among village women becomes spirit possessed, how, and when; relationships between possession and the symbolic frame of interiority; links between *zar* ceremonies and other Hofriyati rituals. Many points raised in this chapter remain unexplained, for my purpose here was not so much to analyse the *zar* as it was to provide a description of it which could serve as a basis for interpretation. Further, an interpretation of spirit possession in Hofriyat must be multi-dimensional: when viewed from one angle alone the phenomenon appears both flat and incomprehensible, like a photograph of the cosmos or of a deeply textured work of art. Seen thus the intricate relationships among various of its aspects appear distorted; they lack perspective, depth of field. It is my hope that in shifting our view from one to another of its facets we may be able to correct for this enigma, so to produce a more faithful reproduction (or image) of the complexity that is *zar*.

So to begin: if, as I assert, we might profitably view spirit possession in Hofriyat as an idiom for the articulation
of a certain range of experience (cf. Crapanzano 1977a), what
generalizations can be made about the experiences of those who
consider themselves possessed? Since most of those who suffer
zār affliction are women, we will consider in the following
chapter why this might be so — why certain feminine
experiences might more readily lend themselves to
interpretation as spirit possession than comparable
experiences of men.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 6


2. In Hofriyat at the time of fieldwork zār-tumbura, a cult having to do with "strong" or grave illness and spirits more predictably malevolent than the zairan about which we shall speak in this and in subsequent chapters, is no longer practiced. Whatever remnants of it remain have been wholly absorbed by zār-bori, simply, zār.

3. 40% of all known cases (of 120 women). Considering the eight women about whom I have insufficient information to be non-possessed that figure drops to 37.5%. If all eight women are possessed, however, then the percentage of Hofriyati women afflicted by zār and who acknowledge such affliction actually is 43.75%.

4. On Mayotte, Comoro Islands, for example, Lambek (1978) notes that possessive spirits often announce their presence in the bodies of their hosts by having the latter drink perfume.

5. Though, perhaps, only meaningful as such to the anthropologist.

6. For kaddaba.

7. For zahagana.

8. From villagers' perspective this is another reason why women tend to become possessed to a far greater extent than do men.

9. In these traits, as in others, zairan are deemed similar to husbands. This comparison is taken up in subsequent chapters.

10. In the case of divorced patients or, more rarely, of those who have never been married, brothers are the primary source of support for curing rituals.
11. I was informed that in Khartoum, on the other hand, zär ceremonies may cost as much as 200L (around $500 U.S. in 1976) or more, indeed a significant expense, four or five times the average monthly wage of Hofriyati in that city.

12. The significance of this door was discussed in Chapter 2. To recapitulate, it is identified with the male head of the household, with his offspring, and with males in general. It is the major orifice of the hōsh, linking those inside with the external world, notably the world of strangers and of men. These associations are again discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

13. The animal is slaughtered by a man, frequently the only male permitted entrance to the ceremony. In performing this task he takes a coin in his mouth in order to prevent him from saying the words b'ism Allahî, "in the name of God." This invocation prefaces all other acts of animal slaughter in Hofriyat but is deemed inappropriate to the zär. It is feared that zairan, upon hearing the name of Allah would flee from the place of the ceremony.

14. The mystically significant number seven figures throughout zär rituals and other local ceremonies such as weddings. It serves to link the zär to these ceremonies and also to the wider system of Islam (there are said to be seven heavens, seven hells, and so on).
CHAPTER 7

FERTILITY AND POSSESSION

Herein we explore at length the relationship between Hofriyati women and zar described in the previous chapter. There it was observed that 40% of all adult female villagers acknowledge themselves to be possessed. Significantly, this figure refers to 40% of all women who have been married, thus adopting the Hofriyati criterion of adulthood for females. I was able to document only one case of a single woman, middle-aged and ostensibly virginal, who both has a spirit and has drummed the zar. Thus zar is, in its incidence, overwhelmingly associated with women who are presently or who have once been espoused. Moreover, this connection is explicitly stated by the Hofriyati themselves, for I once asked a young girl of 15 if she had a zar spirit. "Possibly," she replied, "but I won't really know until I'm married."

Now in Chapter 2 it was noted that 31 village women between the ages of 20 and 55, or 25.6% of females over the average age at first marriage, never have been wed. Apparently only one of these is zar possessed, as noted above. Yet several such women privately affirmed that they had zairan; none, however, sought to undertake a cure since this would involve the public acknowledgement of affliction. A
single woman is, they say, *khajlana*, abashed or ashamed to admit that she might be spirit possessed. Some allege that unless one is married one can do nothing to alleviate the suffering brought by *zairan*, for, lacking a husband, upon whom can a woman rely to sponsor her therapy? And what, then, would be the point of disclosing her association with the *zār*? It is thought better for a single woman to conceal the fact of her possession, for confessing it might limit her chances eventually of finding a mate. Prospective husbands may be frightened away by the promise of financial hardship brought to the marriage by a wife with a prior possession liability.

But these are not the only reasons for which a single woman refuses publicly to concede possession. It seems she is *khajlana* with regard to the affliction because, properly, possession has something to do with the loss of virginity. *Zār* is intimately associated with the group of Hofriyati women whose fertility has been activated, regardless of their respective post-nuptial marital statuses. Only after one's wedding might she, with relative impunity, admit to being possessed. Just as her first wedding establishes a woman's adult status by giving her the means to use her potential fertility, so also does it ordain that she has become *zār* "possessible".

Even if a woman realizes the presence of *zairan* "above" her prior to marriage, she is confident the spirits will
remain benign until after she is espoused. For spirits, too, know how little there is to be gained by afflicting a single woman. In truth, the symptoms zairan bring often are considered secondary to their principal target: female fertility. So, the reasoning goes, if a woman is a virgin and is single, and is therefore relatively unaware of any threat to her reproductive ability, how might she or her kinspeople appreciate the full extent of a spirit attack?

The association between women whose fertility has been activated and spirit possession is expressed in a number of ways. If a single woman spontaneously becomes entranced (outside of the zär ritual context, for spirits have been known to "play" with virgins to attend), her malady is not considered a sign of zär possession. Assuming that she is otherwise mentally sound, hence not possessed by malevolent jinn, her problem is generally diagnosed as a kind of "love sickness". But this is not quite accurate. It is not love that the woman is said to crave so much as sex. Virgins, Hofriyati say, experience trance if unconsciously they wish to sleep with a man, any man. Knowing the premium that villagers place upon fertility, I asked my friends if this was because a girl was anxious to become pregnant. They responded in the negative. Desire for sexual intercourse alone is held responsible for this illness. If a young woman exhibits these symptoms her affliction is not made public; rather, her family
tries to find a husband for her as quickly and as quietly as possible.\(^1\) Here, then, the distinction between virgin women and zār possession (another potential cause of spontaneous trance) is verified and maintained.

From another perspective, women assert that zairān are responsible for a great many fertility disorders. Zairān are said to "hold" or to "seize" (masak) the womb, to prevent feminine blood from mixing with semen so as to produce a child. Alternatively they may "loosen" (hal) a child within the womb so as to precipitate miscarriage.

Several spirits in particular are associated with reproductive abnormality: the spirit Abdelgadir el-Jaylani, zār counterpart of a well known Muslim saint, is said to have great power both to inflict and to correct fertility problems. Hofriyati women, whether or not they are spirit possessed, ask blessings of the deceased holy man (the zār's human parallel), pledging to make a sacrifice (karama) on his behalf if their disability is thereby assuaged.

Ethiopian (Habish) spirits especially are linked to such disorders. Moreover, spirits of the Ethiopian species include many examples of aberrant fertility and perverse sexuality: Benat Jozay are twins, but female, thus indicative of extremely potent fertility that has produced inappropriate results. Luliya Ḥabishiya is a bride, but a prostitute; Sulayman Ya Jenna is a male homosexual spirit whose name,
Sulayman Oh Veiled One, is an intended pun: the close sounding word jena (fruit) is a colloquial euphemism for "offspring".

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POSSESSED

Before proceeding to an exploration of life experiences having to do with fertility that women articulate in the idiom of possession, we must first determine how 40% of women who have spirits differ from the 60% or so who do not. Our sample consists of 120 Hofriyati women, comprising all but eight members of the entire resident adult female population who have ever been married. The eight excluded women are those for whom I have insufficient information to make accurate comparisons. Fairly complete data concerning reproductive and marital life history were obtained for all remaining 120 individuals, and cross-checked as far as this was possible. In addition, I recorded each woman's age so far as this was known: systematic and accurate birth records were not kept in the village until quite recently, so often it was necessary to estimate an individual's age from her recollection of past events, the relative ages of her contemporaries, and the like.

There are some significant differences between possessed and non-possessed when traits are considered independently. With regard to stability of first marriage, only 1 of every 11
non-possessed women has been married more than once (8.3%), whereas for possessed women this ratio is 1:2, that is, fully a third of those who are possessed have been espoused at least twice during their respective lives. As Table XIV illustrates, the marriages of non-possessed women tend, on average, to be somewhat "closer" (cf. Chapter 3, between kin who acknowledge closer prior relationship) than those of women who are possessed. Moreover, when marriages between first cousins only are considered, the configuration presented in Table XV is obtained. Here we see that non-possessed women exhibit a higher incidence of first cousin first marriage than do the zar possessed; further, twice the percentage of non-possessed women (30.6%) have married patrilateral parallel cousins (tawāli) than have women who acknowledge possession. Thus, closeness and preferability of prior relationship between husband and wife might serve to mitigate the occurrence of possession illness or its diagnosis. Though spouses who are close kin are likely to be plagued by as many reproductive problems as are those who are more distant kin or non-kin, family pressures, previously established patterns of communication, moral obligation, etc., may lessen the perceived severity of these or may present alternative means by which they may be articulated or redressed. On the other hand, we note in Table XIV a further difference between the two groups of women with regard to first marriage: a greater
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Endogamy</th>
<th>First Possessed</th>
<th>First Non-Possessed</th>
<th>Subsequent Possessed</th>
<th>Subsequent Non-Possessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Traceable Kin</td>
<td>70.7(^a)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>72.9(^b)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Endogamous(^d)</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Endogamous(^e)</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Tribally Endogamous</td>
<td>68.4(^f)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>61.8(^g)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) extreme limits: 60.4-75.0, known & unknown cases (N= 48)  
\(^b\) " : 70.8-73.6, " & " " (N= 72)  
\(^c\) " : 53.3-50.0, " & " " (N= 18)  
\(^d\) N's exclude cases where neither spouse was born in the area  
\(^e\) N's exclude cases where neither spouse was born in the village  
\(^f\) " : 54.2-75.0, " & " " (N= 48)  
\(^g\) " : 27.8-55.6, " & " " (N= 18)
TABLE XV: COMPARISON OF FIRST-COUSIN FIRST MARRIAGES RELATIVE TO ALL FIRST MARRIAGES FOR POSSESSED AND NON-POSSESSED WOMEN IN HOFRIYAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUSIN TYPE</th>
<th>POSSESSED (N=48)</th>
<th>NON-POSSESSED (N=72)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrilateral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

percentage of possessed have married men from outside the village or from outside the village-area than have those who are not possessed. Such marriages are more likely than others to involve relocation for the bride and, concomitantly, removal from contact with family and friends, experiences which may precipitate feelings that come to be interpreted in the idiom of possession.

Divorce rates also show significant variance. 31.8% of all marriages entered into by women who claim to be possessed have ended either in divorce or in permanent separation, whereas the comparable figure for non-possessed women is only 19.2%. More tellingly, perhaps, 35.2% of zar possessed women
have experienced at least one divorce while 20.8% of those not possessed have done so. If we compare the number of divorces and separations involving withdrawal of support to the sizes of our respective populations, an even more dramatic difference becomes apparent: The 72 women who do not have spirits have, among them, only 15 divorces for the group; that is, when divorces are heuristically distributed throughout the group, the ratio of divorces to women is 1:4.8; 20.8% of these women have been, or could expect to have been divorced. The reader will note that this figure is the same as that for non-possessed women who have experienced at least one divorce, indicating that no one in the non-possessed group has been divorced more than once. But for the zar possessed this is not the case. Here we have 21 divorces among 48 women; hence a ratio of 1:2.3 (divorces:women) is obtained. We note, then, that possessed women viewed as a group are more than twice as likely to have experienced divorce as the group of non-possessed, and that several of those who are possessed have undergone more than one divorce.

Turning now to questions of fertility, Table XVI illustrates marked differences between women who are possessed and those who are not. We note that possessed women, on average, have been pregnant more often than non-possessed women, a fact which might at first glance seem to obfuscate women's statements concerning the association between zar and
### TABLE XVI: COMPARISON OF SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS REGARDING THE FERTILITY OF POSSESSED AND NON-POSSESSED WOMEN IN HOFRIYAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTIC</th>
<th>POSSESSED (N=48)</th>
<th>NON-POSSESSED (N=72)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of pregnancies</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children surviving infancy</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of pregnancies per woman</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of children who survived infancy per woman</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy success rate</td>
<td>80.50%</td>
<td>91.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of male children</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total known males conceived</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy success rate for males conceived</td>
<td>74.55%</td>
<td>84.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of female children</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total known females conceived</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy success rate for females conceived</td>
<td>90.32%</td>
<td>92.21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
fertility disorder. This apparent contradiction evaporates, however, when we consider the respective numbers of failed pregnancies for each group. The pregnancy success rate (the percentages of pregnancies brought to term, excluding stillbirths and, adopting a Hofriyati view of effective fertility, children who died in early infancy) for non-possessed women is 91.34%, whereas that for possessed women is 80.50%. Significantly, possessed women have a higher female to male ratio among their offspring (1.37:1) than do non-possessed (1.28:1). Moreover, while the pregnancy success rate for known females conceived is only slightly lower in zar possessed women (90.32%) than in those who are not possessed (92.21%), this is not true for known males conceived. Here the success rate for women possessed is only 74.55% whereas the comparable rate for non-possessed is 84.10%. Although the attrition rates for males conceived are, in normal populations, higher than are those for females conceived (Hutt 1972), in Hofriyat zar possessed women exhibit, relative to non-possessed women, a greater tendency (a) to reproduce females, and (b) to experience difficulty in carrying male progeny to term and into childhood. Indeed, these conditions are observed with alarm by Hofriyati, who are concerned to reproduce their respective lineages through the bearing of offspring, especially of males.
Now, although it has been touched upon in earlier pages and will be elaborated later in the present chapter, here it must be reiterated that in Hofriyat marriage and fertility are closely linked. For both men and women marriage is the means to activate, test and use fertility for the production of (male) descendants, toward the advancement of social position. So fertility problems recognized by villagers are both medical and social in origin; they include infant death, miscarriage, apparent sterility, bearing daughters only or having a daughter as the first born child, having a child (especially if this is a son) die within the first three or four years of its life, never having been pregnant (sexual incompatibility or impotence of husband), and being divorced before having become pregnant.

Considering those incidents in a woman's marital history generally interpreted as threatening to her fertility and wellbeing, I collected as much information as possible about the stability of her marriage(s), investigating whether she had been divorced, separated, remarried, widowed, a co-wife, whether her husband had withdrawn financial support, had divorced her but returned before the divorce was finalized (called a raja'a, a return), whether she was her present husband's second or third wife and he her first (i.e., whether he has a previous history of divorce, polygyny, or of wives dying in childbirth), whether there had been rumors or threats
as to pending divorce or co-wifery, and so on. Throughout I relied upon my informants to elucidate what was or was not problematic, what was or was not perceived as threatening to the successful attainment of a woman's social goals.

Again, recall that zar affliction is considered a permanent condition: once possessed, always possessed. Thus, in order to see how many women who have ever experienced marital and/or fertility disorders also claim to be spirit possessed, and thus to see how the factors earlier viewed independently might be mutually influential in leading to acceptance of a possession diagnosis, I classed together those who complained of having had one or both of the former set of problems at some point during their lives with others who were, at the time of fieldwork, presently suffering such difficulty. In this way women who are possessed, who have at least once held zairan responsible for certain of their afflictions, can properly be compared to non-possessed women. Table XVII presents a summary of the data thus compiled.

Significantly, only 8.3% of zar possessed women in Hofriyat have never had fertility or marital problems, whereas 40.3% of non-possessed women have escaped such difficulty. Indeed, zar affliction appears to be linked with fertility disorder, much as Hofriyati assert. Upon closer examination, however, the data reveal that a higher percentage of non-possessed women experience fertility dysfunction alone
relative to those who are possessed, and that the same holds true for marital difficulty when this factor is considered separately. The most salient feature to emerge from Table XVII is that zar affliction tends overwhelmingly to have struck women who have experienced both marital and fertility problems in the courses of their lives; moreover, that it tends not to have affected women who have not experienced both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAIT</th>
<th>POSSESSED</th>
<th></th>
<th>NON-POSSESSED</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No apparent marital or</td>
<td>4  8.3</td>
<td>29 40.3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fertility problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital problems only</td>
<td>7 14.6</td>
<td>13 18.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility problems only</td>
<td>10 20.8</td>
<td>18 25.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both marital and fertility</td>
<td>27 56.3</td>
<td>12 16.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals:</td>
<td>48 100.0</td>
<td>72 100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now there are a number of ways that one might interpret these results. It might be concluded that women who acknowledge spirit possession are thereby likely to foment trouble in their marriages because of the financial burden zar
places upon their husbands. Here fertility problems interpreted as possession may bring on marital problems which then exacerbate a woman's original fertility dysfunction (her husband may divorce her, or may take another wife), and so on. But, I submit, the reasoning need not be so complex. In Hofriyat, as we have noted, marriage disorder and fertility disorder are part and parcel of each other. A man marries to gain access to a woman's appropriate (Hofriyati) fertility; similarly, a woman marries to gain access to a man who can activate that fertility appropriately. The couple does not form an independent economic unit until fairly late in marriage, and no permanent transfer of jural rights and responsibilities from the family of the woman to that of her husband occurs with Hofriyati connubium. Fertility is the key to marriage, and marriage the key to fertility. It is not surprising, then, that fertility problems may threaten the stability of a marriage, and that marital problems may menace a woman's prerogative to use her potential fertility. This is not true for all cases, certainly, but perhaps it holds for some of those wherein women are deemed to be possessed.

Yet, if a woman suffers reproductive difficulties alone, these may or may not be considered spirit inflicted: only 10 of the 28 women in this category, or 35.7%, claimed to be possessed. Analogously, marital problems in themselves may or may not be associated, albeit obliquely, with zār (zairan are
not thought to cause problems in conjugal relations overtly, other than those immediately linked to fertility and virility). Of the 20 women who experienced difficulty in their marriages but whose fertility was not open to question, only 7, or 35%, claim to have spirits. But of the 39 women who have had both dysfunctions, 69.2% admit to being possessed. Moreover, possession affects only 4 of the 33 women whose marriages and reproductive careers are not obviously problematic (12.1%).

In looking at these figures it occurred to me that if conjugal difficulties and fertility problems are so closely linked, the above breakdown might in fact conceal differences among the various stages in women's respective marital/reproductive careers. For example, a young bride whose fertility is yet untested and whose husband is relatively attentive should exhibit no apparent trouble in either domain. Is she, then, less likely to be spirit possessed than an older woman who probably has been married for a much longer period of time and who thus may have experienced procreative difficulty at some point in her career? Figure 23 presents a comparison of zär possessed women by age group figured in ten year increments (to help balance any glaring inaccuracies as to age estimation and to offset variation in the ages of women at first marriage), expressed in percentages of the resident female population for whom adequate information was obtained.
FIGURE 23: COMPARISON OF ZAR POSSESSED WOMEN BY AGE-GROUP, AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE KNOWN ADULT FEMALE POPULATION OF HOFRIYAT (N=120)

(Percent)

(Age group)
Here we see that only 15.6% of married Hofriyati women between the ages of 16 (in 1976-77 there were no married women younger than this in the village) and 25 claim to have spirits. In the second age group (26-35 years) this rises to 40.0%, and in the third, a full 73.1% of Hofriyati women (ages 36-45) are possessed. For women over the age of 45 the relevant percentages of spirit possessed are: 46-55 years: 58.3%; 56-65 years: 45.0%; 66-75 years: 0%; 76 years and over: 0%.

The declining percentages of women with spirits in older age groups should be seen in light of the fact that, according to my informants, zar only began to catch hold in the village sometime after 1920. Thus, for a woman under age 45, the zar complex was fairly well established in Hofriyat prior to her birth, whereas for older women such was not the case. The implication here is that perhaps younger women more readily accept zar as an a priori, "natural" idiom for interpreting experience than do those who have learned it at some point in their lives. Moreover, stresses on the marital relationship may have increased in recent years due to the expanded opportunities for village men to obtain work outside of Hofriyat, as well as to the amplified pressures on arable land nearby. These stresses in turn may be expressed in the burgeoning rates of possession among women in young to middle adulthood. And lastly, regular rates of attrition may bias
the above possession statistics, especially in ascendant generations. These circumstances notwithstanding, the most significant aspect of Figure 23 is that it demonstrates a clear relationship between the stage a woman has reached in the life cycle and the probability that she will be spirit possessed.

CLEVER VIRGINS MAKE GOOD GRANDMOTHERS

In this section I endeavor to describe the constraints and potential hazards most Hofriyati women face as they proceed through their respective reproductive careers, in order to show when fertility potential might be thought jeopardized, and spirit possession diagnosed as its probable threat.

To begin the analysis we again turn for instruction to Hofriyati folklore. As noted in Chapter 3, there exists throughout Northern Sudan a corpus of popular tales concerning Fatna (Fatima) the Beautiful, epitome of youthful womanhood and culture heroine par excellence. In these tales, Fatna invariably falls victim or near victim to incest. And, just as invariably, she manages to escape that situation, sometimes by pure luck, sometimes through what appears to be an absurd naïveté on her part, sometimes through her skillful and witty maneuverings. But having disentangled herself from an
alliance that was a bit too close for comfort, Patna then tumbles headlong into another marital predicament at the hands of a complete stranger, usually the Sultan's son.

Earlier we noted that such stories deal with the perplexities involved in choosing an appropriate mate: should a woman marry an insider or an outsider? This quandary, as F.C.T. Moore suggests, contains within it the germ of a larger puzzle, that of how to achieve social stability and alliance at one and the same time (1975:106-122).

Our present interest in the tales, however, lies not in the general problem they pose but in the characterization of their protagonist, Patna. She is a rare mixture of youth and senescence: simultaneously naive and wise. Frequently she is depicted as blown this way or that by the winds of fate, as victimized by some deceitful manipulator, yet, given opportunity, she proves herself so perceptive, so cunning and capable, as to be a match for any man and the nemesis of many. Importantly, however, her actions in this latter regard are nearly always covert.

Most of the stories of Fatna are told to girls and young women by elders of their sex; always they are received with delight. They express, I will suggest, essential truths about the predicament of being female in the Arab Sudan: As we saw in Chapter 2, women begin their adult lives as virgin brides, idealizations of femininity. With skill and luck they end
their lives as respected habōbat, grandmothers, renowned for their earthy wisdom and for their ability as social manipulators. At the outset women are attributed high status, but it is symbolic status, it adheres to them not because of individual accomplishment but merely because they represent the important cultural value of interiority. At the end of their reproductive careers, however, women hope to have transformed symbolic status into significant social status relative to other women, primarily as the result of having borne many children. But the interim, as we shall see, is fraught with dangers. It consists of a complex process in the course of which a woman, in using her fertility, progressively relinquishes her symbolic status in order to achieve a position of respect and authority in the social domain. The heroine Fatna exhibits qualities that symbolize both end-points in this process: she is bride-like and grandmotherly at once. To the women of Hofriyat Fatna is an impossible contradiction. Nonetheless, it is Fatna whom most women wish to emulate, for it is only by conserving their erstwhile symbolic status as long as possible, only by combining bride-like qualities with those of fruitful motherhood, that women can expect to achieve social success.³ It is this problem, that of variegation in social and symbolic statuses of Hofriyati women as they proceed through their reproductive careers, with which we are presently concerned.
One mythic episode in particular provides a frame for our discussion. Herein Fatna, after escaping the village on the night she is to wed her brother, meets an old man who rather stupidly tells her that an old man can be killed by inserting a thorn into his head. Thereupon Fatna kills him in the suggested manner, skins him, and dons his skin. Subsequently she/he is captured by the Sultan's son who makes a servant of what he perceives to be an old man. But Fatna refuses to cooperate. She does not graze cattle, she says. She will, however, graze water fowl on the banks of the Nile. (This, as we shall see, is a clue to her true identity.) Near the river, the Sultan's mute slaves see her strip off the old man's skin and go for a swim. They run to their young master and attempt to explain with gestures that which they have witnessed. The Sultan's son is curious. When he himself sees Fatna swimming he resolves to end the ruse. He challenges the old man to a game of *sija*, stipulating that the winner of the game shall skin the loser. Fatna wins the first game and spares the Sultan's son. She wins a second round, and again spares him. But she loses the third game, whereupon the Sultan's son "skins" her, exposes the radiant Fatna, and promptly marries her (cf. Moore 1975:117).

The image of beautiful virginal Fatna emerging from the skin of an old man captions an exaggerated reversal of the Hofriyati woman's reproductive career. In the real world
women are virgins first. It is later that they become elderly and "man-like" in their powers to manipulate the social environment. And, while Fatna's problem, once she has assumed the guise of an old man, is how to reveal her true self to an appropriate mate, the Hofriyati woman, once married, must do the converse: she must work to attain the respected position she deserves in old age.

Women enter first marriage at the peak of their purity: the bride is perhaps the most prominent expression of all that is valued by Hofriyati. She temporarily symbolizes the idiom that informs village life, relative enclosedness (Part I and Chapter 5 of this thesis). To wit: The bride's body is at once physically chaste and socially virginal (cf. Hayes 1975). She has been prepared, first by circumcision and infibulation and later by elaborate cosmetic routines, to become a perfect vessel for the containment of human life: her womb is enclosed, her body purified and made moisture retentive. Her purity is further enhanced by her sexual innocence; her fertility, as yet untested, is all the more significant for having been rendered potent through marriage.

Paradoxically, however, the social status of a bride is low. She has become a married woman with no children to her credit. Consequently, she has no weapon with which to deflect untoward behavior on the part of her husband or his mother. And, once she has stepped down from her bridely pedestal and
resumed domestic life, her purity, idealized fertility, and general symbolic value begin gradually to diminish. For after the ceremonial leyla-t ed-dukhl, the "night of entrance", which takes place on the third night of her wedding feast, the ritually deflowered bride is somewhat tarnished as a cultural symbol. The fortieth day after her wedding marks the end of a phase during which she was confined, pampered, and permitted to do no work. Henceforward she is allowed to be abroad during daylight hours. Then, immediately prior to the following Ramadan her family completes the last of the economic transactions that surround her wedding by sending some food and new kitchen utensils to the mother of the groom. And at the feast subsequent to Ramadan a woman married in the previous year receives guests for the last time as an 'arūs, a bride. From then on she is but a wife.

As a young wife she occupies a precarious position. While no longer a virgin in the eyes of the community she is nonetheless "virginal" since she has not borne a child. Her symbolic status, though appreciably diminished from that of a bride, is still relatively high. Now she must use her elevated position judiciously in order to substantiate her marriage and establish her child bearing career. For it is only through reproductive success that she acquires the chance to attain a position of authority relative to other women and, to some extent, relative to men in her later years. So, the
recently married woman continues to perform the often taxing cosmetic routines that hallmark the bridal image: smoke-bathing, hair removal, using henna, dilka, kohl, making and using a variety of scents. The effects of these procedures are considered alluring to men; whatever else, they indicate to a husband that his wife is sexually receptive. Thus a woman endeavors to maintain her husband's interest lest he should, as so often happens, be dissuaded by some other beauty. This she does at considerable cost to herself, for the preparations are physically painful, as is sexual intercourse for the infibulated wife. But if pregnancy results, her efforts are worthwhile.

A woman's anxieties are not appreciably allayed with the first signs of pregnancy, however. Stillbirths and miscarriages are common, and infant mortality rates fairly high. And even if she is successful in bearing a child, her first might well be female. Any one of the foregoing circumstances is considered sufficient grounds for divorce. The presence of such a condition is held to indicate that a woman will continue to experience fertility problems throughout her childbearing years. Should divorce befall a newly married woman, she might well remarry, but never again as a first wife. Never again is she imbued with the almost mystical aura of a virgin bride.
At the termination of her first pregnancy a woman's state of purity and enclosedness suffers enormous diminution. Her genital orifice has been surgically enlarged to permit the baby to be born, and she has been polluted by the malodorous "black" blood of childbirth. Immediately, then, she is reinfibulated, made virginal once more. After forty days of confinement she fully bathes and may once more partake in the arduous cosmetic procedures of her sex. These practices, similar to those which preceded her wedding, help to reestablish a woman's bride-like qualities, though they can never restore them completely.

Although her symbolic status, her approximation to the bridal image, deteriorates as a woman progresses through her reproductive career, concomitantly her social status increases. Ideally she becomes a successful wife, the mother of sons. In her late twenties or early thirties, however, she enters a critical phase, and one that may extend well into her forties (until menopause). During this time she may find the marriage she has worked so hard to establish headed toward divorce or co-wifery. There are several conditions that might prompt such action on the part of Hofriyati husbands. A woman could have developed fertility problems at an advanced stage in her reproductive history. Or her husband might wish merely to take a second, younger wife.
If her husband is employed outside the village and she sees no opportunity to join him in the town where he works, a woman may feel her procreative career threatened: while she is denied by his absence, she fears with frequent justification that another will have attracted his attention.

At the same time a woman is wary of having too many pregnancies in rapid succession. For there is widespread belief that children have a greater chance of survival if they are spaced at least two years apart. A Hofriyati woman does not wish to become pregnant again until after the child she has been nursing is weaned (cf. Chapter 2). Should she become pregnant too soon after her last successful birth, and should, in apparent consequence, either the child she is carrying or the child she is nursing die, then her procreative ability may be called into question.

But also it may happen that a woman has successfully borne and raised too many children. For the greater the number of her children, the less time she has to spend smoke-bathing and making herself attractive, or to spend leisurely entertaining her husband and serving coffee to his friends. Numerous children keep her busy; moreover, if the family income is insufficient for its needs she will cultivate a small garden in addition to her domestic duties. Thus, women frequently complain of being overworked, caught between the necessity of administering to their children and of catering
to their husbands' whims.

But men, too, are in a difficult position. It is important to have many descendants, to be known as the founder of a lineage section after one's death. Yet, it is the mark of a man's worldly ability if he is able to support a wife who need do little else than make herself attractive and attend to his personal wants. In the not too distant past slavery provided the means whereby one wife could cope with both roles, that of reproducer and that of hostess-companion-prosperity symbol. Now, however, polygyny is seen as the ideal solution, and men who can afford to do so usually avail themselves of that option. Hofriyati women aver that polygyny has increased since the time of their grandparents. Domestic slavery, though formally abolished with the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium government at the end of the nineteenth century, nevertheless continued informally for several years afterwards. Many former slave families remained attached to the households of their previous masters, rendering much the same service as before manumission. But gradually this system waned. Hence, the eventual abolition of slavery, plus labor migration to the cities, are conditions held responsible for the perceived increment in rates of polygyny.\textsuperscript{10}

Polygyny, of course, is also a means to increase the number of a man's descendants. However, few men are wealthy enough to support adequately two or more (up to a maximum of
four under Islamic law) families at the same time. When such is the case, divorce of the first wife, of the woman who has already given her husband descendants, is a real possibility.

Depending upon her age, the number and sex of her children, and the state of her relations with her natal family, threat of divorce at this point may be more or less worrisome for the first wife. If her close male kin are alive and are willing and able to support her, her divorce, though unpleasant, is somewhat less difficult to bear. But without such support divorce can be devastating indeed, especially if the woman has passed menopause and is therefore unlikely to remarry.¹¹

Equally problematic for a woman is the possibility of becoming a co-wife. Under such circumstances the first wife, in spite of Quranic injunctions to the contrary, usually suffers neglect. Co-wives are rarely if ever domiciled in the same village. Moreover, husbands are notorious for their tendency to evince greatest enthusiasm toward more recent acquisitions, and to divide their time and their favors accordingly. Thus, a woman whose husband takes a second wife realizes that her own child-bearing career may become stymied. She fears the probable increase in the number of her husband's heirs, since as a result the future inheritance of her own children will be reduced proportionately. Furthermore, a father's second marriage extends the range of marital choice
for the children of his first wife to points and locations beyond her personal reckoning. This jeopardizes her aspirations to play a major role in selecting spouses for her sons and daughters and to achieve the respected position of haböba in her natal village later on.

Although particular cases may vary considerably, it is obvious that marriage for Hofriyati women is really a process of continuous negotiation in which husbands automatically have the upper hand. A woman's marital, hence reproductive, success greatly depends upon her ability to balance her two elusive assets: her fertility and her bride-like purity. In order to use the first, however, she progressively relinquishes the latter. Reinfibulation, smoke-bathing and all the rest temporarily shore up her purity and her idealized procreative potential, but cannot ultimately conserve them. Female purity must be spent so that female fertility may be activated. At some point a woman's ascribed fertility potential must be demonstrated, hence validated. Yet prevalent male attitudes demand both bride-like qualities and demonstrated fertility in a wife. Thus does a young Hofriyati wife appear to walk a tightrope in gale force winds: she absolutely must have children -- not too few or too rarely lest her husband (and others) doubt her fertility, but not so many that she expends the source of her attractiveness and her husband loses interest.
Therefore as she matures and her bride-like qualities dwindle, a woman comes to appreciate the extent to which she must rely upon her children, the fruits of her fecundity, in order to advance her social position. She knows well that she must make the best possible use of her reproductive years. In the harsh light of actuality she comes to appreciate marriage far less as an end in itself than as an unsteady means to attain her social goals by enabling her to use her fertility gift.

Even so, like husbands and marriages, fertility is not always predictable. It is subject only minimally to human control. A woman can make herself sexually available to her husband, or she can put off his attentions in a number of ways. Surreptitiously she can receive birth control injections. But she cannot predetermine the sex of her child, she cannot prevent stillbirths and miscarriages, she cannot, under present circumstances, prevent sterility that occurs as a result of the infections to which she is prone because of her Pharaonic circumcision. Indeed it is ironic that the latter practice, considered to enhance and to emphasize female fertility at a cultural level, is so destructive of it physiologically.

All told, marriage in Hofriyat could be compared to a game of chess wherein women play with a full complement of pieces, each with its own limitations, while most of their
husbands' players are queens and capable of unlimited maneuverability. By necessity, then, women play the board defensively. Moreover, Hofriyati women frequently face the paradox of having to control the uncontrollable if they are to succeed. For them, marriage itself is a necessary but, more often than not, a losing game.

And so the story of Fatna the Beautiful outwitting the Sultan's son has a special appeal for women in Hofriyat. With the foregoing discussion of female life processes in mind, we are in a better position to interpret that myth. The Sultan's son first sees Fatna as an old man and his interest in her is minimal. Like the neglected first wife she becomes a servant, someone to help with the herds (read descendants), nothing more. Yet the old man is strange in his refusal to herd anything but unherdable wild birds (and in some versions, pigeons). Here, perhaps, Patna provides a clue to her true identity, for in Hofriyat, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, water birds and pigeons symbolize purity and feminine fertility. But if her choice of occupation was intended to be a hint, it is not taken up by the Sultan's son. On the other hand, Fatna in the skin of an old man herding water fowl may be likened to the Hofriyati grandmother who, in her authoritarian role, assiduously guards the purity and fertility of her brood, thereby upholding values deemed essential to village culture. Even so, Fatna's attempt to herd wild birds seems ridiculous,
an acknowledge that fertility, too, is largely beyond human control.

Now Fatna, the image of bridal perfection, disguises herself as a man. Yet it is clear from the outset that she is in search of an appropriate mate. Somehow she must reveal her feminine self while retaining her masculine advantage. So, she steps out of her male skin to go swimming in the Nile knowing (we may presume) that she will be seen by the Sultan's mute slaves. Thus she reveals her true nature covertly, as all women are enjoined to do, while maintaining the fiction that she does not seek marriage; indeed the clever and "reluctant" bride. The Sultan's son, over-confident perhaps of his talents, determines to expose her. He challenges her to a board game, sija, at the end of which the winner shall skin the loser. Twice Fatna plays the game more skillfully than he and twice spares his life. But the third time she loses. Whether or not both parties play to the utmost of their abilities, and whether Fatna allows herself to lose in the end, are questions for the audience to ponder. The point is well stated nonetheless: it is only in losing to men that women may win; only in losing, and losing judiciously, that they may achieve the means to activate their fertility, embark upon reproductive careers, and remain married long enough and fruitfully enough to attain their social goals. Fatna relinquishes the guise of the witless elder, the mark of age
and of naïveté (itself a contradiction), in order to reveal herself as the clever virgin, to become the beautiful young bride. She thereby doubly reverses the chronology of life as it is lived by ordinary women in Hofriyat. For while Patna uses her usurped status as an aged male to achieve bridehood, mortal women use their ascribed bridely qualities to achieve social status similar to that of a man in old age. And lastly, for Hofriyati women there is solace in the thought that even the redoubtable Patna cannot sustain two competing definitions of herself for very long.

POSSESSION AND MARRIAGE

Such, then, are the general parameters by which the majority of Hofriyati women must abide. We have observed that it is incumbent upon them to exercise considerable skill if they are successfully to maneuver through the indeterminacies of their conjugal relationships, control potentially disruptive situations and mobilize support for their respective social goals. Like all villagers, but perhaps more so than their male counterparts, women frequently are confronted by seemingly paradoxical demands and circumstances. And in all of these they are limited (to a greater extent than are men) by the notable constraints that Hofriyat culture places upon their behavior. Furthermore, women are intimately
and all but exclusively associated with the ultimate indeterminacy: fertility. Regardless of the actual source of such difficulty, it is women who inevitably bear initial responsibility for problems with fertility that arise in their marriages.

In preceding pages we have observed that throughout her life there will be a number of occasions on which a woman is likely to experience conditions thought to provoke possession attack. Inevitably, if she works (as generally she must) she will get dirty, she will perspire, she will become fatigued. Should she feel over-worked, depressed, anxious, fearful, unjustly wronged; should she wish to change her position, the regard in which she is held by her husband, her place of residence (all of which bear some relation to fertility and marriage); and should she feel unable to talk about such things directly, she may confess to feeling unwell. Thus starts the process of locating the source of her illness.

But not all confessions of illness are spawned in this manner and undoubtedly some of those that are get resolved before possession is suggested as the cause. Assigning an appropriate etiology is a process, first, of eliminating other potential sources of illness and, second, of taking into consideration various facets of the patient's social milieu. If a woman is at a stage of life which both she and those around her tacitly recognize as problematic, and if other
remedies have failed (or she maintains that they have failed) to benefit her, *zar* possession will be considered the probable cause. So, with Constantinides (1977:62), I will submit that *zar* provides a vehicle for expressing and sometimes artfully modifying the positions in which women find themselves. *Zar* deflects difficulties in social relations onto another plane of discourse. To borrow Crapanzano's metaphor (1977a passim), it recasts them on the demonic stage.

Yet, though we might intuit such functions for possession, it is quite another matter to describe the manner by which it may perform them. What follows is intended to suggest a possible beginning, nothing more.

Importantly, both the ambiguity of human fertility (and, by extension, of feminine status in Hofriyat), and the extreme identification of women with that fertility are expressed in the symbolism of the *zar*. In Chapter 6 it was noted that *zairan* are referred to as "red winds"; moreover, the Ethiopian (Habish) spirits, who particularly are linked with reproductive disorder, have red as their principal color association. Women possessed by Habish *zairan* don red dresses when their spirits descend in ceremonial situations, and the wool of the sacrificial animal usually demanded by Ethiopian spirits must be reddish in tint. Here red is both explicitly and implicitly associated with blood. *Zar* recipients of ceremonial sacrifice are known as the "owners of blood", and
blood is used therapeutically to anoint the 'ayana and other adepts who attend a zār ritual. Remember, too, that reproduction is thought of as the co-mingling of semen with a woman's blood. Various foods (generally luxuries) are considered to strengthen one's blood and to increase its amount, thus, in women, to improve the conditions for conception; and the untoward mixing of disparate domains of experience (i.e. death and birth) may provoke uncontrolled bleeding (nazīf) in vulnerable women, an affliction for which Ethiopian spirits might also be held accountable.

Indeed, then, it is feminine blood that zairan are thought to control in precipitating reproductive malfunction. Not surprisingly, menstrual blood stands in exceedingly ambiguous relationship to fertility (cf. Constantinides 1977:80). Hofriyati women are quick to point out that while regular menses indicate on-going fertility, they also signify that a woman is not pregnant. Moreover, irregular or discontinued menstrual bleeding may indicate pregnancy, or may indicate its opposite, sterility. Here we observe how the possession idiom might articulate, or better, meaningfully construct, the often anxiety-producing situations women contend with in regard to their fertility. Possession may help make sense out of the paradox in which frequently they find themselves, forced, as they are for the most part, to rely upon something as elusive as procreative ability to
establish their respective social personae.

In holding zairan responsible for procreative dysfunction, women assert that their fertility is negotiable. If, assuming that she has kept her part of the bargain, negotiations with spirits fail, a woman cannot be held liable for the consequences to her fertility. Possession may thus remove from her shoulders some burden of the responsibility for social reproduction thereupon squarely placed by Hofriyat culture and affirmed by her Pharaonic circumcision. Further, it requires that her husband assume some of this burden for it is he who is called upon to provide for the spirits' demands, thereby coaxing them to relent. But most importantly, through zar illness an admission is made that fertility, though socially regulated, is not, ultimately, controllable, for beings more powerful than humans, male or female, may intervene at will to obstruct its proper and normal course. Acceptance of possession etiology for procreative disorder redirects query as to a woman's apparent fate. It is not because fertility dysfunction is in her "nature", and not because it is foreordained by Allah, that she suffers. Possession illness asserts quite the opposite: that she is inherently fertile, for spirits have seen fit to disrupt that fertility in a bid to attain their selfish ends. Limited control of fertility is thus transferred from the individual to whom it is attributed by nature (via Allah, whose
intentions regarding the respective fates of those possessed are, through possession, obscured) to the married couple (and their relatives) who together are encouraged to seek its restoration through a series of economic transactions with offending spirits.\textsuperscript{14}

Now as Crapanzano (1977a:17) notes, spirit possession is concerned with questions of identity or position, and may also permit subtle realignment of the possessed within her world. In its relation to fertility, the most significant trait associated with feminine identity in Hofriyat, \textit{zar} possession exhibits both of those aspects and more. For in addition, it provides an idiom whereby individuals might publicly comment upon a marriage and in so doing help prevent its disintegration in the face of negative gossip.

To deal with the first issue first, in Chapter 2 I made the point that Pharaonic circumcision is a symbolic act through which Hofriyati women are identified with socially appropriate fertility and are ceremonially disassociated from their inherent sexuality. Circumcision is an assertion of feminine value. In Austin's terms (1975) it is a performative act. For it does something, it achieves in its "utterance" a conventionally recognized state of affairs. Here, circumcision renews both the distinction and the complementarity between males and females in Hofriyat. The implied statement "women are fertility" is also, but only
partially a locutionary act: though it does not, strictly speaking, state an empirical truth, it is not altogether unverifiable. It is, in essence, a metonymical assertion, and cannot or should not be taken without a generous pinch of salt. Certainly women are considered the reproductive potential of Hofriyat, but Hofriyati realize they are much more than this besides. However, the danger with a performative utterance is that it is liable to be mistaken for a genuine statement of fact: it may be taken literally, too literally, its performativeness opaqued or as Lambek describes it, "mystified" (1979) in the rush to naturalize the reality that it asserts. For Hofriyati, then, the danger exists that women may become, as it were, over-identified with their potential fertility, that their other qualities and characteristics, goals and ambitions, will be overlooked by those with whom they interact through the marital relationship, notably husbands and parents-in-law. When a woman's fertility is jeopardized, so, too, is her identity. In availing herself of the spirit idiom to articulate feelings of inchoateness, a woman may objectivize her problem and relocate herself in terms of the salient trait by which she is apprehended. In this she does not negate the circumcision assertion, she both affirms and qualifies it. Possession verifies both the existence and the importance of her fertility (for powerful spirits wish to block it), while
clarifying that it is not, like emotion or some other behavior she is called upon to regulate, subject to her control. Acceptance of possession diagnosis is also, then, a performative act. Like circumcision before it, possession precipitates (or attempts to precipitate) a context: through it individuals may alter the terms of a previously accepted state of affairs.

This brings our attention to the second aspect of possession. The qualification of identity that an admission of zar affliction asserts may enable a woman to change her unsatisfactory position relative to significant others, especially her husband and those women with whom she competes for status. With regard to her husband, zar spirits who attack a woman's fertility in essence hold for ransom his most valuable asset. Zairan will negotiate the release of their hostages, a man's unborn descendants, in return for certain demands: a curing ritual and specified items, generally regarded as luxuries, to be used by their host, his wife. In addition they require a woman's ongoing compliance, through regular performance of appropriate cosmetic procedures, in maintaining and revitalizing the bride-like qualities with which she is diminishingly associated. Zar possession thereby calls upon a woman's husband to recognize her value, and somewhat furtively brings to his notice the fact that neither she nor her fertility can or ought to be taken for granted.
In order to restore his wife's zar-usurped fertility a man must enter, by proxy, into an exchange relationship with her spirits. He thereby indirectly renegotiates the relationship he has with his wife. As Crapanzano (1977b) and Lambek (1980) note, possession provides an idiom through which spouses may communicate about (and resolve) issues it might otherwise be inappropriate for them to discuss. And, because most possessive spirits are male (a point taken up in subsequent chapters), it permits such marital negotiation to take place in a context which need not entail loss of face for the husband who, to an outside observer, might otherwise be considered to yield to his wife's requests.

But a woman's acknowledgement of possession is, like any other course of action she might pursue in Hofriyat, a gamble. For his wife's possession could intimate to a husband the existence of fertility dysfunction of which previously he was unaware. Thus it could backfire; it could imperil the conjugal relationship. Here again, a woman must carefully weigh the risks involved in acquiescing to the possession diagnosis. As noted in the foregoing chapter, she is reluctant to accept zar as the source of her illness until she has assurances of support in this from her family and friends, support which both temporarily neutralizes competition from other women and mitigates the expected unhappy reaction of her husband upon discovering that his wife is possessed.
On the other hand, a woman's possession might obliquely serve to enhance the solidity of her marriage. For in attributing fertility disorder to spirits whose existence and powers are consensually validated, it removes any doubt concerning her own and her husband's abilities to reproduce. Thus it may preserve the integrity of the relationship, setting rumors to rest by focusing public attention elsewhere.

Significantly, zar thus reinforces both husband's and wife's self-images. We have noted earlier that the myth of Fatna and the Sultan's son was open to a number of equally plausible interpretations. If you are female, you might wish to think that Fatna legitimately won the first two games of sija, thus placing the Sultan's son at a disadvantage, making him realize her ability and her value; then, that she deliberately lost the third round so as to reveal herself and acquire a worthy (and proven manipulable) husband. But if you are a male reader of this text, quite the opposite rendition might be more appropriate: You might feel that the Sultan's son deliberately lost the first two games, gambling correctly that the "old man", whom he knew to be female, would spare his life. In so doing he was, perhaps, "buttering her up", giving her some lead and allowing her to feel powerful, before showing his real strength and defeating her in the last match, then gaining her final submission in marriage. These two competing interpretations of the myth, which do not, by any
means, exhaust the range of its potential readings, point out that its power lies in its capacity to say something truthful about male-female relationships in Hofriyat. It illuminates their essential ambiguity. And it does so without destroying the self-images of either sex or the images each popularly holds of the other. So, too, with zar. Possession does not obviate the uncertainties which inevitably plague a marriage so much as it provides a new light by which they may be read. Sexual complementarity, the source of much indeterminacy in cross-sex relationships, is not obscured in any way but is both preserved and reinforced when, in holding spirits responsible for reproductive malfunction, people requalify the human factor in fertility control. Thus, neither sex need see itself as capitulating to the other.

It might be best, then, to think of zar as a metalanguage, or a metalinguistic text. The addition of zar to a marital relationship shifts that relationship into another, more powerful mode: it recontextualizes the relationship and re-encodes, as it were, the frequently disparate, frequently inaudible messages its parties might wish to exchange. What zar does, though obviously this is not the conscious intent of those who, by means of it, articulate distress, is open the potentially destructive ambiguity characteristic of marriage in Hofriyat to interpretations which, if they are taken up in appropriate circumstances, may
turn it in positive directions. Ambiguity is not thereby resolved; it is merely diverted along a path that has increased creative potential, the promise of fresh interpretation. Paradox remains despite the adoption of a spirit idiom through which it might be expressed and thus illumined. Possession, therefore, has esthetic implications (cf. Lambek 1978, 1981; Leiris 1958). Like a literary text it "speaks of a possible world and of a possible way of orienting oneself within it" (Ricoeur 1976:88). If Hofriyatih husbands choose to appropriate the possession texts elucidated by their wives, their relationships may be enriched by the addition of new horizons of meaning, new pathways for fruitful communication, and, not to be neglected, new arenas for the generation of conflict.

In the following chapters I attempt to illustrate these points and others, beginning with the documentation of possession case histories and a discussion of their principal implications.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. Interestingly, this sickness is deemed almost as likely to strike a young man as it is to strike a young woman.

2. And, perhaps, in Morocco, as Dwyer's recent study (1978) suggests.

3. Such success is not assured, however. Not all women become respected and powerful habōbat. Notably, those who have few or no children, or daughters only, or who are divorced and never remarry are at greater risk.

4. This cannot but remind the reader of the metaphor women use to describe themselves, "we are cattle" (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

5. This is true even though penetration may not have occurred and, without surgical help from the midwife, is unlikely to occur for some time after her wedding.

6. A vegetable dye used to pattern the hands and feet of married women.

7. Cf. Chapter 2, a combination of powdered aromatic woods and millet dough that has been smoked and perfumed, used to soften and exfoliate the skin.

8. Antimony, used to outline the eyes. This substance is now scarce and expensive. A substitute has been found in carbonized gum Arabic, called delal.

9. Alternatively, she may make baskets, decorated basketry tops for food trays, winnowing trays, or cooked food. These items she sells in the village or to older women who then market them in Kabushiya.

10. It is extremely difficult to tell from village genealogies whether a man (now deceased) who had two or more wives was married polygynously or sequentially. Villagers themselves do not remark the difference in relating genealogies, and if questioned they rarely profess to know. Thus it is impossible to verify statements as to the increase in polygyny in recent years. The reader should also bear in mind that ancestors of the present villagers lived in rather
turbulent times, a factor which may have influenced marriage patterns to some degree.

11. I saw several such women in the village. Most live in abject poverty and are reduced to begging meals from other households.

12. This game is played with a "board" of 24 places or depressions in the sand. Opponents have 8 pieces each. The point of the game is for one player to block all possible moves of one of his opponent's pieces, to surround it, thereby removing it from play and from the board entirely. The game proceeds in this fashion until a player surrounds the last of his opponent's pieces. Villagers frequently make an apt pun of the game's appelation, calling it sijun, "prison". It is interesting that Fatna, in losing the game, becomes the wife (prisoner?) of the Sultan's son.

13. Cf. the mushāharah complex, discussed in Chapter 4.

14. Ultimately, of course, fertility is considered a matter of fate. What acceptance of possession etiology does is forestall that conclusion; it prevents villagers from invoking the notion of fate (gadar) too soon, buying time, as it were, for destiny to play itself out. It rephrases a woman's reproductive difficulty in terms of intervening causes -- spirits -- which are themselves an aspect of her fate, but one which can be dealt with.

The idea of fate in Hofriyat is developed less along the lines that certain events are destined, or predestined, inevitably to happen than in the direction that when all other potential causes have been disproved, fate is what one is left to consider. Fate, whether pertaining to humans or to spirits, is the mysterious working of a transcendent deity and not to be understood. But as the obvious and immediate cause of misfortune or illness it is accepted with reluctance. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, the interventions of the spirits in the lives of their hosts are thought fated to have happened, should they occur. Once possession has taken place, however, humans are not powerless to alleviate it, just as zairan are not powerless to relent.
CHAPTER 8
ZAINEB AND UMSELIMA

THE CASE HISTORY

In adopting a case history approach, I realize that to a certain extent I am imposing the cultural biases of Western civilization upon the experiences of my informants. For inevitably I distort their respective narrations by arranging them in more or less chronological order when, as sometimes happened, they were not related in precisely that way. So that the reader might better assess the strengths and the shortcomings of the data presented here and in Chapter 9, a description of my methods for obtaining information about the possession afflictions of various individuals is warranted.

Basically, no one field method was consistently employed. I did draw up a list of questions, or more accurately, of areas I wished to touch upon in the course of conversation. Some interviews, notably those with people I did not know well, were arranged in advance, but rarely was a specific date set for an encounter. Frequently I would ask a woman whom I met while at the home of another if it would be possible some day to "converse" or to "socialize" (itwannas) with her about her zairan. The seed thus planted, a few such women later
sought me out, coming to my house when they knew I would be home in order to talk. Others "educated" me, as they called it, when I paid them a visit for some unrelated purpose. I was sensitive (and perhaps overly so) to the fact that as a Khawajiya, a Westerner, I inadvertently represented a class of zairan, and worried about the extent to which this would influence such data as I compiled. For by then I had suffered the rather unsettling experience of having been used as a ceremonial prop by Dodomayo, a drunken Greek zar temporarily resident in a certain Hofriyati woman at several of the rituals I had occasion to attend. So, if unsure as to how they or the spirits "above" them would interpret my interest, I was wary of pressing people for information about their possession afflictions. Of course, with those who knew me best, who had come to see me as something other than a stereotypical Khawajiya, such problems generally did not arise. And many potential difficulties were overcome by visiting women I did not know in the company of one I did, one who both understood the nature of my work and knew the woman with whom I wished to speak.

Undoubtedly such an eclectic set of interviews, some conducted in private, others in the midst of a gathering, present methodological difficulties particularly with regard to the assessment of relative accuracy. I tended to trust "public" interviews, during the course of which other
individuals present frequently became intrigued and virtually took charge, asking many of the questions I had wished to put forth and delving into areas I had not to that point considered or known to be relevant. Information thus emerged in a context that was less forced and more natural than when interviews were conducted in private. With private interviews, then, I was most careful to cross-check the data wherever possible, to flesh out a woman's personal narrative by obtaining information from sources other than herself.

The interviews, whether public or private, were informal and unstructured. In each case I asked permission to leave my taperecorder running (refused but once), and so dispensed with excessive note taking. I kept my list of topics nearby in the event that conversation should become overly sluggish, but basically, after asking an initial open-ended question of a woman whom I knew to be possessed, I sat back and listened, adding only those comments necessary to keep the interview alive.

The women to whom I spoke presented their stories in a variety of ways, none strictly comparable to a "life history" in the Western sense. Frequently, for example, there were time gaps of several years, about which little was remembered or no information forthcoming. Presentations seemed to follow a pattern whereby significant occurrences were reported as discrete events, as virtually complete in and of themselves.
Generally there is little overt concern for process or development with regard to the events which structure my informants' biographies: rarely is the past shown to have shaped the present in an evolutionary sense. Instead Hofriyati present their lives as punctuated by a number of distinct situational transitions: graduation to marriageability, marriage, the births of children, divorce, change of residence, the deaths of important kin, and so on. But for those who acknowledge possession, repeated zar experiences tend to bind such events into a comprehensive whole, into a pattern which becomes increasingly well integrated for women in their senior years. Presumably, then, as a woman ages she continuously reinterprets past events in terms of her present relationships with zairan.

The staccato style of narration has been largely preserved in the edited versions which follow, especially those in Chapter 9. But because my effort here represents a translation from one culture to another and the narratives, if not arranged in some sort of order that is intelligible to Western readers, stand to lose much of their impact, events have been reorganized into roughly chronological sequence. The result is a compromise and, therefore, not entirely satisfactory.

That said, however, I should explain that approximately half of the forty women consulted volunteered information
chronologically, *min al-awal illa-l-akher*, "from the first to the last". The remainder tended to follow an order according to which relatively more important events (with regard to *zār*, usually those which prompted a woman to seek relief through a curing ceremony) were reported first, with occurrences deemed less significant given later. In this alternate style of presentation, time was considered only insofar as events were tied to the respective stages in the female life cycle at which they took place (i.e. before divorce, after divorce, before the birth of a son, etc.).

It should be stressed that such narrative forms cannot be considered necessarily to reflect the ways in which Hofriyati conceive of time. For these "histories" are the products of conversations. Biographical information emerged in the courses of those conversations well as it might be expected to emerge in Western cultures: there were elisions, duplications, instances of backtracking, revision, memories which, for one reason or another, stood out from the rest, and so forth. Certain aspects of Hofriyati time sense (that life consists of a series of relatively independent events) can be gleaned from the narratives, but that is all. And even that may not be an accurate assessment, merely a by-product of the anecdotal style that characterizes conversation in Hofriyat. If these women had been literate, if they could have written their stories in non-conversational settings, the results might have
been very different indeed.

Such disclaimers notwithstanding, there remains still another fundamental problem with the case history approach. Do Hofriyati women normally conceive of their lives as individual entities that can be rendered as biographical narratives, or is the concept of personal biography foreign to them? As Crapanzano notes,

"The fact of biography may in fact be the ethnographer's assumption: his biographies, life histories and case histories may be the product of his question. The question itself may well impose a new prise de conscience on the informant which, however satisfying to the ethnographer, and even to the informant, is nevertheless a distortion of "unquestioned" cultural reality. (1977a:22)

Yet in Hofriyat individuals regularly formulate biographical narratives, though in a particular sense: people frequently share with others information concerning events in their own lives or in the lives of neighbors and kin. Over time such stories or anecdotes (gijaš) may become part of the corpus of public knowledge. Indeed, many outlive their protagonists. The case histories presented here are in fact accretions of such renderings. They are, in a very real sense, personal texts. Once constituted, however, such texts frequently are embellished in the retelling, if not by the originator, then certainly by others. One example of this process can be found in the case history of Seraitti (Chapter 9). In the body of the chapter and in notes two versions of
her story are presented: the first is that of Seraitti herself, the second, somewhat amplified, is that commonly told by other women in Hofriyat to themselves and to visiting outsiders.

The process of externalizing individual experience, which for Hofriyati includes dreams, visions, premonitions, and the like, is not unknown to my informants. Rather, it is considered essential to the creation of one's hikāya, one's "story", something like a personal mythology, a concept for which "notoriety" or "reputation" may be the closest English parallels. But this is not quite right. For it is her hikāya that supports a woman's (or a man's) notoriety, and it is the latter which, among other things, tends to distinguish her from other individuals of her sex in Hofriyati. At the same time, and whether intentionally so managed or not, an individual's story might well serve to articulate or to strengthen interpersonal relationships and identifications, a process we observe in the extended case history of possession affliction to which our attention now turns.

Zaineb's Kin

My principal consultant and friend in Hofriyat was Zaineb, an exceptionally perceptive and witty woman who was 33 years of age and mother of seven at the time of fieldwork.
During my stay in the village Zaineb experienced an illness which came to be diagnosed as possession. In order that we might better understand the events surrounding her illness as they unfolded in 1976, we need first to establish the background against which they occurred. Thus Zaineb's family history, the incidences of possession among her closest kin, and her initial acquaintance with zar, will be explored with an eye to discovering the extent to which they might have influenced her most recent acknowledgement of spirit affliction.

It is Zaineb's story, the narrative of her affliction and the narratives of those close to her, that made me realise the degree to which possession can be a family affair. In the first place the possession idiom may be shared by a number of family members, and the mere fact that such individuals "have spirits" may thicken or add further dimension to their established interrelationships in ways to be discussed below.

Further, villagers say that zar affliction tends to run in families. Though not, strictly speaking, inherited or hereditary, it may be unintentionally passed on in a manner said to be "like inheritance" (zai wirasa): indeed, both the proclivity to contract zar sickness and sometimes the affliction itself are transmitted in the maternal line. And a spirit is thought more likely to possess a woman if it also possesses her mother or some other close maternal relative,
especially mother's mother or mother's sister. Thus our story opens with Zaineb's mother, Umselima, Umselima's immediate family, and an account of their experiences with possession. This, in deference to demands for readability, shall be a chronological composite of incidents that she and her daughters related to me during the summer of 1976.

The following is written in the third person except where direct quotes are included, and given names, all pseudonyms, are reiterated throughout.

UMSELIMA AND HER KIN

When I met Umselima her gauntness, her delicacy and her unceasing energy were the things that impressed me most. She was a tiny woman in her early 60's whose wrinkled face spoke of past hardship and of faded beauty. Third child in a family of five, she was not a native of Hofriyat but of Malkab, a neighboring hamlet within the village-area. Umselima's parents, now deceased, were matrilateral parallel cousins. Their marriage had been fruitful in comparison with others, but a major source of tension existed, for their second child was to be their only son.

As a young girl Umselima would accompany her father, who was a farmer, and his mother into the desert at the start of the rainy season each year. They would camp near her father's
wadi-plantation for three to five months in order to plant, tend, and harvest the family's subsistence crop of *dura*. Umselima was there to help her *habōba* keep house in their temporary shelter called a *rakūba*, which was a square hut made of poles, rushes, and palm fronds. Her older sister, Sittalbenat, was left with their mother in Malkab to assist with the younger children. Mohammed, their brother and Umselima's senior by two or three years, remained behind to take religious instruction at the local Quranic school (*khalwa*).

At eight or nine years of age Umselima was circumcised, an operation which her elder sister had undergone several years before. Umselima told me that this had been an extremely painful experience but did not elaborate beyond saying that for some time afterward she had difficulty urinating.

Then, when she was perhaps ten, something happened which would help to shape not only Umselima's life, but the lives of her siblings as well. Their mother, Ne'ema, pregnant for the sixth time, suffered extraordinarily in labor and gave birth to twins, a girl and a boy, both stillborn. At this their father quit Malkab and went north to Dongola in search of new lands to farm and another wife to give him descendants. Prior to his departure their father arranged for the marriage of Sittalbenat, then 15 or 16, to an older unrelated acquaintance
of his in Omdurman. Despite her reluctance she was wed and shortly removed from the village. And his father and his older sister gone, Mohammed also left, to seek his fortunes in Khartoum.

Umselima was now alone in Malkab with her mother and two younger sisters, without the moral support and the physical security of her beloved brother's presence. She had been circumcised, hence rendered marriageable. Inevitably she herself would soon be married and taken to live with her husband's kin.

It was in the wake of these events that she had her first experience with what later she would identify as zairan. She was 12 or 13. Here is her description (explanatory notes are in brackets):

It was summertime and at night. There was a full moon; it was as bright as in the daytime. I was coming back to my khal's [mother's brother's] house where I was sleeping, for he was away in Khartoum and I was keeping his wife and her daughters company. I was alone, coming home after seeing a tabl [a religious ceremony usually held on some special occasion such as the death-day of a well-known holy man or a wedding, that involves the drumming and singing of songs in praise of Allah and the Prophet] sponsored by the Qadriya tarīqa [the Islamic brotherhood to which both her father and her brother then belonged]. My khal's people had a hūsh, not like we who did not. There were few haishan then, and few people, not like now. My khal's people were wealthy and they had walls around their house. When I reached their hūsh I saw three young boys standing near the wall wearing caps and wedding costumes, little Westerners. I asked, "Who's that? Who's that?" I called some names of boys who lived nearby; I called to a son of my khal, his name is Ali. No one answered. I ran inside, I was afraid. I drank water every five minutes during the night. I did not sleep, ever. My mother walked with me the next night
for I refused to go alone. But I told no one that I had seen the boys against the wall. I became ill immediately; my health declined from that moment.

Now when this occurred Umselima was familiar with zar; she knew about spirits and had witnessed possession ceremonies in Malkab and in neighboring villages from an early age. Her mother was acknowledged to be possessed by Ethiopian zairan, those held responsible for the fertility dysfunction such as she had suffered. And although sheikhat in those days would not permit unmarried girls to attend zar rituals, Umselima and her sisters used to observe as best they could, peering over the walls of a hōsh where a ceremony was being held or looking in through open windows. As children Umselima and her sisters were therefore well versed in the idiom of possession. Moreover, Umselima told me that when, as a girl, she would stand outside the "place of the zar", just the smell of the incense and of the perfumes appropriate to the spirits would, as she says, "mutkeyifi", make her feel well and cheerful.

But more importantly perhaps, prior to Umselima's vision of Western boys in traditional wedding clothes, Mohammed, who had run off to Khartoum, married a young girl in that city, a non-relative, without notifying his family or asking their father's permission. It was, apparently, a love-match. But when Mohammed's father found out about his son's marriage he became angry. He went to Khartoum, fought bitterly with his son, and forced him to obtain a divorce. Mohammed was
devastated, but complied. Umselima's first vision, then, was coincident with tumultuous family events, a point that is taken up later in our discussion.

A year or two after her zar experience Umselima was married to a Hofriyati farmer twice her age, the son of her mother's maternal half brother. Though his parents lived nearby Umselima was left to reside with her mother and young sisters for some years after the wedding. Her husband paid conjugal visits to her there from time to time, whenever he was not at his wadi-plantation or tending his fields in the floodplain where he had built himself a small hut. Sometimes Umselima would go to stay with him in his hut near the river, always returning to Malkab, however, following harvest.

Meanwhile Umselima's father, who continued to live in Dongola, arranged a second marriage for Mohammed following the dissolution of his unfortunate first. His bride was their mother's brother's daughter, of the same family with whom Umselima had been staying at the time of her initial vision. This woman, maternally related to the local holy man (she was the feki's sister's daughter) soon gave birth to a baby girl. Mohammed still held his job in Khartoum, but was returning frequently now to his home in Malkab.

Sittalbenat, for her part, had also returned to Malkab, but on a permanent basis. She had borne a daughter by her elderly husband, and then a son. When their son had died in
infancy, however, her husband divorced her, whereupon Sittalbenat came to live with her mother leaving her young daughter to be raised by paternal kin in the city. Not long after her arrival in Malkab she remarried and immediately following her wedding acknowledged herself to be zar-possessed.

Around 1928, two years or so after she was married, Umselima conceived and bore a son. Sometime later she gave birth to a daughter and shortly thereafter experienced her second vision:

I saw the zairan again after I had given birth to two children. I had a son who died after four years, and I had just given birth to a girl, maybe 15 days before. I was lying in a hut like the nomads still use, on an angarib, and again I saw the Westerners, standing in the raküba. Again I was afraid. I said to my mother, "I do not wish to stay in the raküba, I want to lie outside. Help me to move my angarib outside." Still I did not tell her what I had seen. I told no one. Again that night while I was lying out of doors they appeared to me. I was fearful, and I became ill. About two weeks later, a month after I had given birth, my illness worsened. For three days I was unable to urinate, I could not eat, and I had a fever and strong sickness. Then I went to a feki Islam [Islamic holy man and curer]. The feki said, "Never have you been ill [from natural or magical causes]. You have a red spirit, that is all." My baby was still living then. The feki told me I had a red spirit, a zär, and said that I had seen him myself. I said, "No! No!" I denied this. Then Mohammed, my brother, he was visiting from Khartoum, he went to Kabushiya and bought perfume, incense, a white töb. He said, "We must do a zär for Umselima." I said, "No! No! I do not want this, I do not have a zär." Then they said there was a zär ceremony happening in another quarter of the village. They [her kin] said, "We must take her there at night." [Her 40-day confinement period had not yet expired, so she could not go outside during the day.] Reluctantly I agreed to go. Then I bathed and dressed in a töb, and they burned some incense for me. For three
days I had not urinated. Someone carried my baby and they led me to the house of the zār. As soon as we arrived outside I felt the need to urinate. Immediately I crouched on the ground and I urinated maybe a quarter of an hour and still it had not stopped. When it had finished I said, "I can stay to see anything; I am empty, I have become well." When I entered the zār the sheikha brought perfume and incense. She fumigated me and I descended [nizalta, describing the motion of one responding to the "threads" of the zairan, and of the entrance of a spirit into one's body]. I descended a little and then I said, "Enough!" But I was happy. I stayed to the end. I became well immediately, but I said, "It is finished. I do not want a ceremony."

Subsequent to this Umselima's baby died. For several years thereafter, from about 1933 to 1938, she "sat empty", she did not become pregnant. During that time her two younger sisters married and moved away from Malkab. Assaida wed a member of her father's sub-tribe who was otherwise unrelated to her. But Nyla, the youngest, married her father's patrilateral parallel cousin.

Sittalbenat experienced no further procreative difficulties, producing for her second husband sons and daughters in rapid succession. Though she had earlier acknowledged herself to be possessed, she did not at this point feel her affliction serious enough to warrant a full-scale ceremony.

But for Mohammed things were not going well at all. Though his second wife had borne him a daughter soon after they were wed, she seemed unable to conceive again. Like Umselima, she "sat empty". So, like his father before him,
Mohammed left his Malkabi family behind and went north to Dongola. There he married a woman related to his father's second wife.

In 1938 or thereabouts Umselima successfully gave birth to a daughter, Leyla, now her eldest surviving child. Then she gave birth to a boy who died a few months later, but not before her strange vision had recurred.

My husband had built a house for me in Hofriyat and we had just moved there with Leyla and the baby. Again, at night, I went into the house for a moment and when I came out again I saw the same boys as before. Right away I called my husband. I told him what I had seen. I said, "I am in the habit of seeing such and such and such." Immediately he called nas [people] Sosan and Bozeyna [an apprentice sheikha and her assistant] and they put on a big ceremony for me; it lasted three days. I was happy. It was finished and I became well. Later when I felt pain in my arms, pain in my head, we had a seven-day party and slaughtered a white ram.

Shortly after the death of her second son and after this first zār ritual, Umselima again became pregnant. Around 1941 she gave birth to a healthy boy, Osman, a son who would live to adulthood.

Umselima was then about 30 years of age. She had become interested in the zār, and had begun to learn about the spirits and their demands with half an eye to becoming a sheikha herself.

Then, following Osman, she lost two more babies, a girl, followed by a boy, both of whom died within a week of birth. Umselima was grief-stricken. When we spoke about this
incident she recalled a dream she had had after the death of this her fourth-born son. In the dream she saw a fat woman, beautiful and light-skinned. The woman was sitting on an *angarīb* surrounded by children, and she held Umselima's baby boy upon her knee. When she awoke, Umselima found that she was weeping.

Up until this time Umselima and her husband had been living in Hofriyat in a house he had built in the open, without a courtyard. Soon, however, people began to extol the virtues of surrounding their houses with walled enclosures, something which heretofore only the wealthy had done. So Umselima and her children were moved into an unoccupied ḥōsh in Hofriyat, owned by a half-brother of her husband then residing in Khartoum.

Meanwhile Umselima's siblings were getting on with their lives. By now Sittalbenat had successfully borne two sons and three daughters. Her spirits were beginning to make themselves felt ("inflame") and she had taken to appeasing them by drumming *zār* threads with other possessed women for a day or so every now and then.

Mohammed's third wife, from Dongola, had died leaving no children. At once he had married her sister's young daughter, thereby fulfilling sororate obligations since his deceased wife's sister was at the time espoused. His new bride produced a son and a daughter, then lost two babies in quick
succession, dying in childbirth.

Assaida, who had been living with her merchant husband in Khartoum, moved with him to Shendi. But whenever she was pregnant she returned to Malkab for delivery and confinement. Her first child was a daughter, as was her second, who died in early childhood. Then Assaida bore a son, Hamid. While carrying Hamid she became very ill, and when she failed to respond favorably to Western and Islamic medications she was diagnosed as being afflicted by zaırans. So, when Assaida suffered nazıf (hemorrhage) at Hamid’s birth, a seven-day curing ceremony was held for her. She recovered and, as she says, "Praise Allah, I have never suffered zar illness again!"

Nyla and her husband, a shopkeeper, lived in Kassala. She had been married six or seven years by this time and had two healthy children, a boy and a girl.

In 1944 Umselima bore a second daughter, Zaineb, who is henceforward the focus of our interest. When Zaineb was three or four Umselima again became pregnant. In her seventh month her husband suffered a heart attack and died. Deep in mourning Umselima gave birth to a boy, her last surviving child, who was given his father's name, Hassan.

Following her husband's death Umselima and her brood were supported by Mohammed and the same paternal half-brother of her husband in whose otherwise vacant home they dwelt. The latter had become a renowned feki in Khartoum; the two
families drew very close. Leyla and Osman were circumcised with the eldest daughter and son of this man, their 'amm and benefactor.

Mohammed returned to Malkab after the death of his fourth wife in Dongola and married there yet again. His new wife was the daughter of his mother's mother's brother's son (Figure 24, matrilateral links being emphasized by Umselima and Zaineb).

Mohammed's Malkab Marriages

FIGURE 24

Then, around 1951 when Zaineb was seven years old, Hamid, the son of Assaida, fell ill. Now, because he had been borne in the midst of his mother's most significant possession episode he, too, had long been considered possessed. Indeed, due to the circumstances of his birth the spirits which were then above his mother were thought forever to be above him as
well. But when Hamid, still a child, became sick, a feki initially was brought to examine him. He was treated with traditional medicine, to no avail. Subsequently he was diagnosed as zār afflicted, a diagnosis which, because of his former association with zairan, was readily accepted.

Upon learning of her son's zār illness Assaida made preparations to hold a ceremony for him in Malkab, with Umselima, whose favorable reputation with zār had been growing steadily under the tutelage of an established curer from Shendi, as officiating sheikha. Zaineb and her sister Leyla attended this ceremony, as they had been attending others with Umselima since their early childhood.

It was not long after Hamid's seven-day ceremony that Umselima remarried. The marriage, it seems, was entered into reluctantly and doomed from the start. Her new husband was another of her deceased spouse's paternal half-brothers; he had been married several times in the past and none of his wives had conceived by him. So Umselima was unenthusiastic. She did not need the marriage from a financial standpoint, for she and her children were being supported adequately and apparently without hardship by Mohammed and her children's 'amm. The couple did not co-habit: Umselima continued to live in Hofriyat while her husband remained in Omdurman. The marriage designed to fulfill family obligations on both sides lasted but a year.
Umselima claims to have been responsible for securing her divorce from this man. She says, "I told him, 'Do as you wish. I do not want you!'"

Thus having obtained her freedom, Umselima continued to pursue her fledgling career as sheikha of the zär. For several years now she had been accompanying Sosan, another apprentice sheikha, to local ceremonies, and had been learning the techniques of "conversing" with spirits. Umselima, with the co-operation of her possessive zairan and (more rarely) through them when they would enter her body during rituals, proved adept at this. When the older sheikhat died or retired she and Sosan jointly inherited their practice in the village-area. These two and their musician-assistants were soon to become curers whose fame extended far beyond the village of Hofriyat.

But in the interim, Mohammed divorced his fifth wife, his second from Malkab, on grounds of infertility, and married in the north yet again. By then it was 1952 or 1953. Zaineb was eight years old and Umselima newly divorced when Umselima's sister, Nyla, in the seventh month of pregnancy, boarded a train in Kassala on route to her mother's home in Malkab to give birth. But the baby arrived in transit, prematurely. By the time Nyla landed in Malkab with her infant son she was ill from the zär. A seven-day ceremony was held for her as soon as possible, with Umselima and Sosan officiating. Afterward
she appeared to recover and decided to remain in Malkab for an extended visit.

At about the same time, but in Hofriyat, Nowal (Chapter 9), Zaineb's father's brother's daughter, suffered a tragic accident said to have been caused inadvertently by a zar. After a period of convalescence in Khartoum hospital she undertook a curing ceremony in Hofriyat which Umselima officiated and Zaineb, once again, attended.

It was during this period that Umselima herself sustained a relapse of zar sickness, the illness which she described earlier as consisting of "pain in my arms, pain in my head." Zaineb recalls that she was eight or nine years old, newly circumcised, in pain and still lying on an angarib recuperating when her mother drummed the zar as a patient for the second time. Her zaïran desired a white ram in sacrifice; their demands were met by Mohammed, who, it is said, "loved the zar."

That year Zaineb's older sister Leyla married their father's distant paternal cousin, and soon after confessed to a zar affliction. Following Leyla's wedding Nyla returned to Kassala with her one-year old son. Though both had apparently recovered, shortly after arriving home her baby died.

After Nyla's departure, Ne'ema, who up till now had been living with Sittalbenat in Malkab, went to live with her daughter Umselima in Hofriyat. Ne'ema, as noted earlier, also
had zairan, and soon after the move to Hofriyat she became ill. A ceremony involving the sacrifice of a white ram was held for her in Umselima's hōsh; this, too, was sponsored by Mohammed. Yet by then Ne'ema was quite old and she had gone blind. Prior to drumming the zar Mohammed had taken her to the eye clinic in Khartoum, but found that nothing could be done to restore her sight. Nor was her zar ceremony to prove very beneficial, for it was not long afterward that she died.

But in 1955 or 1956, Ne'ema was still living, and her granddaughter Leyla gave birth to a son at Umselima's home in Hofriyat. In this year, too, Sittalbenat, approaching 50, her daughters all married and out of the house, decided that drumming the zar for a day now and then and attending the curing ceremonies of others had ceased to do her any good. Her illness, she felt, was intensifying. She determined to have a seven-day ceremony and asked her husband for the money to mount it. He vacillated. First he agreed, then, as she says,

The anger rose in him and he refused. Came his half-brother by the same mother and killed the anger. His brother said zar is good. He said, "I have spread the zar [spread mats and a feast for the spirits] for each of my wives."

Sittalbenat's husband finally agreed to put up the money for a full ceremony. This was also attended by Zaineb, now 11 or 12 years old.
When she was 12 or 13, approximately the same age as her mother had been when first she witnessed the appearance of three Western boy spirits, Zaineb herself had a vision.

I had a strong fever. Many people in Hofriyat were sick. It was during the winter and everybody was sleeping indoors. I became ghabiyan [entranced, possessed, absent from her body, delirious], a great sickness. I saw a distant dream; where the clothing hung on the wall, the wall was open. I saw some Halib people [Syrian gypsies]. I was very frightened and I said to Leyla, "See the Halib people!" Leyla said, "There are no gypsies on the wall, only clothes." When next I attended a zahr party with my mother I discovered I was possessed by a Halib spirit. I began to cry and I descended. Even now whenever I have a fever, whenever I am ill, this dream returns.

A number of things may be significant here. First, note the explicit reference in Zaineb's dream to an opening: she sees zairan through an opening in the wall while sleeping indoors. This might not seem important to a casual observer, yet placed in its context, viewed in terms of our understanding of Hofriyati culture, it assumes added meaning. We know that for Hofriyati value is invested in the quality of relative enclosedness and its correlate, minimized openness. Here as elsewhere, then, zahr has to do with that which is in some way antithetical to Hofriyati culture.

Still, why should Zaineb see an opening in the wall? Barring strictly psychological interpretations, we might consider if her vision articulates a feeling of "openness" from a cultural standpoint. Zaineb is ill, she is not "herself". But this is not all. For in particular she sees
Halib zairan through the opening in the wall, and these are spirits which possess her mother's sister Sittalbenat. Now, as it happens, Zaineb has just been promised in marriage to Sittalbenat's son, Abdelrahim. Her vision may thus articulate fears regarding her impending marriage, that which is symbolized, perhaps, by the opening in the wall.

Not long after this incident Sittalbenat's eldest son married Mohammed's daughter by his second (first Malkabi) wife, but within a year the two were divorced. This could not but have been a poor omen for Zaineb who in 1957 or 1958 at the age of 13 or 14 married Abdelrahim. But 15 days after the wedding came a tragic event. Umselima's mother died, and Zaineb had to surrender the privileges of a bride prematurely to assume mourning.

Mohammed, who at this point had just divorced his sixth wife for failing to conceive, came to Hofriyat for his mother's funeral. He had always maintained that his sisters and nieces ought not to mourn in the traditional manner, wearing rough garments and tossing dust in their hair. Such behaviors give offence to the zairan, and Mohammed, an avowed champion of the cult, now insisted that his female kin bathe, wear their most beautiful colored tiyab, and have their hair finely plaited in order to avoid provoking a spirit attack.

Then shortly after his mother's death and the termination of his sixth marriage, when he was living for a time with his
second wife in Malkab, Mohammed himself became ill. He consulted a Western doctor, he consulted a feki, neither to avail. Upon hearing of his malady Umselima, by then well established as a sheikha, suggested that he drum the zär. He assented, and a ceremony was held for him in Umselima's hōsh in Hofriyat in order to avoid the certain wrath of his wife's khal, the feki, who had threatened to sever all connection with his niece should they drum in her house.

Mohammed's ceremony lasted a full seven days and was well attended by men as well as by women, the former all members of the religious brotherhood to which Mohammed belonged. When the threads of the zairan were drummed or "pulled", Mohammed did not actively descend in response. Instead he sat quietly, as is usual for men who are possessed. For the spirits said to have afflicted him were those of the species Darawish or Holy Men, spirits which when they enter the bodies of their hosts, a transition otherwise marked by the host's energetic and seemingly uncontrolled movement, cause them to assume a quiet and dignified manner. According to Mohammed's daughter, "He [and it is unclear whether she means Mohammed or the spirit temporarily within him here] gave out cigarettes to those present and he smoked, and everyone was made happy by him. He conversed pleasantly with the men who had come to observe." Mohammed provided a large white ram in sacrifice, for the pleasure of his possessive zairan. Following the
sacrificial meal he is said to have become well.

We have now arrived at 1958 or 1959, something of a turning point in our story. Zaineb was 15 and newly married. Soon we are to learn of her first pregnancy and the circumstances surrounding her initial acknowledgement of possession affliction. But before telling Zaineb's story, I pause to consider implications of possession experience among her close kin in order to point out their associations with her own illness later. Further, I discuss the identities of the spirits by which her kinfolk are possessed for these, too, are relevant to understanding Zaineb's case.

UMSELIMA’S AFFLICTION

Although Umselima's story is somewhat fragmented in places, it wears a mantle of quasi-coherence as a result of her association with zar.

We know that Umselima, as with most persons afflicted by possession, was acquainted with zar from an early age. Her mother had spirits and, though she did not undergo a curing ceremony until late in life, we may assume she was considered possessed early on. Indeed, Ne'ema is said to have been "full" of Habish spirits, those deemed responsible for fertility disorder, consistent with her reproductive history. Ne'ema had four daughters and only one son; then she lost twins, one of whom was male. Although he did not divorce her
for this her husband, Umselima's father, left Malkab following
the deaths of his twins to take another wife in a distant part
of the country.

These events could not have failed to impress Umselima.
When her father left she had been circumcised, thus rendered
marriageable, and was either pubescent or approaching puberty.
Soon she, too, would be called upon to demonstrate her ability
to bear children. At the same time her beloved brother, he
who could be relied upon to protect and support her and could
prevail upon their father to select for her an appropriate
husband, departed for Khartoum. There he married a non-
relative, angering their father greatly. For Umselima it may
have seemed that her world was crumbling about her. Returning
to her mother's brother's hōsh late at night and alone after
attending a ceremony of the Islamic fraternity to which her
father and her brother belonged, with its quick rhythmic
drumming and repeated incantations inducive of trance for its
participants, Umselima has a vision of three boys standing
against the wall of her mother's brother's hōsh.

Several things may be significant in this encounter which
Umselima does not reveal to anyone at the time. The boys wear
caps, identifying them as Westerners, yet they are also
dressed in the costume traditionally worn by village boys at
their circumcisions and by young men at their weddings. Now,
Umselima's brother has gone to the city, the locus of Western
influence in Sudan and considered the "home" of Westerners by some Hofriyati whom I met, and he has just married. Yet he has wed not a kinswoman but a "stranger", as Westerners, not villagers, are wont to do. Again, she sees the boys when she is walking home alone at night, thus when she is doing something which girls and women are exhorted not to do and which their kinsmen, if present, generally would prevent them from doing. Moreover, in walking alone through the village after dark, Umselima is behaving like Western women and prostitutes are reputed to behave. The boys she sees are leaning against a wall, then one of the few haishan in the village, built as a sign of her mother's brother's wealth and of his concern for his wife and daughters. In contrast, Umselima's mother and sisters live in an unprotected "open" house, a house with no male residents, no one to defend them from marauders, not altogether unknown at this point in village history.

Thus Umselima's initial vision appears to be linked inextricably to events from her life. The Khawaja boy zairan are indeed suggestive of her brother, who in marrying as he does and in living in the city behaves like a Westerner. In her dream the boys straddle two cultures, as does Mohammed: the three are of the village, for they appear in local wedding garb, yet they are also of the West, for they are light complexioned and they wear caps.
Further, Umselima's protective "enclosedness" has been shattered. Her male kinsmen have abandoned her, and the house in which she and her sisters reside is open, it has no ḥōsh. She walked unaccompanied through the village late at night, so behaving, like Mohammed, in an "open" manner, as Westerners do. Her sister and her brother, in contrast to typical Hofriyati and Malkabi, have married strangers, non-kin, like the Europeans by which she is now possessed. All of these circumstances, these breaches of interiority, render her vulnerable to attack by zairan, themselves examples of openness par excellence. And it is telling indeed that Umselima sees the Khawaja boys standing against the wall of a ḥōsh, against a prominent symbol of interiority.

That night, out of fear, Umselima drinks several litres of water, an act which in her narrative connects this episode both to her circumcision and to her second possession attack. Whereas in the former instance she consumes inordinate amounts of water, in the latter two she retains the same.

The second attack Umselima sustains comes when she is married. Her father, still spending most of his time in the north, and her brother, still working in Khartoum, are now tentatively reconciled. Mohammed is married to the daughter of his mother's brother, owner of the ḥōsh before which Umselima experienced her initial vision. Here, then, one breach of interiority has been righted. But Umselima is
now in the throes of another. She has just lost her first child, a boy, and has given birth to a second, a daughter. Probably she is anxious for her daughter's welfare as well as for her own future, since she is experiencing reproductive difficulty and living still with her mother. Divorce at this point would not have been out of the question.

So, she sees the same Khawaja boys as before, this time inside her hut, a hut "like the nomads use", a choice of phrase that is indicative, perhaps, of her unsettled life. When she moves outside, again they appear to her. She cannot escape them. She becomes ill immediately, but once more tells no one of her vision. As happened earlier, following her circumcision, she is unable to urinate, having recently undergone post-partum reinfibulation. She is feverish and quite unwell. Her brother and other kinfolk demonstrate their support: when the feki diagnoses Umselima as spirit possessed, Mohammed buys several ingredients with which to appease the spirits and insists upon sponsoring a ceremony for her. When she resists (Mohammed is her brother; her husband is the one who ought to volunteer funds for a curing ritual) they take her to a zar going on in the village, and at once her condition improves. She is again able to urinate; she becomes "empty" once more. Yet, though she feels much better after descending to her spirit's threads, she denies that she needs a ceremony for herself. Significantly, soon after her
There follow several childless years during which, as Umselima says, she "sat empty". Again her choice of words may be instructive, indicating an association between this phase in her life and her earlier reluctance to embrace the zār. But it also links her childlessness to other events in her biography: her circumcision and her two spirit visions, times when she was "full" and elimination impossible.

After a time Umselima gives birth to a daughter, Leyla, who will survive. Then she bears a much desired son. Her husband removes her to his own recently constructed house in Hofriyat, and Umselima's marriage is apparently well established. Though not far from her family in Malkab, she now comes more closely under the scrutiny of her husband's kin. Her husband is the son of her mother's maternal half-brother, but, while their marriage is considered close, their families are only tenuously related. Umselima, then, is extremely vulnerable at this point. She is removed from the supportive environment of her natal family, and anxious about her procreative abilities and for the welfare of her children. Her infant son dies. Then and there Umselima suffers her third and decisive possession episode. Finally she admits to her husband that she is possessed; she reveals her visions. He immediately agrees to sponsor a curing ceremony for her, and himself rounds up the sheikhat and the drummers for this
purpose. Umselima has a three-day ritual and soon regains her health.

Umselima's and her husband's exchange of messages here might well have aided in the preservation of their marriage. Successfully, it elevated interpersonal tensions to an alternate level of discourse, one in which the human factor was removed or considerably reduced. Indeed, following her ceremony Umselima becomes well and goes on to produce a healthy son. The success of this pregnancy, coming when it does at such a crucial time, may have indicated to Umselima that her possessive zairan were now willing to cultivate a positive relationship with her, so long as she would openly admit her affliction and acquiesce to her spirits' demands. Thus, while it was the ambiguity of her marital situation, its "openness", that may have occasioned this latest spirit attack, it was the public acknowledgement of possession that provided the route by which that ambiguity could be turned to positive use, and her marriage strengthened.

Importantly, though she suffers two more infant fatalities, Umselima experiences no obvious trouble from the zairan at these times. But if she is not made ill by the spirits, she does have a disturbing dream that she remembers to this day. She sees a healthy, light-skinned woman in the midst of a gathering of children that includes her most recently deceased son. While Umselima does not identify the
woman, she is considered to be a **zār** by others to whom she relates her dream, a manifestation of one of those spirits believed to withhold or to take offspring from their human hosts, which aspect of possession is discussed at greater length in Chapter 9.

Yet is it possible that the woman is also a manifestation of Umselima herself. But if she is light of skin, Umselima has never been a large woman. In fact she is quite the opposite, wiry and muscular, having lived a life of hard work and little ease. Since there were no sons of suitable age to help her husband with farming, many such tasks fell to Umselima. Rather than becoming fat and pampered in the ideal tradition of Hofriyati womanhood (Chapter 4) and like the woman in her dream, Umselima, though fair complexioned, more closely resembles the local image of the "servant" of recent history whose place of origin was the Southern Sudan.

Now I mention this because Umselima is also possessed (though she does not recall when she first felt their presence above her) by two female spirits of the species *Khudām* (servants) or *'Abīd* (slaves), spirit parallels of the Southern Sudanese tribespeople. Umselima's *'Abīd zairan* are Baharanil (River Nile) and Jata. The latter is the *'Abīd* species counterpart of Luliya Habishiya, the flirtatious Ethiopian prostitute which dresses as a Hofriyati bride and requires its hosts to assume bridal costume when it enters them during
rituals. Jata's costume, a white satin dress with the traditional thong skirt (rāhat) of maidenhood over top, is also consistent with local bridal dress; with Luliya, Jata, too, is a prostitute zār.

These spirits, like the Khawaja boys, might also be associated with Umselima's life experiences, with such breaches of the interiority idiom as she has sustained or witnessed. Possession by Southerner spirits may articulate her feelings of being relatively unprotected, of having to live in an open hut or house like nomads and Southern Sudanese, without the reassuring presence of male kin: brother, father, and most of the time, husband. Moreover, Umselima's prostitute zār is suggestive of a lack of feminine control over fertility (Chapter 3) and of a lack of masculine control over the behavior of female kin, both of which she has experienced in varying degrees.

Furthermore, like her mother, Umselima is also possessed by Habish zairan and has been troubled by problematic fertility. She says that she is strongly affected by Wilad Mama, a call to all the spirits through Mama, mother, sometimes depicted as overseer, of the zairan.

Now, in her narrative Umselima implies that it was because of zār that she obtained her divorce. For she admits that she wanted the freedom to continue her budding career as zār sheikha more than she wanted remarriage. The status of a
widow or of a divorcée would release her from some of the obligations and limitations by which women, if married, traditionally are bound, freeing her to pursue her own interests. Umselima says, "I did not wish to marry again." And later she remarks, "The zär, I love the zär, and I love zär parties far more than weddings." Thus it may have been the spirit idiom that allowed her successfully to articulate distaste (something local women rarely would be so bold as to do) for a leviritic marriage that, because of the respective ages of Umselima and her elderly second husband, because his other wives had never borne him children, because the two were to continue to live apart, and because, as she says, she did not like him, held very little promise.

Articulating, perhaps, her vocation to become a successful zär curer, Umselima also acknowledges possession by Ḥakim Basha, "Doctor Pasha", a nineteenth century Egyptian doctor spirit sometimes considered a Turk or a European, that in recent years has taken on characteristics of a modern medical practitioner. Once entered by Ḥakim Basha its human hosts are thought able, through the spirit's intervention, to divine the sources of illness and recommend appropriate medications. But Umselima's apparent abilities in this regard are not confined to her temporary trance experiences of Ḥakim Basha. Rather, as sheikha she is endowed by her entire pantheon of spirits with diagnostic ability which outlasts
those brief episodes in which they inhabit her body. Umselima, because of her knowledge of zar and her good relations with the spirits, is able to "converse" with them when they inhabit the bodies of others, and in so doing glean information that permits her to assess with considerable accuracy the nature of her patients' possession illnesses. As such, she considers her role to be not unlike that of a medical doctor.

Umselima is also possessed by Sheikh Mohammed of the Darawish. Again, she does not remember exactly when this spirit first made itself known to her, but it seems to have been a fairly recent addition to her pantheon. She says that she does not strongly feel the influence of Sheikh Mohammed, yet possession by this spirit may symbolize a growing affinity on her part for Islam. Though I precede myself in the chronology of Umselima's and Zaineb's narrative, it should be mentioned here that in 1975 Umselima made the pilgrimage to Mecca and co-incidentally relinquished her practice as sheikha of the zar. She candidly admits to becoming reconciled with Islam, which traditionally disapproves of zar, in preparation for her death. Now she prays more regularly than in her youth and is one of the few women who attend Friday mosque every week.

On the other hand, her brother was also possessed by Darawish zairan, a fact which may be significant to Umselima
in affecting an alignment of family relationships in the spirit idiom, discussed later in the chapter.

The foregoing are merely suggestions as to how Umselima might have come to articulate certain aspects of her selfhood and of her experience in terms of the zairan. As Crapanzano notes, for those whose belief systems include the possibility of spirit possession, "the locus of the individual's selfhood appears to be differently oriented and the dimensions of individuality appear to be differently determined for him than for the Westerner" (1977b:142). Here, importantly, it seems that experiences and feelings that are not part of the culturally prescribed female self-image in Hofriyat, not in keeping with interiority, are more likely than others to be attributed to the influence of possessive zairan or to occasion an attack of possession illness. Such experiences would include problems in childbirth, anxiety, fear, lack of male protection, grief, and even religious fervor more readily associated with Hofriyati males.

We must remember, however, that it is not Umselima alone who is responsible for deciphering the respective identities of her possessive spirits. These usually must be discovered in the course of therapy: the human sheikha, normally well informed about the life situation of her patient, negotiates with the afflicting spirit. She coaxes it to reveal itself, makes suggestions as to what its demands might be, thus,
albeit inadvertently, all the while prompting the possessed. As the community of adherents aids the patient in naming the spirit(s) appropriate to her malady, so does it, perhaps, also aid her in achieving the appropriate location of her selfhood.

In addition the spirit idiom according to which the possessed is led to interpret certain events in her life may provide a measure of coherence or relatedness among experiences occurring at different points in her biography. Remember that Umselima is now in her early sixties. In recounting her story she may, and indeed probably does, reinterpret or recontextualize experiences from her early youth. One example of this may be provided by the recurrence throughout her discourse of the number three. Umselima sees three Khawaja boys on three separate occasions: once before marriage, again before giving birth to a daughter having recently lost a son, and again after losing an infant boy. She lost, in all, three sons. Does she now consider these three visions to have foretold the loss of a son on each separate occasion? Are the three Khajawa boys her three lost sons? After holding a three-day ceremony for her spirits she becomes pregnant again and gives birth to a healthy boy. Further, her initial acknowledgement of possession illness was symptomatized by her inability to eat or to urinate for three days. Thus, for three days Umselima's body was "closed", her essential orifices blocked. If her possession attack was
precipitated by a breach of interiority that was symbolized by three Khawaja spirits, the attack itself caused her to experience a state of excessive interiority on three consecutive days. For Umselima the number three may furnish a thread that stitches together sundry untoward episodes already separated from the stream of her experience and rendered more densely meaningful through zār.

We see, then, that Umselima at this late point in her life has constructed her biography with spirit possession as an important scaffold. Her daughter Zaineb is now in the process of interpreting past and present events in light of her possession affliction. But because this process for Zaineb is yet incomplete, her biography does not show the same degree of internal coherence as does that of her mother, Umselima.

MOHAMMED'S AFFLICTION

Though Mohammed had long approved of zār and was said to "love" the spirits, he had not been made ill by them up to the time of his sixth marriage. Yet, by all accounts he was on good terms with the zairān, always quick to provide his sisters and his mother with money to stage their respective curing rituals. Though little is known about most of his northern wives, his family in the village area maintain that both his second and his seventh (and last) wife have spirits.
His second wife, the first from Malkab, is carefully watched by her mother's brother, the feki, and thus cannot easily drum the zar. Were she to do so, the feki has threatened to sever all relations with her. Yet there is little doubt that Mohammed would have sponsored a ceremony for her had she desired one. And he did provide her with clothing appropriate to those spirits which had appeared to her in dreams.

When Mohammed was in his late fifties, just after his mother's death and the divorce of his sixth wife, and before he married for the last time, he was diagnosed by Umselima as afflicted by zairan. Mohammed's spirits were angered, say his kinswomen, because he had been stricken by the evil eye, and this because he was an energetic man and financially successful. As villagers say, "The evil eye brings the zar."

Now the two species of zairan thought likely to possess men are Darawish and 'Arab. The former, as we have seen, are the spirit counterparts of Islamic holy men, and the latter, of nomadic Arabs well known for their extreme displays of masculine valor including sword fighting, endurance testing, voluntary mutual whipping, and sometimes self-mutilation. I was unable to pinpoint the exact identity of the spirit(s) which plagued Mohammed, but from what my informants said I gathered that he was possessed by Sheikh Abdelgadir el-Jaylani of the Darawish, zar parallel of the founder of the Islamic brotherhood to which both he and his father belonged. While
it was generally assumed that this was the zār responsible for Mohammed's illness, there appeared to be some uncertainty among those whom I consulted. Perhaps Mohammed himself remained vague as to the nature of his possessive zār or zairan. He did not descend, or move in rhythm to the drums, behavior not altogether unusual for males who are possessed. This may signify either that he did not enter possession trance, or, if entranced, that he did not manifest the usual signs of that state during his ceremony. The ambiguity here may be intentional and cultivated, for it enabled Mohammed to acknowledge his affliction, something generally associated with female Hofriyati, without jeopardizing his masculine identity in demonstrating attendant trance behaviors. And, as if in affirmation, his ritual was attended by men as well as women.

Mohammed's dignified bearing throughout the ritual, his apparent generosity, the demands of his spirit(s) for a white ram and for white clothing, and his personal history, are all consistent with possession by Darawīsh zairān and by Abdelgadir el-Jaylani in particular. With his father, Mohammed was considered a "strong" member of the Qadriya tarīqa. Moreover, Mohammed's zār ritual was held just after his mother's death and shortly before that of his father. (I was unable to discover when in relation to his father's death it occurred, but have reason to believe the two events took
place within two or three years of each other.)

While this can be no more than conjecture, Mohammed's illness at that time might have had something to do with his earlier parental difficulties. As with many sons whose fathers are polygynous, he may have felt resentful that his father had married a woman "fog umhu", "above his mother". Mohammed's departure from the village, virtually coincident with that of his father, and his hasty unapproved marriage may have been acts of defiance. But at the same time, we note that Mohammed closely identified with his father: both came to occupy positions of prominence within the Qadriya, and Mohammed, in his own search for descendants, repeated many of the steps his father had taken in order to assure the same. However, where his father had been successful in his venture into a second marriage in Dongola, siring five sons and three daughters there, Mohammed suffered many setbacks. How he felt and what he was thinking in this regard we cannot tell. But his acknowledgement of spirit possession and the presumed identity of his spirit, Abdelgadir el-Jaylani, which Mohammed must appease if he is to recover, may have articulated certain ambivalences he harbored with regard to his own identity. The fact of possession associated him with his mother and his full sisters, whereas the form that his possession took may have enhanced his identification with his father and his father's kin.
Moreover, as noted earlier, the zar Abdelgadir el-Jaylani is thought to possess great power both to cure and to obstruct female fertility. When he became unwell Mohammed had been married six times. Four of his wives had failed to conceive by him; one produced a daughter and then conceived no more; another gave him a son and a daughter, then lost two infants and died in childbirth. Given his marital record, his established belief in and admiration for the zar, and his association with the Qadriya, one might be led to speculate whether Mohammed had come to view the fertility problems of his wives in terms of his own experience, interpreted in the dual idiom of the Qadriya and the zar. Did Mohammed consider his problem in fathering descendants to stem from a zar affliction of his own, indirectly acquired via contamination by the evil eye? Were the zairan attempting to attract his attention through the various reproductive disorders of his several wives? Like his sister Umselima who oversaw his cure, Mohammed may have found in zar an interpretive framework, a context, which both gave his life coherence and enhanced its meaningfulness. For why should a man like himself, financially successful and "energetic", able to provide for more than one wife with comparative ease, be beset with such difficulty in siring heirs? One or two wives might experience fertility problems, but surely not five or six! Indeed, in accepting his zar affliction Mohammed may have circumvented
having to confront what is perhaps a graver deficiency than possession in the eyes of his peers, his own reproductive inadequacy. And his ceremony at last appears to have been successful in ameliorating this situation, for his seventh wife later produced a son and a daughter who would survive into adulthood.

SITTALBENAT'S AFFLICTION

Sittalbenat, Umselima's older sister, is also Zaineb's mother-in-law. As she figures prominently in Zaineb's possession narrative we shall consider the nature of her possession experience.

Sittalbenat's spirits are numerous. They include several power figures, zairan symbolic of vested authority. Two of these are Ḥabish or Ethiopians: Romani, Ya Wazīr Galla (Roman, O Vizier of Galla), a spirit which may represent the Italian presence in Ethiopia before the Second World War, and Mohammed Sa'adabi, zar counterpart of a member of the ruling Sa'adab from the Shendi area and, in fact, of Sittalbenat's and Umselima's tribal affiliation, who took refuge in Ethiopia following the murder of Ismail Pasha in 1822 (Chapter 1). Sittalbenat is also host to several Khawaja spirits: Dondo ya Rundu, a wealthy Westerner, and Mistair Brinso, "Mister Prince", an archaeologist. She also acknowledges above her
Fellata (West African pilgrims), nomadic 'Arab, and several Ḥalib (Syrian gypsy) spirits.

One of the peculiarities of Sittalbenat's affliction is that, "should a person say bad words to me, and I anger, I become entranced immediately" (her spirits enter her body).

Now Sittalbenat is, from my experience of her, fairly irascible even at the best of times. She is forever shouting at some small child or other, constantly ordering her children, nieces, and grandchildren about. Yet she is very fond of leisurely conversation, and certainly no stranger to a joke. Thus, when she becomes truly angry the zairan quickly intervene to change the context of the situation while simultaneously refocusing responsibility for her untoward behavior. Here zar may function to permit Sittalbenat to avoid overt conflict, to preserve her from the effects of her irascibility. It may, then, be compared to a cybernetic device, one which controls or checks behavior potentially detrimental to human relationships by automatically shifting it to another mode, here, one at a remove from human intentionality.

Sittalbenat is possessed principally by male zairan, and of these, many are thought to occupy positions of wealth and of power. The female zairan in her pantheon are typically poor, or give that impression while concealing their wealth, and they all have rather forceful personalities.
Sittalbenat's possession appears, then, to have more to do with her social status and identity as a female member of a once powerful ruling elite than it does with fertility disorder, though the latter may have precipitated her initial possession illness. And zar may articulate for Sittalbenat a desire for power, for the wherewithall to control the lives of others, typically associated with males in village society. Zar again appears to be associated with feelings and with assertions of identity that do not strictly conform to the idiom of interiority, the regularizing process of village life.

It is interesting to note that Sittalbenat shares few spirits with her sister Umselima. Their only common zairan are Khawajat. This point is, I think, important, and will be resumed when we consider Zaineb's possession affliction.

ASSAIDA'S AFFLICTION

Assaida is not greatly troubled by her possessive zairan; indeed, the illness she sustained in 1943 was her only significant possession episode. When she lost an infant son some years later her spirits did not "inflame" or cause her distress, nor were they blamed for that misfortune. Assaida says that because her husband always complied with their demands, her spirits have been "good with her". They are
said, for example, to have enhanced her skills as poetess, raconteur and songstress, arts in which Assaida, with her daughter Azina, has earned village-wide renown.

Assaida has been married but once; her husband, now deceased, never divorced her, nor did he take another wife. When she became ill at a critical point in her life, while pregnant, already having borne two daughters, one of whom died, her husband (unwittingly perhaps) reaffirmed their relationship in acquiescing to the demands of her possessive zairan.

Her spirits belong to the Habish, consistent with her earlier fertility problem, and to the Fellata, the Khawaja and the Halib species. Zairan of the lattermost group also possess her sister Sittalbenat and her niece Zaineb, but no other member of the family. For Assaida these and the Fellata may articulate aspects of her former lifestyle, of moving from place to place with her husband as he changed the location of his business every few years. Such a nomadic life is quite the opposite of that deemed fitting for local women. It is inconsistent with the ideals of interiority, for it caused her to be exposed to a wide variety of external influences and other cultures, experiences more typical of village men. Thus might the relative "openness" of her life have found expression in her acknowledgement of possession by Halib and Fellata zairan, whose human counterparts are not bound by
villagers' ideals and are similarly nomadic.

Interestingly, too, Assaida, like Umselima, is possessed by Khawaja boy spirits, spirits which may articulate similar or shared life experiences for both sisters.

Though after 1943 Assaida never again experienced an illness attributable to zār, she is one of the few women I met who is forever doing some small thing such as wearing a zār costume or applying henna in a particular pattern for her spirits' pleasure. While she, too, has made the ḫal and no longer attends curing rituals, she remains faithfully devoted to the zār. More than once I heard her leap to the defense of zaīran when they were accused of being malevolent devils by a Malkabi man, and, like Umselima, Assaida says she prefers a zār ceremony to a wedding any day.

HAMID'S AFFLICTION

When Assaida's son Hamid was diagnosed as spirit afflicted around 1951, he is said to have been maqfūl, "closed": like Umselima, his were symptoms of body closure. As happens with a number of people who claim to be possessed, his hands become clenched and his arms folded to his shoulders; he was found sitting on a chair (often a symbol of the zār, cf. Constantinides 1972, passim) with his legs drawn up to his chest. He did not open his mouth to speak or to
eat, and sat locked in that position for some time. Hamid's symptoms, then, were those of excessive interiority.

Umselima recalls,

They spread the zār in Malkab. They put henna on him and a mattress on the ground. When we drummed 'Arāb threads Hamid stood up. He could not stand up before. He said, "I want a whip and 'Arāb sandals, and an 'Arāb tōb." We put on a seven-day zār and his condition improved.

She continues,

One day during the drumming, Sosan and I were late in arriving from Hofriyat. The women of Malkab wanted to start the ceremony without us, but Hamid prevented this. He sat on the dallūka and would not allow anyone near it until the people of Hofriyat had arrived.

Note here the gist of a rivalry between the villages of Hofriyat and Malkab, a rivalry which is significant to our consideration of Zaineb's possession affliction.

Now Hamid's possessive zairan belong to two groups. As mentioned above he is possessed by 'Arāb spirits, nomadic Sudanese, which were provided a whip and long pantaloons. But he is also possessed by Khawaja boy spirits, those which he acquired from his mother at his birth. These last were given socks and shoes, and a watch.

Like his mother, Hamid has never suffered a recurrence of his spirit illness. Instead the zairan have benefitted him, for following completion of his curing ritual not only did he recover, but he was suddenly endowed with the ability to play the tambourine (rīk), an instrument associated with the 'Arāb.
NYLA'S AFFLICTION

Recall that Nyla's first curing ceremony was held in Malkab following the premature delivery of a son, who subsequently died. Then, two or three years later she bore another son, but this baby died the day of its birth. Once more she succumbed to zar affliction and once more drummed a ceremony, this time in Kassala. Later she conceived again, and had a healthy son.

Nyla and her husband have a marriage deemed good by other members of her family. Her husband owns a shop and they live in a house in Kassala with running water and electricity. He has neither taken another wife nor threatened divorce. Further, he has willingly provided all items requested by her spirits and sacrificed two rams on her behalf.

Nyla's story, then, is similar to that of her sister Assaida. Zar, it seems, has provided both women with a means to test and to enhance the strengths of their marital relationships, and perhaps to adapt them to changes wrought by reproductive crises. Unfortunately these are the only conclusions the data will allow us to draw: though I frequently discussed zar with Assaida, she never went into greater detail about her own affliction. Nyla I met but twice when she was visiting from Kassala, insufficient time in which to cultivate the rapport necessary to the collection of her
possession history in any depth. Assaida and Nyla both appear to be content with their lives. Neither, apparently, has experienced serious marital trouble, despite their respective reproductive difficulties. Hence the simplicity of their possession accounts might merely reflect the fact that their separate cures have been, by and large, successful.

However, both Assaida and Nyla have spent the greater parts of their lives outside of Malkab and Hofriyat. Thus their respective stories are not as well known to permanent residents as are those of other women who have lived in daily association for many years. So, when I publicly recorded their individual zar histories in Malkab Assaida and Nyla were somewhat disadvantaged. Neither had ready access to what might be termed the "communal memory" of the village area, that body of anecdotal information known to virtually one and all. They also lacked many of the remembered shared experiences of long term co-residents, experiences which often help the latter to recall and to situate biographical events. Perhaps, then, her younger sisters' personal accounts are not as complete as Umselima's because many of the events about which her sisters speak were not witnessed by those in whose presence they were told. Lacking a knowledgeable audience, their possession histories lack embellishment, the mythical quality with which other such stories, publicly reported, frequently are endowed.
Figure 25: Zaineb's Close Kin and Affines
ZAINEB'S STORY

In the foregoing pages the possession afflictions of Zaineb's close kin were evaluated and interpreted. Following this none too brief but necessary digression, we resume our narrative, a chronological description of events leading up to and including Zaineb's acknowledgement of possession illness in 1976.

Now, when we left Zaineb she was 15 years old, recently married, and living with her mother in Hofriyat. Her husband, Abdelrahim, is her mother's sister's son, the son of the irascible Sittalbenat. But Abdelrahim is also the son of her father's sister's son, and while these links are underplayed, they serve to render their marriage exceedingly close, hence fitting. Yet, despite the appropriateness of Abdelrahim as husband for her daughter, Umselima and he did not get along.

Then Zaineb discovered she was pregnant; her first child was a daughter whom she named Medina. She says, "I became ill from the zar on the day of Medina's simaya [naming ceremony, held seven days after birth]. I have been afflicted ever since." Prior to her daughter's birth plans were being made to remove Zaineb from her mother's home in Hofriyat to that of Abdelrahim's parents in Malkab. Zaineb says that she did not wish to leave her village. She was informed of her imminent relocation on the day of her daughter's simaya and, as she
says, her Halib spirits "inflamed" and made her unwell.

Not long after Zaineb was ensconced in Malkab her sister Leyla was divorced. Leyla had borne a son and then a daughter, only to find herself pregnant once again three or four months later. This last child was a boy whom she lost in her seventh month. When his son was delivered stillborn, her husband, a Hofriyati farmer, decided to put her aside in favor of another women, whereupon Leyla moved back to Umselima's ḫōsh with her young children. The break-up of Leyla's marriage was a bitter one; her husband abandoned their children, who have been supported by Leyla's family ever since. Leyla has never remarried and expresses no desire to do so as she prefers her relative freedom to the restrictions of matrimony. And her zar spirits ceased to afflict her, she says, from the time of her divorce.

Less than one year later Zaineb, while living in Malkab, became pregnant once more. These were difficult times. Up to then her husband had been farming with his father. Jointly they owned a wadi-plantation, rented some river-bank land, and operated a sagīya (waterwheel) on land farmed by others, for which service they would annually receive a substantial share of the crop. But around this time the Nile began to change its course through the floodplain, moving further to the west and increasing the distance between the eastern bank, the location of Hofriyat and Malkab, and the water. By about 1962
the sagiya operated by Zaineb's husband and his father was dry, too far from the river to be of use. It had to be abandoned. Indeed, all along the eastern bank sagiya farming declined. Those who could afford to do so formed co-operatives for the purchase of diesel pumps which could pipe irrigation water from a further distance than could the ox-driven sagiyat. But those who could not afford this expense departed to seek work in the cities. So, shortly after the birth of their second child, Musera, another girl, Zaineb's husband left for Khartoum.

At the same time her brother Osman also went off to the city in search of employment. With this turn of events Zaineb's situation became intriguingly reminiscent of what Umselima's had been so many years before, when her brother, Mohammed, had run away from Malkab.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that Zaineb claims to have been very ill following Musera's birth, an illness she attributes to possession now by a Habish (Ethiopian) zar. The next time Zaineb attended a zar ritual with Umselima she responded to Habish threads; also, she says, she descended a little to the thread summoning Rundu, the wealthy Westerner spirit which, like the Halib is also above her mother-in-law Sittalbenat.

With remarkable clarity, Zaineb recalls an incident that took place during this period. She and members of her family
were attending a wedding in Hofriyat. Mohammed was there with his second wife and with his seventh whom he had married not long before:

We were sitting over there, in the acacia grove. There came the sound of a beautiful dalluka, and that was the end of drumming for the wedding! There were many people sitting in the shade of the grove. Then Leyla and Mucca (Mohammed's daughter by his second wife), they began to sing the thread. "Dondo ya Rundu, Khawaja Rundu; Dondo ya Rundu, Khawaja 'indu." ["Dondo oh Rundu (Rundi?), Westerner Rundu; Dondo oh Rundu, Westerner has/owns."] They were just joking, that is. Only the new wife of my khal Mohammed, immediately she rose up and began to descend, and another one got up to descend; all of those sitting were descending. So Leyla and Mucca went and took the dalluka to drum in the grove. Came the groom, "Who are you?", he said. "La, berri berri!" [protestations of innocence], said the people in the grove. "We did not do it [take the dalluka from the wedding proper]." Then this one, my khal's new wife, she became ill straight away. She began to cry and to descend, she did this for a long time. And she was just a girl, she had never given birth or anything! Then she got up. She said, "Unless you put on a ceremony for her!" [I.e. she would not get well; uttered in deep tones, a masculine voice.]

Soon after Umselima's people, sheikhat and musicians, got up and spread the zar right there at the wedding! And he [spirit] said, "I want a dress like the dress of Zaineb there, and I want henna and incense." They incensed her and Umselima's people put on a ceremony that lasted seven days, over there in the acacia grove. And they brought a ram. He [spirit] said he wanted a white ram. They brought it and slaughtered it; they put on a sacrificial meal. It went on until we [Zaineb, Sittalbenat, and their Malkabi relations] came back here to our village.

Sittalbenat, she wanted to die that first day in the grove. Her spirits inflamed; the others brought her perfume and incense, she began descending immediately, she had much dizziness. They brought her a white tōb to wear and a beautiful dress and she became well. There was no need to sacrifice a ram for her spirits then, for she had sacrificed at a seven-day party in the past.

There was another one, she was possessed by a Ḥabish zar: Dodo ya Jebel Nado [Dodo oh Mount Nado, an Ethiopian spirit of a mountain on which coffee is grown.] When she
descended during the thread for Jebel Nado she said, "You must make him coffee right now!" They made him coffee and she drank it and I forget what else they made for another of her threads. She descended, and this before the ceremony had begun in earnest; and they brought coffee and they drank and she became quiet and stopped.

But my khal's wife, she refused to stop. She said, "Not unless there is a [bona fide] zar ceremony."

And another woman said, "I want," and they did it for her, for this Nyam Nyam Kubaida [Azande cannibal spirit]. She said, "Bring him meat, raw meat." She would eat. And she took spoonfuls of meat [that was being cooked for the wedding guests] right from the fire, Oh!, right there in the grove, I saw it myself! She blew on the fire -- uh, huh -- to make it grow, and took meat flaming -- it was not yet cooked -- and put it in her mouth and her mouth was fine. We all said, "She has burned herself." But no! When again she took meat from the fire too soon, there was nothing wrong!

Shortly after this incident, when Zaineb was 18 or 19 (in 1962 or 1963), Osman, her elder brother, married a relative of Umselima's through her father's second wife in Dongola. Zaineb, Leyla, Hassan and Umselima travelled to Dongola for the wedding. They went by train and then by steamer along the navigable reaches of the Nile. This trip is one of Zaineb's most treasured memories. Often she would speak of the cool breezes coming off the water as they sailed, of the steep river-banks in the north, and, in Dongola, of her grandfather's fruit garden where the dates grew thick and sweet. Dongola remains, for Zaineb, a symbol of opulence, of joy, and of relative freedom, freedom both from the concerns of everyday life in Hofriyat and Malkab and, not least, from her in-laws' control. When first she told me of this journey Zaineb quoted a well-worn Hofriyati adage: nisībha muṣība,
"her in-laws are a misfortune."

Meanwhile Zaineb's husband had found work in Khartoum. But he did not remain there for long. After two years employed as a messenger in a government ministry he returned to Malkab and tried to resume farming. He built a hōsh for his wife and daughters behind that of his parents and not far from the limits of the floodplain. Zaineb and he had lived there for less than a year when she again found herself pregnant. Just before her time she went back to her mother in Hofriyat for delivery and confinement. She bore a healthy son. Then, twenty days after the birth, while Zaineb was yet with her mother, Abdelrahim again abandoned farming and left to seek work in Khartoum.

Since then he has returned to the village area for short visits and vacations only. His job with the railway is fairly respectable but considered not overly remunerative, even by local standards. Due to the nature of his work he must travel a great deal and, though headquartered in Khartoum, is rarely there for long. So, rather than bring his family to the city where they would be exposed to all sorts of disconcerting influences, Abdelrahim prefers to have them remain in Malkab under the guardianship of his parents.

But Zaineb is not altogether happy with this arrangement. Though fascinated by city life, she is nevertheless content to live in the village area, for it is, she says, far better for
her children there. Instead the difficulty lies with her place of residence in the village area near Abdelrahim's parents in Malkab. For Zaineb much prefers life in Hofriyat with her mother and her sister, and the friends of her early youth. She told me that she had not wished to return to her parents-in-law following the birth of her son. Her mother's hōsh was large and well appointed compared to her own, and relatively empty, for Leyla's children were away most of the year at boarding school. But on this occasion as on others she was forced to comply with her husband's wishes and to return to Malkab.

Over the next eight years Zaineb had four more children: a daughter, followed by a son and then two more daughters. Apart from a few trips to neighboring villages and to Khartoum for weddings and visits to kin, and to Hofriyat for the births of her children, Zaineb remained dutifully in Malkab. But she continued to accompany her mother to spirit possession ceremonies whenever possible, including one held on behalf of Sittalbenat's twice divorced daughter and staged in Zaineb's hōsh.

Then in 1971 a joint archaeological expedition of the University of Khartoum and the University of Calgary began excavations in the vicinity. Crews of both Sudanese and Khawajat returned each year for the next five winters, the last of which brought this anthropologist.
Stories about the Khawajat circulated by Hofriyati in the archaeologists' employ piqued Zaineb's interest in these foreigners. She recalls having seen two Western women at one of the last zar ceremonies in which Umselima was to officiate, probably in 1974.

That was the year in which Zaineb gave birth to her youngest child, a girl, whereupon she fell ill. She was still undergoing hospital treatments for that illness, a thyroid condition, when first I met her in 1976. Six months after we met, Zaineb also became ill from zar.

DISCUSSION

Up to the point at which we met, Zaineb had not undergone a curing ceremony, though she knew herself to be possessed. When a young girl she experienced a vision of Halib spirits, gypsies, zairan which are also above her mother's sisters Sittalbenat and Assaida, both of whom were potential mothers-in-law to Zaineb. Indeed it is significant that this incident occurs when Zaineb is 12 or 13, just a year or so before she is to be married. But at the time Zaineb is also physically ill, victim of an epidemic then sweeping Hofriyat; henceforward whenever she has a fever these spirits reappear to her, she says. But her zairan remain relatively unproblematic until she has borne her first child, a daughter,
and discovers that she is to be moved to her husband's parents' home in Malkab. Then the Halib spirits "inflame" (yitharigo), causing her to become unwell. Here, perhaps, possession by Halib zairan articulates Zaineb's fear surrounding her removal from Hofriyat: gypsy zairan roam from place to place as Zaineb, if only figuratively, is about to do. Further, her mother-in-law with whom she is to live is also possessed by Halib spirits.

After Zaineb's second child is born she is again made ill by the zairan. This time the offenders are Habish spirits, usurpers of fertility. By this time Zaineb has borne two daughters and, though she has neither miscarried nor suffered a stillbirth, she may have considered her marital situation precarious as she has not yet produced a son.

But shortly after this last bout of possession illness her eldest son is born. And Zaineb sustains no further spirit attacks until 1976.

Earlier I mentioned that Zaineb's mother, Umselima, was sent on the haj by her sons in 1975. Her colleague Sosan also made the pilgrimage that year. Since their return to the village both women have set aside their roles as sheikhat, creating a lacuna in personnel locally available to diagnose and treat zar illness. This situation is widely lamented by women in the village area. Those who, in 1976, openly aspired to become full-fledged sheikhat were not thought as capable in
their dealings with the spirits as Umselima and her people used to be.

Now, events frequently led me to consider whether Zaineb herself seriously entertained the ambition to become a sheikha of the zār, to fill her mother's shoes. Her early years had been spent in a milieu virtually dominated by zār. Her mother was a noted curer; many of her relatives, male as well as female, had mounted curing ceremonies. The latter were major social events, invariably preceded and followed by a great deal of discussion about spirits, signs of possession, probable demands on the zairan, and so on, discussions which Zaineb could not possibly have failed to witness. Moreover, unlike other sheikhat in earlier times, Umselima permitted her unwed daughters to be present when the zār was drummed; indeed, many such ceremonies were held in their own home. Undoubtedly Zaineb had acquired a significant amount of information about spirit possession in Hofriyat.

Several times, though early in our acquaintance, Zaineb actually voiced the possibility that she would become a curer. Certainly when I met her she was in the process of establishing, cautiously, her credibility with the zār, and of negotiating, albeit obliquely, a change in marital situation which would permit her an increased measure of freedom from her husband's control. Whatever the eventual outcome, unknown to me at the time of writing, Zaineb was then beginning to
cultivate the possibility of succeeding to her mother's relinquished position, a succession deemed not only possible but proper and fitting in the eyes of the zairan.

ZAINEB'S ILLNESS, 1976-1977

We are now in a position to consider the events surrounding Zaineb's acknowledgement of possession affliction in 1976. Following a brief discussion of my early acquaintance with her, I trace the development of Zaineb's illness in excerpts from my fieldnotes, edited and abbreviated where applicable. For the most part these last are rendered in the present tense so as to preserve a sense of immediacy and to convey something of the drama of her situation.

First Six Months

Shortly after my arrival in the Hofriyat area in January I went out into the village accompanied by a female member of the archaeological crew with whom I initially stayed, hoping to make contact with local people. I met Zaineb when a number of women invited us to tea. At once her wit and confidence, and her curiosity about Western ways, were apparent.

A few weeks later I attended a zar ceremony in a neighboring village on four consecutive nights including that
of the sacrificial meal. And on those days I did not make my usual daily appearance in Hofriyat.

Then, the morning after the ceremony's conclusion I met Zaineb in the street. She asked why she had not seen me in the village of late. When I told her, she said that she had not been aware of the zar, for otherwise she would have attended ṭawāli, immediately and for the duration.

Soon the entire village has heard that I and some others from the expedition were witness to a zar. Now wherever we go for tea, the topic of conversation turns to spirit possession, with various women demonstrating the gestures that their possessive spirits have them perform when housed in their bodies. Then one day Zaineb, accompanied by several other women, led us to a hōsh in Hofriyat where she and Umselima had lived during the latter's heyday as sheikha. Therein we found a beautiful dallūka, Umselima's, which Zaineb set about playing. Other women had brought different instruments of the zar, and all joined in drumming and singing threads of the zairan.

A few days later Zaineb mentioned that she and Asha, one of the women who claimed to be an aspiring curer, were going to hold a small zar ceremony over the next three evenings, not for the purpose of curing but, as she said, "to comfort ourselves." Observing her those nights I could not help but notice how at home she seemed to be in the role of sheikha:
Zaineb obviously was leader of the event. But I also wondered if the presence of Khawajiyat in the villagers' midst had influenced the staging of this impromtu ritual in any way.

Zaineb was, from the very inception of our acquaintance, keenly interested in learning about Canada and about Western ways. Often it seemed that she saw in us, the visiting Khawajiyat, potential for a lifestyle different from her own, aspects of which she considered preferable to life in Hofriyat. She was most inquisitive about, and in voiced agreement with, the relative freedom we appeared to have from male control. When the archaeologists left in mid-March and I remained alone to do research in the village, it was Zaineb more than anyone else who took me under her wing. She seemed almost intuitively to understand what I wished to accomplish and sought to include me in all significant village events. My presence, my interest in zar (which, despite increasing enthusiasm, I allowed to emerge slowly in the company of Hofriyati), her personal dissatisfaction, her physical ailment, and her deep schooling in the idiom of possession, all seemed to combine that year, influencing her via her possessive zairan to negotiate what gradually took shape as a strategic move, a studied defiance of her husband's authority: both she and the zairan wished her to remain with her mother (and me) in Hofriyat. Although the process had yet to culminate when I left the field, it was becoming
increasingly apparent that Zaineb sought to establish a footing on the path which, with careful preparation, eventually could lead to her sheikha-ship.

June 15, 1976

Zaineb has invited me to accompany her to Khartoum where she is due for a doctor's appointment. I have decided to accept, as it will be a good opportunity to observe relations between villagers and their expatriate kinsmen living in the Three Towns. We will travel by train tomorrow, and stay with her brother Osman and his family. Zaineb says she is uncertain as to whether Abdelrahim will be present in the city during our sojourn. But since he rents a hōsh in Khartoum with several other men whose families are domiciled in the Hofriyat area, even should he happen to be in town we would not be permitted to stay with him: not all of his room-mates are Zaineb's close kin.

June 20, 1976

Zaineb saw the doctor two days ago. She is upset because he was inconclusive about her prognosis, and merely gave her some pills which Zaineb says have made her worse.

Today we went to Omdurman to visit the daughter of her
father's half-brother, he who had been the benefactor of Zaineb's family after the death of her father. There we spent a pleasant time conversing and looking at photographs of her cousin's recent trip to Egypt. Then, in mid-afternoon, Zaineb's brother Osman telephoned to say that Abdelrahim was indeed in town, but was expecting to depart for Kassala in a few hours. If Zaineb wished to see him she would have to come right away. Zaineb left me with her cousins and rushed to Osman's house to confront her husband. She wished to find out why there had been no money sent that month. She returned a while later, dejected, having failed to convince Abdelrahim that she needed money for their children's school clothes. What is more, she had discovered from Osman's wife that Abdelrahim had not worked at all this week. He had known for several days that Zaineb was in town, yet, Zaineb says, had not even bothered to come and greet her. He had allowed her to know of his presence in the city only hours before he was due to leave.

So Zaineb was feeling rather downhearted tonight. After tea at sundown, Osman's next door neighbor invited us to their home to watch television, one of the few sets in the neighborhood. The neighbors are a childless couple; the wife, Fatna, a woman in her late forties, is a member of an organized zār cult group. Zaineb, Fatna and I talked for a while about zār, Fatna taking special delight in displaying
the costumes and jewelry appropriate to her possessive spirits. She showed us some gold bracelets belonging to Luliyâ Ḥabîshiyya, the Ethiopian prostitute zar, and mentioned that she (Fatna) owned yet another bracelet even more valuable than these. This, she said, had been stolen. It seems she had loaned it to a bride so that the latter could wear it during her wedding dance. After the wedding the bracelet was not returned, and members of the bride's family claimed not to know what had become of it. So Fatna enlisted the services of a feki, a powerful curer and magician said to be "the friend of devils". The feki promised to find the bracelet and return it within a set amount of time for a fee of £25 (then roughly $62.50 U.S.), and if unsuccessful, to return her money in full. Zaineb remarked that he must be a strong feki indeed if he could afford to make such promises. Then she said that too much was going wrong in her own life for it to be mere coincidence. After further discussion along these lines, Fatna agreed to take Zaineb and me to Goz, a suburb of Khartoum, in order that Zaineb might consult the feki.

June 21, 1976

This morning, after asking Zaineb to describe her symptoms, performing some sand divinations, consulting a well-worn book containing astrological information, and asking her
mother's name, \(^6\) the feki diagnosed Zaineb as being under the influence of some unknown woman's 'amal, "doing", "work", or spell. This woman, he said, wished to alienate Zaineb from her husband's affections. The feki described Zaineb's cure, a special package of incense, and told her that treatment, should she choose to undertake it, would cost £5 ($12.50 U.S.): £3 for the ingredients and £2 for his fee. Zaineb then told him that she hadn't any money, that her husband gave her next to nothing with which to support their seven children. The feki dropped his price to £4, and told her to come back for the medicine tomorrow.

Though relieved to know the source of her trouble, Zaineb was even more downcast than before when we left the feki's establishment as she saw no way to obtain money for the prescribed cure. She was ashamed to approach her brothers, she said, and stated that there was no point in even asking her husband, for he would surely refuse. We made our way to the house which Hassan, her younger brother, rented with his wife and children in Goz, for we were expected there for lunch.

Midway through the meal, Abdelrahim unexpectedly walked in. Now, it seems, he is not due to depart for several days more. Zaineb at first looked extremely nervous, then, emboldened perhaps by the presence of her younger brother and wishing him to know the extent of her marital difficulties,
she again asked her husband for her monthly musarif, budget or household allowance money, and told him that the children needed cloth for new school uniforms. There followed a great deal of discussion but no resolution. When Zaineb and I rose to leave, it was insisted that we return to Osman's house by taxi. Zaineb's brother and husband argued heatedly over who would pay the fare; Hassan won out, and we drove away from a rather abashed looking Abdelrahim. Zaineb was quietly furious.

Late tonight Abdelrahim showed up at Osman's door. He and Zaineb withdrew to the men's room (diwân) and for over fifteen minutes could be heard to argue loudly. The topic was money. Abdelrahim, who up to this point had taken a defensive stance, now openly berated Zaineb for her demands. He told her that their eldest daughter, Medina, in junior secondary school and at the top of her class, was under no circumstance to return to school at the end of the summer break. "Medina is now 16," said Abdelrahim, "too old to be running around the villages. She must remain at home now until she is married." This concluded the dispute.

Afterward Zaineb avoided her husband, but there remained palpable tension between the two throughout the remaining hour or so of his visit. Before he left us that night he gave Osman £5 towards a new tōb for Medina which he said that Zaineb might share. Weddings and other ceremonies were in the
offing, and it was important for Medina to appear at these wearing a töb that showed her to be marriageable.

Zaineb was not at all appeased. In the first place, she wanted her daughter to remain in school for as long as she wished; Medina had aspirations to become a school teacher, and had expressed no desire for marriage at this point. Moreover, Zaineb said, a töb costs far more than £5, and her brother Osman would have to contribute twice that amount if they were to buy anything at all. And still no explanation for the missing household money had been forthcoming. Zaineb complained that Abdelrahim is frequently neglectful in this regard, and though he earns £40 per month, the maximum he ever sends her, she says, is £15 ($37.50 U.S.). She does not know where the money is going, unless, as she suspects, there is another woman in whom he is interested. And since she has no money with which to take the feki's cure, to undo the spell which binds her husband in this woman's power and heaps misfortune upon herself, Zaineb sees no way out.

June 26, 1976

For several days Zaineb has debated whether to ask Osman for the £4 necessary to undertake the feki's cure. She is embarrassed, she says, because he has already been so generous with her. On June 22, while Zaineb and I were shopping for
Medina's töb in the cloth market, I took sick with a high fever. We returned to Osman's house immediately and for the past three days I have been confined to bed. Though unable to follow or record all that has been taking place, I know that Abdelrahim has not come back to see Zaineb. He is still in town, however, for last night Osman and he met to play cards and drink araki, an alcoholic beverage.

Today Zaineb and I are to return by train to Hofriyat. Worried and unhappy, she had all but given up hope of obtaining the feki's medicine when I offered her the money. I had considered doing so from the first, but was unsure as to whether I should interfere, and did not wish to set a precedent for others in the village, a precedent which soon could relieve me of my limited funds.

Initially Zaineb refused my offer of assistance. When I asked if the medicine would make her well, she ardently said she believed this to be the case. I then insisted that she take the money, pointing out that if she did not there would be no further opportunity for her to undo the 'amal until August, when she expected to return to Khartoum for another physical examination.

A few hours before we were to board the train, she slipped away unnoticed and went back to Goz. She returned a short time later and when no one else was looking motioned me into the diwān. There, sitting on a sofa in the midst of our
baggage, she showed me a furry black capsule. It was a piece of goatskin which, as she untied the package, appeared to conceal a fragment of white cloth bound with thread. Inside the cloth was powdered incense and some sand. Zaineb said the feki had instructed her to undo the thread, to wash the cloth with the incense and to put the washings down the latrine. The cloth she was to place somewhere inside her house in Malkab. The feki, Zaineb went on to explain, had retrieved this magical bundle from where a woman who wishes to disrupt her marriage had hidden it. The latter had constructed it from a piece of Abdelrahim's clothing. Zaineb had also received from the feki some incense with which to fumigate herself, so as to relieve the symptoms of her illness.

July 10, 1976

It is now two weeks since our return to the village. Zaineb is still unwell. Though she followed the feki's instructions to the letter, her illness is as strong as ever it has been.

A few days ago Zaineb received word from her husband, via his father, that Abdelrahim will be coming to Malkab for several weeks' holiday, and that he expects her to have their house in readiness. Up to now she has been living with her mother in Hofriyat. Zaineb is disturbed by the prospect of
having to return to Malkab. She is still smarting from her recent confrontation with Abdelrahim, and says she does not want him to come home. "I am not accustomed," she says. "When he is in the house, it is not 'as you wish'. I want to do as I wish."

Umselima's half-sister from Dongola is presently visiting her relatives in Hofriyat and Malkab. Today while talking to Zaineb and Umselima, she suggested the possibility that Zaineb is experiencing zar affliction. After all, neither Western medicines nor a feki's cure have been of help, a sure sign that zairan are involved. Umselima readily concurred. Zaineb herself has seldom spoken of zar in the past few days. However, I know that she has long considered that her illness is related to possession. This afternoon she responded to her aunt's suggestion, "Yes, probably, but I have no money for a curing ceremony."

July 14, 1976

Abdelrahim has not yet arrived. Zaineb and Medina are busy cleaning the Malkab house in preparation for his visit. Zaineb told me today that she has been feverish, remarking that whenever she is feverish she sees the family of Ḥalib spirits which first appeared to her when she was a young child.
August 10, 1976

Abdelrahim has still not arrived, though he is expected imminently. He will be here for the whole of Ramadan, which begins at the end of this month.

Zaineb's condition has worsened since her move to Malkab. Five days ago she had a zar dream. She dreamed that a strange man approached her. He grabbed her by the back of her neck and pushed her head up and down, forcing her to perform the mannerisms of a woman in possession trance. He told her that he wanted a seven-day ceremony and a tall white ram. Zaineb says she argued with the man, which she maintains was a zar, telling him that she had no money with which to meet his demands. The zar replied that it would not leave her alone until she had entertained it and the other zairan for seven days.

I visited Zaineb that day in the company of Samiya, a Malkab sheikha and good friend to Zaineb. We later discussed the possibility of raising money for Zaineb's zar. Samiya tells me the spirits specify that money for their demands must come from Zaineb's kin, preferably from her husband, but failing that, from her close male relatives. She further tells me that between Umselima and Abdelrahim there have been "words" (an argument). Abdelrahim does not like Hofriyat nor
the people of Hofriyat, and he wants Zaineb to live in Malkab in the house that he built for her. He expects her to live there, says Samiya, even though the house does not have a proper latrine and Zaineb and her children must use the latrine in her husband's parents' hōsh next door. Samiya says that Zaineb's house is inconvenient and that Sittalbenat, her mother-in-law, is angry much of the time. Zaineb, overriding Abdelrahim's command, has allowed Medina to return to boarding school in Kabushiya, though it leaves her without much help at home. With her illness, her husband's impending visit, and her house, she is truly miserable.

Two days later, on August 7th, I again visited Zaineb. Medina is now coming home from school every afternoon in order to take care of her mother. That day she brought the ingredients for henna: Zaineb was going to try to appease her spirit(s) somewhat by staining her hands and feet in the appropriate manner. Medina also brought her mother some "white" bread and some fried chick-pea patties, *akil nazīf* (clean food), to mollify the *zaīran*. That day a number of Zaineb's Malkabi relatives visited and we discussed local curing techniques while Zaineb applied her henna. In the general course of conversation, a *tajrūba*, a *zār* test, was suggested for Zaineb to determine if her present malady was in fact a possession affliction. The test would take place on the following night and for two nights succeeding that. When
I left her at sunset, Zaineb seemed much improved.

The next evening (August 8th) Leyla, several of Zaineb's friends from Hofriyat, and I went to Malkab. Umselima's dallūka was set up inside Zaineb's house and the room soon filled with women. The drumming began, slowly at first, then gaining speed as more and more women arrived and joined in. When the thread Wilad Mama (an Ethiopian spirit, mother or vizier of the zairan) was drummed, Zaineb, who until that time had been sitting quietly with eyes downcast, began to tremble. Soon her trembling became more intense. She shook as though someone indeed held her neck and pushed her to and fro as she had dreamed. She started to descend. She continued to descend during all the threads of the Ethiopian spirits. On several occasions she fell, apparently exhausted, to the mat. At such times she was held by her khal's wife (the widow of Mohammed) or daughter, Mucca, who fanned her with a colorful flag. A number of different Wilad Mama threads were tried and Zaineb responded in like manner to each. Several times I thought I caught a glimpse of Abdelrahim's father standing on a sand dune next to the house, observing the proceedings through an open window. Zaineb descended to the thread for the Ethiopian female twins and to some Khawaja chants as well. During the latter, however, Zaineb's cousin, Assaida's daughter Azina, herself an aspiring sheikha, responded even more strongly than she. Both women descended to the threads
for Turko-Egyptian and British Pasha spirits. After several hours of drumming the group gradually began to disband, the consensus of opinion being that Zaineb certainly is spirit afflicted.

The next night, August 9th, Azina arrived carrying a suitcase full of clothing appropriate to her possessive zairan, provided by her husband some years earlier when she had undertaken a curing ritual in Gadaref. Leyla brought from Hofriyat some perfume, some coins, and some cigarettes which Zaineb, unentranced, distributed among the guests. Zaineb's demeanor was markedly subdued from that of the former evening. She descended less frequently; although she looked pained and distracted through many of the threads to which previously she had responded with energy, one received the impression that her freedom of movement was somehow curtailed or blocked, that she or her physical being wished to descend but could not. Something restrained her. She did descend to the thread for Ḥakim Basha, the spirit whose two manifestations are those of Western doctor replete with stethoscope and white coat, and 19th century Turko-Egyptian physician. This spirit is also above her mother Umselima, along with Wilad Mama and several Khawaja spirits to the threads of which Zaineb descended. Interestingly, too, Zaineb looked most pained, least able to move, when the threads for the Halib zairan were drummed. These are not above Umselima, but above Umselima's sisters
Sittalbenat (Zaineb's mother-in-law) and Assaida.

The ceremony had started rather late and, as it was an exceptionally warm evening, the drums and mats were set up out of doors. I had arrived early and Zaineb and I had sat chatting for an hour or more before other women began filling the ḥōsh. Zaineb was not feeling well at all, that much was obvious. She had put on her newest dress and wore her prettiest tōb. Several women stopped by to see her, but Zaineb complained that they were the first to do so that day, though she had left her front door ajar in invitation the entire time. Indeed, she has privately complained that the women of Malkab are somewhat less friendly than are those of Hofriyat.

Samiya was among the first guests to arrive. After taking one look at Zaineb she told her that drumming only in the evening was doing her more harm than good. Zaineb was merely socializing with her spirits, Samiya said. The zairan were letting her know by intensifying her symptoms that they require a proper ceremony, one that begins in the evening, leaves off in the early evening while the sun sets, and resumes at night. The hiatus in drumming is to avoid inadvertently calling up shawatin, devils, said to come out at sunset. Samiya added that we must drum in the afternoon "so the illness does not become heavy", or build up so much during the day that drumming at night is insufficient to bring
relief. Zaineb replied that Umselima, upon learning the results of the first night of testing, had earlier come from Hofriyat to see her, and had said she would personally ask her sons and her nephew Abdelrahim for the money to sponsor a seven-day ceremony. "My mother said to me, 'You have had zahir above you since you were small,'" Zaineb remarked, and went on to reiterate that since the day of Medina's naming ceremony she has been afflicted with zār illness from time to time.

On August 10th the last night of the tajrūba was held, this time indoors, and over 60 women from Malkab and Hofriyat attended. Zaineb was even more lethargic in responding to threads than before, and her overall condition appeared to have declined.

August 13, 1976

It is now three days since Zaineb's zār test ended. Since then her health has continued to deteriorate. I took some eggs and some cheese ("clean food") and went to Malkab to spend the day with her. She is still weak, but Medina and I were able to convince her to eat. She says that she gets a sharp pain in her knees and then immediately becomes feverish, symptoms she ascribes to her Khawaja (Westerner) zār conveying the message that it wants a pair of trousers.
It has been determined that Zaineb will keep her doctor's appointment scheduled for ten days hence. She and I have decided to travel together to Khartoum, as I must make arrangements to have my visa renewed. We will return to the villages in time for Ramadan. Only after Ramadan is Zaineb planning to drum the zar, for during that month the spirits are prevented by Allah from manifesting themselves, and the boxes containing incense used to summon the various species of zairan are closed. No curing ceremonies, therefore, may be held at that time.

Today I learned that there is a great deal of talk concerning Zaineb's place of residence. One of her Hofriyati male cousins (remote patrilateral) has been encouraging her publicly to return with her children to Hofriyat.

While I was in Malkab, Zaineb was visited by a number of people: Assaida, herself unwell, came to discuss Zaineb's troubles with the zairan. Abdelrahim's sister and his brother's wife also made brief appearances. They came to bake kisra on Zaineb's griddle, apparently considered superior to their own. Then, just after noon, several men from Hofriyat, including the village area sheikh, an elected local official, dropped in on their way home from Friday mosque. They told Zaineb that living in Malkab obviously did not benefit her, that her home was in Hofriyat. They asked when she planned to return to the latter village. Zaineb responded, "Ask my in-
laws!" Promptly the men rose and went next door to do precisely that.

A few hours later, Zaineb's mother-in-law Sittalbenat stalked in. One could easily see that she was livid. She berated Zaineb over some washing that her daughter Medina, home today for the weekend holiday, was supposed to have done earlier in the week, "if she had not been off at school!" A while later, when Zaineb's sons began quarreling over some game they had been playing, she upbraided her ailing daughter-in-law for inability to control her children. "Your children are short of manners!" she said, loudly and menacingly. When Zaineb's sheikha friend Samiya appeared at the appointed time to make coffee as demanded by Zaineb's Habish spirit, Sittalbenat was overtly rude to her. She did not greet Samiya, nor did she respond when Samiya addressed her.

Shortly after Samiya departed, Zaineb's father-in-law, who up to that time had been speaking with the delegation from Hofriyat, entered the room and sat down close to the door. He greeted no one and, what is worse, failed to inquire about Zaineb's health. After a tense half hour he and his wife left without his having spoken a word.

It struck me that Abdelrahim's parents had been there to assess the situation, reassert their authority, and register their displeasure with Zaineb by their unfriendliness. When they departed her hōsh Zaineb was visibly relieved.
Next to visit was Abdelrahim's brother's wife, a jovial woman in much the same position as Zaineb for she, too, lives with Sittalbenat and with other mutual affines. She joked with Zaineb, but her jokes had a ring of truth about them that proved disturbing to my friend. She said that Abdelrahim had mentioned to her his desire to take another wife. "He wants a divorcée," she laughed, "because they are cheap! He will send you and the children back to Umselima and put his new wife in your house!" Zaineb managed a smile, but it was obvious that she was upset.

It seemed that Zaineb was somewhat uncertain as to the direction in which things were developing. Likely she feared the possibility of having a co-wife while still being closely controlled by her husband. The alternative, beneficial in some respects, was divorce. Yet with her children still very young, and with five daughters and only two sons, she both needed Abdelrahim's support and could count on receiving very little if he put her aside.

It was at this point that I entered the conversation, asking Zaineb if Abdelrahim would mind if she moved back to Hofriyat. She said no, because if he came back to the area for Ramadan he too could stay with Umselima, whose home is quite large. Though, given his past relationship with his mother-in-law, it is unlikely that Abdelrahim would agree to such an arrangement, Zaineb offers it as a reasonable solution
which her husband, being a reasonable man, would not reject. Though others openly criticize Abdelrahim for his stubbornness and his neglect, Zaineb refuses to speak badly of him.

Not long ago Zaineb sent a letter to Abdelrahim, written by Medina, again asking for money or some material for their children's school uniforms. Now Zaineb tells me he has sent a response and that his message is clear: he sent material in the colors and amounts appropriate to his sons' uniforms only. His daughters are not expected to return to school.

Now, the education of all her children is one of Zaineb's greatest ambitions. Moreover, my presence as a female graduate student, it seems, constantly reminds her of opportunities for learning that she wishes she herself had had. And whatever else, she is determined that her daughters be permitted to avail themselves of such educational opportunities as presently exist. The children of Zaineb's and her siblings' childhood benefactor have all, male and female alike, received an education: Zaineb's father's half brother's daughter, married and with daughters of her own, has recently retired from a teaching position at a prominent girls' school in Omdurman. The children of this woman have all attended university or post-secondary school. Moreover they have travelled abroad, as a family, to Egypt, to Greece and to Kenya on separate occasions. It is such a life that Zaineb envisages for her offspring and to which, at least for
his daughters, her husband apparently stands opposed.

Throughout this eventful day a further topic of conversation was the present level of the Nile. The annual flood has begun and the river level is rising daily. Zaineb says she is afraid of the river every year at this time. Her house is closest in Malkab to the floodbank and would be first struck if the Nile rose so high that it overran its course. This has happened on several occasions in recent history. Zaineb avows that every year she falls ill when the flood begins; every year at this time she wishes to be back on the comparatively high ground of Hofriyat.

August 21, 1976

Abdelrahim arrived for his long anticipated holiday two days ago. Yesterday, after one of the worst sandstorms ever, Zaineb and I cancelled our trip to Khartoum until weather conditions improve. Abdelrahim has determined that our train would be delayed indefinitely as the tracks were obscured. It was decided that today we should go by bus to Shendi and thence to Khartoum by train. Abdelrahim's mother, Sittalbenat, would accompany us.

This morning I had occasion to observe Zaineb and Abdelrahim together. He is, by now, fully aware of recent developments in Malkab and Hofriyat with regard to Zaineb and
the zairan. Abdelrahim barely spoke to his wife, at least in my presence. When we were about to board the bus he handed his mother some money with which to buy food on the trip. He gave Zaineb nothing, and still had not addressed her when the bus departed. Later, when Sittalbenat was out of earshot, I questioned Zaineb about this. Her mother-in-law, it seems, was sent along as chaperone. Moreover, Zaineb was not to be entrusted with money. She tells me that even when Abdelrahim sends her money for household expenses, it comes through his parents.

Now, I should point out that Zaineb is an extremely capable woman. Though not exactly bold by Western standards, she has a great deal of confidence and is able to hold her own in conversations with men whom she knows. She is well-liked, and her dry wit is appreciated by all. In the city, which she has visited only briefly on a number of occasions, she maneuvers through crowds, on countless buses and along a veritable maze of streets and alleys as though she has lived there all her life. While it is probably because she is so capable that Abdelrahim has sent his mother as her guardian, his treatment of Zaineb as if she were a recalcitrant child often rankles her, though she dare not openly object.
August 22-31, 1976

In Khartoum this time I did not stay with Zaineb's kin. Yet she and I remained in contact, and together we attended a zar ceremony in Göz held to honor the spirits before the onset of Ramadan. Zaineb did not stay long at this ritual. She left me in the care of her brother's wife and withdrew, saying she felt unwell. Later she confessed that she did not wish to anger her spirits by attending the ceremonies of others before holding a ceremony of her own.

September 20, 1976

My business in Khartoum concluded, I returned to Hofriyat on September first. Zaineb remained with her mother-in-law in the city for further medical tests, returning two weeks later to her mother's hosh in Hofriyat. She returned to Hofriyat in spite of the fact that Abdelrahim is still in the village area. Since Zaineb's arrival he has (much as she had suggested in mid-August) divided his time between his parents' home and Umselima's. Happily, Zaineb tells me that she has obtained permission to remain in Hofriyat unless her husband again comes for a holiday, at which point she must go back to Malkab, yet only for the duration of his visit.

Ramadan will soon end, but since Zaineb has another
doctor's appointment in October she says she will now wait until November before drumming the zār. She and Khalda, another zār afflicted woman in Hofriyat, are planning a joint ritual. Zaineb's physical condition and emotional outlook are much improved these days.

November 28, 1976

Zaineb returned today from yet another doctor's appointment in Khartoum. She is back in Malkab, preparing for the arrival of her husband and other relatives who are coming to celebrate the 'Id el-Adha in a few days. Zaineb is feeling quite a bit healthier, she says. She and Khalda still intend to drum the zār, but plans for the ceremony are presently in abeyance until after the 'Id. Problems with her affines appear to have been smoothed over since it was decided by her husband, his parents, and Zaineb's brothers in the face of public pressure to allow her to live in Hofriyat for most of the year.

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Such was the situation when I left the field in March of 1977. To that date, plans were still being made to drum the zār, but the ceremony itself had yet to take place. Indeed, it appeared rather an incongruous denouement to the crisis that had gone before.
DISCUSSION

Why did Zaineb's possession crisis abate? Factors influencing the palpable loss of momentum in the press for a curing ceremony on her behalf are likely to be many and complex. However, I would submit that some, at least, may have to do with the process of structuring her biography in the idiom of possession and with an associated concern, her understated and uncertain ambition to become a sheikha of the zār.

Now, in considering the cases of possession presented in this chapter it becomes increasingly clear that possession means something slightly different to each of the individuals who claim the affliction. While in women, and perhaps also in men, the association of zār illness with problematic fertility and anxiety over childbirth is readily apparent, none of the people whose possession histories we have examined experience zār in precisely the same ways in precisely the same sets of circumstances.

Yet a number of themes emerge when we consider Zaineb's account of her early possession experiences, the possession accounts of her relatives, and events which took place in 1976-77. In all of this there is an undercurrent of similarity. In Zaineb's maternal family the possession idiom
is well shared and understood, and common elements crop up in the possession narratives of its members. For example, though the problematic zairan vary from case to case, the demand of a white ram in sacrifice is called for in several. Zaineb's khal, who is possessed by a Darawish zar, slaughters such an animal at his ritual. In this case spirit and sacrifice are mutually appropriate: white is the principal color association of Darawish zairan. But with Zaineb, Umselima, and Umselima's mother, variously afflicted by Habish and Khawaja zairan when their respective zar rituals were deemed necessary, the call for a white ram in sacrifice is, though not unheard of, somewhat extraordinary. Thus, the usual color association of Zaineb's Habish spirit is red, and Habish zairan normally request in sacrifice an animal of reddish tint. Yet in her dream the zar demands a "tall white ram". Here similarity among ritual demands serves, however unwittingly, to connect Zaineb's possession experience with those of her maternal kin, notably those of her mother, her mother's mother, and her mother's brother.

Umselima considers herself to be "strongly possessed" by the Ethiopian Wilad Mama zar and its entourage, and it is this spirit which particularly afflicts Zaineb in 1976. Several things may be of significance here: Habish (Ethiopian) spirits are those which began to affect Zaineb following the birth of Musera, her second child and her second daughter. This is a
situation with potential to be interpreted as fertility disorder, and as such may have rendered Zaineb's position in the household of her husband's parents even more tenuous than before. Moreover, Zaineb's sister Leyla was recently divorced because her young son, born prematurely, died. At this point Zaineb cannot help but be somewhat anxious for her own future while at the same time uncomfortable living under the constant surveillance of her affines. Possession by Habish spirits here may articulate her fear of fertility dysfunction, absolve her of any guilt she might be led to feel in this regard, and, what is more, indirectly reiterate her affiliation with her mother. It is interesting, too, that Musera is later adopted by Umselima.

Then during my stay in Hofriyat it is discovered that Zaineb is afflicted by Wilad Mama, a Habish spirit of specified identity which also is above her mother. This is a powerful zar figure, itself mother or vizier of all zairan. It is this spirit which is first summoned ceremonially and requested to marshal the zairan that they might descend; it is this spirit which acts as spokesman for the entire pantheon and receives the blood of sacrificial victims on its behalf. Threads addressed to Wilad Mama are addressed to all zairan. Possession by this spirit, or perhaps I should say spirits for Wilad Mama is always considered a plurality, is indeed beneficial, if not mandatory, for those wishing to become
sheikhat. Hence her possession by Wilad Mama at this time might obliquely indicate Zaineb's desire to assume her mother's role.

Remember that the proclivity to become a sheikha is said to run in the maternal line. Thus Assaida's daughter, Azina, who has publicly stated she is learning the diagnostic techniques of sheikhat, might also legitimately aspire to that position. In observing the behaviors of Azina and Zaineb at the latter's zār test in August, I noted that the two descended to the threads of the same spirits and that few other women present descended at all. Frequently, however, Azina's actions in trance (strictly speaking, actions which the possessive spirit made her perform) appeared to be more finely tuned than were Zaineb's, an indication that Azina, as human host, is on better terms with the possessive zairan than is her cousin. Azina, moreover, owns costumes appropriate to her spirits and she has undergone a full seven-day ceremony, another prerequisite to becoming a curer oneself. These observations led me to remark in my notebook that Zaineb frequently appeared to be "upstaged" by Azina, more accurately, perhaps, that the spirits appeared to manifest themselves more completely in Azina than in Zaineb. And I wondered if these two, good friends as they are, were competing in some way for Umselima's relinquished status. There was technically nothing to prevent either from becoming
sheikha but lack of public acceptance: a belief in each woman's ability to "converse" with the spirits and to diagnose illness in others. But in 1976 Azina was better placed than was Zaineb to convince others and to be convinced herself of such a calling. However that may be, the fact that both are possessed by Wilad Mama might nonetheless function to emphasize their respective associations with Umselima.

Significantly, too, Umselima is possessed by the zar Ḥakim Basha, the doctor spirit, and at her tajrūba her daughter Zaineb descends to the thread of that spirit for the very first time. But here again both Zaineb and Azina, and no others present, respond to the Ḥakim Basha chant. It is this spirit especially which is thought to confer upon its human hosts the ability to diagnose illness, whether or not spirit inflicted, and to prescribe suitable remedies. So, like Wilad Mama, Ḥakim Basha is a valuable spirit by which to be possessed if one wishes to become a sheikha of the zar. But here again Zaineb cannot hope to verify her vocation in this regard until she, like Azina and Umselima, has undergone the ceremonial zar cure, and for this she needs her husband's and/or brothers' support.

Zaineb is also possessed by Halib, Syrian gypsy spirits, and she says she has been so since before her marriage. Only two other members of Zaineb's family are possessed by Halib zairan: Sittalbenat, her mother-in-law, and Assaida, Azina's
mother and once potential mother-in-law to Zaineb. Perhaps Halib have come to represent for Zaineb her affinal relations, for she first saw these spirits after her betrothal to Sittalbenat's son, and was made ill by them upon learning that she was to be domiciled with Sittalbenat in Malkab following the birth of her first child. Moreover, female gypsy spirits are characterized by their forthright behavior, their boldness and brassiness when speaking to men. This, plus their relative freedom from male domination and their mobile lifestyle may have crystallized for Zaineb that which she desires or sees in herself, but which her marital position has precluded. But Halib zairan have yet another aspect which may be relevant to Zaineb's situation. Frequently she pointed out that the Halib are practiced con-artists, forever attempting to relieve people of their money by this trick or another, but usually by appealing pitifully to the innocent passerby for alms "in the name of Allah." Now if we consider Zaineb's ongoing financial war with her husband, her repeated attempts to wrest from him the household expense money and their children's school uniforms, we see other potential meanings she might derive from possession by Halib zairan, again in relation to her affinal kin.

Remember too that Zaineb's affines are also her maternal relatives: her husband is her matrilateral parallel cousin. Thus Zaineb's zar dream and entrancement episodes during her
test ceremony take on additional relevance, for in demanding a white ram in sacrifice and in revealing itself to be Wilad Mama, a spirit which does not afflict Sittalbenat, the possessive zār not only reaffirms Zaineb's affiliation with her mother, it also distinguishes both women from Zaineb's mother-in-law, Umselima's sister. Here, then, zār may permit Zaineb to differentiate between facets of her dual relationship with Sittalbenat. It may allow her to effect or to point out an existing alignment of her matrilateral kin whose differential status is otherwise obscured by the similarity of their genealogical ties. Thus might zār "open up" the dense, compacted relationships between individuals that are created by endogamous marriage, itself an expression of interiority. However it may be interpreted by others, and however wittingly or not it may be sent, the revelation of a possessive spirit's identity and demands appears to be a message of a special sort, one which encodes information about the contexts of the human to human relationships in which its host participates. And here, as elsewhere, it would seem that zār is a comment upon the existence of ambiguity in interhuman affairs.

Now the spirits themselves are ambivalent and capricious. Further, possession may in fact augment the level of ambiguity normally present in human interaction. People, perhaps intentionally, often confuse host and spirit behavior when
observing an episode of possession trance; in day to day life certain of an individual's responses, behaviors, psychological and physiological conditions formerly attributed to her or thought to be under her control may variously be considered attributable to extra-human influences. Just which entity one is dealing with in any given situation, Hofriyati or spirit-influenced Hofriyati, is not always clear.

Yet, somewhat paradoxically, for those who know how to read the possession text zar may increase coherence in human relations. Knowledge about one's own and about others' possessive zairan may help to increase predictability in everyday interactions, for specific spirits, spirit types, and spirits in general cause or exhort their hosts to behave in particular ways in certain situations. Moreover, the knowledge that others are possessed, and possessed by certain spirits or spirit types, may clarify an individual's perceptions of those with whom she interacts. Or, as perhaps is the case with Zaineb's matrilateral kin, whole groups of possessed persons, otherwise related in the human world, may perceive realigned relationships among themselves in the spirit domain. Two close kinswomen who share no possessive spirits in common may see this difference as functioning to create or to reinforce a distinction between them in the human world. Conversely, two individuals possessed by the same spirit may tacitly recognize that mutual association as
contributing to their relationship; it may strengthen existing bonds or even create where none exists a sense of kinship or affiliation between them.

Still, as much as it might clarify, the possession idiom obfuscates. For an individual generally will acknowledge possession by more than one spirit or spirit species at any point in time. Each spirit "acquisition" might serve to add yet another layer of meaning onto the interhuman relationships in which she participates. And each time a woman discovers she is possessed by a spirit that previously she did not know she had, her relationships may be repositioned. Thus, zar might function as a metalanguage in interpersonal communications, contributing layer upon successive layer of messages that indicate how an individual's position in her world might be interpreted at various points in time. Therefore, temporal sequence, the gradual unfolding of a woman's possession affliction, may be highly significant to an investigation of the present sort, as noted in Zaineb's possession history.

But Hofriyati and Malkabi women rarely remember the exact progress of their respective zar afflictions except in the most general terms. The precise context of the moment at which a woman first discerned the presence of a particular spirit above her, the state of her interpersonal relations at that exact point in time, usually is not recalled. It is
perhaps deemed unimportant, at least retrospectively. For many women presume that the spirits which now they acknowledge have always possessed them; some simply chose not to manifest themselves from the start. And possessive *zairan* never completely abandon those who are their hosts. Thus a woman's awareness of the extent of her pantheon tends to increase over time and as it does it leads her to recontextualize the *zār* experiences of her past. Further, and in like measure, each new spirit she acknowledges to be above her may force a complete reinterpretation of her existing interpersonal relationships. The sequence of spirit acquisition need not be remembered precisely, for it is the present situation that is real and true. Indeed, human relationships are not seen to develop gradually in the village; instead they are held to change episodically, with the present state of understanding explaining all that has gone before. Hence for she who is possessed relationships may be ongoingly "revealed" through her own and others' continuing association with *zār*. *Zār*, then, functions in the human world as integument; it creates relationships; it binds existing relationships into continuously changing patterns of alignment. Through *zār* ascribed genealogical relationships may be evaluated and commented upon both subtly and indirectly.

*Zār* possession, much as Crapanzano (1977a) suggests, serves also to effect a refinement of the possessed's
definition of herself via negative metaphor: what is not to be considered an aspect of one's self is thereby distinguished from that which is. To the normal dialectics of self and other, of the I and the Me (cf. Mead 1934), are added two additional dimensions: that of the extra-human self and of the extra-human selves of Hofriyati others.

Objectively speaking, the possessed individual is characterized by what we might call a "Hofriyati self", comprised of those qualities consistent with the ideal Hofriyati image for persons of her (or his) sex, and by what we might term a "zar self", which incorporates all those aspects and qualities she displays or desires that are either inconsistent with idealized self-image, or consistent but virtually unattainable, hence abnormal (i.e. extreme wealth) and attributable to possessive zairan. For villagers the "Hofriyati self" is the "true self". The "zar self" comprises that which the individual sometimes manifests herself to be but her "true self" is not: behaviors, reactions, physiological deviations from normal or ideal thought to be the effect of spirits upon their human host. The possessed individual, like those not possessed, receives and transmits information regarding her identity, her selfhood, dialogically: by engaging in interaction with others. But when interacting with others the possessed may interact in one or both of her aspects, and she interacts not only with the
Hofriyati selves of these others, but also, perhaps, with their respective zar selves. Dialogue is thus potentially thickened in a variety of ways, for any apparently simple conversational situation may disguise an ongoing multi-dimensional enterprise.

This brings us to the important point. Because of zar people might freely communicate in ways which run counter to the harmony-preserving tactics characteristic of "normal" dialogue in Hofriyat. Hence close kin, husbands and wives, might indirectly discuss issues which otherwise they could not broach without rupturing their mutual relationship. And all of this is possible because of the potential for obfuscation that inheres in the possession idiom: the distinction between Hofriyati self and zar self is not rigidly drawn at all times, even when the body of a human host is entered by its possessive zar during trance. Indeed it is the very possibility for confusion, the frequently obscure and oblique nature of such communications, that permits vitally important messages of a sort not normally countenanced by Hofriyati culture to be transmitted without permanent injury to the concerned relationships. Responsibility for untoward behavior might well be assigned to zairan as much as to the Hofriyati selves of the individuals involved. For example, without automatically damaging her marriage Zaineb might, through the spirits, indirectly voice dissatisfaction with her husband's
treatment of her or, through her acknowledgement of illness, inform him of negative gossip surrounding their relationship of which he may be unaware.

Well do Hofriyati recognize that ambiguity in human relations exists. Hofriyati culture, for its part, does not attempt to deny ambiguity; instead, it welcomes it and through zar turns ambiguity and paradox to positive and creative use. But I digress, and must return to a consideration of the case at hand.

Zaineb, as we have seen, is in the process of constructing her biography, the events in her life and the relationships in which she is involved, in the idiom of possession. Because of her youth and her as yet unfulfilled aspirations this process is far from complete. In 1976 she was just beginning to get her bearings with regard to the zar; she was maneuvering through a personal crisis, the outcome of which was much less than certain. She was understandably uncertain of the reactions of others — her in-laws, her husband, her brothers, the community at large — to various attempts to ameliorate her affinal situation, reactions which, when they have come, periodically have given her pause and led her to consider alternative responses. Zaineb is not pursuing a straightforward course of action, but is feeling her way, slowly, toward a more comfortable position in her world.

The negotiation of her illness has been at least as
complex as the negotiation of her cure. Zaineb is physically unwell; her condition has been diagnosed and treated by doctors trained in Western medical techniques. She is also magically ill, for as we discovered from the feki in Göz (and subsequently from another feki in the village area), she is the victim of 'amal, a ruinous spell. And there is a further component to her illness, she is suffering affliction brought by zairan. These three features of her condition emerged gradually, over the course of a year, in precisely the order according to which villagers proceed when attempting to locate the etiology of an ailment. Zaineb neglects no possibility in searching for cause or for cure, and she discovers that her malady is multi-faceted. All three of its components are mutually influential: her physical disease, perhaps brought by zairan, is made worse by magic, and both physical and magical disorders are exacerbated by possession.

But knowing herself to be possessed, Zaineb has then to establish the credibility of her possessive spirits and of herself as their human host for such an etiology to gain widespread acceptance. Public and private acknowledgement of her possession affliction is not enough.

So if, on the one hand, anxious to drum the zār, Zaineb is, on the other hand, undeniably cautious. By mid-September she had amassed so much political support both in Hofriyat and with her brothers in Khartoum that her residential difficulty
had been temporarily resolved. Moreover, she probably could have staged a seven-day ceremony had she pressed for it. But she did not. Indeed, had she done so, her credibility with regard to zar, which she had taken such pains to establish, might have been damaged irreparably and her health, instead of improving, would likely have declined. For zairan prohibit their hosts from consulting Western medical practitioners. They are said to increase the intensity of one's possession symptoms should an adept (or a novice) do so. And most certainly the zairan would not silently endure their host's consumption of Western medicine at the same time as she undertakes a zar curing ritual. The two types of remedy are held to be mutually exclusive. So Zaineb realized that, despite the risk she took in angering her possessive spirits, the "natural" component of her illness had to be cleared up via her visits to doctors in Khartoum before she drummed the zar. Should she drum too soon and her condition not improve, doubt would circulate as to whether or not she was truly possessed and her emerging ambition to establish herself as sheikha might well be curtailed. Somewhat paradoxically, then, Zaineb was tactically forced to wait until she had recovered before she could undertake a cure.

Thus it is that Zaineb's narrative, her possession history, is a biography in the making. Wittingly or not she has at least set foot upon a course leading to the realignment
of her identity, realignment in a direction she deems preferable to that which brought her to her present untenable position. For the moment she vacillates, caught between the necessity of remaining married to Abdelrahim and her desire for relative freedom which divorce from him would bring. Zaineb would prefer to have both: her marriage and the freedom to "do as you wish". Indeed, due to her possession affliction this preferred situation now exists, for her marriage has been temporarily preserved and a measure of freedom assured.

Undoubtedly, too, Zaineb, like Umselima and others with whom we have become acquainted in this chapter, continuously reassesses her past in terms of her present. Here Zaineb's developing association with zairan provides an ever expanding backdrop against which to interpret the various twists and turns that her life has taken: a childhood illness, stresses and tensions in her marriage, anxiety over pregnancy and childbirth, removal from the relatively comfortable world of Hofriyat. But the reverse is also true: events in her life frequently provide her with clues as to developments in her relations with zairan. Spirit world and human world are for Zaineb and for others who experience possession, dialectically intertwined.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. Dodomayo, upon entering this woman's body, would lead me around the midan as its bride. It would call for chairs to be set up in the center of the midan -- always high backed wooden chairs -- on which we would then sit in order to be admired by "our" wedding guests.

2. This is similar to the way in which genealogies are reported. Regardless of birth order, the names of a man's sons are given first, as they are deemed more important than are his daughters for maintaining and expanding the lineage.

3. For wiratha.

4. Though Umselima does not explicitly make the connection, the implication is that the two events, her denial of a ceremony for her possessive zairan and her baby's death, are related.

5. Here one is led to speculate as to whether this first Malkabi marriage had been arranged prior to Mohammed's departure for Khartoum. If so, his marriage to a non-relative in the city would have been doubly defiant of his father's authority.

6. Another feki of the same type as the feki in Gőz told me that he asks the name of a patient's mother because motherhood is indisputable. Her mother's name is thus the most sure form of identification for the purposes of divination.
CHAPTER 9

HOSTS AND THEIR SPIRITS:
PROPERTIES OF THE POSSESSION IDIOM

In this chapter several more cases of spirit possession are examined, not specifically, as in Chapter 8, with a view to mapping the developmental process of such affliction, but with intent to describe further properties and potentialities of the possession idiom itself. This is but a slight shift of emphasis. Concern here is with the nature of the spirit-host relationship, how possessed individuals think and talk about zairan "above" them and about zar in general, as well as with ways in which the possession idiom provides a vehicle for precipitating or responding to alteration of social position. Thus I propose to delve more deeply into the language of possession, both literally and figuratively, in continuing to investigate the vocabulary and symbolism that arise in Hofriyati's dealings with and discussions about spirits, and in noting additional contexts in which a possession diagnosis might be invoked or acknowledged.

Much of the information here presented is given anecdotally, not always in complete possession histories. In some cases this means that histories are telescoped or otherwise abbreviated, in others that only those aspects of a
narrative are noted which illuminate a certain feature or features of the zär. Undoubtedly such selectivity on my part does grave disservice to the richness of the possession texts. But it is unavoidable, for space does not permit extensive treatment of each case we might wish to examine.

SOSAN

Sosan, who is perhaps 60 years of age, is the retired Hofriyati sheikha who once practiced with Umselima. Even before Sosan had begun to menstruate, she says, she was married to her classificatory wad 'amm. Her first experience of possession occurred when she was living with her two young sons and her husband in her mother's hōsh:

I fell ill when the father of my sons left Hofriyat and went to the area of the dam at Jebel Awliya. My husband left his sons, and they were beautiful, for they have yellow [light] skin. He bought some land near the Jebel and married a woman sakīt [literally "silently", but with the commonplace rendering "for no real reason"]. She was of no relation to him at all. I became ill and I did not know anything. I was entranced.

I lay on a mat inside the sleeping room and a beautiful woman appeared before me. She was as tall as the center support pole and she wore a lovely tōb, of plain crepe, and yellow. She spoke to me from above, informing me of what rests upon me. She told me of the spirits by which I am possessed, and they are many. [1] The yellow lady told me to have a curing ceremony. I did this and I sacrificed a two-toned ram [2] as she instructed. My husband sent the money for the ritual and for the demands of the zairan, demands for gold jewelry and special clothing.

After drumming the zär I became its sheikha. I went with a sheikha from Shendi and her male partner, a former slave and a homosexual, and I learned the threads and how
to incense people and how to talk with spirits....

I had just become pregnant for the third time when Umselima and I were called to drum the zar for an old Hofriyati man, Maowi. He was slightly crazy, his mind was a little slow. He used to attend zar parties often, and he would dress like a Khawaja, wearing trousers, hat, and a suitcoat. Or else he would dress and behave like a nomadic 'Arab, forever in the act of drawing his sword. Maowi had taken ill, and since other methods for curing him had failed, they decided to try the zar. But he was not weak, for he continued to draw his sword throughout the ceremony.

I was pregnant then. A woman came up to me during the ritual and told me she had heard the old man, Maowi, claim that my baby was illegitimate. I said to her, "I am legitimately pregnant"; I denied his claim. The man [Maowi] said, "The child you carry will not prosper." A short while later I gave birth to a son. Immediately after his naming ceremony my baby died. The dusatir [synonym for zar spirits; Chapter 10] of Maowi took him, they took my offspring. The woman who had heard Maowi foretell this told me she saw zairan make off with my baby's spirit [ruh].

FAIZA

Faiza is a woman in late middle age married to her mother's matrilateral parallel cousin. Her initial experience with possession illness occurred following the miscarriage of her first pregnancy, a daughter. Her affliction returned after the birth of a son, her first surviving child. Her father, who could read the "books", examined her and advised her to drum the zar, which she did with her husband's support.

Faiza remarks that when a zar attacks her, it holds or grasps her legs and her neck. It holds her head and prevents her from sleeping. Moreover, in the past possessive spirits
have also seized her offspring. She says, "The zar stole my daughter and he stole two other daughters as well." She continues:

One day I had a dream. I saw my neighbor Rabi'a sleeping on the ground, she was four months pregnant. I saw a jinni, one, a zar. And I saw Rabi'a lose her boy child. At dawn I told Rabi'a what I had dreamed. Rabi'a said that during the night something had come down upon her head. He was trying to make her abort. She lay down on the ground and slept that way, but just before sunrise she miscarried.

Faiza now has seven sons in addition to the three daughters whom she lost. When her youngest son, 'Awad, was four months old, Faiza's brother died:

I was full of grief. I was shattered [maksūra], and I must have had ḍu'f [weakness, more specifically, a disease in which the blood is considered thin or light]. I took to bed and the baby at my breast, 'Awad, he became ill. He was vomiting and he had diarrhea. My father said the reason for his illness was zar. He said, "The zar is inflamed because of the sorrow." It was my zar who inflamed and affected my offspring. My father said, "Above her is a zar and it has gone astray and has descended upon her baby." We obtained a light crepe shirt for 'Awad, and good powdered perfume, and a vial of cold [liquid] fragrance, and sweet soap, and a bit of clear araki, and when we had done this he became well. Even now whenever 'Awad is at home everything must be immaculate at all times or his zar will inflame.

HOWARI

Howari is perhaps 50 years of age, the second of her husband's wives. She was married to her present husband as a virgin, after the death of his first wife in childbirth.
Howari notes that zairan first began to bother her "early, even before I had given birth."

I had been married for a long while, for several years, and I had not yet conceived and I became ill. It was the zār. I consulted a sitt el-'ilba whose diagnosis indicated that red spirits are above me. I had a zār ceremony and I found that among my spirits are many which also are above my mother and my older sister. My sister and I received spirits from our mother, like an inheritance....

I have had three more zār ceremonies since my first, one following the birth of my first child, Nada, a daughter; another after I lost a baby boy to the zār in miscarriage, and the fourth not so long ago, after Nada died in childbirth.

When I am made ill by the zār I go silent and my body becomes rigid. My arms and legs fold in close to my body. And my breasts swell and become very painful. If I put dust on my head upon hearing news of a death, immediately a fever comes. My spirits demand cleanliness; I must bathe with Lux soap, use incense and henna, because these things bring coolness and are pleasing to the spirits.

DISCUSSION

Though the above cases contain several intriguing revelations, we shall discuss but a few at this juncture, leaving others to be taken up at a later point in the chapter.

From a quick perusal of the foregoing, a number of prevalent themes emerge. And here we see that such themes, far from being confined to a single family, appear to be widely applicable within Hofriyati society among those who claim zār affliction. Thus they might broaden our understanding of the possession texts addressed in Chapter 8.
Sosan, Howari and Faiza, and Faiza's neighbor Rabi'a, associate problematic fertility with zairan much as do Zaineb and her kin. But now the extent of the spirits' power in this regard is disclosed. Zairan not only prevent conception and bring uncontrollable bleeding or a lack of bleeding, they may go so far as actively to interfere with a pregnancy whether in its early or more advanced stages. Zairan may bring about miscarriage; they may also cause sickness and death in the infants of those women whom they possess. For a spirit, resentful that its host's attentions are now or are soon to be focused elsewhere, may vengefully seize her womb or her potential offspring; indeed, it may steal her child's very essence, its soul. Sometimes, too, merely by exerting pressure on her from its resting place over her head, a zar might cause a woman to "drop" or to "pour out" (dafag) the child she so tenuously carries.

The perils of Hofriyati motherhood are aptly symbolized by a symptom that Howari attributes to possessive spirits, for whenever the zairan above her "inflame" or make their presence felt she suffers pain and swelling in her breasts. Indeed, the relationship of Howari's affliction to childbearing is virtually transparent. Each of her possession episodes deemed so severe as to warrant a curing ceremony is associated with maternity: her apparent inability to conceive after several years of marriage, the birth of a daughter as her first child,
the loss of a son "to the zār" in miscarriage, and the death of her now adult daughter in childbirth. Thus we are able to reaffirm that, in Hofriyat, spirit possession tends to be linked subjectively as well as statistically with female fertility — but that much is not really new.

Interestingly, however, one thing does emerge more clearly at this point, and that is the association of zār with a particular form of matrilineality. Recall that Umselima's possessive spirits, some of which were discovered to be above her mother as well, presently have come to rest above her daughter Zaineb, and her sister Assaida's daughter, Azina. Umselima and Assaida both have Khawaja boy spirits, and these were transmitted to Assaida's son Hamid because they "inflamed" and openly afflicted his mother just prior to his birth. As the spirits had been above him when he and his mother were one, so now they are above him when he and his mother are separate entities.

In the cases at hand, Howari and her sister are possessed by the same zairan. This is not coincidental, for these spirits, she says, were transmitted to them "like an inheritance" from their common mother. But it is not a true inheritance, since Howari and her sister received the spirits in question long before their mother's death in 1975. More than inheritance per se, such linkages resemble the affiliations of descent.
Again, Faiza's four month old son becomes affected while at his mother's breast by one of her possessive *zairan* gone astray. Henceforward he, like Assaida's son, is thought to be spirit possessed. In another case, that of Ina'am not otherwise considered, a woman who frequently experiences *zār* illness is held to have passed on her afflicting spirits to two of her sons and to several of her daughters.

The possession idiom thus implicitly incorporates a principle of matrilineality. And this is significant not only because it is another property of the *zār*, but also because it contrasts strikingly with the ideology of the everyday human world. In Hofriyat the sexes, as discussed in Chapter 2, are separate and complementary in numerous respects: in the forms of their respective genital operations, in the division of labor, and in their association with different entrances and parts of the *hōsh*, to name but a few. Here, however, we see that this complementarity extends even further. While an agnatic organizational principle applies to the everyday world and also to Islam, since *baraka*, blessing, is passed from father to son and sometimes to collateral (usually male) agnates as well, the uterine organizational principle, covert in the everyday world and where present translated into agnation within a generation or two (Chapter 3), is that which typically characterizes human relationships in the idiom of *zār*. 
But, like agnation, this is a relative quality. For in spite of the fact that a uterine principle dominates the spirit domain, maternal relatives may be possessed by entirely different spirits or spirit species. As we saw in Chapter 8, for example, Umselima and her older sister Sittalbenat are afflicted by few, if any, of the same zairan. Thus Zaineb, who shares some possessive spirits with each of these women, is subtly provided a means to highlight the distinction between her relationship to her mother and her relationship to her mother's sister who is also her mother-in-law, a distinction which, strictly speaking, is obscured in the interiority idiom and again in that of possession due to matri-group affiliation. Zaineb, therefore, is able through zar to emphasize the affinal tie and to underplay the uterine one in her association with Sittalbenat.

Yet it is also true that two genealogically distant or unrelated individuals may be possessed by the same spirit or spirits. And should they choose to take it up, such coincidence might serve to create a bond between them where previously none existed. Indeed, it might enhance communication and contribute to the resolution of interpersonal conflict. As such, zar encourages openness, as opposed to interiority, among possession adepts. Witness the following set of incidents:
AMNA AND SEKINA

Two years ago (1974) Amna married Hessein. It was her first marriage and his second. Hessein had divorced his first wife, his classificatory bit 'amm but a month before he and Amna wed.

Amna's father was not in favor of this match from the outset, for Hessein, he said, had already set aside one woman; could he not be expected to do the same yet again? But Hessein is a relative of Amna's mother (Amna's mother's father is Hessein's mother's matrilateral parallel cousin), and since Amna's mother insisted upon it, the wedding took place.

When I met her Amna was living with her parents in Hofriyat since Hessein worked outside of the village, in Khartoum. In January 1976 she was successfully delivered of a baby girl.

Then, early in June of that year, Hessein remarried his first wife, Sekina. Villagers remarked that Hessein's sons had pressured him into this "return" (raja'a) because they themselves wished to depart the Hofriyat area in order to work elsewhere and did not want to leave their mother unattended. Sekina, on the other hand, informed me that Hessein had missed her terribly during their separation, that after the divorce he had experienced a great deal of sorrow and remorse. She maintains it was on his own (not his sons') initiative that
they rewed.

Now Hessein patently cannot afford two wives unless one continues to be supported by her own family. But Amna, if she remARRies, cannot expect to reside indefinitely with her parents, for they have a small hōsh and eight other children permanently living at home. Moreover, Amna's sister Khalda presently is staying there with her four children; she has just begun her forty-day confinement period following the birth of a son, and her husband does not wish her to return to him in Khartoum when it terminates. In addition, a wedding is planned to take place in July for another sister, Nemad, and there will be little room for wedding guests if the hōsh is filled with married daughters and their children. Thus Amna had fully expected to join Hessein in Khartoum where he had promised to rent her a house.

But now, it seems, it is Sekina who is to live with Hessein in Khartoum. To Amna this does not seem fair, for several years ago Hessein built a house for Sekina in Malkab which presently is standing empty. Sekina had closed up this house, which she says belongs to her sons, at the time of her divorce. Since then she has been living with her mother.

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It is now July. Hessein is in Hofriyat for Nemad's wedding and the conflict between his wives appears to be escalating. Amna is very angry and refuses to speak to her
husband or to Sekina. She now says that she would be content to live in Hessein's house in Malkab and to let Sekina go with him to Khartoum. But Sekina refuses to consider this.

Sekina, for her part, is making quite a show of her coup. She has invited numerous people to Hessein's and her home, which she has reopened, in order that they might offer congratulations on her remarriage. Hessein's mother is so pleased by the return that she has slaughtered a goat in thanksgiving, though Hofriyati say she pretends to be saddened by the event when in Amna's presence.

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At a funeral in Malkab shortly after Nemad's wedding I spoke again to Sekina, who confirmed that Hessein now plans to reclose their house in Malkab and rent her another in Khartoum. If so, Amna will have to remain with her parents in Hofriyat. Amna's parents are not at all happy with these developments. What is more, Hessein has not sent Amna any money for their infant daughter's expenses now for over two months. All fear that Amna's divorce is imminent.

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Early in August Amna sent a letter to Hessein asking him if she might move into the Malkab house when Sekina leaves it to join him in Khartoum. The letter has caused quite some commotion among Sekina's kin in Malkab. A delegation headed by a mutual kinsman of Sekina, Hessein and Amna came to
discuss matters with Amna's parents, but left without having resolved the dispute.

Then Amna one day paid a visit to Sekina at her house in Malkab, apparently for no reason at all, or so say Sekina's kin. It seems, however, that Amna merely wished to find out where things stood with her co-wife and with her husband, from whom she has received no word in quite some time. But Sekina's mother feels otherwise. I have learned from Zaineb, presently living in Malkab, that Sekina's mother has begun to spread an ugly rumor about Amna. She says that it is strange that Amna's visit had no purpose other than that of a friendly chat, a luxury in which co-wives rarely will partake. She maintains that before she came to Malkab that day Amna must have visited a feki, one who is a friend of devils, and obtained from him some magical sand. This is sand over which the feki has cast a spell designed to bring misfortune. Sekina's mother believes Amna dropped some of this sand on the ground in Sekina's hōsh so that when the latter steps on it she will immediately fall ill.

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Shortly after this rumor had begun to circulate, both Amna and Sekina attended Zaineb's zar test ceremony (Chapter 8) on August ninth. And both descended to the thread "Maraya Maray" for Maray, a beautiful female Ethiopian zar (a prostitute). This is a spirit which Sekina says has been
above her for some time and for which she has slaughtered a ram (had a curing ceremony). Amna, on the other hand, newly married and delivered of her first child, has but recently acknowledged a possession affliction.

Now, when Amna descended that night during the thread for Maray she became entranced. The spirit entered her body. When she continued to descend even after the drumming for that spirit had stopped, Samiya, the sheikha, decided she must coax the spirit to relent. She placed her arms upon Amna's shoulders and asked the spirit, "What do you want?" There came no reply. Amna's head just kept bobbing up and down. Samiya then called for the thread to be drummed again. And again the spirit in possession of Amna's body responded with quick rhythmic movement. When the drumming stopped Samiya asked once more, "What do you want?" This time a small voice came from under the tob which covered Amna's face, "Rundu aowz" ("Rundu wants"). Maray thus indicated its willingness to depart Amna's body and its desire for the ceremony to continue with the chant for Rundu, a wealthy male Westerner zär apparently impatient to enter the midan. Drumming promptly resumed with the appropriate thread. Amna began again to descend, then, in the middle of the chant, she arose and left the room. She was perspiring heavily and looked to be somewhat disoriented.
A few moments later Sekina also got up and went outside. Then I observed Amna and Sekina talking in hushed tones in the doorway. Sekina was warning Amna of the rumor her mother had started and she apologized, saying she would quell the story if she could, for she knew it to be false. Amna asked about the house in Malkab and Sekina replied that it was a matter she would leave for Hessein to decide. They spoke a while longer in what appeared to be friendly tones, then each resumed her place in the mīdān.

DISCUSSION

A sociological analysis of what has just been described likely would reach the conclusion that Zaineb's zār test provided Amna and Sekina with neutral ground and a legitimate excuse to meet and discuss their problems. And on one level this, of course, was the case. But the anthropologist, endeavoring to remain true to her informants' view of the situation, would have to include consideration of the spirits in her interpretation.

Amna's departure from the room probably signalled the exit from her body of the invasive Habish zār Maray, for a transition from spirit to human presence usually is marked in this or in similar fashion. But Maray continued to hover near Amna and to exert its influence upon her, for spirits, once
summoned to a ritual, do not withdraw from the midan or entirely relinquish their hosts until the night's drumming terminates. Now Sekina, too, is host to this spirit and is therefore under its influence when she joins Amna at the door. Amna and Sekina thus have more in common than a single husband; respectively they are host to the same spirit. And in this instance the latter consideration appears to provide a pathway for communication between the two that overrides their conflicting interests in the former. It might well be that Amna, wittingly or not, becomes possessed by Maray precisely because this spirit is above Sekina and both women are married to the same man. For Maray is already "bound" by a reciprocal exchange agreement with Hessein, mediated by Sekina who has sacrificed on his behalf. And Maray's interest in Hessein is the same whether that spirit be above Sekina or above her co-wife, Amna. Conflict of interest between co-wives in the human world is thus apparently balanced by the common interest of their mutual zar in the spirit domain.

Stripped of its complexities, we might conclude that this incident demonstrates how a shared spirit affliction might help to neutralize disagreement between two women. Yet such analysis neglects to consider the subtle roles that the spirits themselves might play. For ostensibly Maray has its own interests at heart in choosing to possess Amna: two human hosts are better leverage than one in its dealings with
Hessein. Maray, then, presumably does not want Hessein to divorce one of his wives; hence it might be thought to precipitate this meeting in a conciliatory atmosphere which it controls. Both Amna and Sekina are aware of Maray's stake in their dispute, versed as they are from early age in the idiom of possession. And here again the potential for confusion of categories and of entities, characteristic of communication between those who are possessed, becomes apparent. Significantly, not only do Amna and Sekina meet under the influence of the spirit Maray, so that just who is negotiating with whom is not made explicit, but their conversation also takes place in the doorway: on liminal ground between the human world outside and that of the zar made manifest in the midān. Thus, even the context of their communication is indeterminate, and each participant, each member of the audience of onlookers, is given the opportunity to derive several different interpretations from the event. Indeed some of these interpretations might later provide the basis for consultation and negotiation.

Hence, an apparently mundane confrontation between co-wives is thickened enormously when it takes place in the idiom of zar. Though the ambiance of mutuality was not sustained, and in fact failed to outlive the course of the ceremony, Amna and Sekina were nonetheless provided a medium in which to air their differences and mitigate tensions in their relationship
through the protective ambiguity of possession.

CONTEXTS OF POSSESSION ATTACK

We now turn our attention to the investigation of contexts other than those explicitly associated with childbearing in which possessive spirits have been known to afflict their hosts with illness or misfortune. Several cases we have examined here and in the previous chapter are themselves instructive in this respect: Sosan's initial experience of zairan occurs when she has newly acquired a co-wife; Paiza describes possession illness mistakenly inflicted upon her baby but supposedly meant for her when she is grief stricken over the loss of her brother; Howari's spirits "inflame" when she is in mourning for her daughter. All three situations are ones in which the ideal Hofriyati female image is violated or compromised in some way or another. When her husband takes a second wife in order to beget more descendants, a woman's aspirations for her own children generally suffer a reverse; the death of a loved one both signifies the loss of a supportive kinsman and calls for a woman to loosen her hair, rub dirt into it, wear rough clothing, and refrain from bathing completely for several days. As such occurrences run counter to the definition of a woman's Hofriyati-self, derived from the idiom of interiority,
so equally do they seem to attract or invite the intervention of extra-Hofriyati beings — the zairan. Again, Zaineb's initial vision of Halib spirits happens when she is physically ill, ghabiyan: delirious, not herself. And Umselima's first zar experience takes place when she and her brother have not been "themselves" since they behaved in ways deemed improper for members of Hofriyati society: Umselima, unmarried, walks home alone in the dark; her brother weds a stranger. Subsequent attacks befall these women whenever they are overly angry, unhappy, frightened, anxious or depressed, feelings which fail to mesh with the prevalent ideals of emotional enclosedness: dignity, reserve, and emotional control. Violations of interiority here, then, lead to openness and to incursions of zairan.

Let us examine some other cases:

BEDRIYA

My first illness from the zar came when I was very young, even before I was married. I was at a wedding and dancing with the other girls to the beat of the dallūka. One Sudani man came close to me, snapped his fingers and asked for the shabal [Chapter 4]. He stank so terribly of sweat that I fainted immediately. My family brought me home and incensed me and perfumed me. I awoke and I descended, there, in the belly of the house [indoors]. I dreamed I saw three young girls saying that they wanted pretty wraps and plaited hair. I dreamed this song:

What needs have I?
We want henna, incense, a bottle of perfume on which there appears the face of a man,
A töb of plain crepe with no design,
We are an ancient illness in the books of knowledge,
Tell us noble personages
That you fear the dastür Awlad Mama.

Thus did I learn I was possessed by a zar.

DISCUSSION

Here we have another case in which zairan afflict a woman when her experience is the obverse of what Hofriyati culture demands for its female participants. Recall from Chapter 2 that the wedding ceremony is an exceedingly important event for villagers. In it are implicitly restated many of the values which inform Hofriyati life, symbolized in the specially prepared body of the bride which exhibits the qualities purity, whiteness, smoothness, cleanliness, imperviousness and enclosedness. Perspiration, a violation of these positive conditions, is considered abhorrent, and particularly so if observed at a wedding. Since Bedriya's experience is indeed counter to that which Hofriyati reasonably anticipate on such an occasion, it is literally non-Hofriyati and as such renders her especially vulnerable to zar attack. Significantly, the spirits themselves demand that she restore those ideal "bridely" qualities that have suffered depletion through her negative experience.
ASIA

Asia's first marriage ended in divorce. She had borne a daughter and was about to be moved to her husband's mother's house when a dispute arose between her parents and her mother-in-law over the nature of Asia's accommodation, culminating in the break-up of her marriage.

Two years later Asia remarried. Ahmed, her new husband, was also once divorced. He had released his first wife several years earlier for, though they had been married for some time, she had never conceived. But since then Ahmed's ex-wife had also remarried. More tellingly, she had successfully borne sons. Because of this Ahmed was widely rumored to be impotent or, at best, sterile.

So upon hearing of Asia's marriage to Ahmed, people in the village area began to ridicule Asia and her parents. And her principal antagonist was her ex-mother-in-law.

They said of me, "Now she will never give birth, at all, at all!" [she will not even bear daughters now]. But I became pregnant not two years after the wedding. Then they said, "Ahmed has not taken that girl there [Asia]." They said my child was illegitimate, that is. My mother said, "By the Prophet, can you not give it up?" The people said I had done wrong but I had not. And they did not give it up [stop the rumor] even after my son was born...

When my son was seven months old, Ahmed moved me to his house in Hofriyat. We had a "removal" party in Malkab before I left my mother. After the party, they brought me here to Hofriyat. The moment I crossed the threshold into Ahmed's house, I became ill.... The feki said my illness was caused by a red spirit, a zar.
DISCUSSION

Asia's zār affliction, not unlike that of Zaineb, or that of Miriam soon to be considered, is associated with a change of residence from her mother's home to that of her husband. But Asia, in contrast to these women, is also the focus of negative gossip: she is tacitly but wrongly accused of wanton, non-Hofriyati behavior, of violating the ideals of enclosedness. Moreover, she was being made to surrender the protection and support afforded by her relatives in Malkab and to venture unaided into the social world of a neighboring and potentially hostile village. Understandably she is apprehensive, even anxious, with regard to this shift of her social position. All of these conditions are thought to increase vulnerability to zairan.

Note here, too, the aspect of liminality in the onset of Asia's illness: "the moment I crossed the threshold...I became ill." Symbolism of doorways and of liminality in general weaves its way throughout the possession idiom. Though we will see more of it in subsequent cases, extensive treatment of this theme is reserved for Chapter 10 wherein we consider the relationship between spirit possession and interiority, the informative idiom of Hofriyati culture.
MIRIAM

Miriam is the local midwife whom we first encountered in Chapter 2. Initially she was made ill by zairan shortly after her first wedding when her husband brought her to live with him in Khartoum. Then, after four years of marriage, they were divorced because Miriam had not become pregnant.

Some time later she married again. She conceived and bore a son who died at birth in Shendi hospital. At this point her spirits again "inflamed" and made her unwell. Miriam was told by doctors at the hospital that never again could she have sexual intercourse, whereupon her second husband set her aside.

Then in 1968 Miriam, single and childless, obtained support from the village area council to undertake a government sponsored training program in midwifery. But just after she had completed the course and returned to Malkab her sister died in childbirth, a tragedy which Miriam, with all her training, was powerless to prevent. Now Miriam lives with her mother and cares for her sister's child. She is the only licensed midwife practicing in the village area and for some distance beyond. Not only does she assist at childbirth; indeed, it is Miriam who performs virtually all of the female circumcisions in Hofriyat and Malkab.
In May, 1976, Miriam again succumbed to zār illness and made preparations for a curing ceremony. She said she was "unhappy, angry, tired, tired from 'birthing', and the zār inflamed." The spirit responsible for her malady was one she had not to this point known was above her, Luliya Habishiya, an Ethiopian female prostitute and usurper of fertility. She says,

The zairan inflame when I see or smell the black blood of childbirth, the blood that comes when a woman suffers difficulty in delivery. The zār inflames when it [through Miriam's eyes] sees blood all the time and experiences the screaming and the confusion of a birth or a circumcision.

Frequently Miriam has to deliver a child who is stillborn or who dies soon after birth. This causes her sadness which, she says, also provokes possession attack.

DISCUSSION

The relapse of Miriam's zār illness in 1976 was caused by Luliya Habishiya, an uncircumcised Ethiopian prostitute zār reputed to "seize" or to "tie up" female fertility. Significantly, Luliya afflicted her at the height of the season in which female circumcisions are performed, when Miriam had been kept busy both operating on young girls and assisting at childbirths. In the space of a few weeks several women had gone into labor. None of these were easy births: in
one case both mother and child died, in another the baby was stillborn. And Miriam was being exposed to blood of several domains on a regular basis.

Now, feminine blood, that associated with reproduction, is ambiguous in Hofriyati thinking, as noted in Chapter 7. Menstrual blood, for example, may be read as a positive sign (of ongoing fertility) or as a negative sign (of lack of pregnancy). So, too, the blood of circumcision is considered a positive sign, whereas the blood of problematic childbirth is read as negative. However for Miriam, whose own reproductive experience was an unfortunate one and who regularly witnesses the positive and the negative shedding of blood, and sometimes both on the same day, the ambiguity of blood may be even more pronounced. For it is by the spilling of others' blood that she derives her livelihood. Moreover, as described in our discussion of the complex of beliefs and practices known as mushāharah (Chapter 4), the various categories of feminine blood (circumcision, childbirth) must be kept distinct lest illness result. Here, perhaps, it is the ambiguity of Miriam's social and symbolic position that renders her vulnerable to repeated zar attack.\footnote{7}

Yet Miriam tells us her possessive spirits are especially prone to "inflame" when she is exposed to the black blood of problematic childbirth. That this articulates some aspect of her own past experience we might well imagine. But notice
again the association between possession and the odor of a body fluid inappropriately discharged. Just as Bedriya was afflicted by zairan upon detecting human sweat at a wedding, so Miriam's spirits "inflame" or assert their presence when she smells the malodorous black blood of problematic delivery. Once more the spirits are seen to afflict a woman when she witnesses an event that contravenes Hofriyati interiority-ideals.

Furthermore, Miriam's experience, like that of Asia discussed above, is one which involves a boundary or threshold. In this case, the liminal area is not a doorway, a khashm el-beyt; rather, it is the symbolic counterpart of the khashm el-beyt, the female genital orifice.

Finally, the context of Miriam's initial zār illness is fairly typical: it occurred shortly after her wedding when she was removed to her husband's home from that of her parents. And her second attack also is not unusual, coming as it does after the loss of an infant son. In fact, so common is this pattern in the village area that an adage has been coined with regard to it. As Hofriyati say, "Zār conceives with the wedding and laughs with childbirth."^8

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Up to this point I have been concerned primarily with symbolism and context relative to possession attack. In discussions of the uterine organizing principle that predominates the possession idiom, I described certain features of the spirit-host relationship and the implications of these for interpersonal positioning and communication. Presently we investigate further the relationship between spirit and host in continuing to map the symbolism of the \textit{zar}.

NOWAL

The incident I am about to describe occurred when Nowal was into her second marriage and still childless. She and her husband were living in Khartoum but had returned to Hofriyat for the wedding of a relative. Nowal wished to prepare herself for dancing at the wedding, and so gave some money to a kinsman on his way to Kabushiya that he might purchase some henna for her. When he returned with the henna, he found that the ceiling of the room in which she was staying had collapsed. Nowal was lying on the ground, pinned beneath the heavy room beam. Her right hip and her back were severely damaged.

After trying unsuccessfully a number of local bonesetters and herbalists, Nowal's family took her to the hospital in Khartoum. There she lay, patient #10, for six months and ten
days. The Khawaja doctors decided they must operate. But there was grave risk that the operation could kill her or leave her in worse condition than before. So her relatives decided against it and brought her home to Hofriyat. By this time Nowal was again divorced.

Upon arriving home Nowal's relatives consulted a feki. He was able to divine that the ceiling had collapsed as a result of a red spirit (zār) descending upon her; a zār ritual was then drummed on her behalf. At one point in her narrative Nowal remarks that this, her first ceremony, was ten days in length. This is unusual, for zār rituals generally take place over an odd number of days. Later, however, Nowal said that what she had undergone was a seven-day ceremony, more in keeping with the traditions of zār.

Up to the time of her ceremony, Nowal had been unable to walk. But,

They did a zār for me and I walked! I stood up tall, I arose to descend while standing erect...and I made requests. I requested liquor and a cap and a khaki suit and a walking cane like those used by Europeans. I am possessed by Westerners, by the Christians. No other species of spirit is above me.
DISCUSSION

Several features appear to be of significance in the foregoing possession description. Like that of Umselima with whom we were concerned in Chapter 8, relationships among events in Nowal's narrative are emphasized by her repeated use of certain key elements. Here we see that Nowal occupied bed #10 when hospitalized, that the length of her hospital stay was six months and ten days, and that her initial zār ceremony was "ten" days long. Moreover, the doctors who treated her were Westerners (Khawajat), and Westerner zairan are those by which she is possessed.

Now, Nowal's hip is badly misshapen as a result of her accident and, though she is able to walk thanks to the zār, she does so with much difficulty. But certainly the spirits are capricious, for was it not a zār which caused the accident in the first place?

Moreover, the roof falls in and injures her severely, while Nowal is preparing to attend a wedding dance. As in the case of Bedriya, possession attack coincides with the occasion of a wedding. At such times young women are presumed especially vulnerable to zairan, for it is then that they make themselves most beautiful, accentuating their bride-like qualities, and the spirits, which love beauty, are greatly attracted to them. Thus we see that extremely positive as
well as negative experiences of interiority might provoke possession attack. The link between zar and the Hofriyati wedding goes even deeper than this, however, and we shall return to it in the following chapter.

Note also that in Nowal's case, the descent of a zar provides explanation for sudden misfortune or oddly coincidental events such as might be explained by witchcraft in other African societies (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1976 [1937]). Instead of attributing such a calamity to the psychic malice of co-villagers, Hofriyati cast blame outside of their society, claiming that the accident resulted from the actions of an alien existent, thus preserving village harmony and enclosedness. Though the explanation, like that of witchcraft, is of a "personal" nature, the perpetrator in this case is patently non-Hofriyati.

Now Hofriyati are not without witchcraft-like beliefs: the evil eye and the mushaharah complex are cases in point. Villagers are also quite ready to attribute certain illness and misfortunes to sorcery or black magic, 'amal. Zar, however, supplies an alternative explanation, one generally resorted to if (a) other explanations and their associated remedies have failed, or (b) the affected individual is previously known to be possessed. Yet the situation in which the illness or misfortune arose is also taken into account. And here the fact that something fell (or descended) upon her
from above, coincident with her preparations to attend a wedding ceremony, are clear indications of zar or, perhaps, of an affliction brought by the evil eye which increased her vulnerability to zar attack. Both are equally plausible for Hofriyati and according to them need not be distinguished.

SERAITTI

We will consider the nature of Seraitti's zar affliction in greater depth later in this chapter. Here I wish merely to point out that, like Nowal, the onset of Seraitti's illness coincided with a sudden accident.

When I was a little girl, before I was circumcised, I climbed a tree. And I fell from it; I fell because of zar, because a zar descended upon me there in the tree. I fell on my arm and it became swollen. I had a fever and I was delirious (entranced). They called in Umselima and she incensed me and learned it was zar.

ASHA

Among women who already acknowledge possession zairan may be held responsible for numerous strange occurrences. Witness the following excerpt from my field notes.

Asha is presently married to a man who has three other wives. Recently Asha's husband has been spending a great deal of time with one of his other wives and Asha is openly angry
with him. The other night she dreamed of henna and dallūka music (a zar dream) and when she awoke she found she had a painful sore on her finger, the finger on which she wears the ring her husband gave her at their wedding. She says that the sore came about because her possessive spirits "inflamed" at her anger.

DISCUSSION

Here zar explains the co-occurrence of Asha's anger with her husband, and the appearance of a painful sore on the finger on which she wears her wedding ring and for which there is apparently no natural cause. But it does something more than this besides. For again zar attack reinforces the ideal Hofriyati female image, an image of interiority in accordance with which individuals are enjoined to control strong emotions, particularly those of anger and grief.

For the sake of comparison, let us now examine the case of spirit possession in a Hofriyati male:

'UMER

Before 'Umer's parents married, his father claimed to be possessed by a zar. His mother, too, became possessed at an early age. 'Umer's family is one of a number which migrated
to Hofriyat some 50 or 60 years ago. Consequently, they are landless and not well off; 'Umer's father is a tenant farmer in Hofriyat. But 'Umer's 'amm (his father's brother) married a woman from another village, a non-relative who had no brothers or sisters and whose father owned some land. When her father died, she inherited most of this land, land that her husband presently farms.

At the age of 25, 'Umer contracted to marry the daughter of his 'amm, and after the wedding went to live with her in her mother's house. 'Umer began to farm alongside his father's brother on land belonging to his mother-in-law.

Then one day shortly after his wife had disclosed that she was pregnant, 'Umer suddenly was taken ill. When the others went off to the fields, he walked to Kabushiya, entranced, his body inhabited by a zar. In Kabushiya, he went to a male sheikh of the zar who fumigated him with incense. At once 'Umer began to speak in a strange tongue. Someone there from Kassala was able to recognize the language as Hadendowi, the language of the Eastern nomads. Soon after realizing that he was possessed, 'Umer drummed a zar ceremony at his mother-in-law's home; Umselima and Sosan were invited to officiate.

At his ceremony it was discovered that 'Umer, when entranced, was able to diagnose all manner of ailments plaguing those in attendance. Following the termination of his ritual,
these and others who had not attended began coming to him in hopes of securing relief from their various illnesses, which 'Umer treated with great success. Now, 'Umer treated his patients free of charge until one night several months later zairan appeared to him in a dream and told him that henceforward he must demand 25 pt. (about 62¢ U.S.) per consultation. Since then 'Umer's fees have escalated steadily, always in association with a dream in which he receives instructions from zairan. Presently over 40 years of age, 'Umer is a widely respected curer and by far the wealthiest man in the district. He has acquired quite a bit of farmland both by outright purchase and by mortgage (rahan), and at the time of my fieldwork had four wives, the maximum number permitted by Islam. 'Umer had built each of his wives her own bōsh from the proceeds of his curing activities.

DISCUSSION

The context of 'Umer's first possession experience is instructive. Here we have a poor man, and one who has grown up in a milieu where, despite the views of orthodox Islam, zar was unquestioned reality, for both of his parents are possessed. Appropriately, he marries his patrilineal parallel cousin, and she is a woman whose mother has access to riverain
cultivation land. 'Umer goes to live with his wife and farms her mother's land. This is not unusual for a newly married couple, as we have observed elsewhere (Chapters 1 and 8). But it is generally considered a temporary arrangement, one which should terminate shortly after the birth of the first or, sometimes, second child. Now, coincident with the announcement that his wife is pregnant, 'Umer falls ill. Significantly his wife's acknowledgement of pregnancy comes as a warning to 'Umer that soon he will be expected to move his wife to his own village, Hofriyat, and to resume tenant farming there. Under certain conditions it would have been appropriate for him to remain in his wife's village and to farm with his father's brother; in this case, however, the land in question does not belong to his father's brother but to his father's brother's wife, and she is not otherwise related to 'Umer. Consider 'Umer's position: he is without inheritable resources and is obliged to seek his livelihood in those of his wife. He himself is thus unable to live up to the expectations of his culture and, what is more, is reliant upon his mother-in-law, by no means the ideal situation for a man in Hofriyat.

Significantly, perhaps, 'Umer's diagnosis appears to be self-selected. Rather than consult Western doctors or Islamic practitioners, 'Umer renounces orthodoxy and goes immediately to a sheikh of the zär. And in Kabushiya his affliction is
confirmed. It is important that all of this takes place in a public forum dominated by males -- the market town of Kabushiya -- for male acceptance is necessary if 'Umer's acknowledgement of possession is not to damage his reputation with his peers.

But who, in this case, does what? Though we might be led to believe that 'Umer consciously saw in zar a potential means to alleviate his difficulties, we must bear in mind that it is not 'Umer himself who consults the zar sheikh, but a possessive zar. 'Umer's body is inhabited by a spirit, a Hadendowa of the nomadic 'Arab. The spirit speaks through him in its own language (a language of which 'Umer to this day disavows knowledge), thereby verifying its existence and establishing the credibility of 'Umer as its host. And it is only through the good graces of his spirit that 'Umer is able to reverse an unhappy social situation and go on to attain what is an envied and respected position for Hofriyati of his sex. We should not be overly skeptical because 'Umer's affliction and his subsequent cultivation of an association with zar appear rather transparently to be the means to an end, more so, perhaps, than in other cases of possession we have examined. We must not hastily assume that his initial illness was in any way dissimulative. For 'Umer as for other Hofriyati possession is a reality.
When 'Umer became possessed he was, like many who come to acknowledge such affliction, in something of a double-bind, damned if he should forsake his mother-in-law's support and damned if he should not. In the first case he would remain poor, in the latter, accept support from a relative stranger thereby stretching to the utmost the idea of interiority. The very least we can say, then, is that 'Umer has turned from one situation potentially detrimental to his masculine self-image, dependency on his wife's mother, to another, more ambiguous one: acknowledgement of possession. And the latter, because of the widespread belief in possession and the ambivalence of Hofriyati males with respect to zar, he has turned to positive advantage. In accepting his possession, 'Umer veered slightly from the path of orthodox Islam, but, paradoxically, in doing so he has fulfilled some of the highest expectations of his culture. This he has done not only with the cooperation of his Hadendowa zar but also by scholarship and training: since his illness and the revelation of his possessive spirit's willingness to work on his behalf, 'Umer has learned much of what there is to know about magic and divination from ancient Arabic treatises on these subjects and has acquired additional information from herbalists in Kassala, the home of his Hadendowa zar. Interestingly, too, once 'Umer had established his renown as a curer, he became increasingly active in the Khatmiya (another
major religious brotherhood in the village area), thus resuming a more traditional stance with regard to Islam.

'Umer's case is somewhat unusual when compared to those of female zar adepts. For one bout of possession illness is all he suffers, followed by the establishment of a mature, controlled relationship with his possessive spirit. Women, on the other hand, generally suffer repeated attacks of their possession symptoms and rarely achieve with their spirits such an unquestionably beneficial relationship. Furthermore, while 'Umer's spirit is one, the spirits of most women are many. And the spirits are far more capricious in dealing with their female hosts than in dealing with hosts who are male.

In the following case, that of Seraitti whom we encountered earlier in this chapter, we observe the ambivalence and ambiguousness of spirits at work. Seraitti's possessive zairan are numerous indeed. Sometimes they are good to her, bestowing abilities and gifts, but at other times they are quite the opposite. (Notice also the discrepancy between Seraitti's own account of one of her possession episodes and a popularized version of the same included in notes at the end of the chapter.)
SERAITTI

Recall that Seraitti first learned that she was possessed after a fall from a tree. This fall was said to have been caused by a zar when it descended too heavily upon her.

Now Seraitti was the only issue of her parents' marriage. When she was very young, her father took a second wife and then divorced her mother, who subsequently remarried. But her mother never again became pregnant, and her mother's husband died when Seraitti was about 16 years of age. In a continuation of the alliance between their families, Seraitti was wedded shortly after her mother's husband's death to her mother's husband's brother.

Though Seraitti was married to this man for many years, never did she conceive. Still, she was not divorced by her husband and lived with him uninterruptedly until his death a few years ago. Because he did not set her aside in favour of another wife when she failed to become pregnant, it is widely believed that Seraitti's husband was sterile or impotent and that both he and Seraitti knew that her failure to conceive was his fault. Her repeated attacks of possession illness are perhaps in some way related to the apparent blockage or stagnation of her potential fertility.

Now, Seraitti has had five zar ceremonies, the first occurring soon after her wedding. But always, it seems, she
is ill. In the past, whenever her spirits would "inflame" and
demand this or that, their demands invariably were met by her
husband. When I asked her where money for the requests of her
possessive zairan had come from, Seraitti responded, "el-
bowābi [my doorman] bought them for us [Seraitti and her
spirits]." From this and from other possession texts I
learned that "doorman" or "doorkeep" is the zar term for the
husband of the spirit's human host, a point considered later
in the chapter and again in Chapter 10.

But sometimes, money for her spirits' requests has been
provided by the spirits themselves. For, Seraitti says, she
often used to find money on the ground or under her mattress,
gifts from her possessive zairan. However, because once she
did not use this money toward purchase of their demands, but
instead bought with it new kitchen utensils, the spirits have
since quit this practice.

Still, the spirits have given her another valuable, if
less tangible gift. When she is entranced, she says, "You can
ask me anything!" The zairan speak through her and in
whatever language they choose. If someone has lost something,
Seraitti is able, through the spirits, to tell her where she
might look for it; Seraitti is also capable of diagnosing
illness, and practices as a sitt el-'ilba (lady of the tin
box, Chapter 6).
Once when Seraitti was ill her family took her to the hospital lying on an angarīb. A doctor came into the room to examine her, but he was afraid. For when he attempted to perform an examination the zār inhabiting her body commenced to speak. It introduced itself as a spirit and began to diagnose another woman on the ward, whose case had baffled the doctor up to that point. This patient suffered persistent nausea and vomiting and Seraitti, through the zār, correctly informed the doctor that the woman had a stomach tumour.

Yet Seraitti's zairan are not always benevolent:

Once my right arm [went paralyzed] and so I could not eat! When at last I had to eat to stay alive the zār forced me to use my left [unclean] hand, though Allah was displeased. The zār [in forcing her to eat with her left hand] said, "It is not as you wish. It is as I wish!" And another time my right leg died until I bought socks and shoes for my Khawaja zairan.

Seraitti's possession symptoms, like those of many adepts, always involve some form of paralysis and the inability to open her mouth to speak or eat. Generally the latter occurs when one of her spirits desires her to consume a certain type of food. Once for over a year she ate nothing but bilīla (boiled millet) and drank nothing but water. The spirits would not permit her to eat anything else: "no meat, no kisra, no molah(sauce)." This continued until she had provided her powerful Egyptian zār Sitt el-ghweshat (Lady of the Bracelets) with its special requests: apples, cherries, fish, sausages, and figs.
Yet Seraitti's Shilluk zär, a member of the servant/slave species from the Southern Sudan, wishes her regularly to consume bilīla, its national food. Thus, it seems, Seraitti's possessive spirits frequently conflict with one another: the Khawajat want "clean foods" as do many other zairan, but some of the Khudām (Southerners) and of the Fellata (West African pilgrims) want "poor foods" such as plain boiled grain. When she gives in to one group, the other sometimes "inflames". Here the ambiguities of possession replicate those of everyday human life.

Once Seraitti went into mourning when someone close to her died. Upon receiving news of the death she threw dust on her head in the traditional manner and immediately went into trance. She lay in this state on an angarīb for seven days and for seven days she did not eat. Her male relatives and fellow mourners would come into the room in which she lay and instruct the womenfolk to bring her food and water, but to no avail. At one point when this happened, Seraitti shot bolt upright and said, "Eating is not possible, I am a zär!", whereupon all of the men present ran from the room in fright. Then they called for Umselima. Umselima fumigated Seraitti with incense and said to the spirit, "Ma'aleysh, ma'aleysh, dair shinū? Inta minū?" ("Too bad, it is of little consequence, what do you [masculine] want? Who are you [masculine]?") The spirit responded in gibberish (roṭāna)
that no one understood. Then somebody suggested they summon one of the female schoolteachers. After the latter had heard Seraitti's spirit, she revealed that Seraitti was speaking English. The spirit had said, "I want biscuits and plain tea (no sugar). I am a Khawaja and I demand a seven-day ceremony."

On another occasion when Seraitti was ill and she did not speak, villagers could not discover what was wrong. Then one day a sheikha from a neighbouring village came to visit relatives in Hofriyat. This sheikha heard about Seraitti, who had not uttered a word for three days. She told Seraitti's kin, "If it refuses to speak, it is the Azande cannibal-sorcerer zär!" She visited Seraitti and fumigated her with incense. She asked the spirit, "Who are you? What do you want?" Seraitti's spirit spoke to the sheikha, they became friends. The spirit said, "I am a zär, I am a sorcerer," making Seraitttta's eyes go wide and drawing in her mouth. The spirit growled and said, "I want raw meat, I am Bayakuba!" So her kinfolk brought her raw meat and she ate a quarter kilo of it, then drank some water and some tea and she recovered.16

DISCUSSION

Seraitti's is an intriguing case of possession indeed. Like most women who acknowledge the affliction, but perhaps
more emphatically, Seraitti’s various anecdotes (only some of which we have considered here) combine to present an image of a subtly differentiated self, articulated in the idiom of 
Zār. ¹⁷ We end this chapter with Seraitti, for her story draws together a great many features of the Zār phenomenon that will lead us to an analytic comparison of the possession idiom and the predominant organizing idiom of Hofriyati culture, relative interiority, in Chapter 10.

Note that in Seraitti’s narrative there appears more of what we have previously described as liminal symbolism: a particular concern for doorways and orifices of the human body. Seraitti’s husband, he who provided money with which to meet the spirits’ demands, is referred to as Ṣalīḥ, “my doorkeeper”. And both the symptoms of her Zār illness and the remedial requests of her possessive spirits involve an essential body orifice, her mouth.

Again, the capriciousness of Seraitti’s Zairan is evident throughout her account. Sometimes the spirits give her money or other means to obtain their desires, sometimes they bring grave suffering such as paralysis and near-starvation. Moreover, Seraitti’s possessive Zairan impose a great many restrictions on her behaviour. Many are food restrictions: her spirit possessors demand numerous delicacies that are expensive and difficult to obtain in Sudan, let alone Hofriyat. And, what is more, her spirits do not always agree
among themselves. Some want this food, others want that. When she appeases one group, Seraitti invariably affronts the other; no matter what she does she cannot win.

Characteristics such as these are typical of the spirits no matter whom they possess, for zairan are masters of change and of equivocation. Zairan, say village women, are, in this regard, just like husbands. Sometimes you get a good one who treats you well and never neglects to provide you with money, but sometimes you get a bad one who does not. Often a good one will have a change of heart and occasionally, for no reason at all, a bad one behaves rather well. "Marra wahda da, marra taniya däk"18: "one time this, the next time that."

As it is with husbands, so it is with spirits. But zairan are doubly equivocal, for they both uphold the Hofriyati idiom of interiority and take advantage of its violation, of "openness" in the behaviour of their human hosts.

If spirits are like husbands, spirit hosts are like brides. Recall that the patient on whose behalf a zar ritual is held is referred to as the bride (‘arūs) of the mīdān. Moreover, the spirits demand that their hosts conduct themselves as brides, as the following will illustrate.

I have mentioned that demands of food play an important role in Seraitti’s relations with her spirits. Such demands are in fact common to most who acknowledge possession: spirits want their hosts to consume foods associated with the
spirits' own identities. But, with some exceptions, such edibles generally fall into the category "clean foods", those which exhibit the bridely qualities of whiteness and enclosedness or containment within a protective covering.19 Again, for the most part, zairan demand that their hosts associate themselves with clean and sweet-smelling things: Seraitti and the other women whose possession afflictions we have examined say that they must bathe with scented soaps (especially Lux), use henna regularly, perfume themselves, wear clean and untorn tiyab and have their hair neatly plaited lest the spirits above them should inflame. They must, in other words, attempt to approximate the ideal feminine image, that of the Hofriyati bride. Here, too, we should recall that the onset of a possession illness frequently occurs on or about the occasion of a wedding.

Again, associated with encosedness but at a different level, there often appears to be a symbolic component in symptoms which Hofriyati, whether male or female, attribute to possession. Hamid, the son of Assaida (Chapter 8), Howari and many others experience the "closing" of their limbs into something like fetal position. 'Umer, too, suffered the folding inward of his hands and arms against his chest. Numerous possessed individuals say they are unable to open their mouths to speak or to eat when the spirits "inflame"; some, like Umselima, are unable to urinate. Others fall ill
when they see or smell inappropriate discharge of body fluids. Just as the demands of the spirits generally are associated with body orifices (food, perfume, incense, cleanliness), so the symptoms which spirits bring often are associated with closure of the body (paralysis, folding into itself) and of its orifices, or "over-interiority". In this last regard, we should also include the blockage of female fertility.

Thus we have detected a number of relationships between possession and fertility, weddings, doorways, orifices, and "openness", all associated with the interiority idiom that informs and regulates Hofriyati daily life. It is to a further exploration of these relationships that we turn in Chapter 10.
1. In the majority of cases in this chapter the names and characteristics of possessive zairan are not given, for it is not our purpose here, as it was in Chapter 8, to detail the articulatory functions of specific spirits and spirit types.

2. Abrag (for abraq), literally, shiny or glittery.

3. The reader might recall from Chapter 6 that a woman who becomes entranced and/or descends to the chant appropriate to her possessive spirit is not necessarily entered by that spirit then and there. Invasion of its host's body by a zār frequently but not inevitably occurs on such occasions.

4. Indeed, since the midān is always inside a hōsh and often inside a room, the external zār world is, in the course of the ritual, brought within Hofriyati culture, whereas the everyday world remains outside of this area for the duration of the drumming. The two parallel universes exchange places, as it were. This issue is discussed again in Chapter 10 and in Part III.

5. Asia was to live in the same room as her mother-in-law. There is a Hofriyati adage which goes, "A house that shelters three men will not hold two women."

6. Miriam also told me that she was possessed by spirits which afflict her mother and her mother's mother. She says that when, as a child, she attended zār ceremonies with her mother, her mother's spirits descended upon her "like an inheritance." This is yet another example of matrilineal alignment characteristic of human relationships in the idiom of possession.

7. One is led to wonder here if Miriam tacitly recognizes that Pharaonic circumcision is detrimental to female fertility. Moreover, given her reproductive history, it is not improbable that genital mutilation was at the root of her own difficulties. If so, Miriam's dual role as midwife and circumcisor must present her with greater paradox than that which we have described.

8. "Zār habal ma'a-l-'iris, u hazzar ma'a wilāda."
9. This involves the holding and using of land in exchange for an interest-free loan of money. The owner or his heirs might redeem the land at some future date by repaying to the lender the full amount originally borrowed. Villagers maintain that such a transaction, also referred to as Damāna, frequently results in the permanent transfer of rights, for it may involve a number of successive payments culminating in a debt so large it is virtually impossible to repay. Damāna is expressly forbidden by Islam.

10. Though prior to his marriage he was engaged in transporting produce to and from Kassala and spent quite some time living in that city.

11. Since Seraitti's mother did not conceive when married to Seraitti's husband's brother, Hofriyat maintain that impotence plagues all the men of that family.

12. Like Asia, as noted in Chapter 6, Seraitti conceives of herself as a plurality because of her association with Zairan.

13. I was told that when the spirits provide their hosts with money, however, inevitably it is stolen from some other hapless human.

14. Significantly, a time of much noise and confusion is childbirth. Yet at the point of birth all who are present fall silent. Even the woman in labor stifles her cry as the baby is born. Perhaps, then, Seraitti's fits of silence bear some relationship to her childlessness, to her blocked fertility potential.

15. However, Nuer and Dinka spirits demand curdled milk—not, strictly speaking, a "poor" food.

16. On yet another occasion Seraitti fell ill, this time when visiting kin in Omdurman. There she had a vision of five Zairan which appeared to her when she was alone. They told her that Birono, one of her Habish Zairan, wanted a special ebony walking stick which had to be obtained before she could recover. The spirits told her in which store she might find this walking stick; she went there and purchased it for the sum of £3, and she became well.

This story is an important component of Seraitti's public image with respect to zar. It is widely told in Hofriyat, but in embellished form, more mythical in cadence than that which Seraitti herself relates:
"The first time Seraitti went to Khartoum she became ill. She said, 'I do not want a doctor, I have a zar and he wants an ebony walking stick of special shape and design, like this and like this...'. Her relatives said, 'we do not know where to find such an unusual walking stick.' But Seraitti said, 'I know where!' She said there was one just like it in a certain shop in Khartoum. But how could she know where to find such a shop, for this was her first visit to the city? She said, 'The zar knows where to go.' So Seraitti and her father's daughter's son climbed into a taxi. And Seraitti gave detailed directions to the shop. But it was not Seraitti herself who spoke: it was the zar. The zar guided them to a tiny shop in a remote corner of the city.

Seraitti's kinsman became embarrassed at this point. The store before them did not look like one which might sell walking sticks. He said to himself, 'How do I go in there and ask for such a thing? How do I explain that my khalat's zar wants a specific type of walking stick?' The spirit heard his thoughts. Immediately Seraitti entered the shop and spoke to the merchant herself [as the spirit]. She said, 'I want a walking stick of ebony with such and such design...and I know you have one like it.' The merchant said no, that he did not sell walking sticks. When she insisted, he said, 'Well, yes, a long time ago I had three walking sticks like the one you have described. I sold two of them but the third got away from me. I have not seen it around my shop for quite some time, though I have searched everywhere for it.' She replied, 'I know it is here in the store!' He invited her to look, but warned that he had looked before and it was not there. He suspected it had been stolen. Seraitti searched and within a short while she found the walking stick, and it was exactly as she had described. When she went to pay for it the owner of the store was so surprised she had found it and so awed by the power of her spirit that he refused to take any money for it and gave her the walking stick as a gift."

17. Seraitti claims to be possessed by over twenty spirits. She says she speaks to her spirits directly, something which few adepts say they do, speaking French to Nimir Kondo from Chad, Zande to Bayakuba the sorcerer-cannibal, English to Rondo (or Rundu), Basha Bishir and Mistair Brinso the archaeologist, and Tigre to the Ethiopians.

18. For thaniya.
In Chapter 4 it was noted that one is thought to become a member of the group whose everyday diet one appropriates. Thus I was said to have become a Sudaniya because I ate kisra. Similarly, those who consume the traditional foods (at least as Hofriyati see them) of other cultures become at least temporarily members of those other cultures. The same holds, to a certain extent, for clothing: when a woman dons the costume of her Habish zār, she becomes an Ethiopian for the duration. Thus, not only do zairan manifest themselves in Hofriyat, they also reciprocally incorporate possessed Hofriyati into their respective social groupings. This last is an intriguing point and is taken up at greater length in Part III.
Here I attempt to shed some light upon the relationship between the spirit idiom, described in Chapters 6 through 9 of the thesis, and the predominant cultural idiom of interiority examined in Part I. I wish to show that in order to grasp the full range of potential meanings to be derived from possession narratives one must view them in the context of principles of daily life. Yet, once the spirit idiom has been appropriated by an individual, whether Hofriyati or anthropologist, the reverse is also true: each idiom illuminates aspects of the other.

However, I do not wish to state that the spirit idiom is wholly derived from, given in, or dependent upon the quotidian logic of enclosure, though, as we shall see in this and in the following chapter, there are significant parallels and contrasts between the two. Theoretically at least, an investigation of Hofriyati cultural symbolism could have begun with an analysis of possession and from there moved to discuss the secular organizing principle of interiority. My point of departure was not an arbitrary choice since it reflects that part of the Hofriyati world which I first learned in the field. But it is an arbitrary beginning in the sense that
villagers themselves do not necessarily consider one component of their belief system as having precedence over any other.

What I do want to emphasize is that the zar and the quotidian logics are built up of elements belonging to a common symbolic code. Aspects of this code shared by the two idioms were tentatively described in the foregoing chapter. Therein we witnessed such themes as fertility, marriage, the wedding ceremony, doorways, and orifices, so prevalent in Hofriyati daily life, crop up again and again in the possession texts examined. As shown in Part I, these themes are themselves closely related and contribute to the idiom of interiority or enclosedness which receives expression in the meticulously prepared body of the Pharaonically circumcised bride.

Since the Hofriyati wedding and the zar curing ceremony are in many ways concentrated expressions of the idioms of enclosure and possession, respectively, it is fitting that we convene our investigation of the relationship between the two with a comparison of the rituals appropriate to each. Significantly these rituals frequently are contrasted and associated by Hofriyati themselves: Umselima, Assaida and others who acknowledge possession avow that they would rather attend a zar than a wedding, and a woman at whose curing ritual I was present repeatedly berated her guests because they had not prepared themselves as beautifully as they might
have done had they planned to attend a nuptial dance. The
onset of many a possession episode occurs in the context of a
recent or ongoing wedding; moreover, the woman who undertakes
to appease her possessive zairan through ritual is referred to
as the bride (ʻarūs) of the zār, or the bride of the midān
(place where the ceremony is held). And, not least, the
spirits are said to behave like husbands. Comparative
analysis of the two ceremonies thus appears warranted on
several counts.

But before I go any further the point must be made that,
whatever association between zār and wedding rituals is here
found to obtain, Hofriyati by no means consider a possessed
woman to be married to her possessive zār or zairan. The
implication that a zār ceremony is a wedding, contained in
vocabulary referring to zār patients as "brides" and spirits
as "husbands", is metaphoric, nothing more. The relationship
established at a zār ceremony between human host and spirit
possessor, which conceals a relationship between the spirit
and its host's husband through the proxy of his wife, is
similar to that established at a wedding because it is
contractual or "affinal" in nature. Just as a wedding
initiates or renews an alliance between two social groups, or,
as is often true in Hofriyat, between two closely related
families, so does the zār ritual initiate or renew a
reciprocal agreement between host and host's husband on the
one hand, and possessive za'iran on the other. Through it a man acknowledges the spirits' claim upon the body of his wife. In return for special foods and valuables to be provided the host by her husband or other male kinsman, and a relaxation of certain humanly set restrictions on its host's activities to be replaced by some of its own, a spirit tentatively agrees not to wreak further havoc with its host's well-being. Thus the host's husband receives assurances, however inadequate, that henceforward the spirit will refrain from interfering with his wife's fertility and the lives of his potential descendants.

Consequently it seems we must distinguish between two equally valid approaches villagers take when comparing or associating zar with the Hofriyati wedding. In one the wedding ceremony is seen not so much as the celebration of a marriage, but as a statement of key cultural values, chief symbol of which is the bride. And in the other, noted above, wedding terms provide a figurative lexicon for the establishment of a contract between spirit (usually male) and the male human (husband or other close kinsman) responsible for its host.

We commence our analysis with a description of the wedding ceremony and then proceed to a point by point discussion of its key ritual elements relative to those of the zar.
THE WEDDING

The wedding ceremony in Hofriyat is much like that described by Zenkovsky (1945) for Omdurman and Barclay (1964) for Burri, but compares even more strikingly with two discussed by Crowfoot (1922) and attributed to residents of Dongola and to West-bank Ja'aliyin. Although similar wedding customs are to be found, with local variations, throughout Northern Sudan, in Hofriyat the ceremony appears to be a hybrid of customs from Dongola district to the north and those of local Ja'ali groups. One need look no further for explanation of this mix than to remember that the forefathers of many Hofriyati migrated upstream from Dongola in the 17th and 18th centuries in their twin capacities as holy men and merchants, and settled among Ja'ali tribes then resident in Shendi district (Chapter 1).

Originally, Hofriyati say, a wedding took place over seven days, with newlyweds having to observe certain restrictions for a further week or more thereafter up to a total of 40 days. Now, however, because many young men are employed outside the village and are unwilling or unable to take sufficient time from their work to go through the lengthy traditional nuptials, and because of the increasing expense involved in putting up hundreds of wedding guests over a long
period of time, major ceremonial activities have been telescoped into the space of three days.

The descriptions of practices which follow pertain to the wedding of a virgin bride. Likewise, when customs having to do with the groom are discussed, they pertain to a bachelor groom. For even though individuals may marry more than once in their lives, after the first wedding, one is never again an 'arūs (bride) or an 'arīs (groom), except, of course with respect to the zar.

When a man wishes to ask for a woman in matrimony, his brother or some other kinsman known as the wazīr (assistant or vizier) pleads his suit before the kinsmen of his prospective bride. If an agreement is reached and brideprice (mahr) is set, the groom's proxy gives a token payment of from 3/5 to 3/10 to the bride's kinsmen known as the fatha-t-ekh-khashm, the "opening of the mouth". Some time later, at a meal attended by the groom and his wazīr and given by the bride's kin (bride and groom avoiding each other's presence) the groom publicly pays the brideprice agreed upon in a ceremony called the sedd el-mal, the public "settlement" or "stopping up". He also presents his bride-to-be with a gift of jewelry, clothing and perfume known as the wad' esh-shubka, the "depositing" or "putting down of the intertwining". A propitious date is set for signing the marriage contract and staging the wedding, both of which ought to take place during a mansion of the moon
deemed favorable to the begetting of children.\textsuperscript{2}

Then, just before the wedding is to begin, the groom brings to his bride's family the \textit{shaila} (the "load" or "burden"). This includes great quantities of spice, flour, oil, onions, dried vegetables, powdered fruit drink, cooking pots, animals to be butchered, and various other necessities for the wedding supper as well as clothing, perfumes, aromatic woods and jewelry for the bride, her mother, and sometimes her unmarried sisters. Because she is not permitted to wear clothes of her girlhood once she is married, the bride, in fact, receives a trousseau, each item of which is given in multiples of a certain number. An average \textit{shaila} would be one based on a multiple of three. Therein a bride would receive three dresses (sing., \textit{fustān}), three \textit{tiyāb}, three pairs of shoes, three pairs of underwear, three slips, three brassières, and three nightgowns (the lattermost five are recent additions), all chosen by the groom and frequently bought more cheaply than in Sudan in Jedda, Saudi Arabia. A \textit{khamsa-khamsa-khamsa}, (five-five-five) \textit{shaila} is considered respectable indeed, and anything above that is enviable. Once the \textit{shaila} is delivered it is put on display for whomever wishes to admire it.

The wedding itself is immediately preceded by the \textit{laila-t-el-henna}, the henna night. This ceremony principally concerns the groom and his kin, but parallel events, though
smaller in scale, take place in the home of the bride. The groom's hands and feet are stained with henna and he receives the *jirtig* ornaments designed ostensibly to ward off effects of the evil eye and protect the bearer from harm during a vulnerable period, and which first he wore at his circumcision. On his head is placed, in layers, a paste of fragrant oils and powdered dry perfumes that is not to be removed at least until after festivities conclude on the following night.

The bride prepares by taking her first smoke bath, removing her body hair, having henna applied in intricate patterns to her hands, feet and ankles, and having her hair plaited in the traditional manner. She, too, receives a *jirtig* charm but it differs from those of the groom and, indeed, from those she herself wore when newly circumcised. The *jirtig* of the Hofriyati bride\(^3\) consists of a piece of gold jewelry, either a pendant or a ring, made of a coin on which appears the "face of a person". Absent from her *jirtig* adornment is the *harira*, the important red tassel bracelet of the groom and of recently circumcised boys and girls. Significantly, before the couple assume their respective *jirtig* charms, these are first dipped into milk to "brighten their days" and then, to make their union fruitful, into some grain soaked in water until it has begun to sprout, called *zirri'a*\(^4\) (cf. Crowfoot 1922:5).
Prior to the groom's jirtig investiture, a meal was provided for his guests; following it comes a night of music and dancing. Meanwhile the bride, who up to now has remained in her parents' hōsh, is spirited away from her home by her sisters and her wazira (bridesmaid) and hidden in the house of a neighbor or, preferably, in an unoccupied house in the village. Her location is to be kept secret, but rarely is, until late on the following night.

After dark the next evening begins the laila-t-ed-dukhla, the night of the entrance, considered the first day of the wedding proper. Festivities get under way once again at the home of the groom. He and his guests form a procession (saira). Slowly and with much fanfare they make their way from his parents' home to that of the bride or to the hōsh where, because it is more spacious than her parents', the night's entertainment is to take place. Upon arriving at the front door, the khashm el-beyt, a mock struggle takes place with the bride's kinsmen attempting to prevent the groom and his entourage from passing over the threshold.

Once they gain admittance male and female guests separate; they are taken to different areas and fed an elaborate supper. After the meal, usually somewhere between eleven o'clock and midnight, the long dancing mats are spread, the band begins to play, and the mixed festivities recommence (though men and women are careful to remain on opposite sides,
of the dancing ground when not actually dancing). As on the night before young women, and older female relatives of the groom wishing to honor him, perform the "dance of the neck" wherein they arrange their wraps across their bodies and dance with slow, mincing steps, rolling their heads in a manner resembling the movements of a courting pigeon (Chapter 2; see also Zenkovsky 1945:245). The men dance singly or in pairs, approaching women whose dancing and/or beauty they admire and requesting the shabal (Chapter 4), the tossing of her hair that is thought to confer luck.

While this is going on, the groom, attended by his wazIr, slips away and is taken to the house wherein his bride is being hidden. He enters the room and finds her sitting on a red brush mat (birush el-ahmar), her head and upper body completely concealed beneath a special silk cloth called a firka garmosIs, the principal colors of which are red and bright gold. There he performs the ceremony called guta'a er-rañat, the "cutting of the rañat". This rite, in earlier times, used to consist of ripping seven thongs from the leather skirt (rahat) of the virgin bride.5 Now that the rañat no longer is worn by girls before their marriage, this ceremony consists of pulling a few threads from the bride's garmosIs. Of breaking off strings from the rañat (or threads from the garmosIs), Barclay remarks, "the groom may be regarded as symbolically breaking the hymen...." (1964:260).
When this rite is completed, the groom returns to the wedding dance. The festivities continue into the early hours of the morning. Then, shortly before dawn, the bride makes her first appearance dressed in all her finery.

Her wazIra and other attendants, prior to leading her forth from her hiding place, light bridal incense and pass the brazier beneath her skirts. They carry the red mat on which she has been sitting and lead her to the party with the silk garmosis still covering her head. Once inside the wedding hosh, the bride's red mat is spread on the ground. The music stops. Guests gather into a tight circle around the mat in anticipation. In the glow of kerosene lanterns and pressure lamps, the bride appears on the mat, barefoot, her upper body completely sheathed in the golden silk. The groom approaches and takes his place on the mat. Then the girls of the village start to sing love songs, keeping time on the dalluka; the wazIra removes the garmosis, and the bride stands revealed.

She is dressed in white; her hands cover her face in a gesture of timidity. Then the groom gently pulls her hands away and she begins her exacting dance. Her eyes are tightly shut; her arms are at her sides and slightly extended with palms forward; her back is arched, her head high, and her feet move in tiny controlled rhythmic steps, barely leaving the mat. As the girls sing, she moves her arms and hands illustratively in gestures appropriate to the meaning of the
song. Since she does not open her eyes to see, the wazīra guides her dance when necessary, for never must the bride's feet leave the mat and touch bare ground. At the end of a song, or sometimes in the middle of it, the bride breaks off her dance and, shyly, recovers her face with her hands. Immediately the wazīra replaces the garmosis over her head. Now the groom removes it and the music begins. Once more he pulls her hands away from her face; again she commences to dance. This is repeated several times and may continue for half an hour or longer, until the girls have exhausted their repertoire for the evening, and the bride, who is under terrific tension throughout this display, has had enough. The bride is then led from the wedding party veiled as before and returned now to her parents' home. The gathering soon disbands. The groom retires to his bride's hōsh where he is to be housed henceforth, though this night the couple remain apart.

The next day, the day of the laila-t-eg-gaila, the night on which bride and groom first spend the night together, a morning party (subḥīya) is held at the bride's house. Invited guests are fed a late breakfast, and the young girls assemble to sing and drum love songs yet again. Women are apt to get up to dance, but informally, for the sexes generally are separated throughout most of this day. The bride is now out of hiding and unveiled, though she remains seated on the
bridal mat. Now she must perform her dance on command. Whenever a guest desires it, the mat is placed on the ground and her head is covered by the garmosi. Her dance is the same as on the night before, slow, rhythmic and controlled, with the exception that, if the groom is not present, the wazira performs the task of removing the veil and parting her hands.

In years past the bride and groom would be brought together just before sunrise and sunset on each day after the laila-t-ed-dukhla for a ceremony known as hadāna ("stillness"). The couple would be seated side by side on the bridal mat with the bride's garmosi stretched over them. There they were made to stay, in total silence, until the sun had risen or had set. As Crowfoot notes, "Sunrise and sunset are known as the hamārain -- the two reds, and the people think that spirits are particularly active at these periods." (1922:7) This custom is no longer practised in Hofriyat, though my informants remembered it well, many from their own wedding ceremonies.

Now, late in the afternoon of the day following the laila-t-ed-dukhla or possibly the laila-t-eg-gaila, the groom and his friends plus some young girls and women assemble just outside the village for the procession to the river. At the river, the groom enters the water and washes his face and arms. Others might also wade in for a swim, but caution is
high, for people fear crocodiles and the various legendary creatures of the Nile. Before leaving the riverside the groom and his friends may cut some palm fronds with which to decorate the room he is soon to occupy with his new wife.

Upon returning to the home of his bride, the groom finds that a ram has been sacrificed before the front door (the khashm el-beyt), and he must step over the pool of blood upon entering (cf. Crowfoot 1922:7).

Supper that evening generally is followed by more dancing, but fewer guests and villagers participate. This is the laila-t-eg-gaila, the night on which the newlywed couple first remain together until morning. Ostensibly this is the night on which the marriage is to be consummated, but, as noted in Chapter 2, rarely does this occur until some time afterward. After the dancing party has drawn to a close, the bride is led to her husband's room veiled in her garmosis. Crowfoot mentions that the groom gives her a present "to open her mouth" (1922: 8) for she is shy and reluctant and does not speak, though I was unable to verify that the custom is regularly practised in Hofriyat. To this point and even after it, the bride has maintained silence in her husband's presence.

A cord has been tied around her waist which the groom must now try to remove. The bride, for her part, should struggle to prevent him from doing so, for she must not
surrender easily.

If the groom does not have to return immediately to work in the city, singing, dancing, and feasting may continue for several days. Then on the seventh day of the wedding, a ceremony called el-asbū' (the seventh) is held. The groom sacrifices a ram, referred to as the hulāla (loosening) on behalf of the young girls who taught and assisted the bride in her wedding dance.

Nowadays it sometimes happens that a husband will take his new wife on a Euro-American style honeymoon trip, usually to Khartoum or the cool elevations of Kassala town. Whatever transpires after the "seven" days of the wedding have come to an end, the bride is under further restriction until 40 days after the laila-t-ed-dukhla. During this period, she is not permitted to do housework or to be abroad while the sun shines. When she leaves the hōsh, whether to pay required condolences at a funeral or to visit an ailing relative, she must wear the inconspicuous black visiting tōb of a married woman, not the brightly colored diaphanous tōb of a bride.

INITIATION

For both bride and groom, the first wedding is an initiation into adulthood. It is a rite of passage, exhibiting all three stages of status transition described by
Van Gennep (1960 [1909]). In the case of the bride, who is our major concern in this chapter, these stages are especially well-marked:

**Separation:** On the *laila-t-el-henna*, the day prior to her wedding, the bride is removed from her former girlhood status. She is taken from her parents by the *wazīra* and other peers and lodged apart, hidden in a "secret" place. She undergoes the purification procedures of a woman for the first time in her life, and for the first time may use henna on her hands and feet. The clothing of her maidenhood is distributed to her unmarried friends.

**Margin and Transition:** Her transition to womanhood is completed the following night when, in private, the groom pulls some threads from her silken veil. Perhaps, as Barclay suggests (1964: 260), the groom thereby symbolically breaks the hymen of his bride. However correct this interpretation, the fact that the groom is said to "cut" the *rāḥat*, the skirt of maidenhood, signifies that the effect of this procedure is to divest the bride of her former estate and to usher her into that of married woman.

The bride undergoes another such transition, now in public, when she dances before the groom. This is the high point of the evening's festivities, preceded by a great deal of suspense and anticipation. Importantly, as she performs her wedding dance without the benefit of sight, her feet must
not leave the bridal mat and touch bare earth. Her
sightlessness may emphasize her status as neophyte, for she is
newly born into womanhood. Her confinement to the bridal mat
may be an indication of her liminality, for here she is,
however slightly, poised between earth and sky. Nor does she
speak, and will not address her husband, even obliquely, until
after the "consummation" night, after she has been socialized
to "open her mouth". Again, color associations figure
prominently throughout the dance event. When her *garmos*s is
pulled off, the bride is revealed wearing a white dress which,
as in Western weddings, symbolizes her purity. The mat on
which she performs is referred to as "red", even though it may
include several other shades in equal proportion. Red, as we
have seen, is a color elsewhere in Hofriyati culture
associated with ambiguity, hence, liminality. The bride's
veil, the *firka garmos*s, is red and brilliant gold,
signifying, perhaps, the simultaneity of her ambiguousness and
of her purity and exalted status.

*Aggregation*: Following her dance, the bride returns to
her parents' compound. The next morning, with the breakfast
party, she is tentatively reincorporated into village society.
Gradually over a period of several weeks the restrictions by
which she is bound are lifted. Once more she is permitted to
be out in the village at times other than the dead of night,
and when visiting she may now wear a more colorful *tòb*. 
Further, she soon resumes domestic activities forbidden her during the wedding.

As in many such rites of passage there is a great deal of emphasis placed upon the notion of rebirth and renewal in the Hofriyati wedding ceremony. The protective jirtig charms are dipped in milk and then in newly sprouted grain; for 40 days following the night of entrance the couple are said to be "green" (akhdar), after which they are said to be yābis, dry or firmly planted (cf. Crowfoot 1922: 26). Moreover, there is focus upon points of transition and margin throughout: bride's kin and groom's kin struggle before the door of the bride's hōsh; the slaughter of a ram takes place at the same doorway later on; in earlier times newlyweds kept the hadāna custom, an observance of silence at sunrise and sundown, times of transition between night and day significantly referred to as the "two reds".

Now, in anticipation of the forthcoming comparison of the wedding ritual to that of the zar, the reader might wish to consider whether any similarity between the two, in terms of their respective uses of liminal symbolism, derives solely from the fact that both are, in essence, rites of passage. In that the wedding emphasizes the transition of a girl to womanhood, and the zar emphasizes the transition of a patient to an adept, the prominence of doorways, orifices and other symbols of ambiguity and margin is to be expected and may not
necessarily indicate that the ceremonies are otherwise related. We might wish to say, then, that liminal symbolism here has no more than positional meaning (cf. Turner 1969: 12): it bears reference to other symbols and events within the rite of passage, but not to aspects of Hofriyati culture as a whole.

But, I will maintain, this is not quite true. We have seen, for example, that in the possession idiom doorways and orifices have significance beyond the parts they play in the curing ritual itself: Asia is smitten with possession illness the moment she crosses the threshold to her husband's bōsh, the khashm el-beyt; Amna and Sekina converse openly in the protective liminality of the doorway at a zar ritual. Similarly, the wedding is more than a rite of passage, it is also an important expression of the idiom of interiority, an idiom in which doorways and orifices of the human body are key symbolic elements. I am led, then, to conclude that the relationship between the wedding ceremony and the zar ritual appears to be more fundamental than that of a formal similarity between two initiation rites, though this, of course, might also be the case.

What is the nature of this association? We shall discover that such correspondences as obtain are often rather subtle and complicated, despite certain more obvious concordances. I begin with some general considerations and
then proceed to discuss those that are somewhat more involved:

1. The two ceremonies take place over seven days, and when shortened both usually are shortened to three.

2. The bride of a wedding is secluded. She must avoid seeing her future husband before the ceremony and on the wedding day itself. For the duration of the wedding, she must remain within the walls of the hōsh (except when led forth to dance) and is forbidden to do domestic work, restrictions that are repeated after every childbirth. The bride of the midān also must avoid seeing her husband during the (zār) ceremony, remain inside the walls of the hōsh and do no domestic work.

3. The bride of a wedding wears a white dress and purifies her body by completing the several taxing cosmetic procedures of married women. But during the wedding itself, she must not bathe her entire body nor might she wash her clothes. Throughout the ceremony, she sits or reclines on the red bridal mat and either wears over her head or keeps near her the red and gold firka garmosis. Moreover, for up to 40 days after giving birth similar requirements apply to a post-parturient woman, who is re-presented to her husband as a bride.
Likewise, the bride of a zar ritual wears white (especially if this is her first such ceremony), performs the purification routine of a married woman and is forbidden to bathe her entire body for the seven days of the ceremony or to wash her clothing. She, too, reclines on a red bridal mat, at least during the day, and keeps near her a garmosis.

4. Before the wedding, a bride receives several gifts of fine clothing, perfumes, soaps, and jewelry from her husband-to-be. Similar presents are forthcoming upon the birth of a child.

During the zar ritual, the patient, on behalf of her possessive zairan, receives gifts of clothing, perfumes, scented soaps, gold and silver jewelry from her husband or close male kinsman.

All of the above are formal correspondences, sufficient merely to develop the consciousness of an association between the wedding and the zar ritual among the latter's participants. However, in remaining points of comparison the zar provides more subtle and at times trenchant comment upon the wedding which, if taken up by possession adepts, is thought provoking indeed.

5. When the wedding is arranged, the groom's proxy gives a token monetary gift to the kinsmen of the bride, referred to
as the "opening of the mouth". Drawing upon our knowledge of Hofriyati cultural symbolism, this phrase evokes a number of possible interpretations. To begin, it may represent the initiation of an alliance, the "opening" of one khashm el-beyt onto another, the opening of mouths to communicate.

Significant, perhaps, in this regard is the term used by zär adepts to describe the first incensing a patient receives, usually in private, prior to the staging of a ritual on her behalf. This ceremony, which initiates desired communication between host and spirit and incorporates the patient into a coterie of adepts, is referred to as the "opening of the (incense) box" (cf. Constantinides 1972: 181-2), and requires a token payment (perhaps 25 pt.) on the part of one who is ill. Like the gift from groom's proxy to bride's kinsmen known as the "opening of the mouth", this ceremony marks the positive beginning of a relationship, here the relationship between possessive spirit and its human host.

But the phrase "opening of the mouth" appearing, as it does, in the context of a wedding, might have other significations as well. It may, for instance, refer to the symbolic opening of access to the bride's potential fertility through obtaining the rights to her virginity. To utilize her fertility, the groom must cross the threshold that is her genital orifice, the figurative "mouth" or "door" of his "house" (khashm el-beyt), of his future descendants. Again,
on the laila-t-eg-gaila before she (symbolically) surrenders her chastity to the groom, we are told that the latter gives her a gift "to open her mouth". Ostensibly this is to encourage her to speak to her husband, for up to that time she has maintained utter silence in his presence. Yet it may disguise another meaning, for its precedes the symbolic breaching of her virginity.

Now a zar curing ritual is precipitated by illness, common specific symptoms of which have to do with inappropriate body closure: the folding inward of the patient's hands and arms and the drawing up of her (or his) legs against her chest, as if mimicking the position of a human child before its birth; blockage of the reproductive and urinary tracts; the inability to move or to open one's mouth to speak or to eat. So, too, the bride's genital orifice is "closed" prior to her wedding. Thus, both bride and zar patient suffer from closure of body orifices which once were "open", and it is the task of their respective rituals to restore these orifices to openness under appropriate, if obverse, conditions. The bride, for her part, is lawfully wedded to a close kinsman; the zar patient's symptoms are reversed through her acknowledgement of possession by an alien existent. And like the bride whose fertility is opened in a controlled and restricted context, it is intended that the zar patient, through her relationship with her spirit(s), will be restored
to a condition of **controlled** openness: though now she can both move and speak, yet she must practice physical and emotional restraint; though her reproductive potential is released, it must not be used except in appropriate circumstances.

On the consummation night, a previously silent bride is encouraged to speak, hence to reverse still another indication of closure. At the *zār* curing ceremony, a previously silent or incomprehensible spirit is encouraged to enter the body of its host and to speak through her mouth, here, too, reversing a symptom of closure, the inability to communicate.

Thus, both wedding and *zār* rituals begin with silence on the part of their respective brides, followed by symbolic (wedding) or actual *zār* penetration of the brides' bodies by "alien" beings (husband and spirit) which gain admittance through body orifices. In both "speech" is the desired result, here, perhaps, a metaphor for the revelation of the alien being in the body of the woman either through pregnancy or through possession. But this is not to say that *zār* adepts think of possession as sexual intercourse, for certainly they do not, only that the symbolic structures of the Hofriyati wedding and *zār* ceremony parallel one another with regard to prior and subsequent conditions of the bride and of the woman possessed.
6. Related to the points considered above is one which concerns the theme of tying, a theme to which we will return often in the course of this analysis. When a man signs his marriage contract he formalizes his decision by tying a knot in a rope at the mosque. In so doing he symbolically ties the bride unto himself, he appropriates her potential fertility. Now, often a zar spirit will make known its intention to engage in continuous relationship with a woman, and through her, with her husband, by confiscating that woman's reproductive ability. And when this happens, the spirit is said to "seize" or "hold" or to "tie up" her offspring. Whereas in the first instance, a contractual relationship results in the birth of children, in the second, a contractual relationship is initiated through the prevention of children.

7. On the laila-t-eg-gaila, the groom struggles to untie a cord or a band of cloth knotted about the bride's waist. His success marks the conquest of her virginity. This rite is known as the hal el-hizāna, the "loosening of the belt". Then, on the seventh day of the wedding, the groom slaughters a ram for the benat, the girls of the village, a ceremony referred to as the hulāla, the loosening. A similar sacrifice, also called hulāla is performed by a man immediately following the birth of his child.
By comparison, a woman whose fertility has been usurped by a *zar* can expect that spirit to release or to "loosen" her womb once she has sacrificed a ram on its behalf. At this point her body is, like that of the bride or the newly delivered woman, "re-opened", as it were: her fertility rendered potent once again.

But this does not exhaust the available range of comparative association between *zar* and wedding rites having to do with binding or loosening. Such themes thread their way throughout both ceremonies, sometimes running parallel to each other, sometimes intertwining and opposing. For example, one way in which a woman might signal to her possessive spirit that she does not wish to be entered by it when its chant is drummed at a *zar* ritual is to tie a knot in her braided hair; in much of what follows a similar pattern of point-counterpoint will be seen to emerge.

On the *laila-t-ed-dukha*la, the night of the entrance, which climaxes the wedding festivities, the bride undergoes transition to womanhood. Certain rites performed that evening correspond strikingly with the events of a *zar*.

8. When the groom ritually "cuts the *rāhat*", he in fact pulls several threads from the *garmosīs* that covers the bride.

In drumming the chants appropriate to various *zairan*, adepts are said to "pull" (*jarr*) or to "drum" (*dagg*) their
"threads" (khuyut). "Thread" is also a synonym for spirit (Constantinides 1972:178).

In the first case, the groom may symbolically break the hymen of his bride, the barrier to her fertility. The bride sits passively throughout the brief ritual; she is veiled, shy and reluctant. She does not speak as the threads of her veil are pulled.

In the zar, adepts, drumming the chants of the spirits, invite them to enter the midan and descend into the bodies of their human hosts. The bride of the midan sits veiled beneath her tob while one by one the spirits' threads are pulled.

Whereas the wedding rite symbolizes the forthcoming entrance of the groom into the body of his reticent and infibulated bride, that of the zar is an invitation issued on behalf of the bride of the midan for the spirit(s) to enter her body. The events are similar, though somewhat reversed: in the former the action is figurative, in the latter it is literal; in the former the bride is reluctant and passive, while in the latter she ostensibly encourages the spirits to enter her. The difference is one between relative closure and relative openness on the parts of the respective brides.

Here again, as Constantinides notes, the image of the thread in the zar ritual, "extends itself into one of tying" (1972: 222). On the one hand, she remarks, the spirits are
conceived of as being tied in the sky, and the zār ritual has the effect of untying or loosening them (1972:223-4). In "pulling the threads" spirits are brought down into the midān from above and into the bodies of their respective hosts. Alternatively, however, the zār cult leader or the bride of the zār is seen as being "tied to the zār" (1972: 224).

Both the zār and the wedding ceremonies make ample use of such imagery. And if we might read the latter in terms of the former, the suggestion arises that the groom, in pulling threads from his bride's garmosis, invites her to incorporate her essence with his own; again he symbolically ties her to himself. Or perhaps he "loosens" her chastity with this gesture, one that is repeated in the ceremonial hal el-hizāna, "loosening of the belt" on the following night.

9. Just before the bride of a wedding is brought forth to dance, a lighted incense burner is passed beneath her dress.

Similarly, just before a zār ceremony is to commence, the patient (bride) is fumigated. A lighted incense burner is put before every body orifice and passed beneath her skirts. The censer is then given to other adepts present, who do the same.

Now, the incense used at weddings and in the zār is different in each case: the one, plainly enough, is bakhūr ez-zār, zār incense, the other is bakhūr el-'irīs, wedding
incense. The two are composed of different ingredients, or of similar ingredients combined in different ways, and have different purposes.

Zār incense is composed of bits of brownish red wood ('ūda, not a specific term) and yellowish lubān mistīka, mastic resin (Pistacia lentiscus). First the wood is beaten very fine; then pieces of mastic are added and perfume sprinkled over the lot. This is the basic incense of the zār to which other items or different perfumes might be added according to the identity of the spirit species invoked. For example, kandur, frankincense, is, if available, added to the brazier when threads of the Westerner zairan are drummed (cf. Constantinides 1972: 158). Significantly, zār incense is meant to be inhaled.

Wedding incense, on the other hand, is made up of sandal wood (sandal, also used in the zār for certain spirits, specifically, for the Ethiopian prostitute zairan), shaff (a light yellow wood), and kilait (a light brown wood with pronounced striations), all said to come from "Africa" to the south. These three are pounded fine and mixed in appropriate amounts, the sandal having first been saturated with essence of clove. To the leftover clove mixture is then added pounded dufra, explained to be the claws of crocodiles or of crocodile-like water animals. This liquid is poured over all ingredients, sugar added and the mixture heated through. When
cooled, perfume is sprinkled over all. This incense is said to be helu, sweet, and is not to be inhaled. Its purpose is to fragrance and to purify, and importantly, to drive away evil spirits.

Hence there exists a salient contrast between zar incense which is meant to be inhaled and taken in through body orifices, and is intended to attract zar spirits, and wedding incense which is not inhalable and is intended to repulse potentially intrusive spirits. Here as before the difference between the ceremonies is one of preventing or resisting and encouraging "openness", in the form of alien beings wishing to enter the body of a "bride".

10. The turning point of the wedding ceremony comes when the bride is led into the assembly draped in her firka garmosis. The red bridal mat is spread for her and she removes her shoes, taking her place on the mat. When her veil is lifted she begins to dance, with eyes closed, led by the wazira and by the groom. Her gestures correspond to those indicated in the lyrics of the song to which she moves. Though the bride has secretly undergone a week of training for her dance (Chapter 1), there is always the danger that she will make a mistake, that her dance will not be semih, beautiful and well performed. Tension, then, is high.

Just as the revelation of the bride at a wedding climaxes
that ceremony, the revelation of the afflicting spirit's identity is the most significant and suspenseful event of the zār. Throughout the ritual both patient and spirit have undergone a kind of training, as the sheikha observes the reactions of the possessed to various chants, questions the spirit as to its demands, interprets the patient's symptoms, suggests possible solutions to the identity puzzle and discusses these with adepts and with the (out-of-trance) patient herself. On the final day of drumming, if not before, the spirit is expected to enter the body of its host and manifest itself through her. In these few tense moments, adepts might assess the validity of their prior diagnoses or query the fit between spirit's (read host's) performance and such clues to its identity as emerged during negotiations with the sheikha.

So too, when a bride dances at her wedding, the groom and his guests ostensibly see her for the first time. Though the couple might know each other well, the groom has never before seen his bride as a woman, her body appropriately prepared. And again there is a great deal of discussion among the guests as to whether the bride justifies the claims her family made for her in their negotiations with the wazīr of the groom.

Before her afflicting spirit ritually enters her body, the zār patient "descends" or dances to the threads of the spirits from a kneeling or a sitting position. But when it
manifests itself through her, she rises to "descend" or to dance standing up. Here again we see numerous correspondences to the wedding dance: now the sheikha guides the patient's body, invaded as it is by the possessive zär. The sheikha tries to confine the movement of the entranced individual to the long dancing mat, for the soles of her feet, like those of the bride, ought not to touch bare earth. Confinement to the dancing mat is not always possible; however, should her body stray the spirit is offered shoes and kept within the mTdän. In contrast to the movements and gestures of the bride, those of the spirit are freer and less controlled. Yet its gestures conform, as do those of the bride, to an external text: the intrusive zär causes its host's body to perform the gestures appropriate to its identity, some of which may be mentioned in the song. The Khawajat smoke cigarettes, Ethiopian priest-spirits solemnly bless people, Halib (gypsies) hawk their wares in boisterous fashion, Fellata (West Africans) beg for grain. Now that the possessed is fully upright her face is no longer covered by her töb, as was the case prior to the spirit's invasion of her body. The spirit is neither shy nor, again like the bride, reticent. It wishes to see, to sense the Hofriyati world, and it does so through the eyes of its host. Thus the possessed herself is considered somewhat blinded to events occurring in the mTdän, much like the newly revealed bride.
Both the bride of the *zār* and the bride of the wedding play dramatic roles: they portray the essences of their respective idioms. The possessed's performance is an enactment of otherness, of non-Hofriyati reality, of exteriority; that of the virgin bride is an enactment of enclosedness (she opens neither her eyes nor her mouth, she remains on the small rectangular bridal mat) and self-control, of interiority. Yet both, at the same time, are the roles they play: the possessed temporarily "is" her intrusive *zār*, the virgin bride "is" interiority *par excellence*. Here again numerous parallels and the contrasts they conceal knit together the *zār* and the wedding ceremony in a network of associations that coils about a common symbolic code.

11. The next point is one of significant difference between the two ceremonies we have been considering. On the last day of the *zār* curing ritual, after the afflicting spirit has become manifest in its host, the sacrificial animal is brought forth. Its head, sometimes also its back and its hooves, have been stained with henna. Over its head is placed the *firka garmosis*. *Zār* incense is thrust under the cloth while musicians play and sing the thread for Wilad Mama, a summons to all *zairan*. The animal is held in place throughout the chant and as it strains to free itself its head bobs up and down in the manner of a woman entranced. The animal is
said to descend, the afflicting spirit is thought to enter its body. Immediately thereafter the sheep is slaughtered.

The sacrificial animal is thus more than a substitute for the bride of midān. In the rite described above it also appears to be a living effigy for the bride of a wedding. The animal is first washed and hennaed and then veiled in the bridal silk; in these characteristics its body resembles that of the bride at her wedding dance. But then it is fumigated with inhalable zar incense and the spirit which has afflicted the patient with illness is encouraged to enter it. The spirit leaves the body of its human host and enters that of its proxy, signifying its acceptance of the exchange by causing the head of the sheep to bob up and down.  

This sequence is suggestive in its interpolation of zar and wedding elements, and we will return to it at a later point.

12. The sacrificial animal at a zar ritual is led out of the midān after fumigation and its throat is slit. Some of its blood is collected in a bowl. Then the patient, she on whose behalf the animal is sacrificed, steps seven times over the victim's body or the blood that has spilt on the ground.

This rite is similar to that performed for persons newly returned from pilgrimage to Mecca before the threshold of the hōsh in which they reside. It further calls to mind the wedding custom wherein the groom, newly returned from his trip
to the river, must cross over a pool of sheep's blood upon entering the hōsh of his bride.

In the zar the patient, too, is newly returned: as we discuss in subsequent pages (Part III), when the body of an entranced woman is entered by a spirit she is thought to be transported, in her essence, to the parallel world of zairan. When the intrusive spirit exits her body and "descends" into that of the sacrificial animal, and when that animal demanded by her spirit(s) is offered up, then the patient once more is securely housed, alone, in her body.

What is more, in all three cases noted above the sacrifice takes place before a threshold: a doorway in the case of the pilgrims and of the groom; the outskirts of the mīdān in the case of the zar patient. As observed in the previous chapter, the threshold between the mīdān and the rest of Hofriyat is an important one, for it is in the mīdān that the parallel universe of zar becomes manifest. That which is other than and external to Hofriyat is, in the zar ritual, brought within Hofriyat, indeed, brought within the walls of a hōsh, this last a vital symbol of Hofriyat culture and of its theme, interiority. Thus, when the patient leaves the zar mīdān she symbolically leaves the world of zairan. Upon re-entering the world of Hofriyat she, as with others who return from afar, must mark the occasion by stepping over the body and/or blood of a sacrificial beast.
Modelled upon Allah's redemption of Ishmail with a sacrificial ram, the shedding of blood here bears the connotation of a covenant: between spirit and host in the zār, between bride's kin and the groom in a wedding, or between returning pilgrims and their God. The rite of stepping over blood symbolizes a return to mundane reality from that which is, in some way, considered sacred or mystical, and marks the liminal status of those who are enjoined to perform it. The groom, the zār patient, the pilgrim, all are initiates. Indeed, when an initiate or neophyte crosses over blood, an ambiguous sign in Hofriyati culture, that is spilled before a threshold, another common sign of liminality and symbol of the vaginal opening, it might well symbolize both death and rebirth: the individual's change of status. Significantly, for the zār adept the cross-over ritual is demanded of her only once, regardless of the number of ceremonies she holds or the number of animals she sacrifices during her life. Once possessed, always possessed; once initiated to the zār, forever onward an adept.

There is another important point to be discussed with respect to this practice. The zār patient, known as the bride of the mīdān, steps over blood that has been shed on her behalf, that her own blood might be spared. The groom, too, may be thought of as stepping over blood shed on his behalf when he enters the hōsh of his bride, for the entrance to the
hōsh here, as elsewhere, may be interpreted as symbolizing the bride's vaginal orifice. The blood spilt before it, then, is a metaphor for the blood she sheds on his behalf: at consummation, and henceforward at childbirth, that he might be provided with descendants. In the zar it is the "bride" who is spared, in the marriage it is she who is sacrificed.

13. A related consideration is that of the blood itself. In the zar the collected blood of the sacrificial sheep is used to anoint the patient and other adepts; most of these take a sip of fresh blood as well. Thus, while blood of a virgin bride is shed as a result of her wedding at consummation and at childbirth, blood of the sacrificial animal is consumed and used to confer a sort of blessing in the zar. But at the same time the blood shed by the sacrificial animal, because that animal is substitute for the bride of the zar and effigy for the bride of a wedding, also symbolizes the feminine blood loss that a wedding entails. And it is this blood over which zairan are able to wield such control. Simultaneously the zar parallels and reverses significations of the wedding ceremony: despite formal resemblances between the two rites, in the zar "feminine" blood is consumed and used to anoint, it is re-incorporated, as it were, whereas in the wedding it is either lost or inappropriately retained.
14. On the day following the sacrificial meal in rituals of the zār, a ceremony known as fakka-t-er-ras, the "opening of the head", takes place (Chapter 6). Adepts gather again in the patient's home, several threads are drummed, and incense is lit once more. The boiled head of the sacrificial animal is brought into the mīdān, carried on a tray by the sheikha. Silence falls. As the tray is held above the head of the patient, the sheikha pulls apart the jaws of the animal, thereby symbolically releasing the possessive spirit,\(^1\) for a spirit which has invaded the body of its host is thought most frequently to take up residence in her head.

Following the opening of the animal's head, the patient proceeds to consume the "head meat", to ingest those parts of her sacrificial proxy wherein the afflicting spirit was housed. The patient and the sacrifice thus become one in more than a metaphoric sense. Both host and spirit partake of the sacrifice: the spirit receives the offering of life blood symbolically that of the host herself; the host partakes of the animal parts most closely associated with her possessive zār. The sacrifice, followed by this symbolic mutual consumption, confirms and seals the contractual relationship between spirit and host.

Importantly, through the "opening of the head" spirit and host are distinguished: the spirit has left the body of its human host and has now attained release from that of her
substitute. The two entities once resident in the same human body are separated, marking the fact that the patient has successfully differentiated between the identities of her spirit and of her Hofriyati-self. On the other hand, spirit and host demonstrate relationship in that both participate in consuming the essence of the sacrificial beast. The nature of their relationship is, however, much altered from what it was prior to the ritual: usurping spirit is now a contract-bound (though still capricious) partner of the possessed.

There are several correspondences between the custom described above and practices associated with the wedding. The loosening of the bride's wedding belt marks the surrender of her chastity and fertility potential to her husband. As in the fakka-t-er-ras, the joining of two individuals is here achieved in the (symbolic) opening of a body orifice. In contrast to the zar, however, wherein a separation of the spirit from its host must take place before a contract between them can be established, in the wedding it is the physical uniting of bride and groom that cements a contract by which they previously are bound. In the zar emphasis is placed upon creating and maintaining a certain distance between spirit and host, upon assuring the latter of her relative autonomy. Conversely the wedding works toward overcoming such social and physical distance as might exist between bride and groom, witnessed in the several "battles" the groom must win in order
to gain access to his wife. Yet in both, consummation of a contract is achieved in the symbolic joining of the entities involved: host and spirit in incorporating complementary essences of a third party, the sacrificial beast, husband and wife in their attempted sexual congress. Again, however, there is a difference in the means for accomplishing these respective ends: in the zār, the head of the sacrificial victim is forcefully opened and the spirit "released", whereas in the wedding the groom must struggle to open and enter the body of his bride.

Here, too, we might note that the week of wedding celebrations terminates with the hulāla sacrifice -- the "loosening", performed by the groom on behalf of the maiden friends of his bride. Therein the bride is symbolically separated both from her virginity and from the coterie to which she once belonged, and re-presented to her friends in the status of married woman. So also the week of the zār ritual culminates in animal sacrifice. And after this the spirit previously inhabiting the patient's body, then transferred to the sacrificial sheep, is "loosened". The woman who has "slaughtered for the zār" is thereby separated from those who have not and admitted to the select status of those who have instigated a contractual relationship with the spirits.
15. Subsequent to the "night of the entrance" or the "night of the staying", on both of which he figuratively "opens" the bride's genital orifice, the groom leads wedding guests in a procession to the river. There he and his wazIr (best-man and proxy in negotiations with the relatives of the bride) ritually cleanse themselves before returning to the village. Because weddings generally are foreshortened several days and a groom must contemplate early return to the city, he frequently divests himself of his jirtig perfumes and ornaments at this time, rather than wear them the full 40 days that tradition demands.

There is also a procession to the Nile at the end of the zar ritual, immediately following the "opening of the head". And once there, patient and sheikha (who functions as the patient's proxy in negotiations with her possessive spirit, and much as might a wazIra in a wedding when the "bride of the zSr" performs her trance dance) ritually wash themselves. But more than this, they cast into the river the cleaned bones of the sacrificial animal and remains of the blood collected at its death.

That the two processions are symbolically related is not difficult to ascertain, given the accumulation of evidence pointing to close association between the zar ritual and the wedding. But what sense can be made of throwing the sacrificial victim's remains into the Nile at the end of the
zar? One possibility we might examine has to do with ancient practice. Villagers often informed me that it was customary in Meroitic times periodically to sacrifice young virgins to spirits whose abode is the Nile by throwing them into that river. A woman who met her end in such a way was, they said, referred to as a bride. Recall again that the sheep both substitutes for the bride of the mìdān and symbolizes the bride of a wedding. Hence, disposing of its remains in the river might well be a reflection of ancient custom, rendering unto the everpresent river spirits their due. The bride of the zar is thus doubly sacrificed through the death of her animal alternate: once at the threshold of the mìdān, once on the banks of the river, the westernmost boundary of village space. And so it is, metaphorically, for the bride of the wedding whom the animal also represents. She, too, then is sacrificed to the river, the ancient goddess of fertility.

However, it may be of crucial import that those parts of the animal disposed of in the Nile are its bones and its blood. The reader may remember (Chapter 2) that according to local belief the body of a child is held to be composed of bones which it receives from its father, and flesh and blood which it receives from its mother. Moreover, these contributions are symbolized by the results of men's and women's respective labors: grain (male substance) and water (female fluid).
At the jirtig investiture ceremonies of bride and groom, the ornaments which protect them from harm during their nuptial celebrations are dipped first into milk and then into sprouted grain (zirri'a), here, perhaps, symbolizing the respective contributions of the couple to the body of their future child. But the female liquid is not water, it is milk, and the grain is not that which might be consumed, it has sprouted. Thus the symbolic contributions have undergone transformation: fittingly, through the wedding they have been rendered potent.

Now in the riverside cleansing rite at the end of a zär only the cleaned bones and dried blood of the sacrificial victim remain, for its flesh has been consumed by the patient and other adepts. Nonetheless, the animal's bones and blood, which symbolize those of a human — the bride of the mīdana and/or the bride of a wedding — might yet represent respective male and female reproductive contributions: Significantly, however, these have been "de-activated", as it were; the bones are disjoined and cleaned of all flesh, the blood is dried and caked in a bowl. So, when at the close of a ceremony the de-activated symbolic male and female contributions to human reproduction are cast into the Nile, what interpretations might Hofriyati derive from the event?

First of all we must bear in mind that the age-old association of the Nile with fertility is well established in
the minds of contemporary villagers. We have seen that water, and fluids in general, are markers of femininity. And Nile water is consumed by all, but especially by pregnant women for whom it is deemed particularly beneficial. Perhaps, then, disposal of the sacrificial victim's bones and blood in that river is representative of conception, a symbolic making of a "child" in the "womb" of the Nile. Yet it might just as easily signify the reverse, for the animal has been killed and disassembled. Thus the rite may represent the "unmaking" of a human by reducing its animal substitute to constituent male and female parts and then scattering these in the waters of the Nile. Indeed, it may express both simultaneously: the bittersweet cycle of birth and death.

And, however it might be read, the association of this rite with the Hofriyati wedding ceremony again looms apparent, in that it is the purpose of the wedding to create appropriate conditions for human reproduction. The entire sequence, that of opening the sheep's head, consuming its essence, and disposing of its bones and its blood in the river, can be seen at once to represent, symbolically reverse, and ridicule the expected outcome of a wedding: consummation and conception. As the wedding ideally culminates in the production of a descendant, it is fitting that the zahr ritual, a metalinguistic text whose subject is the idiom of interiority, should draw to a close with the polysemous riverside ceremony.
Below I have summarized some of the dimensions of contrast between the Hofriyati wedding and the zar curing ritual in clarification of the foregoing discussion.

**FIGURE 26**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wedding</th>
<th>Zăr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. BRIDE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. virgin</td>
<td>a. married woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. hennaed and veiled</td>
<td>b. animal proxy hennaed and veiled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. sheds blood to seal contract</td>
<td>c. proxy sheds blood to seal contract</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. OPENING</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Opening of the mouth&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Opening of the incense box&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. begins alliance</td>
<td>a. initiates contractual relationship with spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. opens communication with bride's family</td>
<td>b. opens communication with spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. breaks silence of bride with her new husband</td>
<td>c. encourages spirits to break silence and reveal themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. symbolic gaining of entrance to &quot;mouth&quot; of the womb, acquiring access to bride's fertility; opening within the bounds of relative interiority. Marriage to a kinsman.</td>
<td>d. allowing spirits entry to &quot;bride's&quot; body through its orifices: opening beyond the bounds of relative interiority. Admission of an alien being from another culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. opening from a state of appropriate closure (chastity).</td>
<td>e. opening from a state of inappropriate closure: over-interiority symptoms, body closure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. uniting of husband and wife</td>
<td>f. disjuncture of human and intrusive zar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. TYING, LOOSENING, ENTERING

a. contract cemented by tying a knot in marriage rope, appropriating fertility potential
b. results in children

c. loosening wedding belt, cutting rāhat, pulling threads from garmosis: symbolic of loosening or activating bride's fertility potential, of "opening" the bride under appropriate circumstances
d. bride veiled and reluctant, attempts to prevent opening of her genital orifice. Struggle of groom to enter bride's bōsh

d. contract offered by spirit's tying of offspring, confiscation of fertility potential results in lack of children pulling zār threads activates possession by summoning spirits to enter the "bride's" body.

"bride" veiled, invites spirits, promotes experience of openness, of alien reality

IV. INCENSE

a. uninhalable, not to be taken in through body orifices
b. designed to repulse spirits

da. inhalable, to be taken in through body orifices
b. designed to attract spirits

V. CEREMONIAL CLIMAX

a. revelation of girl as a new woman
b. tightly controlled motions expressive of song-text
c. face exposed, eyes closed, bride shy & reticent
d. enactment of interiority ideal

a. revelation of spirit in body of woman
b. exuberant but controlled motions, expressive of zār text
c. face exposed, eyes those of zār, spirit audacious
d. enactment of "exteriority"
VI. BLOOD

a. blood of sacrifice stepped over by groom at threshold of bride's hōsh: movement from outside in
b. may symbolize feminine blood to be shed as result of wedding; bride as sacrificial victim
c. blood spilled

VI. BLOOD

a. blood of sacrifice stepped over by "bride" at threshold of midān; movement from outside in and inside out (ambiguous)
b. blood of sacrifice symbolizes that of "bride" to be spared as a result of zar ritual OR feminine blood as in wedding blood spilled and then consumed by "bride", used to anoint.

c. blood spilled

VII. CONSUMMATION

a. social linking of two entities accomplished through physical union after prior close relationship determined; overcoming distance in creation of new household within Hofriyat
b. union of feminine blood and semen (blood and bones, liquid and dust) to produce a child

VII. CONSUMMATION

a. social linking of two entities accomplished through physical separation after alienness, lack of relationship determined; creating distance between human host and intrusive zār in creating alliance between Hofriyat and non-Hofriyat
b. union of sacrificial animal's de-activated blood and bones in the Nile: metaphoric child or non-child
MESSAGES OF THE ZĀR

One might wish to argue that since the Hofriyati wedding and the zār ceremony are both life crisis rituals and since both are products of the same cultural milieu, it is not surprising they should share certain formal characteristics. But, I will submit that links between the two are subtle and complex and bespeak an association far deeper than that of similarity in surface structure alone. For the zār ritual appears to be a parody, a ludic portrayal of the wedding ceremony. Not only does it follow the wedding format in many of its rites, but it presents symbols and practices associated with the wedding in unusual contexts, wrenching them from their conventional significances and repositioning them in surprising and often illuminating ways. For example, the *garmosis* which veils the bride at her wedding, when she is the epitome of interiority, of purity and potential fertility, is, in the zār, placed over the head of the sacrificial animal prior to its slaughter. Immediately this brings to mind the metaphor which Hofriyati women use when describing themselves: "We are cattle." The zār rite thus reminds the patient of the fate of all brides. It evokes numerous associations, some of them ludicrous: if a sheep might substitute for a bride in the zār, might the same apply to a wedding?; others poignant: while the contract between spirit and bride of the *midān* is
established through the sacrifice of an animal which substitutes for the latter, it is also true that the contract between husband and bride of the wedding often involves the unmitigated sacrifice of herself in childbirth.

The zar further provides countless opportunities for reversing or otherwise altering messages contained in the various rites of which the wedding is composed. The use of fumigation is a case in point: in the wedding uninhalable incense is passed beneath the bride's dress before she dances in order to ward off potentially evil spirits. The bride's body, her vaginal orifice, is then of course relatively closed. In the zar, however, inhalable incense is passed beneath the bride's dress (and beneath the skirts of other adepts) before the drumming begins for the purpose of encouraging the spirits to enter the bodies of their human hosts. Significantly, the latter are married women all, women whose bodies have been relatively opened through sexual intercourse and delivery. Here once more the associations of the wedding with enclosure and of the zar with openness are underscored.

Yet the zar says none of this explicitly. Its oblique reference to symbols and rites of the wedding do not assault the intelligence, they merely tantalize and suggest. Hence the wedding and all of its attendant significations are transformed into subjects for reflection: apparently it is up
to participants themselves to assign or to derive meaning as and where they will. Zār comments neither favorably nor negatively upon the Hofriyati wedding ceremony, that most vivid expression of the quotidian logic of interiority. Adepts, furnished with a number of hints, many of them ambiguous, are left to draw their own conclusions. And whatever these may be, undergoing this ritual, experiencing its parallax commentary on the nature of Hofriyati reality, cannot but reaffirm or enhance the meaningfulness of village culture for those who live it day by day. For the woman who is led to zār because she suffers disenchantment with everyday cultural reality or has tumbled into one of its crevices, the ambiguities and paradoxes with which it is rifled, zār offers the possibility of a fresh reinterpretation for her untoward experience. In the possession ritual she is given to see herself (and those about her) as in a hall of mirrors, the proportions of her selfhood shifting from context to context, now familiar, now alien, now frightening, now bizarre. For those who choose to take it up, the zār provides a medium for philosophic and poetic contemplation.

Though both possession and quotidian cultural idioms share a symbolic code that draws upon the ideas of openness, closure, binding, and loosening, significations associated with certain colors, body orifices, doorways, and the like, that of interiority might be considered prior, at least in the
experience of Hofriyati women. For though a woman might think herself to be possessed before she is married, rarely will she acknowledge the affliction until after her wedding. It is only after she has celebrated her wedding that she might undertake to stage a ritual of the zār. Indeed, one explanation for this injunction might be that it is only after having been the bride of a wedding that a woman might fully grasp the range of potential meanings to be derived from her initial experience of the zār.

Now, as we have noted, zār does not necessarily say anything in particular about the everyday values of Hofriyati culture, so much as it focuses attention upon them and shows them in unconventional light. Yet there is, it seems, one overriding message which adepts might derive from the possession ritual. The wedding, which zār parodies, celebrates the value of relative enclosure both symbolically in the body of the bride and her actions in the wedding dance, and socially in the contractual union of closely related kin. Through the repeated difficulties experienced by the bridegroom in gaining access to his bride, in her reluctance and in her essential enclosedness, it reiterates the implication that openings of the human body and of village society are dangerous and must be minimized. Now the zār, for its part, does not deny the importance of this value; rather, it upholds it, for through the demands of their possessive
spirits which, incidentally, love the ideals of Hofriyati womanhood, women are enjoined to revitalize the bridely qualities in themselves through bathing with perfumed soaps, eating clean foods, using henna and fragrance, wearing beautiful clothing and precious ornamentation, avoiding all dirt and strong emotion. But at the same time, zār ritual (and the idiom of possession in general) is an expression of relative exteriority, a celebration of the value of "openness" to Hofriyati culture. For zār demonstrates that it is possible to establish contractual relationship between human villagers and alien existents, beings which are both non-human and members of foreign cultures. And though such relationship might bring negative consequences, just as Hofriyati culture might assert, the zār idiom stipulates that there are positive benefits to be derived from it as well. For one thing, illness and disability can be assuaged through negotiation. And possessed individuals might be endowed by their possessive zairan with special skills and aptitudes, with money, or with luck. Moreover, the possession idiom acknowledges that not all of a Hofriyati's experiences are compatible with the central value of enclosedness. While this may be comfort in itself, zār also provides a vehicle for expressing such experiences, for they are attributed to the influence of zairan, examples of non-enclosedness par excellence: alien beings and outsiders to Hofriyat whose behavior fails to abide
by the standards of normalcy which bind their human hosts.

It was noted earlier that a woman most often claims to be possessed who is in something of a double-bind, where her identity or her position, defined in terms of interiority, is jeopardized or thrown into question. Such a woman is brought face to face with the limitations or over-determined boundaries of her culture's principal idiom, that for which she herself provides ultimate expression. Indeed, it is her wedding which socializes her to this position of "interiority-symbol"; consequently it is her wedding which in some sense fails to socialize her to greater awareness, true adulthood, with respect to the world at large. Aside from other considerations, it is highly indicative that even after marriage Hofriyati women are considered jural minors.

Thus it is the zar ritual which, in its sometimes blatant, often subtle manipulations of wedding symbolism redresses this lack by focusing a woman's awareness upon that which is alien and other to Hofriyat and its culture.16 Zar allows for and orients its participants to exteriority. As well as developing a consciousness of alternative social forms it cultivates an appreciation for the ambiguity in all things, and for the real as opposed to the ideal. This cultural repositioning is the salient transition which the zar ceremony seeks to effect in its participants; it is this which is the culmination of the ritual as a rite of passage.
Let us re-examine the liminal vocabulary and symbolism that is found in both the wedding and the zär. Throughout the course of the wedding the groom or his wazir perform a great many rites having to do with opening or gaining admittance: presenting the gift known as "opening of the mouth" to the family of the bride, battling the bride's kin before the door of her hōsh, "cutting the rāhat" (pulling threads from the garmoso), unveiling the bride, loosening her wedding belt, having to jump over blood upon re-entering her hōsh, and so on. But all of this "opening" or "entering" is that deemed appropriate by Hofriyati culture: it takes place between close kin and within the context of village society. Even so, it is hazardous and not to be lightly undertaken. Its dangerousness is emphasized in the many restrictions which apply to both bride and groom, in the redundancy of many customs and the degree of difficulty involved in executing them. The groom repeatedly attempts to gain access to his bride and to consummate the marriage, but on every step of the way he meets with resistance.

Symbols and rites having to do with openness in the zär are rather different. One opens the incense box to see into an alternate reality or has the incense box opened for her when she first experiences that reality in herself. Coins and bits of personal clothing brought by the supplicant and upon which the diviner sleeps are referred to as the "keys of
dreams", that which unlocks the door between this world and the parallel world of *zairan*. Doors and doorways, real and symbolic, have important functions at *zār* ceremonies: the patient generally sits facing the door of the *hōsh*; the slaughter of the sacrificial animal takes place on the threshold of the *miđān*, the border between the manifest world of *zairan* and village space within the patient's *hōsh*; persons who fail to come out of trance at the end of a chant may be led out of the *miđān* or taken through the doorway of the *hōsh* and back in an effort to convince the spirit to relent. The term *dastūr*, a synonym for *zār* spirit, colloquially means "permission" and is shouted upon entering a latrine in order to warn spirits dwelling therein of a human's approach. But in Northern Sudan *dastūr* also means "door jamb", hence, that which keeps the door between the Hofriyati world and that of the *zairan* ajar. Constantinides remarks that this commonplace meaning of the term employed with respect to *zairan* "ties in with much of the liminal terminology used in spirit possession songs, which include much reference to doorkeepers, thresholds, doorways and so on." (1977:65-6, note 6). She further notes that during the patient's initial diagnostic session the first spirit to manifest itself is said to stand "locking up the door." Once it has appeared, then other spirits possessing the patient may reveal themselves and make known their demands (1977:67). Last, but not least, recall
that the *zar* term for the husband of a possessed woman is "bowāb", doorkeeper, and an adept refers to her husband as her doorkeeper or doorman.

The notion of husband as doorman is instructive indeed. For it provides a link between the two significations of "opening" herein discussed: that which concerns the wedding and that pertaining to *zar*. Through the wedding ceremony a man gains access to his bride's reproductive potential — he acquires the right to open her vaginal orifice. He also becomes the master of a household, of a "khashm el-beyt" — literally, a "mouth of the house" or doorway, figuratively, his descendants. Thus, in the everyday world of Hofriyat, a husband is to all intents and purposes, his wife's "doorkeep", though he is not addressed by that term. In the *zar* ceremony a woman establishes a contractual relationship with an alien existent through the sacrifice of a sheep provided by her husband. Thus it is her husband who opens the door between the human world and that of the spirits: in his provision of the sacrificial animal he initiates the possibility for positive negotiation between the possessed and her intrusive *zairan*. He retains the title of "doorman" for as long as the couple are married, as he will be called upon to "open the door" for his wife (though he may, of course, refuse) whenever her possessive spirits inflame and demand mollification. Thus, for a woman possessed, her husband is the symbolic point
of articulation between the two universes of her experience: that of Hofriyat and that of its counterfoil, the ḭār. He is at once guardian and mitigator of enclosedness and facilitator or obstructor of desired openness, contractually bound. Thus, quite apart from anything he himself might do, the ḭār adept's husband occupies an ambiguous position with regard to his wife. Indeed, not only are spirits like husbands, but in this context at least, the reverse is also true.

Related, then, to the theme of relative openness, a further problem dealt with in the ḭār is ambiguity. The spirits themselves are capricious and ambivalent, evincing simultaneously the potential for good and for evil. They are, in fact, amoral: in their associations with humans, however ideally they may be confined by contract, zairan are changeable in the extreme. Their ambiguity is their salient characteristic and is captured in yet another synonym: zairan are referred to as "red winds", winds of a color associated with ambiguity and liminality throughout village culture. And here, too, the use of red symbolism conceals a comment upon the Hofriyati wedding and the idiom of everyday life: red is the color of the bridal mat; the garmosis; the blood of virgins and women in childbirth, and of sacrificial animals.

But if so, one message contained in the ḭār is that ambiguity, though dangerous and often troublesome, need not be a negative thing. Moreover, the ḭār idiom asserts that
ambiguity is unavoidable. The logic of everyday life emphasizes the value of interiority for people of Hofriyat, and begrudges the need for openings, however minute. Openings, after all, symbolize the imperfectibility of humankind. Zar, on the other hand, focuses heightened attention upon doors, orifices, openings in general, informing Hofriyati that their inherent ambiguities are manageable -- not through minimization, but through public acknowledgement and negotiation. Where the idiom of enclosure seeks to restrict openings in an effort to decrease their danger and attain the degree of perfection permitted to man, zar recognizes the futility of such an enterprise and seeks to cultivate them. Indeed, where the interiority idiom attempts to limit ambiguity, that of possession embraces it.

Perhaps the central problem addressed in the zar is that of how to negotiate the proper balance between openness and enclosedness in Hofriyati life. Acknowledgement of spirit possession operates to redress situations, correct symptoms, and interpret experiences having to do with interiority gone awry: the inability to move or communicate, the dangerous blockage of body orifices ("over-interiorization"); strong emotions, miscarriages and experiences which fall outside of the expected range for people of Hofriyat ("over-exteriorization"). It shifts attention away from the value of enclosure and extols the potential benefits of relative
openness: what begins as tormenting illness is, through public acknowledgement and the staging of a *zar* ritual, transformed into a controlled, mutually beneficial relationship between human host and possessive spirit. The ritual thus establishes a pathway for communication between the two entities which, though fallible, is nevertheless essential to the maintenance of the host's wellbeing. In the *zar* doors, orifices, and other apertures, both physical and social, are not only to be considered rather perilous means for linking villagers to one another and to the sensible environment. They are, in addition, crucial points of exit and entry between the world of Hofriyat and that of an alternate reality, a world which presents certain hazards to the unwitting traveler but which, as the *zar* asserts, is knowable and can be dealt with advantageously if one contracts to obtain the compliance of its inhabitants. Significantly, then, the logic of spirit possession posits the feasibility of negotiation between Hofriyati and beings which not only are amoral and both culturally and linguistically foreign, but also more powerful than they themselves. Surely this is an optimistic message for she who is in conflict with an unyielding spouse.

What is more, through *zar* rituals this alien world regularly appears within the very heart of Hofriyati culture, the family compound, yet no grave alteration of Hofriyati values and ideals results. The implications here for
villagers' dealings with intrusive foreign nationals, who have colonized or otherwise disturbed or controlled this part of Sudan in recent centuries, are patent (see also Lambek 1978:215 for Mayotte). So, too, are the implications for Hofriyati seeking employment outside the village area, travelling within the country, or having to cope with curious Canadian anthropologists.

Зар comments upon the idiom of enclosure in stressing its relativity. It warns that individuals are more complex and differentiated than the ideal images of their culture would propose. It encourages Hofriyati to reflect upon the paradigm that informs their everyday reality and cautions them to realize its essential paradox: that despite their drawbacks, openings, interstices, and indeterminacies in social structure, body orifices, links to the external world and all of their attendant ambiguities must be maintained if that very culture is to persist and flourish and is to avoid the centripetal collapse that an over-evaluation of interiority threatens to produce. This, perhaps, is the therapeutic message, the illumination, provided in the зар. It says something fundamental about humans and their cultural constructs — that the latter must always be inadequate and the former can only abide by them in relative measure. In this regard зар obliquely admonishes Hofriyati to remain aware of that which occurs outside of village society, and, to
paraphrase its own metaphor, it urges them to accommodate when up against shifting and modulating winds. In truth, zār teaches that change, as well as ambiguity, ambivalence and paradox, must also be expected, even welcomed, for nothing, not even contractually established relationships between husbands and wives or between possessive spirits and their human hosts, can be relied upon for very long.

Revealed in the light of zār, alternative realities are shown to have validity in themselves, to order the physical and social worlds of their inhabitants as much as the idiom of enclosure orders the world of Hofriyat. Though villagers must remain vigilant when dealing with other beings and members of other cultures, the benefits of encounter might well outweigh potential detrimental effects, if they be but willing to assume the risk. For above all, the possession idiom stipulates that exchange and communication between Hofriyati and extra-Hofriyati existents is possible without assimilation, without the permanent absorption of Hofriyati into an alternate reality, and so without real jeopardy to the integrity of village culture.
1. Even so, the shortened Hofriyati wedding is still a costly event. I was told that a sum of at least ₤500 to ₤600 ($1,250-$2,500 U.S.) would be required, provided from the savings of the groom.

2. The signing of the marriage contract may precede the wedding by several days, weeks, or in some cases, months.

3. And of an expectant mother from the seventh month of her pregnancy.

4. The reader may recall from Chapter 2 that grain and water are associated with male and female labors, respectively, and again with male and female contributions to the body of a child (bones, and flesh and blood). Significantly, too, the sprouted grain is referred to as zirri'a, a term derived from the same root as zurī'a (crop, that which is planted), a term which Hofriyati use in speaking of their offspring or descendants.

5. Barclay notes, According to Herzog [Rolf Herzog, "Der Rahat, eine fast verschwundene Madchentracht im Otsudan," Baessler Archiv, N.S. IV, 1956] the Arab women of pre-Islamic times wore a rahat before marriage, during menstruation, and during any period of stay in a sanctuary. The dress diffused to East Africa with the Arab immigrations of the seventh century, where its use was restricted to the unmarried. (1964:255)

6. See also Crowfoot 1922:8 on this point. In contrast to other areas of the Islamic world such as Egyptian Nubia (Kennedy 1977:114) or Mayotte, Cormoro Islands (Lambek, personal communication), there is no custom in Hofriyat whereby a bloodied cloth is displayed after ritual defloration to demonstrate both the bride's virginity and the groom's success.

7. In some areas of the Sudan the "cutting of the rahat" and the public dance of the bride take place simultaneously (cf. Zenkovsky 1945:248).
8. As opposed to more generalized symptoms such as headache, depression and anxiousness which may also be associated with illnesses other than those brought by zairan.

9. Though some women do compare their possession experiences to their experiences of sexual intercourse, usually favoring the former.

10. Since all zar rituals in Hofriyat are private curing rituals, there is always a bride (or patient) present, as in a wedding.

11. The fact that the animal is offered in exchange for the woman possessed is illustrated rather well in the following anecdote. One of my informants reported that her spirit had communicated its demand for a ceremony through a dream in which it held a knife to her throat, threatening to slaughter her in the manner prescribed for animal sacrifice. Here, it seems, she was to be substitute for the sheep which in turn was substitute for herself.

12. The Islamic version of the Bible story in which Isaac was spared execution by Abraham when God provided a ram to take his place.

13. Constantinides gives another interpretation for this rite:
   The sheep is alternatively viewed as an obstacle in the patient's path from illness to normality over which she can now step, or as a repository of the illness itself, a patient-substitute, and in leaping over it she leaps away from the illness. (1972:228-29)

14. The spirit, because it is so powerful, cannot be considered "trapped" within the sacrificial animal, hence its release here is figurative.

15. As a treat, for well water is more commonly used on a daily basis, the distance to the river being thought too far to go for water several times a day.

16. I am grateful to Ken Burridge for drawing this implication to my attention.

17. Also used by women in childbirth and newly circumcised boys and girls.
18. Constantinides (1972:231ff) mentions that in the vicinity of Khartoum the zār patient wears on her wrist a handkerchief which has been dipped in the blood of the sacrificial animal. The similarity between this item and the harīra, the red silk tassel-bracelet worn as part of the Řirtig ornamentation by the groom at his wedding and by newly circumcised children, is obvious, further linking the red symbolism of the zār to that of the wedding and of daily life.
PART III: THE SPIRIT WORLD
CHAPTER 11
EXPLORING THE PARALLEL UNIVERSE

We are the children of Mama,
Born of the wind.
As we advance by species,
Oh Lord, our felicitations!
They have spread our display,
They have lined up our chairs;
Those who mock us
Are transforming their awareness in our midst.

-- Opening "thread" of a zār ritual

TEXT

In this part of the thesis we explore the extent of villagers' knowledge about the spirit world and examine potential significances to be derived from their experiences of it. Our present interest lies with zār beliefs divorced from particular contexts of possession incidence: with zār as a system of meaning in its own right. Further, this chapter concludes the task begun in the foregoing pages of mapping the possession idiom against that of everyday life.

In Chapter 6 I introduced the idea that zār can be thought of as a cultural text (cf. Geertz 1973; Ricoeur 1976; Lambek 1978, 1981), one that is both verbally discussed and ritually enacted, to which individuals refer and upon which they draw in understanding and evaluating untoward experiences of their everyday world. Zār is a symbolic construction upon
quotidian reality; it is a metalinguistic text (cf. Geertz 1973, Basso 1979, Bateson 1972) which draws attention to the theme of interiority and illuminates its significances without enforcing any definite conclusions about it.

Now a possession event, the acknowledgement or manifestation of a particular spirit in a particular human being, must simultaneously contain at least two forms of meaning (cf. Basso 1979, Crapanzano 1977a): "social meanings", expressive of the possessed's position or identity, and "cultural" or "textual" meanings, derived from the broader possession text out of which social meanings may be construed but existing independently of them. Whereas in Part II we were concerned primarily with social meanings of possession, now we shall focus upon its cultural meanings in an effort to decipher further ramifications of the story Hofriyati tell themselves about themselves (cf. Geertz 1973:448) through zar.

If the "intention" of she who becomes possessed is to articulate aspects of her selfhood and experience considered alien to the ideal image of Hofriyati womanhood, that of the spirit is merely to present itself in the human world. A spirit manifestation must resonate with spirit (read textual) meaning if its host's experience is to be judged authentic. A possession performance is thus far more than what its ostensible human author might wish to convey by it. It stands alone as something created; it has a certain autonomy of
meaning. And it is this "autonomous" meaning that is most readily available for appropriation by the audience of observers. As Ricoeur asks,

> What is indeed to be understood — and consequently appropriated — in a text?

> Not the hidden intention of the author, which is supposed to be hidden behind the text.... What has to be appropriated is the meaning of the text itself, conceived in a dynamic way as the direction of thought opened up by the text. In other words, what has to be appropriated is nothing other than the power of disclosing a world that constitutes the reference of the text.... If we readers may be said to coincide with anything, it is not the inner life of another ego [the author], but the disclosure of a possible way of looking at things, which is the genuine referential power of the text.

(1976:92; emphasis mine)

Thus it is the "direction of thought" opened up by the zār text which engages our interest for the remainder of the dissertation.

But before we begin, a word as to how Hofriyati learn about the spirit world — the zār text — is in order. Such knowledge as villagers have about spirits derives from a body of local beliefs long ago assimilated to the tenets of Islam. Yet it also comes from frequent manifestations of zairan in the bodies of their human hosts and in the latter's dreams and visions. This is demonstrated knowledge, a constant source of verification and elaboration for the system of zār beliefs. Equally, of course, the system of zār beliefs shapes the experiences Hofriyati have of their spirits. Belief and experience nourish and modify each other; adepts'
understanding of zairan is ever shifting, here expanding as a spirit reveals more of its characteristics and demands, there contracting as another spirit, once popular, now fails to appear at village rituals. What I am about to describe, then, is the state of villagers' knowledge about the spirit world at a certain point in village history.

SPIRIT CLASSIFICATION

In Chapter 6 I mentioned that zairan, according to Hofriyati, comprise a distinct class of jinn, invisible beings which inhabit a world parallel to our own and contiguous with it, but invisible to average humans. All villagers recognise three classes of jinn to which a great many spirit types are assimilated. First are the benign, controlled, and frequently benevolent white jinn, known also as "white winds" (jinn el-abiyad, rowhan el-abiyad), spirits which, it is said, are Muslim. Possession by these is rarely serious and often held to account for the behavioural quirks of more eccentric individuals. Additionally, say villagers, white jinn may work on behalf of an Islamic holy man, a feki Islam.

Black jinn, on the other hand, are malevolent and invariably pagan, though still capable of salvation. Their principal concern is thought to be the spread of serious disease and misfortune. Possession by them is indeed a grave
affair; they are held to cause severe mental disorder whose only cure is violent and often fatal exorcism. Black jinn are known to befriend certain powerful though unorthodox fekis who thus gain the ability to see into the invisible spirit world, find lost objects, foretell future events, and undo or perform black magic ('amal).

Lastly there are red jinn, also called, among other terms, red winds (rowhan el-abmar) or zairan. These certainly are not benign. Nor are they necessarily beneficent or inherently malevolent. They are instead ambivalent, amoral, and capricious. As we have seen, possession by them is held to be the cause of certain illnesses, misfortunes, and emotional difficulties which, though fairly severe at times, are thought never to result in death.

Now the reader may recall that men and women are not in full accord as to the proper classification of zairan. The discrepancy arises as follows: local men, for the most part, include zairan with black jinn in a broader category, shawatān, malevolent devils, for they maintain that red spirits are just slightly less evil than are black. The milder malevolence of zairan consists in their penchant for quixotic behavior and in their singular desire for expensive finery. Zairan bring illness, say men, because they enjoy playing with the lives of gullible women, extorting from them the things they desire, entertaining both humans and
themselves at curing ceremonies, and being treated to lavish displays. But, they say, one need not play along with zairan in order to secure symptom relief. Men stipulate that red spirits can be exorcised like other shawat\text{In} and, because possession by them is a lesser malignancy than possession by black spirits, this can be accomplished without violence.

While men tend to blur the distinction between red and black jinn, women hotly deny any such association between the two spirit types. The criteria women employ in asserting this distinction are three-fold. First, zairan and black jinn cause different kinds of illness, the former never killing their hosts as the latter are wont to do. Second, though both men and women agree that possessive shawat\text{In} must be exorcised by an Islamic holy man, women insist that since the zairan are not shawat\text{In} they do not respond well to such techniques.

Third and most relevant to our present purpose, zairan and black jinn differ in appearance and behavior when taking human form or inhabiting the bodies of their human hosts. Black jinn are said to be ugly and kab, colloquially, the lowest of the low. They are horrific and filthy beings which, when visible to humans, have long tangled hair and unkempt fingernails, go ragged or unclothed, and exude a foul smell. Those whom they possess soon approximate this image; they are said to eat dust and human excrement and to behave in ways that are not only disgusting but dangerous, even life
threatening for themselves and for those whom they encounter.

But red jinn are quite the opposite, say Hofriyati women. These spirits love cleanliness and beauty; they desire gold, fine clothing and delicate perfumes; and they demand a similar concern in the behavior of their human hosts. When zajran appear to villagers in human form they are always clean, well-dressed, and lovely to behold.¹

Yet their beauty and their love of beauty are not the only traits which distinguish zajran from black jinn in the minds of village women. Unlike black jinn which are prone to consume dirt and require their hosts to do the same, zajran have fairly refined food preferences. They are said to love clean foods, those which are white, enclosed in natural or artificial casings, expensive, and often difficult for Hofriyati to obtain. Further, the hosts of zajran may be asked to eat foods associated with their spirits' respective nationalities, whereas black jinn make no such demands. Lastly, a zar on occasion will signify its presence in the body of a woman by having her drink perfume straight from the bottle (cf. Constantinides 1972:119, Lambek 1978 passim); more commonly zajran request that their hosts smoke cigarettes which have been sprinkled with fragrance and to drink a mixture of water, sugar, and cologne. The use of expensive scent in this manner is an extravagance which both heightens the distinction between zajran and the dirt-consuming black
jinn, and distinguishes the former from their less indulgent human hosts.

Finally, when possessed by a black jinn an individual relinquishes bodily control. Her movements become reckless, hazardous to herself and to others. Possession by red jinn, on the other hand, is characterized by relatively controlled and stereotypical gestures on the part of a human host.

Indeed, the chief difference between red and black jinn, according to local women, is this question of control: black jinn bring serious dysfunction, causing those whom they possess to have uncontrolled, frightening, and even fatal experiences, whereas zairan bring milder ailment and cause those whom they possess to have relatively controlled and pleasant experiences when entranced. A black jinn inhabiting a human body attempts to take permanent custody of it and must be driven out; a zar generally does not inhabit the body of its host for very long, and in ritual situations vacates it when the drumming stops.

SPIRIT TRAITS

Despite such diversity all three classes of jinn share certain attributes. They are considered nominally to be governed by the prophet Sulayman (cf. Trimingham 1965:172) whose abode is the ancient city of Meroe near Hofriyat. When
not in human form they are conceived of as massive and formless beings, having great fiery bodies (cf. Constantinides 1972:103). Indeed, zumran are variously said to have been created of smokeless fire, as were all jinn (LV:14), and of wind.

Additional attributes of zumran and other jinn include the ability to transform themselves into certain animals, typically snakes, hyenas, and crocodiles (cf. Nalder 1935:227-230, Trimingham 165:171). While normally invisible to humans they can appear to them in human form; they are said to "fly" great distances in very little time; they were created long before Adam\(^2\) and are thought to live through countless ages (cf. Nalder 1935:227); they are most active at night; they lurk in rubbish heaps, cemeteries, ruined haishan, latrines and body cavities. Not only can they enter into a human body through its orifices and play havoc with its health according to type, but jinn are also able to move through walls and ceilings: they cannot be shut out or kept in.

DISCUSSION

Red jinn, in their love of beauty and of precious goods, and in their craving for entertainment, are not unlike their human hosts. But certain differences between the two do exist in this regard. Importantly, these differences are
qualitative: zairan exaggerate human ideals and transcend the practical constraints of everyday human life. For invariably they demand more of their hosts than the latter are able to give, and it is rare that a spirit will consider the fact that its desires for finery and lavish display are financially burdensome to the possessed and her kin. Moreover, a woman's possessive zar is said to "inflame" and thereby cause a relapse of her initial illness if she works so hard that she neglects to perform the beautification regime traditional for Hofriyati of her sex or inadvertently sullies its effects. Physical labor, necessary though not prestigious in the human world, is regarded askance by zairan, especially if it causes diminution of their hosts' purity and enclosedness. Here, then, the spirits represent a positive exaggeration and tacit enforcement of Hofriyati values.

But in other respects zairan contrast strikingly with their human counterparts. Ideally, behavior in Hofriyat is regulated by customs and a strict moral code. It ought to be predictable but, as women attest with regard to their husbands, frequently it is not. Zairan, however, are the essence of amorality and equivocation. Their behavior is capricious and often ambiguous, even when they profess Islam or are drawn into contractual relationships with their hosts.

Thus, behavioral characteristics attributed to zairan both surpass and reverse those of humans. In some respects
zairan are the opposites of Hofriyati humans, and in others they are their caricatures.

Existentially, too, zairan both invert and transcend their human counterparts. Quite apart from their enormity and their fiery aspect zairan, unlike humans, live exceedingly long lives and are capable of covering great distances with amazing speed. But if their capacities are more extensive than those of humans, they nevertheless are bound by time and limited by space. Zairan are not eternal; at some point they must die. And they normally reside in homelands, specific locations in the parallel universe. Moreover, zairan may be male or female; they marry and produce offspring; they live in organized societies. Indeed, to conceive of them as spirits in the sense that we in the West might wish to assume is not entirely correct, for while less constrained than are humans, zairan are not entirely above the laws of nature. So, with regard to their spatial and temporal adaptations zairan differ from humans but relatively. They are similar to culture heroes or creatures of myth and legend which have various exceptional attributes and abilities, but are fallible nonetheless.

Yet in some respects zairan and humans are complementary beings. In local belief air, earth, fire, and water are the four basic constituents of the natural world. Whereas Adam, the original human, is said to have been molded by Allah from
moist clay (LV:13), earth plus water, zairan are variously said to have been created of fire and of wind. Further, humans have perceptible form, are visible, and are diurnal, "children of the light," whereas zairan are formless, invisible and nocturnal. Thus in zairan can be seen the counterface to humanity in a holistic creation. Zairan and humans are obverse existents: each form of being is the essence of otherness to its counterpart.

Significant here is the fact that zairan know no physical boundaries. Unlike humans they are formless in their own universe; they are not bound by bodies of specific shape and limited size, whose regular inhabitants must experience and maintain contact with the outside world through potentially dangerous orifices (though as we see later on, zairan are considered to have eyes). While zairan can move through walls and ceilings at their pleasure, if sometimes with difficulty, humans must pass through doors when intent upon entering rooms or enclosures. While a zār is able to invade a human's body whenever it feels so inclined, a human, should he wish to initiate relationship with another being, is constrained by his form (and by his moral code) to communicate that desire in less immediate ways. Zairan, then, are the personifications of "openness" both anatomically and kinetically, as well as morally. In contrast to humans they cannot be enclosed even when inhabiting a human body, for a single zār may be present
in or above several different hosts concurrently. Enclosure, however, is the principal organizing and defining characteristic of those humans, residents of Hofriyat and its vicinity, whom zairan possess.

In sum, zairan are like Hofriyati in certain of their attributes, though somewhat more extreme, yet also they are unlike Hofriyati, who are their existential complementaries. Much as we saw in Chapter 10 and as we see again in subsequent pages, the relationship between spirit and human existence forms a complex tapestry of exaggerated similarity and contrast. Here, as elsewhere, the zar phenomenon is ambiguous, and therein lies its power. On one level the spirits hyperbolize Hofriyati humanity: villagers' ideals and the pragmatics of their everyday lives are highlighted, displayed and dramatically caricatured in spirit behavior and spirit demands. Yet on another there is deep contrast between zairan and humanity: characteristics of each form cast those of the other into photographic relief. She who would take up the issue is, then, likely to be confronted by a riddle, a logical paradox for which no solution exists, to wit, how could those which are so "other", so antithetical to Hofriyati humans, be, in certain of their attributes, more Hofriyati than Hofriyati themselves? The question is, of course, rhetorical. But it points to a more fundamental line of inquiry, that which takes as its subject the parameters of
Hofryati human nature. We cannot presume that the individual who comes to face this puzzle is led to draw any particular conclusion because of it, only that she is given occasion to ponder those assumptions which tacitly guide her behavior day by day.

THE SPIRIT WORLD

Now zairan, like humans, are social beings. And in this regard as well they are both similar to, and different from human Hofriyati.

As stated earlier, the genus red jinn is comprised of several kinds of spirit. Supposedly there are seven species of jinn, but in reality classification is flexible and more than seven may be distinguished. Since seven is a significant number in popular Islamic belief, its application here may serve to link the zar complex to beliefs of the wider system and to other local customs (cf. Constantinides 1977:71).

The invisible zar world parallels that of humans and as such, differences between spirit species generally correspond to differences between human cultures. In turn, every zar species embraces a number of individually named spirits, each of which has some distinctive characteristic which marks it off from the rest.

In the roster of zar species which follows, the color
code associated with the three forms of jinn is replicated and extended. Certain species are typically linked with particular colors, chief of which are white, red and black. Here as elsewhere white is associated with cleanliness, purity, dignity and holiness; black is associated with evil, severe malignancy, lack of dignity, worldliness, wantonness and impurity; and red is associated with ambivalence, ambiguity, power, and danger under the aegis of its principal referent, blood.

Zairan are invoked sequentially in possession ceremonies by drumming and singing the chants appropriate to each in turn. As villagers say, "We pull the threads one by one" (see also Constantinides 1972). Different spirit species are distinguished by slight variations in rhythm and, sometimes, by variations of the incense that is burned to summon them. In Hofriyat the threads usually are drummed in the order presented below, though this is by no means as systematic a classification as first it might appear.

Darawish

These are the zar parallels of well known founders of Islamic orders who lived during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. One important spirit in this group is Abdelgadir el-Jaylani, founder of the Qadriya sect.

Zar el-Jaylani, like its human counterpart, is associated
with disorders of female fertility and their cure. Indeed, the soul of the human saint is often asked to intercede with Allah in this regard by local women. Powers attributed to the human thus also are attributed to the zar. Likewise, the Darawish zar Sayidi Bedawi is the spirit parallel of Sayid Ahmed el-Bedawi (d. 1276), founder of an offshoot of the Qadriya whose shrine is at Tanta in Egypt, and of whom it is said, "he...was especially notable for securing the fecundity of women" (Willis 1921:181). This zar, too, is thought to exercise special control over human reproductive ability.

Female Darawish represent the daughters of males of this species, and symbolize appropriate feminine fertility. El-Jaylani's daughter is Sitti Khudera, Green Lady, whose attributes are those of idealized Sudanese womanhood: it is said to be pious, graceful, and supremely dignified. When appearing in human form it is richly dressed and adorned, light of skin and beautiful beyond measure. Moreover, green, its color and that of the dress its human hosts are requested to obtain, is associated with fecundity and abundance. Outwardly, then, it is the essence of interiority. And, as befitting its lofty station, Sitti Khudera, like its father, commands deference from those humans whom it encounters in Hofriyati midãns.

Yet in a significant respect Sitti Khudera breaks with Hofriyati tradition and ideals. For according to my
informants this zar is married to Birono, a male Habish spirit and a Christian. Hence its marriage is triply exogamous: whereas kin, culture, and religious group endogamy is considered proper human practice, Sitti Khudera's spouse is a non-relative, a foreigner, and most surprisingly, non-Muslim. Further, Sitti Khudera itself is sometimes classed as Habish, indicating that the species of a female zar might shift upon marriage to that of its husband. Such a custom runs counter to that of Hofriyati humans, whose jural rules stress lifelong natal group affiliation for female members. Thus Sitti Khudera is an excellent example of a spirit which is both "other" than Hofriyati and more Hofriyati than ordinary Hofriyati women; it is the embodiment of interiority with respect to comportment, appearance, faith and fecundity, and that of exteriority with respect to its existential nature and its marital and jural practice. Sitti Khudera focuses attention upon the interiority-exteriority dilemma: like all powerful symbols (cf. Turner 1967:54ff) it signifies neither one nor the other, but different facets of both at the same time, at once illuminating the essential dialectic of Hofriyati culture and providing its mediation.

In addition to the spirits named above the Darawish species includes Bedawi's daughter, Bedawiya, whose known characteristics do not differ greatly from those of Sitti Khudera; Sheikh Hamid, the spirit parallel of a local Qadriya
elder long deceased; and a zār called Sheikh Mohammed⁹ (see Appendix II for a list of spirits and their demands). In Hofriyat this last spirit is associated with the religious order founded by Sheikh Mohammed Osman el-Mirghani (d. 1853) and may be the zār counterpart of that notable human. The ṭarīqa which he established is the popular Khatmiya sect, the "order of the seal", so called because its adherents maintain it is the "final word" or last and most comprehensive of the ṭarīqat.

In keeping with their holiness and purity spirits of the Darawish group generally demand white rams in sacrifice. Females among them request green or white dresses and white head shawls, while male Darawish request white gowns called jelabiyat, prayer shawls, skull caps, prayer beads and forked walking sticks as are commonly used by religious scholars. When these spirits invade the bodies of their hosts they behave in a calm and dignified manner. While one might have its host remain seated peacefully throughout the drumming of its thread, another might have her finger prayer beads or sway gently back and forth like a participant in a zikr, the remembrance ceremony of the Muslim orders that involves drumming and recitations in praise of Allah.

Thus male Darawish zairan cause the women whose bodies they temporarily inhabit to exhibit qualities and behaviors normally associated with elders in a religion which the women
profess, but from which they are excluded by reason of their sex. A number of important issues surface as a result of this dialectic. Beginning with the most apparent, women here are seen to behave as men. However, these are not average men but the zar embodiments of Islamic masculine ideals. When portrayed by women, masculine qualities are, perhaps, more readily discerned than if they were to be portrayed by men, since the contrast between human and male spirit is that much more profound (cf. Lambek 1978:400). Female "actors" thus provide a striking foil against which masculine qualities may be depicted. Hence, during ritual manifestations of male Darawish zairan in the bodies of their female hosts, the ideas of maleness and of masculine piety and dignity are presented as issues in themselves, apart from the individuals who might exhibit such qualities to one degree or another in the everyday human world.

Here, as in the structure of its ceremony, the possession system wrenches ideas from their ordinary common-sense constructions and grants them a certain amount of play, leaving adepts and onlookers to form their own conclusions. Moreover, this release of ideas from their usual contexts is compounded by the ambiguity which surrounds the possession trance episode. For as noted earlier, villagers observing possession trance in others are inexplicit as to which entity, human host or intrusive spirit, performs in their midst.
Would-be readers of the event are provided no clear instructions as to how it ought to be interpreted, with the result that, having been confronted with seemingly incongruous entities within a single physical presence, those who attend a zar ritual are pretty well left to make of it what they will, to derive whatever messages from its various episodes as befit their own experiences and textual expertise.

In the case at hand, one woman observing the manifestation of a male Darawish zar might be led to contrast its demeanor to that of a recalcitrant kinsman. Another, at a more general level, might be led to consider the whole notion of gender, to ponder the social discriminations imposed by sexual identity upon Hofriyati humans. Yet another who observes a local woman "become" a Muslim holy man might be led to consider the relationship between Hofriyati females and Islam. Not that any or all of these are de facto messages of the zar; they are but potential meanings or "directions of thought", to use Ricoeur's phrase, that the ritually enacted possession text opens up for contemplation. Thus they are immanent within the zar text, though not fully constructed until mentally taken up by one or more individuals.

To return to something noted a moment ago and left unfinished, not only is the concept of ideal masculinity put forward during manifestations of Darawish zairan, so also is the question of Islam and its relationship to Hofriyati women.
Through consideration of this issue we are brought to realize yet another, one conspicuously absent from our deliberations to this point: the relationship between zär itself and mainstream religion. For it is in the forum of the zär that Hofriyati women, who comprise the majority of those possessed, broach the subject of Islam. Thus we might contrast what zär adepts themselves have to say about Islam and their position vis-à-vis that religion with what anthropologists who have investigated zär and other possession cults, notably I.M. Lewis, have concluded in this regard.

Lewis asserts that Islam is a central or "main morality cult" (1966, 1971a, 1971b), one "whose concern is the maintenance of general morality in a society" (1971b:213) whereas the zär in Sudan is a "peripheral cult", one which attracts individuals such as women who occupy low social positions, and "is not directly concerned with the official public cult of Islam, nor does it perform any central role in the maintenance of general morality" (1971b:214). Lewis goes on to note that the zär "appears to function as a compensation for [women's] partial exclusion from full participation in the men's world of Islam" (1971b:214). Moreover, the zär, he says, plays no real role in maintaining public morality because the spirits "strike their victims haphazardly and mischievously without direct reference to moral infringements or misdemeanors" (1971b:214). The zär, then, is here seen as
a sort of counterfoil to Islam which is at once a gesture of
defiance and of hopeless acquiescence to the established
social order on the parts of women and of disadvantaged men
(1971a:32ff), and which, because there is no direct link
between possession affliction and human misbehavior, does not
enforce a particular moral code.

But if the zar is not a part of official Islam, as the
majority of Islamic clergy would avow, it is in many ways
associated with Islam, if only by dint of efforts to
legitimize its existence. We have seen, for example, that
zairan are considered a type of jinn, spirits whose reality is
verified by mention in the Quran. Moreover, in the system of
zar beliefs certain recurrent symbols and concepts, such as
"tying" and the number seven, link that cult to the wider
system of popular Islam. Constantinides (1972:324) sees a
remarkable similarity between the organized Sufic brotherhoods
or Muslim orders (tarīgat) and the organized zar cult in
Khartoum and Omdurman. There, in fact, the zar appears to be
modelled directly upon the Muslim fraternities: the zar
sheikha commands respect and deference from adepts much as the
tarīga sheikh from his following; and public ceremonies of the
zar cult, periodically organized by individual sheikhat (a
custom not practiced in Hofriyat) greatly resemble public
zikrs of the tarīgat in their uses of such ceremonial props as
flags, and in their prayers directed to Allah and the Prophet.
In Hofriyat zar rituals begin with offers of greeting to Allah and requests for the Prophet's blessing, then, after a general invocation of all zairan, adepts proceed to drum the threads "one by one" commencing with those appropriate to Muslim leaders and founders of religious orders. And, as Constantinides notes, "most of those women who participate in the [zar] cult genuinely believe that it is a part of Islam" (1972:14). Thus, if Muslim clergy and Western anthropologists wish to consider the zar as something apart from the main morality cult of Islam, its adherents certainly do not.

But just what is it that zar adepts here mean by Islam is not fully understood. For Hofriyati, at least, Islam is not something that can be divorced from the total social reality in which they live. For, I will submit, it is their way of life. The term "Islam" is used by them in a loose sense, to express that reality described here as informed by the idiom of interiority, a reality which is more embracing than what we might be inclined to call religion, and which, as we have seen with regard to female circumcision, often contradicts the teachings of orthodox Islam. In saying that the zar is a part of Islam adepts assert, quite rightly, that it has to do with the essential values and moral tenets of their culture.

But the nature of this relationship remains ambiguous. On the one hand zar supports Hofriyati culture, it does serve to maintain morality. Zairan are capricious, it is true, but
they are not oblivious of their hosts' and hosts' husbands' supposed misconduct. Certainly they are not above giving the proverbial slap on the wrist to hosts who violate the ideals of Hofriyati womanhood.

Yet, on the other hand, zār illuminates deficiencies in Hofriyati culture. It cautions against the too strict enforcement of interiority, a value which is buttressed and legitimized by Islam in numerous respects (i.e. endogamy, sex segregation).

Again, despite ceremonial invocations to Allah and the Prophet, zār and Islam are separate contexts. Women in attendance at a zār leave the mīdān in order to pray; Umselima quits her practice as sheikha when she goes on the haj; no drumming can take place during the observances of Ramadan. Thus zār is distinguished from and respectful of mainstream religion.

And so we come to the heart of the relationship between zār and Islam in Hofriyat. Zār is less a comment upon Islam per se than a comment upon the wider social and cultural reality of which Islam is a part. Zār rituals in Hofriyat, if they are patterned after anything, are patterned after the wedding ceremony (cf. Chapter 10), albeit in complicated and negative fashion. And it is the wedding ceremony that celebrates the totality of Hofriyati culture; it more than any other ceremony extols the value of relative enclosedness, of limited, morally
restricted openness within the context of village society. The zar appears less a counterfoil to mainstream religion than a counterfoil to mainstream Hofriyati culture.

Now Darawish zairan, for their part, may be thought of as symbols of interiority in the extreme. Both male and female spirits among them are embodiments of qualities and attributes deemed ideal by local woman but virtually inaccessible to them. Since many, though not all, have to do with values promulgated by orthodox Islam, they are more readily approximated by Hofriyati males than Hofriyati females, yet even the former rarely are able to attain them to fullest measure. Such qualities include the association of one's person with baraka (blessing), piety and learnedness, supreme dignity and forbearance, leadership, and exemption from physical labor. Darawish, moreover, are linked with controlled feminine fertility, desired by Hofriyati women but well beyond their powers to command.

Thus when ordinary women take on the characteristics of their inaccessible ideals in possession trance, they manifest qualities which they, as good Muslims, would aspire to exhibit in everyday life were it not for their gender. But this may be read with slightly different emphasis: Darawish spirits become manifest in women whose bodies symbolize the ideal of enclosedness, but who are themselves precluded from ever attaining the position which accompanies that ideal (and which
Darawish zairan symbolize) by reason of their femininity. The manifestation of a Darawish z̄ar in a female villager is, then, a paradox, one which illuminates the paradox of being female in Hofriyat. A woman is interiority, for her body (especially that of a bride) symbolizes this value in its most perfect, yet still human form. But she is virtually excepted from becoming all of those things associated with interiority (learned, powerful, a leader of men, devoted to worship and higher pursuits as opposed to earthly work) that males might become and her spirit briefly exhibits through her during possession trance. Indeed, the paradox is more complete in that aspects of the Hofriyati interiority ideal are epitomized by alien existents, beings whose foreignness is apparent in their patently non-Hofriyati marital and jural arrangements. Thus we see that the z̄ar does have to do with the exclusion of women "from full participation in the men's world of Islam" (Lewis 1971b:214), but in a more complex and more subtle way than we might originally have been led to suspect.

Lewis's distinction between the z̄ar as a peripheral cult and Islam as a main morality cult is certainly a useful one. If nothing else it stipulates that there is a fundamental relationship between the two systems of belief, a contrastive relationship, to be sure. However, if we wish to probe the extent of this contrast, it is not sufficient to note only what Islam has to say about the z̄ar; rather, we must also read
what it is that the zar has to say about Islam, and this should entail more than an analysis of the social positions of zar adherents relative to those of full-fledged participants in mainstream Islam. It must, in all fairness, involve an investigation of the zar text, the implicit messages delivered by spirits of a particular identity via their characteristic behaviors and demands, relative to Hofriyati culture as a whole.

In subsequent pages we have occasion to observe the range of treatment that Islam, as subject for consideration, receives in the zar. Seen through the possession idiom Islam appears in several guises, not only that which provides extreme expression of Hofriyati interiority ideals. For example, if Darawish zairan are respected Muslim elders, founders of religious orders and their pious daughters, Fellata zairan are poverty stricken West African Muslims, zealous but undignified, whose lives are dedicated to accomplishing the pilgrimage to Mecca. Again, now among the 'Arāb, one finds militant Muslim spirits, zar parallels of humans who fought in the holy war of the Sudanese Mahdi at the end of the nineteenth century. But more than this, since several species of zairan profess to be either Christian or "pagan", zar opens up the direction of thought that Islam, though foremost in importance, certainly is not the only religion practiced in the spirit (read human) world.
The second spirit species invoked at zar ceremonies is that of the Ethiopians or Abyssinians. This group includes the zar parallels of Ethiopian Christians, plus some Muslims residing in or near that region. The Habish are, with the possible exception of the Khawajat (Westerners), the most popular zar species to affect Hofriyati, embracing some twenty-five named zairan. In contrast to other groups where male spirits predominate, the gender ratio among Habish spirits is remarkably well balanced.

Listed as Habish and invoked as a solitary spirit, but properly referring to all zairan regardless of type, is Wilad Mama, Children of Mother, whose thread introduced the present chapter. Somewhat paradoxically Mama, the "mother" of zairan, is sometimes held to be male. While intriguing, this blurring of sex identity may be explained as the result of Hofriyati's merging two spirits which elsewhere are distinct. Constantinides (1972:331), for example, notes the existence in Khartoum of Wazir Mama, a male spirit and emissary of Mama. Like Wazir Mama, Wilad Mama in Hofriyat is considered the representative or overseer of all zairan. Yet a Hofriyati woman when entered by this spirit or spirit plurality makes gestures as though she were mothering an infant during the drumming of its thread. Thus would Wilad Mama seem to
incorporate both male and female characteristics. Here as with the Darawish sexual identity and its implications for role behavior are rendered ambiguous in the zar and offered to participants as food for thought.

Several additional figures of power and authority are among the Habish: there is Birono, a king or ruler, husband to Sitti Khuđera earlier discussed; Shamharush, another petty king; Yo, a high court official; Bishir Tadır, a dark-skinned nobleman; Sulțan el-Ḥabish, the sultan or king of Ethiopia which is depicted as seated upon a horse. There is also an Ethiopian priest, and a zar by the name of Sheikh Mohammed Sa'adabi, spirit counterpart of a leader of the Ja'aliyin Sa'adab who fled Shendi district for the Ethiopian frontier following the murder of Ismail Pasha in 1822 (Chapter 1). Sulțan el-Riḥ and Sulțan el-Aḥmar (Sultan of the Wind or Spirit, Red Sultan) are alternate names for the Habish zar which is said to be king of all zairan. In Hofriyat the popularity of this last spirit appears to be waning, for all of its present hosts are elderly. Its place in the Hofriyati zar pantheon is gradually being taken by Wilad Mama, a spirit which in some respects duplicates the Sultan's functions.

Two other male Habish spirits interest us in that they, too, are political personages. One is Galay Galay, chief of the Galla tribe which requires a spear for its host to carry; the other is Romai, Ya WazIr Galla, "Roman, Oh Vizier of the
Galla", a zär which may represent the Italian presence in Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941.  

As a rule male Habish zairan demand red jelabiyat, red shawls and red fezes, and dance when in the bodies of their human hosts in a proud and rather stately manner. Several demand ebony or ivory walking sticks of one design or another; all invariably smoke cigarettes.

Of the remaining Habish zairan most are explicitly female, requesting red dresses and head scarves. Raya, Shilshila, Amerio, Shamiya, 'Aya ("illness"), and Beney Showina are the names of Habishiyat whose characteristics are not that well known. A more popular female Ethiopian is Dodo, Sitt ej-Jebana: Dodo, Lady of Coffee, a spirit which demands that coffee be prepared whenever it descends at a zär ceremony. This spirit requires its host to obtain a gold pendant in the shape of an Ethiopian cross; it further demands that she observe a special coffee-drinking service every Sunday. Dodo is said to come from a place called Jebel Nado (Nado Hill), itself a Habish spirit, a hill on which coffee is grown.

Hamāma-t-el-Bahr, Pigeon of the River, is a female zär considered as beautiful and as graceful as are water birds. Often when this spirit invades its host during the course of a ritual it has her make gestures as though she were swimming in the Nile. Alternatively, Pigeon of the River has its host
perform the Hofriyati women's dance, that which is said to mimic the strut of a pigeon or some other small bird. While classed as Habish, the thread appropriate to Pigeon of the River frequently is drummed toward the end of the zar alongside that of another spirit, et-Tomsaḥ, the Crocodile. The reasoning behind this change of sequence will be discussed at a later point in the chapter. Here, however, we might recall that in Chapter 2 a strong metaphoric association was noted between pigeons and circumcised Hofriyati women, and also between water (especially the Nile) and female fertility. Pigeon of the River, then, conceals a message about Hofriyati womanhood which, according to adepts, is more meaningfully "read" in relation to the Crocodile zar.

Maray is a beautiful Ethiopian zar of noble descent; Sitt em-Mendil (Lady of the Handkerchief) and Luliya Ḥabishiya are said to be beautiful and extremely flirtatious. Indeed, all female Ḥabish zairan are thought to be prostitutes or, at the very least, maṭlūgat, "loose women", characterized by wanton, lustful, and even erotic behavior.

Luliya is especially interesting in this regard, as its character is rather well developed. Its particular demands are for bridal incense, agate beads, a gold nose-ring, rings of silver to be worn in its host's pierced upper ears, and a firka garmosis, the red and gold bridal veil. Significantly, when it descends in ritual situations a red bridal mat is
spread on the ground and Luliya dances as a Hofriyati bride, though in a less restrained manner than the latter and with obvious pretense at shyness.

Now, here dramatized is the association between the Hofriyati wedding and the zār discussed in Chapter 10. When Luliya descends the zār's otherwise subtle parody of the wedding is rendered explicit, it becomes more apparent. The spirit's performance thus reinforces participants' intuited conclusions in this regard, or perhaps serves to cultivate this awareness in the first place. For when Luliya is present in the mīdān the zār becomes a mock wedding in substance as well as in format.

Moreover, Luliya, a wanton, uncircumcised alien, presumes to dance as a restrained and circumcised village woman. And in so doing, in attempting to overcome its basic disposition, the spirit exaggerates the highly controlled rhythmic steps of a bride to the point where imitated Hofriyati drama becomes a spirit farce. Luliya is not by nature bashful; its timidity must be feigned and seems more than a little trite. The spirit's personality shows through the facade it erects with the aid of its host's body, casting enacted Hofriyati behaviors and attitudes into relief against a background of patently non-Hofriyati characteristics.

But surely this is not all. For what onlookers observe is a restrained, circumcised Hofriyati woman in the role of a
wanton, uncircumcised alien which in turn plays a restrained Hofriyati woman. Here in looking at the "other", what Hofriyati see is the other looking at themselves; in looking at one of their own entranced, they see themselves looking at how the other might regard them. They are, then, provided a unique opportunity to contemplate the image which they, as Hofriyati women, present to the outside world and to think about how it might be received.

Yet at the same time villagers might be led to note that however refined the attempt, wanton, uncircumcised non-Hofriyati females cannot ultimately "pass" for Hofriyati women: invariably they give themselves away. The integrity of Hofriyati values is safeguarded since only human village-born females might genuinely and successfully express them.

Thus Hofriyati and non-Hofriyati characteristics are, simultaneously, context and contrast for each other. And whenever Luliya appears those women present who are not entranced laugh uproariously. The whole event is an elaborate joke, a forcing together of several levels of normally disparate reality into a few densely packed tension filled moments that explode when Luliya furtively peeks over the hands that cover its host's face in (mock) timidity. Here so much is stated, so much more implied. It is, in Koestler's terms, a truly creative act, one which "operates on more than one plane.... [It is] a double minded, transitory state of
unstable equilibrium where the balance of both emotion and thought is disturbed" (1975: 35-36). The "creative instability" inherent in this episode jolts commonplace attitudes held by those who witness it, suddenly calling tacitly accepted values to conscious attention. It seems not to matter how often the joke is retold, Luliya always gets a laugh. Yet it is really Hofriyati women who get the laugh—at their own expense.

A similar ludic drama ensues whenever another Habish spirit, Sulayman Ya Jenna, enters the midan. Sulayman is an unmarried male homosexual whose name is a pun: Jenna here means "one who is veiled" or "concealed" (like a woman) and, according to informants it may also mean "one who is possessed". In addition, however, its name sounds much like jenā, "fruit", a colloquialism for offspring, and might thus call to mind the essence of its character: its misplaced fertility and problematic sexuality.

Sulayman calls for its host to chew tobacco, drink marīssa, native beer, and wear a jelabiya, all typical of Hofriyati men. But in the midan Sulayman behaves like a Hofriyati woman. When resident in its host it constantly fusses with its jelabiya, trying with but limited success to wear it as a woman's tōb, a length of cloth that is wrapped around the body and tenuously pinned in place by the left arm held close against the chest. Sulayman in its host struts
around the midān impatiently tucking up whatever loose material it can gather from it jelabīya-*tōb* and stuffing this under its host's left arm, all the while holding the hem of its garment lest this drag. The spectacle is comic indeed, and evokes much laughter. For here we see a woman in male costume "playing" the role of a man playing the role of a woman. But in this case, unlike that of Luliya, Hofriyati feminine traits are not depicted against those of non-Hofriyati females. Rather, Hofriyati femininity is placed in contrast to Hofriyati masculinity and then the opposition is subverted in the inexplicit sexuality of the spirit possessor. The effect is to emphasize the distinction between male and female while showing that distinction to be problematic and ambiguous. Sex differences in the human world receive clarification and definition by contrast with Sulayman. Equally, however, a Hofriyati woman is seen to assume traits of both sexes simultaneously.

The episode itself thus becomes something of a paradox. In examining its construction, William James' "law of dissociation" provides instruction as to how the initial contrast is set up. According to James, if two parts of an object, (a) and (b), regularly occur together, the placement of one of these, (a), in a novel combination (ax) leads to the discrimination of (a), (b), and (x) from one another (1918: 506). In the case at hand, feminine gestures normally are
associated with feminine dress, and masculine dress normally is associated with masculine gestures. But in the possession episode feminine gestures are depicted in association with masculine dress, thereby wrenching both traits from their ordinary contexts and heightening awareness of the qualities to which they respectively refer. As James notes, "What is associated now with one thing and now with another, tends to become dissociated from either, and to grow into an object of abstract contemplation by the mind" (1918: 506). The drama of Sulayman, in fact, is a double dissociation, for while aspects of femininity are taken out of normal context and associated with aspects of masculinity, the reverse is also true. Male and female traits are well contrasted.

But at the same time they are merged in Sulayman's hybrid sexuality. Not only does a woman "play" a man playing a woman, but a woman with a definite gender identity "plays" a male spirit with an indefinite gender identity acting like a woman whose gender is explicit. The episode is, then, more than a comic discourse on the differences between femininity and masculinity in Hofriyat; again it raises the issue of gender in itself, whether male or female, neither or both. While demonstrating the necessity of explicit sexual identity for spirit (read human) reproduction — Sulayman has no offspring — it also demonstrates that gender categories are cultural constructs and not wholly immutable.
To conclude discussion of the intriguing Ethiopian zairan we examine one more spirit, or more accurately perhaps, two: Et-Tomat Rongay, Benat Jozay, "The Splendid Twins, Paired Girls". Here we are further reminded that Habish zairan are closely linked to female fertility disorder. Many, such as Luliya and Sulayman, are associated with exaggerated but subverted sexuality: a wanton prostitute, though she act as a "bride", is thought incapable of producing moral children since her offspring are illegitimate (Chapter 3), and male homosexuals use their potential fertility inappropriately. Now, twin daughters are indeed an expression of fertility in an exaggerated sense, yet here, too, there is something amiss. The Splendid Twins represent fertility gone awry, for according to Hofriyati, sons, not daughters, would have been a more suitable result. The twin daughters are ambiguous, markers of potent fertility and of problematic fertility at one and the same time. Here an issue which Hofriyati deem clear-cut ideally, but which is, in practice, anything but, is shown also to be ambiguous in the parallel world of zairan. The ambiguity of Benat Jozay may identify a problem of meaning which villagers are not always given to acknowledge. But at the same time the spirits may help to define by opposition the procreative priorities of Hofriyati, mediating as they do between the extremes of desirable offspring: twin boys and single girls.
Now Habish zairan require red clothing and, as a rule, the sacrifice of a reddish-brown sheep. Hence they effectively constitute the red species of the red genus of jinn, and are doubly associated with the ambiguity that this color implies. Indeed, in their characteristic gestures, traits and demands the Habish provide dramatized portraits of ambiguity and paradox whenever they enter the midān. Their antics illuminate the power that inheres in ambiguity, when that which is "common sense" is torn down and reconstructed, depicted in "uncommon" light. Like all zairan but more eloquently, the Habish are liminal beings, beings which, as Turner describes, "have the pedagogical function of stimulating the [human participants'] powers of analysis and revealing to them the building blocks from which their hitherto taken-for-granted world has been constructed" (1977: 69).

Power itself is a theme explored by the Habish zairan. Inherited masculine power is transformed into something to think about when normally retiring and "powerless" women are seen to exhibit the characteristics of kings and princes, strutting proudly with heads held high, glancing with graceful disdain at those whom they encounter. Here, then, red may signify not only ambiguity but also worldly potency. The might of Habish zairan is not religious as is that of the Darawish; instead it is secular and mundane, comprising both
the power of sexuality and that of vested, heritable authority.

And this brings us to an important point. The Habish and the Darawish, plus species yet to be discussed, contrast with each other as well as with Hofriyati humans. The spirit world thus constitutes a structure, a comprehensive arrangement. It is far more than a simple aggregation of isolated elements, spirit species and individual zairan. It is a system of relations in which the significance of each element derives from its place in the whole, and from its relations to other like elements (cf. Dumont 1972: 71, Lambek 1978, Langer 1942: 56). Thus, in part, the meaning of a particular spirit consists in the scope of its suggested references to other spirits or spirit species along certain dimensions: sexual power versus political power; secular authority versus religious authority; different faces of Islam represented by the Darawish, 'Arab and Fellata zairan; and so on. If we or if Hofriyati be but patient enough and persistent enough to trace the system through to the limits of our respective spirit competences, we would be left with a complex, intersecting network of relations, a virtually inexhaustible pool of ideas reflecting upon spirit (read human) existence.
'ARĀB

Following threads devoted to Habish zairan, Hofriyati usually drum those of the 'Arāb. These are Muslim nomads, most of which are thought to inhabit the eastern deserts of Sudan. Several 'Arāb zairan occasionally are classed as Habish, and some Habish are thought also to be 'Arāb. Hence the break between the two species is not at all distinct. Ceremonially, too, threads of the Habish shade imperceptibly into those of the 'Arāb. Just as the political boundary between Sudan and Ethiopia is ethnically artificial in that human 'Arāb reside on either side, so the boundary between the two zar species said to dwell in this area is relatively vague.

Included among the 'Arāb are two female spirits, Hassina 'Arabiya and Luli Hassina. Possibly these are manifestations or local derivations of the same zar: both are depicted as Hadendowa brides and request similar items of silver jewelry of their hosts. In contrast to the Habishiyat they are not considered prostitutes, and behave demurely when inhabiting their hosts. Sometimes they portray themselves in mime as if travelling in a ḥowda, a large canopied seat in which women and children are carried on the back of a camel, thus pointing up the contrast between the spirits' transhumant lifestyle and that of the sedentary Hofriyati women. Entering the midān
on another occasion one might perform the 'Arāb jaboudi dance, similar to the "pigeon" dance of Hofriyati women but more animated and sensuous. Female 'Arāb demand soured camel's milk to drink and semen, strong-smelling clarified butter, to smear on their hair (cf. Constantinides 1972: 163).

Most male 'Arāb spirits are Hadendowa or Beja. Each requests a costume of wide legged pants and loose fitting over-shirt and demands some sort of weapon. Holiba 'Arabiya, "Gypsy of the Automobile", is a Beja lorry-driver -- a modern nomad -- which requests a narrow long-toothed Beja comb to place in its fuzzy hair. Sulayman el-Bedawi, "Sulayman the Bedouin", is a Hadendowa bridegroom which demands scented paste to wear on its (host's) head, as in the jirtig. Jamali is an aggressive nomad of unspecified nationality which demands both sword and whip, plus a Beja tōb, a length of cloth worn criss-crossing the chest. Mohammed or Ahmed el-BishIr, known as the sheikh or leader of the 'Arāb zairan, is Hadendowa and requires a silk tōb and a whip. Mohammed Bikeyfu is a fierce and rather dangerous zār, apparently the spirit parallel of a Beja warrior who fought on behalf of Osman Digna, an Eastern ally of the Khalifa during the latter years of the Mahdiya. Its demand is for a sword which, when this spirit becomes manifest, its host is made to draw, brandish menacingly, and resheath throughout its chant.
Another 'Arāb spirit notable for its aggressiveness is Bernowi, a Baggara spirit from Kordofan which demands that its host must carry a spear. Bernowi is said to be "highest in command", an officer in some informal army. Interestingly, human Baggara were the principal supporters of the Khalifa (the Mahdi's successor) at the end of the nineteenth century, and Hofriyati refer to as Baggara members of an expedition sent by the Khalifa purportedly against Egypt but effectively against the riverain Ja'ali tribes in 1889. Hofriyati hold Baggara tribesmen responsible for the destruction and privation which they or their relatives underwent during these troubled times (Chapter 1). Thus, when the Baggara zar descends into the midān and into the body of its human host we see far more than a woman manifesting traditionally masculine behaviors, and more than a villager exhibiting the stereotyped characteristics of an alien ethnic group. For here the zar counterpart of Hofriyati's longstanding human enemy appears, invited, in their midst. The woman invaded by Bernowi displays the physical traits of Hofriyati womanhood and the behavioral traits of Hofriyati's most dreaded adversary at one and the same time. The distinction between two sides in a lengthy quarrel is thereby drawn, only to be opaqued or mediated in the temporary episode of a villager's possession trance.
But there are less odious figures than Bernowi among the 'Arab zairan. For here we encounter two child spirits: Wad el-'Arab, a schoolboy who wants a töb like that of its elders, and 'Ali Ababa, a tiny lost boy which wears an 'Arab töb and cries for its father, whining, "They stole my camel and I am little and my guardian has gone and left me alone!" When Wad el-'Arab or 'Ali Ababa descend during a zār ritual, an intriguing drama ensues. For an ordinarily sedate, dignified adult woman, now entranced, suddenly takes on the behaviors of a small child. The humor in this situation is patent: 'Ali Ababa, in the body of its human host, runs around the midān -- as Hofriyati women do not -- searching for its father or for its purloined camel, sometimes wailing brokenheartedly, sometimes tripping, sometimes just staring at onlookers with pathetically rounded eyes. Thus its human host is made to perform those actions and to portray those feelings which her culture repeatedly enjoins her to restrain: "she" behaves clumsily, "her" demeanor is undignified, "she" shows a range of tempestuous emotion. In short, she is seen to behave well as she might have done prior to her socialization in the idiom of interiority. The contrast between her present self and that of her childhood is deepened in that 'Ali Ababa is a male, a member of another culture, and a zār: it is indeed "other" than its human host. When this contrast between the two entities is overcome via possession trance and a Hofriyati
woman behaves with childhood license in an innocent, apparently unsimulated manner, the effect is bizarre, unexpected, and obviously comical.

Several other spirits included in the category 'Arab are somewhat less popular than those we have discussed. Wad el-Badiya, "Son of the Steppe", is a West Asian camel nomad; Budwani belongs to an Ethiopian 'Arab tribe; El-Kuraishi is a member of the Prophet's tribe (Quraish) in Saudi Arabia and demands a traditional four-cornered Arabian headdress. Finally there is El-Tulub, "The Request", said to be an assembly of all the 'Arab zairan demanding that their hosts stage a zar party so they might descend and be entertained.

Khawajat

Next to be drummed at a zar are the threads of Westerner zairan. Alternatively these spirits are referred to as Nasareen, Christians (or Nazarenes), though the category embraces a heterogenous mixture of ethnic groups not all of which are associated with Christianity. The Khawajat have light skin and are thought to be wealthy. Among their general demands are whiskey, beer, cigarettes, and bottled soft-drinks, plus various expensive fruits, cheeses and tinned foods.

If the woman on whose behalf a zar ritual is mounted finds herself supplied with sufficient funds, a sequence known
as maiz might be held. Maiz, according to Constantinides (1972:201) is a colloquial corruption of "the mess", food (and the place where it is eaten) provided to soldiers in the British Army. The maiz of a zar ceremony consists of a table which is set with a tablecloth and European-style cutlery, and on which are put foods thought to please Khawaja zairan: cheese, olives, sausages, cherries, apples, jam, white bread, tinned fish, oranges, guavas, bananas, sherry, Pepsi, and small single shot bottles of European and North American liquor. Straight backed chairs may be placed at the table and the hosts of Khawaja zairan be invited by a manifest Khawaja zar to seat themselves and partake of the meal. Alternatively the table might be set for a "bufay" — to be served buffet style; informants told me that maiz was much like an English tea party. Unfortunately I did not observe a maiz ceremony during fieldwork in Hofriyat, for none of the women whose rituals I attended was able to afford one. Constantinides' description of such an event, though pertinent to zar in Khartoum and Omdurman and thus perhaps different from what might take place in Hofriyat, is interesting nonetheless:

All dance around the table, swaggering, speaking 'English' or 'Greek', pretending to drink from the bottles and generally exemplifying their image of Europeans. A typical exchange in Arabic, between two 'Europeans' swaggering around arm in arm: "C'mon, let's go to Church", "Naa, let's go to the bar." (1972:202)
Among the Khawaja spirits are Mestair Brinso, "Mister Prince", an archeologist which requires khaki pants and shirt, pith helmet, black shoes, and eye glasses; and wealthy Dondo, Ya Rondu which is depicted as smoking cigarettes one after the other, drinking whiskey, reclining on a bed, and riding in a taxi. The wife of Dondo, Ya Rondu is Sitt Mama, "Lady Mother", a female Coptic zār said to love pigeons and to desire gold caps for its host’s front teeth.

Then, of course, there is Dodomayo, an Athenian overly fond of wine. This zār, when it descends at a ritual, chooses a woman from the audience (Hofriyati or, better, Khawaja anthropologist), and leads her around the mīdān in ceremonial courtship, bowing to those it presumably meets whilst on its promenade. It demands two straight-backed chairs to be set up in the center of the mīdān so that it and its "bride" might be admired by all.

Donnabey is a male Khawaja zār, a North American doctor, portrayed as a big game hunter which drinks whiskey and beer, dresses in a khaki suit and carries a powerful rifle, perhaps an elephant gun. Like Sulayman, Ya Jenna and Luliya of the Habish, this zār is better known than most, and its typical behaviors and demands well developed and thoroughly dramatized by Hofriyati who are its hosts. For Donnabey, the fierce big game hunter, chases not lions and elephants but little animals called sa'id. From descriptions given to me by villagers
sa'id are probably tiny antelope known in East Africa as dik-dik; occasionally they are captured in the Hofriyat area and kept as pets. They are said to have lovely smooth fur that is light in color, and big dark eyes. Intriguingly, too, the term sa'id is used as a metaphor for petite and beautiful nubile girls and young women, and Donnabey is considered a rather unsavory, lascivious character.

Thus when Donnabey takes up residence in the body of a Hofriyati woman, what are the potential messages or ideas to be read from the episode? In the first place, Donnabey is a ludicrous character, chasing after dainty little dik-dik with a weapon designed to bring down animals weighing hundreds of pounds. Perhaps what Donnabey portrays here is a Hofriyati view of North American "overkill" -- the use of more complex technology than necessary to achieve ends better served by simpler means. Hofriyati, after all, capture dik-dik using nets and stealth, and capture them alive; the North American doctor spirit loses what it gains in annihilating them with its powerful gun. What might emerge via the dramatic contrast between feminine Hofriyati "player" and masculine Khawaja character is the idea of foreign technology and the question of its usefulness to the people of Hofriyat. Villagers, who generally are in favor of bringing electricity to the village and of acquiring such comforts as refrigerators and televisions, are thus perhaps warned that in the process of
modernization they might destroy that which is so small a part of the world and which they seek to enhance, their distinctive Hofriyati culture.

But Donnabey is more than a caricature of high technology. It is a male zar, one which is a skilled and learned doctor and, as such, a figure of respect. Yet Donnabey's behavior is not the sort to garner respect, for it is seen as chasing after nubile Sudanese girls and stalking harmless little animals. In this a number of ideas present themselves: that positive masculine traits such as learning and accomplishment may be housed simultaneously with negative traits such as lust and, at the very least, bad manners and poor judgement; that no matter how mightiful a foreigner may be, no matter how well-educated, he ought not be trusted in the presence of one's womenfolk; that Western doctors, however much they are dedicated to saving lives, frequently appear to destroy that which they desire to preserve.

These potential messages harbor a number of practical implications if read in terms of Hofriyati's own experiences, not the least of which might relate to the fact that North American scholars and students lived and worked at the archeological site near Hofriyat every winter from 1971 to 1976, and were frequent visitors to the village. Another, more poignant implication concerns the fact that hospitals, staffed by Western and Western-trained Sudanese doctors, are
hopelessly inadequate to the needs of the rural population, so much so that the seriously sick and injured must endure a long and often arduous journey in order to reach one, and usually will undertake the trip only when death is imminent.

But apart from and in addition to all of this, Donnabey is portrayed in the body of a Hofriyati female. The result here as elsewhere in the zār is a paradox: the hunter in one sense "becomes" its prey, while the reverse is also true, a Hofriyati woman "becomes" a Khawaja male which chases Hofriyati women. As in the case of Bernowi the Baggara warrior, a potential enemy is dealt with not by denying its existence or its power, but by acknowledging it and inviting it to become manifest in Hofriyati's midst in a controlled and temporally limited manner.

Also among the Khawaja we find Bamba Beya, "boy of the ancient monuments", a "Turk" vacationing at the pyramids close to Hofriyat (possibly Cailliaud or Burckhardt, or Budge, Chapter 1); Aziza, Lady of Bracelets, an Egyptian female zār and a Copt; Hindiya, an East Indian female spirit which demands that its host wear her tōb as a sari; Wad en-Naṣara, "ya mama meya!": "Son of the Christians, oh mama mia!" an Italian Christian zār which hunts water fowl and is similar to Donnabey; Hashira, a female spirit which is portrayed as riding in a carriage over the bridge between Khartoum and Khartoum North, well above the heads of others down below; and
Miriam el-Azrak, "Miriam the Black": the Virgin Mary of which it is said "Shallat 'Isa fi-k-kanIsa", "She carried Jesus in the church." Miriam requests that its host obtain a black dress and black head shawl such as are worn by Catholic nuns. Jamama is a female Chinese zar which walks with its husband through a garden of figs, and Ard as-Sin, "Land of China", is a male Khawaja spirit said to live in England and to own China (cf. Constantinides 1972:157).

There are, in addition to archeologists and doctors, a number of other Khawaja occupational zairan: Kapitan Tiyarat is an airplane captain; Gasis Romay is a Roman Catholic priest. There is a lawyer zar and a "priest from a monastery", possibly the zar parallel of a Coptic monk, which, strangely, is said to "take off in an airplane."

In Khartoum and Omdurman certain well-known European historical figures such as Lord Cromer (el-Wardi Karoma) and General Charles Gordon (Gordel) are represented in the zar (Constantinides 1972:338). Constantinides notes a Khawaja spirit called Nimr el-Kindo, "Tiger of Kindo", which is said to be a boatman and to live in the desert, and she speculates as to whether this represents Sir Samuel Baker. Baker was hired by the Khedive Isma'il to suppress slaving in Sudan during the mid-nineteenth century and proceeded to his task by sailing up the Nile with a flotilla of steamers and sailing ships (1972:95). In Hofriyat there is a Khawaja zar by the
name of Nimr el-Khala, "Tiger of the Desert", which is associated with steamboats and which might thus be a local version of Nimr el-Kindo. However, this zar is not above a great many village women, and the particulars of its character and its demands are, in consequence, poorly known. Some do speculate that Nimr el-Khala is English, and is the zar parallel of an unnamed British military officer who came upriver during the late nineteenth century war against the Sudanese Mahdists (whether in the attempt to rescue Gordon in 1885 or in the Anglo-Egyptian invasion of 1898 is uncertain).

Lastly, we might note the recent addition of a female Canadian spirit, Sitt en-Nisa, "Lady of the Women". Of this zar we shall have something more to say in subsequent pages.

Khawaja zairan in general demand that their hosts acquire uniforms consisting of khaki shirts and pants, pith helmets, socks and shoes. Alternatively they request suit coats and trousers. They also express the desire for whistles, various types of caps and hats, and hooked canes. The females among them have more individualistic requests: a nun's habit; a sari, a Chinese high-collared, floor-length dress of floral silk with slits up the sides. While all Khawajat like whiskey, in fact any alcoholic beverage will do. And Khawajat demand more emphatically than do zairan of other species that their hosts eat "clean" foods and bathe with Lux soap.
Bashawat

Frequently classed with Khajawat and often invoked as part of that species at zār rituals are the Pasha spirits. The majority of these are the zār parallels of military officers, doctors, and bureaucrats of the Ottoman occupation who entered Sudan as administrators and officials sometime after 1821. Certain Bashawat, however, represent more modern versions of government figures. Hofriyati explained to me that the Bashawat are "big Khawajat", those Khawaja males having a great deal of power and authority. Alternatively they and other Khawajat are referred to as "nas Turuk" or Turks.

In this group we find Ḥakim Basha, Doctor Pasha, a spirit with two manifestations: one, a turn-of-the-century Turkish medical practitioner requesting a long white jelabīya, a long top coat, a fez and a walking stock; the other, a modern Western-trained doctor which desires that its host obtain a white coat, trousers, stethoscope, and tongue depressors. When Hakim Basha enters the body of its host, those attending the ritual approach her, asking the spirit to perform diagnoses and to recommend medications for their various complaints. Another modern doctor zār, Ḥakim bi dor, "Doctor by turns", is similarly petitioned, and further depicted as presiding over a waiting room where patients are seated in chairs placed in long rows, or over a hospital ward where
patients lie on beds lined up against the walls. This doctor spirit sees its patients one by one, each in turn, while they, for their part, converse amicably and have a "party" as they wait.

Basha Basha, "Sheikh of the long march", is said to be the zar parallel of an eighteenth or nineteenth century slave owner. This spirit is seen as capturing and transporting to markets in the north numerous zar members of Southern Sudanese tribes which it chains together in long lines for the forced journey downstream.

Somewhat more lightheartedly, a popular spirit, Basha Bishir, is an English emissary or colonial officer which dislikes travelling through the desert. It is portrayed as carrying a handkerchief with which to mop its brow, or as keeping a towel over its shoulder, ready at a moment's notice for a cooling splash into the Nile.

Basha-t-Adel is a European said to have much power. It travels by train, builds railways, and has a secretary. Sometimes it is depicted in the gestures of those humans whom it temporarily inhabits as a locomotive engineer, poised with arm raised as if to sound the train's alarm. Or it behaves as a conductor might, blowing an "all aboard" whistle that hangs around its host's neck. In addition to a whistle, Basha-t-Adel requests a peaked cap and a European style suit of clothes.
Abu Rîsh, Ya Amir ed-Desh, "Owner of Feathers, Oh Emir of the Armed Forces" is a military officer which requests a khaki uniform with a wide belt and epaulets, and a helmet-like hat with feathers in it. Abu Rish's costume resembles something like a cross between the outfit of a modern Sudanese military officer and the parade uniform of a turn-of-the-century British soldier.

Yet another spirit in this group deserves mention, for it is one of the few now current in Hofriyat that might tentatively be traced to an historical figure or event. This is Basha Korday, a zar about which unfortunately little is known. The name, however, is strikingly similar to that of Alexander Korda, the renowned film-maker who produced and directed the movie "The Four Feathers", a lengthy sequence of which was filmed on location in Sudan just south of Shendi in 1938 or 1939.9

Bashawat zairan generally request fezes and walking sticks. When inhabiting the bodies of their hosts they strut and swagger, and hook their canes over their host's arms as they dance.

Benat

Perhaps the least well defined group of zairan is that which consists of the "Ladies" or "Daughters". In Hofriyat the threads of female spirits are rarely drummed as a class
apart from other spirit species. Rather, they are drummed with those of the various ethnic groups with which the female zairan are respectively affiliated. When these spirits are discussed, however, frequently they are segregated from their male counterparts and placed in a class that is sexually homogeneous but ethnically mixed. The ambiguity here is instructive, as it reflects a corresponding ambiguity in the ordering of human society. Village women are classified either in terms of the men to whom they are related as fellow members of a specific patrilineage distinguished from other named patrilineages, or they may be classed "generically", as females irrespective of kin affiliation, complementary to but usually segregated from adult male villagers. Yet, even when the threads of female zairan are drummed along with those of male spirits in a particular category, a certain amount of segregation is preserved, for Hofriyati women maintain that it is appropriate to invoke female zairan only after their male species-counterparts have been invited to enter the mīdān. The spirits, in this instance at least, observe proper Hofriyati form.

Halib

Halib zairan are the spirit parallels of itinerant tinkers, Muslim gypsies, whose homeland is said to be Syria. Human gypsy women make a living peddling small items and
kitchen utensils in return for grain or money, while their menfolk sharpen and repair farm tools and fashion and mend leather goods. They wander from village to village along the Nile and from camp to camp (in zär threads, "from tree to tree") in the desert, spending but a day or two in any location before moving on.

Halib women can in no way be considered shy or retiring. Those whom I met in Hofriyat were considered shameless by local standards, for they assume a welcome in any courtyard they choose to enter, they initiate conversations with men to whom they are not related, and they are wont to speak rather freely on even the most sensitive of topics in mixed company. Indeed, they are forceful, earthy, and incredibly aggressive ladies whose antics shocked my own acculturated sensibilities almost as much as they shocked those of my village friends.

In Chapter 4 it was noted that Halib females are especially feared for the reputed power of their glance to cause hemorrhage (nazIf). For this reason, women in conditions of vulnerability such as brides, newly circumcised girls, pregnant women and women in childbirth, ought to be prevented from coming into visual contact with one. Should a Halibiya enter the hōsh of such a woman, her kin leap up and shut the door of the room in which she is lying or usher her safely inside the house, thereby preserving the boundary between Hofriyati (interiority) and those whose behavior
circumvents Hofriyati ideals (exteriority).

All of the above traits associated with human Halib are also associated with their zar counterparts. Halib zairan, along with Habish and certain of the Darawish, are often held responsible for fertility disorder. When a female Halib spirit ritually enters the body of its Hofriyati host, the latter takes on all of the aggressive, non-Hofriyati mannerisms and attitudes for which Halibiyat are known. "She" requests a peddler's basket (guffa) which "she" places on her head and proceeds to circulate among the assembly begging most persuasively "for the love of Allah!", "Give me a penny, c'mon, I'm hungry! In the name of Allah give me some bread!" are typical utterances of Halibiyat zairan. While human Halib are considered reasonably well to do, they are thought to dress poorly in order to evoke sympathy, thereby seducing gullible villagers into parting with some hard earned cash. Their zar counterparts, too, are considered charlatans, and Halib zairan can be quite difficult to bargain with, whether in their dealings with their human hosts or with audience members at a curing ceremony. An episode in which a female gypsy spirit manifests itself in the midan is highly amusing, but at the same time intimidating and a little frightening for Hofriyati women who know they are the butts of a ploy but whose culture admonishes them to be hospitable, tolerant, and accommodating. They do not wish to refuse the spirit and thus
give offence, for if nothing else, they fear its recriminations. Yet they do not wish to be seen as succumbing to its dissemblance. They laugh to see their kinswoman behave in so untoward and unusual a manner, but are made to feel just a little uncomfortable by the performance, forced, as they are, into a confrontation of incompatible values and attitudes. Much as Goffman observes with regard to circus goers (commenting upon Bergson 1950), when Hofriyati laugh at one whose behavior is improper in its most minute detail, they are all the while assessing their own behavior, their ideals, and finding them no laughing matter (1974:38).

*Halib*, a distinctive group in human experience, are always considered to form a separate species in the spirit world. Those that are named are Abu Munira, Nahali ("The Skinny One") and Barow Nayyar ("Luminous Scraps"), all male, and Halibiya of the Basket, a female which demands a green dress and a blue *tòb* in addition to its peddler's basket.

**Fellata**

These *zairan* are the spirit counterparts of West African Muslims working their way through Sudan on pilgrimage to Mecca. *Fellata* (or *Fulani*) *zairan* are sometimes referred to as *Takareen*, from the Takrur, apparently the name of a tribe whose homeland is near that of the Wolof in Senegal (Nagar 1971:98). Some Western Sudanese from Darfur are included in
this spirit group as well. Fellata holy men or highly placed officials on pilgrimage may be classed alternately with the Darawish (i.e. Sarikin Borno, the Sarkin or king of Bornu).

In chants and in trance behaviors of their hosts these spirits are depicted much like their human parallels; they are said to be impoverished and to wear ragged clothes; in tall mortars they pound spices to sell in local markets; they sell sweets made of boiled grain mixed with sugar. When inhabiting the bodies of their hosts they have the latter perform gestures of begging, though in this regard they are truly pathetic, not dissimulative as are Halib zairan. Needless to say, Hofriyati women consider begging to be an undignified occupation, one which they would not be brought to take up. To see one of their own invaded by a Fellata zar and made to behave in this way is thus to focus attention by way of negative metaphor upon those values which Hofriyati hold dear and those behaviors they do deem appropriate. Here again we note the potential of a spirit manifestation to stimulate thought about the characteristics of one's own culture relative to those of another. Yet at the same time, Fellata are engaged in an enterprise which all Muslims are enjoined to undertake: the pilgrimage to Mecca. So if Fellata zairan affront Hofriyati women on the issue of dignity, when it comes to following the dictates of Islam they outdo their human hosts, most of whom will never make the haj because of
financial want.

Classed as Fellata are the zār parallels of young women from Western Sudan who sell perfume and roasted peanuts in local markets, and whose morality village women suspect. These spirits request their hosts to obtain brightly colored tiyab of native cloth and gold rings (singular, zumam) to be worn through a perforation in one nostril.

Here also we find a spirit by the name of Nimr el-Kondo, "Tiger of Kondo", an itinerant merchant said to come from Chad and to speak French. Its human counterpart can be seen at the twice weekly suk in Kabushiya, selling everything from razors, mirrors, deodorant and cologne to hair pomade and Bazooka bubblegum. Nimr el-Kondo, too, is a peddler, and requires its host to obtain a fez and a blue vest to wear over its long white shirt.

The remaining Fellata zairan are Muslim pilgrims proper: Meriam, a female Fellata said to be shameless, demands a flat mortar on which to grind grain for flour or a deep one in which to pound spices; Abu Bukari is said to travel by camel and to obtain its "tea from Allah", hence to rely upon Allah's generosity rather than its own ingenuity; Tekonday is a pilgrim from West Africa which now lives in Darfur. When these last three spirits desire that their hosts consume food during a zār ceremony, inevitably they demand plain boiled grain and water.
Human *Fellata* are feared by H自贸i because they, along with Southern Sudanese, have a reputation for being able to perform *'amal*, black magic. Their spirit counterparts are thought similarly formidable, and are held responsible for some of the more severe forms of *zär* illness.

**Khudām** or *'Abīd*

As the threads of *zairan* are drummed sequentially, spirit by spirit, and species by species throughout a *zär* ceremony, there occurs a corresponding progression from spirits associated with more controlled behaviors and less severe illnesses to those associated with less controlled behaviors and more grievous disease. So it is that we come to the category of *zairan* which embraces the spirit parallels of Southern Sudanese, people who, in the not too distant past, could be enslaved. These spirits are referred to as Khudām, servants; *'Abīd*, slaves; or Zurūg, Blacks. Among them are found representatives of most of the better known Southern Sudanese tribes: Nuer, Dinka, Shilluk, and Nuba. But some Zurūg are said to come from the Western Sudan. These are the spirit counterparts of "pagan" Western tribes from which Muslim slavers also used to take captives.

The Blacks generally require their hosts to obtain black clothing, often in scanty proportions; some are said to demand the hides of animals, including an elaborately decorated
leopard skin. Male 'Abīd spirits want spears, ebony walking sticks and clay pipes, while the females among them, like female Fellata, request mortar stones for grinding millet. The Blacks cause their hosts to dance violently in possession trance; their drum rhythms are somewhat quicker and more pronounced than are those of other spirit species. These zairan, again like the Fellata with which they are sometimes classed, are considered adept at black magic and are thought to bring on the more serious or prolonged of zar inflicted illnesses.

Named spirits in this species include Bainallah, also called Ferigallah, literally "separated God", a name which indicates the pagan beliefs of this zar which is an elderly female Nuba. BaharanIl, "River Nile", is another female slave spirit, also elderly.

There are two female prostitute zairan in this species: Jata, Lady of the Rāhat, and Muna, Lady of the Shabal, the flick of the hair gesture performed by young Hofriyati women who dance at weddings, said to confer luck upon the men who receive it. As with Luliya Habishiya, when these spirits inhabit the bodies of their hosts they have them behave as Hofriyati brides and young women. Of course Muna and Jata are, in spirit reality, anything but Hofriyati: they are uncircumcised, pagan Southerners which are flirtatious and wanton, not bound by the moral code that rightly guides the
behavior of human Hofriyati females. Thus we see in the performance of a villager inhabited by Muna or Jata a sort of double exposure: a Hofriyati woman who "plays" the role of a Southern prostitute zār which plays the role of a Hofriyati woman. To detail all of this episode's implications, its obvious comic aspect and its reflexivity, would be repetitious, since these do not differ in essence from those discussed for Habish prostitute zairan in earlier pages. But in the present case there are some differences, for Jata and Muna are spirit imposters not only of Hofriyati brides, but also of young unmarried women: the rāhat is a garment associated with maidenhood and abandoned at marriage; the shabal, though it might be performed by women of any age, is most often associated with the "hamāmat mashīn fi-es-sūk", the "pigeons going to market", young unmarried women who display themselves to prospective suitors at others' wedding dances. Here, then, the contrast between host, spirit and spirit's Hofriyati role in possession trance is complicated and intensified: a married village woman, entranced, performs the gestures of a Southern prostitute zār impersonating an unmarried village woman. The direction of thought potentially opened up by this convoluted text sequence thus embraces several different dimensions at once. Messages might be derived, for example, from the contrast and/or association between host (married Hofriyati woman) and spirit (Southern
prostitute): both are sexually active females, one a circumcised human villager who uses her sexuality appropriately for the bearing of legitimate children, the other an uncircumcised zar being, a member of a pagan, non-Hofriyati culture, which uses its sexuality inappropriately and immorally. Or, one might wish to pursue the relationship between host and spirit impersonation (unmarried Hofriyati female): "both" are human female villagers, "both" presumably are morally guided, "both" are supposedly circumcised. Yet only one has been rendered sexually active, only one has been led to acknowledge a possession affliction. But things are not quite what they seem. For the unmarried Hofriyati is, on one level, an unmarried prostitute zar, and on another level, a married Hofriyati woman. This thought might bring the individual to a consideration of the relationship between the spirit and its role. Herein lies the deepest contrast: that between immoral, uncircumcised, sexually active alien existent, member of a foreign ethnic group (and one which until recently was subjugated by Hofriyati), and moral, circumcised, sexually inactive human villager. While the spirit is openness "demonified", the role it attempts to play is closure or interiority personified. The contrast is mediated by the human host who, in a concrete manner, is both at once, and, no less concretely, is neither. Observing such a possession episode virtually forces to consciousness the
ideas of virginity, chastity, and enclosedness, so central to Hofriyati culture. But it evokes opposing qualities as well, placing both sides of the issue in an elaborate three-dimensional puzzle. The result is an unresolvable paradox (who is what and to what degree?), which evaporates as quickly as it was constituted in the midān, when the drumming stops.

In this instance we have a further example of how a seemingly simple bit of drama conceals, just below its surface, a wealth of potential meaning, and for Hofriyati readers, undoubtedly conveys far more than the few implications which a foreign anthropologist might discern.

Though remaining 'Abīd zairān signal somewhat less convoluted dramatic episodes upon entering the midān, they are intriguing nonetheless: ekh'-Khadim esh-Shilluk, "the Shilluk servant", is a spirit which requests its host to carry a spear. It is this spirit which demands that Seraitti (Chapter 9) subsist on boiled grain and "plain water" for months at a time. Dinkawi is a male zār of the Dinka tribe whose thread runs, "The cow is dripping, oh Dinkawi. Express the milk, oh Dinkawi." Not surprisingly, Dinkawi demands that its host drink cow's milk when it descends during rituals. Maryjan is an elderly male slave; Khadim ej-Jebel is a male slave from Darfur.
Finally we come to the last known category of zār spirits, the witches: cannibal-sorcerers and their animal transforms. All of these are considered to be Azande: Bayakuba, es-Sahar-Juba, "Bayakuba, the witch of Juba", a town in the extreme south of Sudan, is a male cannibal-sorcerer which is said to love dates; Nyam Nyam Kubaida, "Nyam Nyam [Azande] the Severe Afflictor", is said to enjoy eating raw liver (kibda); and et-Tomsah, "The Crocodile", is an Azande sorcerer which has taken its animal form.

Now, despite the relative paucity of wild animal life in the region of Hofriyat, crocodiles are no strangers to local people. Said to originate "min ej-jenoub", from the south, they have been known to travel downstream with the annual Nile inundation. Their possible advent is greatly feared and stories abound of their fondness for terrifying riverain farmers and for snatching up and devouring hapless children who stray by the riverbank.

Just as Azande witches, whether in human or crocodile form, are considered cannibals in the human world, so their zār parallels crave the consumption of human flesh. I was informed that, as a symptom of her illness, a woman possessed by a Sahar spirit refuses to speak or to eat. When the thread of the crocodile zār or that of an untransformed Azande witch is ceremonially drummed and the spirit takes up residence in
its host the latter suddenly leaps up and begins biting at her fellow adepts who flee from her in alarm. As a (reluctant) substitute for human flesh these spirits demand that their hosts be brought raw meat, of which the possessed may consume half a kilogram at a sitting.

A Sahar spirit is said to demand that its hosts fling off all their clothing when it descends into the midān, but no such behavior was observed at the rituals I attended. I was told that if a woman in trance were to attempt to disrobe, someone out of trance would intervene to prevent her from going too far. Et-Tomsah, however, demands that its hosts wear rags and, in addition to having them bite at members of the audience, that they crawl on their bellies as its thread is drummed. The descent of Sahar zairan at a ritual is greatly feared by those present. While these spirits are not above many Hofriyati, there is always a chance that one will manifest itself in a participant who previously did not know she was so possessed. This thought is sufficient to cause adepts to drum Sahar threads with some trepidation.

Earlier it was noted that the thread appropriate to the Habish zār Hamāma-t-el-Bahr, "Pigeon of the River", is sometimes drummed out of sequence along with that of et-Tomsah. Informants maintained that the two spirits should be invoked one right after the other because of their mutual association with the Nile.
Constantinides, writing of zār spirits current in the Khartoum area, mentions a sub-species of "Daughter" spirits called "Benat el-Bahr", "daughters of the River", whose threads are drummed with those of other female zairan in the ethnically mixed category el-Sittat or el-Benat, the Ladies or the Daughters. These, she says, are "spirits of a mermaid type, sometimes depicted on Egyptian amulets and zaar jewelry with fish-like tails" (1972:160).

Now, the reader may remember that both pigeons and the Nile are symbolically associated with Hofriyati womanhood. Pigeons and circumcised women are said to be alike in that they are pure (tahir), and women are often referred to metaphorically as pigeons or water birds. Water in general is linked to femininity, and consumption of Nile water is considered to enhance feminine fertility and to benefit a woman during pregnancy. It is, then, quite likely that the Daughters of the River zairan noted by Constantinides represent a spirit form which, in becoming established in Hofriyat, has undergone modification and some reclassification in keeping with the prevalent symbolism of that region. But the original form is, perhaps, more ancient than this. For both Nile angels and mermaids are well known from Sudanese folklore and antedate the development of the zār spirit possession complex in that country (Crowfoot 1919).
However syncretic the origins of this spirit, it is interesting that Hamāma-t-el-Bahr should be associated with et-Tomsah. For the former represents, following Hofriyati logic, fertile human womanhood: the zar counterpart of "human" female flesh. Tomsah, for its part, represents the spirit parallel of an Azande cannibal, a male and a consumer of "human" flesh. The juxtapositioning of these spirit manifestations is likely to evoke a number of potential readings: Local men who overwork their wives or who use their wives' personal resources without permission are said to "eat the flesh" of these women. But in the zar ritual it is a woman who is given occasion to play the role of cannibal; moreover, if we are willing to stretch our interpretation but slightly, we might note that zairan permit a woman to engage in a sort of retaliatory "cannibalism" since their requests for special foods, clothing and sacrificial animals often involve the expenditure of her husband's funds. The placing of Hamāma-t-el-Bahr with the cannibal spirits reinforces this interpretation, and may in fact represent a tacit acknowledgement within the zar itself that the cult may have such consequences.

Now crocodiles are wild animals and extremely dangerous. Pigeons, on the other hand, are docile domestic birds, and are raised as food. Should an adept choose to take up this distinction, the ritual proximity of these two "animal"
spirits might well lead her to consider the image Hofriyati women profess to have of themselves as domestic animals in a contrast between enclosed and unenclosed, domestic and wild, food and non-food, Hofriyati female and alien male existent. Much as human men "consume" human women, "wild" aliens might consume domesticated Hofriyati. The relation thus conceals implications for exogamous marriage and, indeed, for marriage in general.

That Hamāma-t-el-Bahr symbolizes Hofriyati womanhood is, on one level at least, readily apparent, for not only might its host perform gestures indicative of swimming in the Nile when this spirit descends into her body, she might also perform the so-called "pigeon dance" of young Hofriyati women. But, remember, Hamāma-t-el-Bahr only impersonates a Hofriyati woman; it is a female Ethiopian zar, considered a prostitute, an uncircumcised foreigner, and, as Habish, a potential usurper of fertility. Here again the role of Hofriyati womanhood is played by a being which contrasts strikingly with that ideal on several dimensions all at once, and this while inhabiting the body of a genuine Hofriyati woman. Here again the zar creates in the body of her who is possessed an elaborate dramatic paradox that is, at the very least, provocative of thought.
OF ZÄR RITUALS

In zär rituals threads of the spirits discussed above are drummed one by one, species by species, often, though not always, in the order I have detailed. But the reader would be misled if left to think that all known spirits manifest themselves at every ritual, that each slice of drama I have described is automatically replayed whenever the spirits are invoked. Such is not the case. Sometimes, though a thread be drummed, no woman present is host to the appropriate spirit. On other occasions, though a spirit's host be present, the spirit quite inexplicably does not descend when its thread is drummed. Or, as sometimes happens, a woman may be entered by a spirit which previously she did not know she had, a spirit which is yet unsocialized in her and which causes her to dance more wildly, with less gestural finesse, than it would were it to manifest itself in an established host. Thus I have not, in foregoing pages, described the progress of a typical ritual, for no such thing exists. No two ceremonies are exactly alike with respect to the spirits which descend or the degree of dramatic elaboration achieved by a particular spirit (read human) when manifest in the mīdān. A zär ceremony is always something of a surprise; its salient events, and the thoughts which these might provoke among those who witness them, cannot be wholly predicted in advance. In our
discussions of zar species and of individual spirits we have, then, but tentatively plumbed the reservoir of potential meanings that constitute the spirit system upon which Hofriyati draw both in possession trance and in their observations of spirit behavior in others.

However, in order to provide some idea of what a local ritual might be like, in terms of the spirits which descend and the behaviors they manifest in their hosts, I include the extended description below. What follows are slightly edited excerpts from my field notes written shortly after having attended a zar ritual for the first time. The scenes detailed took place when I had been in the area less than a month and was yet largely unschooled about the zar. Undoubtedly my descriptions would have been more complete had this ceremony taken place a year later. But as it transpired, apart from Zaineb's tajruba described in Chapter 8, this was the most elaborate ritual which occurred in the area during my stay, though villagers assured me that these complex performances are common. Usually in Hofriyat alone there are two or three seven-day ceremonies each year; in 1976 I attended all five rituals that took place in the village area, only two of which, as villagers say, actually "inflamed" (got going).
Day 3

The sheikha is a forceful looking woman wearing a pink pull-over sweater with short sleeves, and her tōb tied loosely about her waist. When first I entered the patient's hōsh she was standing in the center of the mīdān, arguing with a woman smoking a cigarette and wearing a light colored tōb -- diagnosing that woman's illness, I am told.

The 'ayana is a frail older woman clad in a white tōb and sitting, her arms and legs held tight against her body, on a large pillow next to the musicians; she faces the door.

Her diagnostic discussion concluded, the sheikha sits down and begins to drum. Among the onlookers I notice a very tall, very muscular figure dressed in women's clothing, wearing a hairnet and a massive men's watch. This may be a transvestite man, the sheikha's assistant, who I am told lives in a village not far from Hofriyat.

Soon the drumming begins in earnest and the 'ayana rises to dance. Now I see that over her white tōb she wears a shoulder-to-waist sash of red cloth attached to a red cloth belt, much as in paintings of nineteenth century nobility or as in a military uniform. I am informed that she is possessed by a Khawaja doctor, a Khawaja lawyer, and a military officer, all at once. Her tōb is worn so as to form a cowl over her head and she carries a hooked cane as in a vaudevillian
burlesque. Her dance is in the form of a slow rhythmic walk, feet moving first side to side, then forward and back as if criss-crossing an imaginary square. Often she bends rigidly at the waist and carries her cane pressed against her head. I am informed that her zairan have requested a white tüb, cigarettes, a European belt, and a radio.

Now the band has begun another thread. The sheikha rises and begins to dance. Suddenly she approaches me. She literally marches the length of the midan to where I am sitting and stops before me "at attention". She salutes stiffly three or four times, a wild sort of grin playing across her face. [She is possessed by the Pasha zar Abu Rish, Ya Amir ad-Desh.] She carries in her left hand a sword within its sheath; with her right hand she grabs mine and shakes it forcefully in time to the music. The thread sounds like a military march. When it ends the sheikha's face assumes a more dignified repose, and she returns to the center of the midan.

Many women rise to dance throughout the evening, some only when specific chants are drummed; others descend from a kneeling position, their tiyab covering their heads, bobbing up and down to the majority of threads. [The former were probably women who had sacrificed to the spirits and therefore knew the actual identities of those by which they were possessed, whereas the latter were in all likelihood those who
At one point I noticed a woman doing a strange pantomime with a sword, rapidly sweeping it back and forth along the ground, running quickly and skillfully through these postures. She reminds me of a hunter flushing out game, or a warrior wary of enemies concealed in thick vegetation, though I'm not sure why. In the chant to which she performs these gestures I am told there are no Arabic words. [Her spirit, too, is a Pasha.]

There is one very tall, older woman, thin and wiry, wearing a red dress and a white tob. At the start of another chant she lights a cigarette and proceeds to strut down the mat in my direction, puffing away, carrying her walking stick at the end of an outstretched arm like one would imagine the Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, or Sir Winston Churchill, in some photographs I've seen, or some rather pompous head of state around the turn of the century might have done. Occasionally she pauses and sort of leans on the stick in a stately manner.

Several chants later this woman and the transvestite man engage in a sword-fight "dance", similar to that I have seen the nomads perform. The two participants come within a foot or so of the audience seated on the periphery of the midan, terrifying us with their bravado and the proximity of their blows. [This was probably the spirit Jamali or Bikeyfu or
perhaps both, one in each dancer, of the species 'Arāb."

At various points the sheikha dances round and round the 'ayana, sometimes encircling her with her arms. I observe that following a chant many of those who were dancing begin scratching themselves, hiccuping and burping indiscriminately. [Later I learned that these are the expected signs of a spirit's exit from one's body.]

Day 4

Tonight the sheikha wears a bright pink tōb: the same color as she wore yesterday. I am told that it is the color associated with her principal spirit, a Habish. Soon after we arrive she lights the incense brazier and sprinkles some cologne over the top.

The 'ayana emerges from the room next door, now wearing a green shift [possibly Sitti Khudera or Halibiya-t-eg-Güffa, "Halibiya of the Basket"] over her regular clothes, and over that the white tōb and red sash as before. She leans over the incense, completely shrouding the censer with her head shawl. After a few moments the sheikha, who was holding the brazier, begins to drum after passing the incense and the perfume on to other women assembled around the mīdān. With the commencement of drumming the 'ayana begins to dance, first moving in situ on the ground, then standing, holding her hand to her head as
if carrying the invisible counterpart of the cane she had danced with the night before. Someone hands her the cane and several other women also begin to descend.

The woman who impressed me last night with her regal bearing dances again in much the same way, but now with more of a swagger, and carrying a cane as opposed to a walking stick. [Here it is likely she was inhabited by a Khawaja zār, whereas the night before the spirit remarked upon had probably been Ḥabish.]

A rather large grey-haired woman wearing a red head scarf on which there is what looks like a Greek design, dances animatedly, using a variety of gestures. At one point she performs what looks convincingly like a benediction! [Possibly Gasis Romay, the Catholic priest, or the Khawaja Coptic priest.] Several chants later someone hands her a sword, whereupon a man, one of the 'ayana's kin, jumps into the mīdān, challenging her. Immediately she takes after him, brandishing the sword meaningfully, while the man swiftly dodges her swings until he is forced for fear of sustaining an injury to vacate the mīdān. She then continues her dance, still carrying the sword. Now another woman dancing nearby approaches her and goes into the jaboudi, the dance 'Arāb women perform, quite like the "pigeon dance" of village women but quicker, its movements more pronounced. Suddenly the jaboudi-dancer tosses her hair at the "swordsman", giving the
latter shabal.

Shortly after this the jaboudi-dancer [a female 'Arab zär] is handed a white töb which she fastens over her shoulders Beja-style, thus assuming the dress of an 'Arab male. Then she is given a green and blue checked cloth which she ties like a kerchief over her head and fastens around her neck much like lorry drivers do when traversing the desert. [She was likely inhabited by the zär Holiba 'Arabiya, "Automobile Gypsy", of the 'Arab.]

Another chant begins. Immediately a young woman on the sidelines starts dancing about wildly, her gestures quite uncontrolled. She is guided into the center of the midān and when, after a few moments, the music stops, she continues descending from a kneeling position at the sheikha's feet. The sheikha removes the white töb that covers her green dress [Sitti Khudera's outfit]. The entranced woman is given incense; she falls on the ground. The sheikha then knocks on her back and says, "Dairi shinu?" ["What do you want?"] There comes a whispered response. The young woman is handed a purple töb. The sheikha and others keep repeating, "too bad, too bad, it's all right...." The thread is drummed again. Again the young woman dances, then falls. She is lying face down on the mat. Someone tells me that she is sick to her stomach, another observer says that the woman is married, yet another says that she has asked for black trousers.
Later, during a chant for a prostitute zar, another dancer falls to the ground, entranced. She is covered with a red and white töb [possibly the spirit is Ethiopian]. The sheikha knocks her on the back and asks the spirit what it desires. The spirit replies, "Two short dresses!" and the audience breaks into a fit of laughter.

Meanwhile the woman now clad in the purple töb continues to dance rather unrestrainedly, though she is closely watched by an older adept who periodically intervenes to keep her from hurting herself or others present nearby.

One woman wearing a prayer shawl around her neck holds the ends of this garment in her hand as she dances, sweeping to and fro, back and forth across the mats. The gesture is similar to that of men at a zikr, the remembrance ceremony of an Islamic order.

Day 7

After the sacrificial animal is slaughtered I, along with others present, move forward and put a few piasters in the bowl containing the victim's blood. Someone asks me if I'd like to drink some araki (liquor) [being Khawaja I was expected to imbibe] but I decline. Women anoint themselves with blood, and some take small sips of it as well. The dancing then resumes.
One lady who dances wearing men's Western-style trousers is said to be possessed by the airplane captain zar. Somewhat later another, older woman performs the "pigeon dance", coming up to the lady who earlier wore the Greek shawl and giving her shabal. [This is the zar Muna, Sitt esh-Shabal, the Southern prostitute.]

At this point a young unmarried girl rises and begins to dance, but with a garmosis covering her head. She, too, does the "pigeon dance" while onlookers attempt to dissuade her to no avail. It is not right, they say, that an unmarried girl should dance so, like a bride. The woman next to me tells me the girl just wants a husband, that she is not really possessed.

Further into the night a little girl of perhaps nine or ten begins dancing animatedly at the side of the midan. Several people lead her away from the other dancers, telling her it is not proper for a child of her age to dance at zar ceremonies. Once outside the midan they try to calm her. Now she is crying and has gone quite limp. When their efforts to revive her fail, the women begin dragging her back into the midan. The little girl [rather, the spirit within her] appears to be resisting all attempts to bring her before the sheikha. At last she is set down in front of the musicians. The sheikha incenses her and places a white tob over her head. She asks the spirit, "What do you want?" No response. Women
in the crowd taunt the spirit, "Ah, her father is poor!", "Her mother is blind!", "Her mother is ill!", in an effort to gain the spirit's sympathy. Then the sheikha asks for the girl's father. After a short delay he is brought to the mlān and made to give the girl ten piasters (about twenty-five cents). Still there is no response from the possessive zār; the girl remains in what looks like a deep trance.

More drumming and dancing are now called for. The sheikha requests that certain threads be drummed [for various species of zairan] in hopes that the spirit might identify itself. She blows into the little girl's ears and behind her neck, she pulls at her limbs, she whips her softly with a length of rope, she beats her lightly with an iron spear. She incenses her, rolls her own head along the girl's body, takes the girl in her arms and dances rhythmically to and fro while blowing a whistle to the beat of the ubiquitous drumming and singing. She leads the girl around the mlān and twice is successful in getting her to move of her own accord. The girl now runs back and forth along the length of the mlān, one arm pumping up and down and around as though she were a locomotive train, the other raised and crooked at the elbow, repeatedly sounding an imaginary whistle. The sheikha toots the whistle that hangs around her neck in accompaniment. [It would seem that the spirit possessing the little girl has now been identified as Basha-t-Adel, the railway engineer.] This goes
on for almost an hour, the sheikha trying various techniques in her repertoire, attempting to convince the tenacious spirit to abandon the body of its new-found host. One chant she tries requires that all in the audience stand; another that we clap and sing along. Finally the sheikha leads the girl out of the hôsh, both crossing the threshold backwards, facing the midân. The two remain in the street for several moments, then return as they had left, facing the midân. The girl, apparently calmed, is made to sit next to me on an angarîb, now, however, facing away from the ceremony. Soon after, the sacrificial meal is served and the ritual quickly brought to a close.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 11

1. Leiris (1958:41), writing about the zār cult in Gondar, Ethiopia, mentions that the spirits are thought most likely to possess beautiful women. Moreover, there is a widespread myth about the origins of zairan that is supposed to have come from Christian Ethiopia (Messing 1958:1122, Pakhouri 1968:49), which accounts for the inordinate concern of these spirits with beauty and with products of the human world. As Messing notes, zairan are thought to have originated in the Garden of Eden, where Eve gave birth to thirty children. One day the Creator came to visit and began to count the children. In apprehension, Eve hid the fifteen most beautiful and intelligent ones; as punishment they were condemned to remain always hidden, nighttime creatures. Consequently, they envy their uglier and weaker human siblings who are the children of the light. (Messing 1958:1122) A version of this story was told to me by a zār-possessed woman in Hofriyat and, though not the only origin myth in circulation, it has common currency among adepts.

2. An apparent contradiction to the origin myth discussed in note 1. Both beliefs, however, are sustained in Hofriyat.

3. Not to be confused with Sheikh Mohammed Sa'adabi of the Habish.

4. Without this difference, of course, the Darawīsh would too closely resemble Hofriyati interiority ideals for a significant contrast to be drawn.

5. Constantinides (1972:331) notes a Habish spirit by the name of Roma (Rome) which "is said to be a place which brings all the Ethiopians together — i.e. the spirit of the Italian conquest?"

6. In Khartoum this category includes Jewish as well as Coptic, Catholic and Hindu zairan. It also includes the spirit of "Electricity" (Constantinides 1972:160).

7. The common name, adapted from Ethiopian usage, for antelope of the genera Madoqua and Rhynchotragus found in East Africa.
8. However there is in Hofriyat a Fellata (West African) spirit by the name of Nimr el-Kondo, a French-speaking merchant from Chad.

9. Constantinides (1972:332) mentions a Habish zär el-Kordi, which is said to have a fine moustache which it twirls.

10. See Basso 1979 for similar conclusions regarding Apache's assessments of stereotypical "Whiteman" behavior.
CHAPTER 12
EXPERIENCING OTHERNESS

"...there is a mystery here and it is not one that I understand: without this sting of otherness, of -- even -- the vicious, without the terrible energies of the underside of health, sanity, sense, then nothing works or can work. I tell you that goodness -- what we in our ordinary daylight selves call goodness: the ordinary, the decent -- these are nothing without the hidden powers that can pour forth continually from their shadow sides." Doris Lessing, Canopus in Argos: Archives; Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five.

THE PARADOX OF POSSESSION

In Chapter 11 we discussed the epistemological underpinnings of zār belief, and the qualities and propensities of zairaḥ relative to other forms of jinn and to humans. In a lengthy section of that chapter we examined the ordering of the zār world into a number of spirit species and the manifestations of spirits in the bodies of their human hosts.

The qualities and general characteristics of zairaḥ are a matter of articulated belief, information to which the majority of villagers have ready access. The ordering of the zār world is better known to zār adepts than to other Hofriyati, but is once again a subject about which all are acquainted to some degree. But knowledge of the specific
behaviors and characteristics of particular zairan is somewhat more arcane. It is acquired in a number of ways: by attending rituals and observing the behaviors of spirits manifest in their hosts, by learning the threads of the various zairan, in diagnostic consultation with a sheikha or a sitt el-'ilba, in informal discussion with Hofriyati or adepts from other areas, and, not least, through one's own zār dreams. The roster of spirits described above is by no means static. Individual spirits become established in the village area whether by indigenous appearance, as when a previously unknown spirit is discovered via dreams or visions, or by importation, as when the thread for a spirit previously unknown in Hofriyat is heard at a ritual in another area and subsequently added to the repertoire of chants at Hofriyati ceremonies. A certain "new" spirit might manifest itself in a number of local women, thereby becoming fashionable or popular for a time. But its popularity might wane (that is, it might seize fewer and fewer new hosts), when other, "newer" spirits make their appearances in Hofriyati mīdāns. A particular spirit's qualities, characteristic gestures and demands, and subtleties of dramatic performance are more elaborated, better known, if it possesses several local women. For each host brings something of herself to the text which "she" elucidates in possession trance. A spirit, moreover, might reveal different aspects of itself to each of its hosts, which, when
combined with the experiences of others similarly possessed, deepens the understanding of all. Certain spirits of sustained popularity, such as Luliya Habishiya, tend to be those about which most is known. In general, however, the characteristics of individual zairan are not highly elaborated.

While the ordering of the spirit world is by no means systematic and is subject to changes of classification depending upon whom one consults, certain of its features do lend themselves to generalization. In spite of their heterogeneous cultural profiles, each of the aforementioned zar species is thought of as an ethnic group or a people (nas). The pantheon of zar characters in fact provides a fairly complete record of external cultural influences to which villagers have been exposed, whether directly or indirectly, since the time of Mohammed Ali's conquest of Sudan over a hundred and fifty years ago:¹ the establishment of the major Sudanese Islamic orders; Ethiopian Emperors such as Haile Selassie who stayed in Sudan after he had been ousted by the Italian forces in 1936; Ethiopian and Southern Sudanese prostitutes; Southern slaves; Syrian gypsies; West African pilgrims and tradespeople; Turkish officials and British and Egyptian administrators; European doctors; East Indian, Lebanese and Greek merchants; Arab nomads; "Baggara" warriors; North American and British archaeologists; Chinese
construction workers; military officers; airline captains; lorry drivers; railway engineers; Azande "witches" and, of course, crocodiles. All have left their mark.

In a sense, then, the zār is social history encapsulated. But if history, it is history seen not as a sequence of specific events involving specific individuals (though some zairan are named for historical personages), so much as a series of discrete representative episodes or typical events. What the zār preserves and portrays so adroitly in its ritual burlesque is an exaggerated, even mythical, ambiance of past times, which, appearing in the midst of Hofriyat, is strikingly juxtaposed to that of present everyday reality. But zairan live very long lives; spirits continuously update themselves. The spirit system is more than history, it is a contemporary folk-ethnology, here again mythical in quality and in composition.

The zār system is mythical in the sense that spirits and spirit groups are identified, or rather encoded, by the method which Levi-Strauss (1966) terms "bricolage":

The characteristic feature of mythical thought, as of 'bricolage' on the practical plane, is that it builds up structured sets, not directly with other structured sets but by using the remains and debris of events: in French 'des bribes et des morceaux', or odds and ends in English, fossilized evidence of the history of an individual or a society. The relation between the diachronic and the synchronic is therefore in a sense reversed. Mythical thought, that 'bricoleaur', builds up structures by fitting together events, or rather the remains of events....Mythical thought is imprisoned in the events and experiences which it never tires of
ordering and reordering in its search to find them a meaning. (1966:21-22)

The debris out of which the zar system is constructed include established local color associations (chiefly white, red and black); exaggerated bits of observed behavior; the life experiences of elders and those long dead; hearsay; legend; recent events; stereotyped notions of which foods, clothing, and artifacts are appropriate to certain foreign groups; symptoms of various illnesses; occupations; and religious and moral alternatives. Not least, perhaps, these are tempered by the demands of competent dramatic performance.

Although it derives from human experience, the mythical classification of ethnic groups presented by informants and described in Chapter 11 is not explicitly intended to be a model of the human world but of the parallel, invisible world of zairan. Villagers infer from their knowledge of historical events and of other cultures in the human world, what might be typical episodes and ethnic groups among zairan. The spirit categories thus contain far more than a literal record of human types and past events. They are richly symbolic constructions upon the observable, tangibly experienced everyday world.

Remember that zairan are quite different from humans in an ontological sense. In fact, zairan and humans are complementary existents: the former are made of wind and
fire, are amoral, nocturnal, formless, invisible, and unenclosable; the latter are composed of earth and water, are moral, diurnal, have form, are visible, and are enclosable (and in Hofriyat are relatively "enclosed"). Now if zairan are basically "other" with respect to humans, the zär world is "other" with respect to Hofriyat. The several zär species depicted as cultures or ethnic groups do not include the sedentary Arabic speaking Sudanese living in Hofriyat. Villagers have no zairan of themselves. The most they have in this regard are spirits which play at being Hofriyati but which for one reason or another fail to "pass". All zär species belong to other cultures in the parallel universe. And, significantly, specific qualities, behaviors and social situations which are considered abnormal, undignified, or anti-social on the part of Hofriyati (and especially Hofriyati women) are shown to be perfectly normal and acceptable in other, zär cultures: begging and poverty, overt aggressiveness, wantonness and promiscuity, swaggering, lying, and unrestrained physical activity, religious beliefs and social arrangements other than those practiced in the village. Most zairan, for example, are species exogamous, whereas kin and culture group endogamy is the proper Hofriyati practice. Conversely, however, qualities, behaviors and conditions considered ideal by village standards, but rarely attainable (and especially out of reach for Hofriyati women) are also
depicted as typical and expected for certain *zar* spirits and groups: extreme wealth, holiness, supreme dignity and deference, political power, and control over fertility.

Hence the *zar* world inverts that of the village in at least two fundamental ways: first, ontologically, since *zairan* are the natural complements of human beings, and second, sociologically, since culture-specific qualities of *zar* figures are either unseemly, or ideal but virtually unattainable (i.e., transgress both external and internal boundaries) with regard to village culture. Just as *zairan* can be thought of as non-humans, so humans can be thought of as non-*zairan*. Each form of being contextualizes the other.

Should an anthropologist wish to understand what significance the *zar* holds for women of Hofriyat, first she must learn something about Hofriyati, their culture and their self images. But Hofriyati, for whom the ordinary everyday world is lived reality and not the exotic subject of investigation, perform rather a different task. For in learning about, in experiencing *zar*, they actually learn about themselves. Spirit possession, ultimately, is an esthetic experience, and the *zar* is an expressive genre, one which operates primarily via negative metaphor. The system of *zar* beliefs is a comprehensive metalinguistic text (cf. Bateson 1972, Lambek 1978, 1981); it is a secondary construction upon the everyday Hofriyati world which speaks about that world in
selective portrayals of what it is not.

Much as Basso (1979:41ff) notes for Apache secondary
texts (joking sequences that are modelled upon unjoking
activity and in which Apache assume the roles of "Whitemen"),
the construction of zar secondary texts is based primarily on
the principles of contrast and distortion: Zairan, we have
noted, are examples of otherness epitomized, alien existents
whose social arrangements are modelled upon those of beings
who populate the human world external to Hofriyat (contrast),
and which in performance (that is, spirit manifestation),
either exaggerate the "typical" traits and behaviors of these
others or feign Hofriyati characteristics (distortion),
thereby intensifying the initial contrast.

But again according to Basso,

Whereas contrast and distortion constitute the main
principles for constructing secondary texts, comparison
and censure appear to constitute the major principles for
interpreting them. (1979:56)

Apaches, in constructing their models of "the Whiteman" expect
that these will be judged and found not only different but
defective when compared with the models they have of
themselves (1979:56).

Is this what Hofriyati do by means of caricatures of
other cultures portrayed in the zar? Indeed, yes, at least in
part. Through the zar cultural constructs other than those
which Hofriyati espouse are assessed and found wanting. Even
amoral prostitute zairan insist that their hosts follow assiduously the dictates of interiority, and maintain dignity, remain clean, well-dressed and perfumed, and refrain from strong emotion. And prostitution is no more acceptable to a Hofriyati possessed by Luliya Habishiya than to one who is not. The zär thus positively reinforces the ideal images Hofriyati have of themselves, both by negative example and by sanctioning practices associated with the idiom of interiority.

Yet not all that the spirits do is wrongly guided. Some zär qualities are desirable to Hofriyati: political power, holiness and wealth among them. In this respect, then, the zär conceals a criticism of an established order in which Hofriyati perceive themselves as disadvantaged relative to other cultures, and, perhaps, Hofriyati women as disadvantaged relative to Hofriyati men. But the zär is no mere "rite of reversal" in the sense that Gluckman has described, a "protest against the established order" which is intended, in fact, "to preserve and strengthen" that order (1965:109) and which "is effective only so long as there is no querying of the order within which the ritual of protest is set" (1965:130). Rather, the expressions of cultural inversion presented to Hofriyati through the zär embody an analysis (cf. Hymes 1979:xii) that is critical of village culture and reinforcing of it at one and the same time.
If this sounds contradictory it is only because the "analysis" which the zār system contains is one that is designed to open up thought, to free it, in a sense, from the limitations of prior associations, to pose new problems and to encourage reflection upon the reality that villagers live day by day. It provides, as Lambek remarks of spirit possession on Mayotte, a means whereby "the ordinary world is illuminated by its contrast with the extraordinary" (1978: 16).

Symbolic inversion (Babcock 1978) or negative metaphor (cf. Crapanzano 1977a) is the essence of the zār, and, perhaps, of spirit possession cults generally. During possession rituals women become men; Hofriyati become Ethiopian, British, West African, Chinese; the powerless and impoverished become powerful and affluent. Essentially irreversible conditions and physical characteristics are shown to be reversible, and established categories and distinctions, such as male/female, enclosedness/openness, are subverted. Hierarchical orderings are telescoped and undone (cf. Lambek 1978) when Islamic holy men and pagan prostitutes possess the same Hofriyati woman. And the exterior world becomes internalized, both socially, by appearing in villagers' homes, and physically, by manifesting itself through their bodies. Thus paradox, which as we have noted is an important theme of the zār, is here seen also to be its method. The paradox of possession, the merging or juxtapositioning of opposite
qualities and mutually exclusive entities, plays with human understanding, directs attention to boundaries of cultural categories, and is obliquely critical of all that is absolute (cf. Babcock 1978:16-17, Colie 1966:7-10, Douglas 1966).

The possession paradox is an immanent signification; it is saturated with potential meaning. Through it a Hofriyati woman is led to see herself, to resurrect an earlier analogy, as in a hall of mirrors: each spirit manifestation in the body of a co-villager is at once a distorted and a true-to-life reflection of herself; each pole of the possession dialectic -- human, spirit -- is a reverse reflection of the other. Those who are led to possession because of a challenge to their taken-for-granted world are, through the possession paradox, made to face that challenge, to explore that world and its alternatives, to examine the issue from every conceivable angle. Possession invariably stimulates those whom it claims, provoking adepts and novices alike to think about themselves via their inverse spirit counterparts. For paradox, as Babcock notes,

is at once self-critical and creative, 'at once its own subject and its own object, turning endlessly in upon itself', one inversion leading to the making of another, into the infinite regress of self regard. (1978:17)

Luliya Habishiya and Sulayman, Ya Jenna, indeed all zairan which manifest themselves in Hofriyati midāns, are in one way or another paradoxical entities when viewed from the
standpoint of local culture. The dramas they enact through their hosts are thus doubly paradoxical: they are enactments of paradoxes dramatized in a paradox, in the manifestation of a spirit through its human opposite. Such episodes are thought provoking, less often in a ruminative, sit-down-and-think-about-it way than in the sense that behind their laughter, their terror, or their surprise, Hofriyati are somehow made to feel just slightly uneasy. One is, perhaps, left with a vague sort of sensation that something has happened, that she has "seen" more than she has observed. Whatever messages are potential in a slice of zar theatrics, they may not occur to observers at a conscious level. Further, the intellectual directions the zar proposes may not be taken up, or they may lie dormant, as it were, until called to mind at a later time. The appropriation of meaning is entirely a matter of individual disposition. The direction of thought that a possession episode opens up is one which extends as far as the individual mind wishes to follow it; and it is virtually inexhaustible, each interpretation leading to another possible interpretation, fresh insights, altered perspectives.

Yet at the same time such reflection, as the zar inspires, however personally meaningful, is essentially a social act (cf. Geertz 1973: 362). For it takes place in the medium of cultural symbols (spirits and their associations)
and deals with cultural issues. The behaviors of *zairan* in the bodies of their human hosts parody or invert traditional Hofriyati values, values which all villagers are expected to hold dear.

Now the paradox of possession, rooted as it is in symbolic reversal, is also the paradox of liminality, of being, as Turner (1964) says, "betwixt and between" statuses or assigned positions, or, as I will venture, of occupying several mutually inconsistent positions at one and the same time. It is not that easy to subtract from one's apprehension of possession trance in a compatriot the identity of the possessed, her essential Hofriyati-ness, her humanity, however much adepts might realize that what they behold is the manifestation of a *zar*. But this intentional "confusion", which first we described in Chapter 6, contains within it the seeds of creativity. For it is precisely this which liberates ideas from their quotidian taken-for-granted associations, whether these include the idea of wantonness ordinarily associated with uncircumcised foreign women, that of interiority and self-restraint normally associated with Hofriyati, or that of masculinity ordinarily associated with humans of the male sex. When a Hofriyati woman, now inhabited by a *zar*, behaves flirtatiously or aggressively or as though she were a wealthy political magnate, one may be startled into thinking that, were it not for Hofriyati culture, she might
actually have been any or all of these in her everyday life. The contrast between the actual and the possible is so striking that the Hofriyati-ness of the possessed is just as, if not more obvious than the temporary zār presence in her body. The effect of the performance is much like an optical illusion, like a shifting figure-ground pattern, as attention is alternately drawn to now one, now the other, behavioral design.

Just as an optical illusion directs attention to the peculiarities of human perception, so the zār "illusion" directs attention to the ideas behind the entranced's performance (or, as the case may be, in front of it). Most obviously, she presents the ideas of interiority and exteriority in simultaneous relief. But beyond this, the particular qualities she portrays focus upon the very stuff of human morality and sociality: gender distinctions, differential power and wealth, cultural identity, religious belief, and so on. These are shown, in ritual, as pure ideas, as concepts in themselves, regardless of their various applications and significances in the several on-the-ground cultural systems with which Hofriyati are familiar. And they appear as ideas precisely because they are to some extent freed by the "confusion" of entities in the body of she who performs them, by her liminality, from their prior associations in the minds of Hofriyati who attend. Turner writes,
For me the essence of liminality is to be found in its release from normal constraints, making possible the deconstruction of "uninteresting" constructions of common sense, the "meaningfulness of ordinary life", discussed by phenomenological sociologists, into cultural units which may then be reconstructed in novel ways.... Liminality is the domain of the "interesting", or of "uncommon sense". (1977: 68)

The temporary trance episode, whether observed in others or sustained in oneself, provides always a controlled atmosphere in which the liminal might be experienced, and "uncommon sense" made of quotidian reality. The zar, like any art form, offers Hofriyati the opportunity to experience disorder within a fairly well-defined frame (cf. Peckham 1967: 40), to "deconstruct" the constructions which inform their lives and to discover, perhaps, new ways for ordering them. For as Babcock notes, it is by means of symbolic inversions, such as the zar, that "culture frees itself from the limitations of 'though shalt not's', enriches itself with the subject matter without which it could not work efficiently, and enables itself to speak about itself" (1978: 21).

The zar "speaks about" Hofriyati culture in a number of ways, not all of them direct or apparent. Through it, for example, Hofriyati women, normally sheltered and secluded, have occasion to experience what they are not, hence to learn about the world outside of the village and to achieve some sort of accommodation to it. One might wish to think of the zar as a training ground in which past external influences
upon Hofriyat are rehearsed and assessed, and the known schedule of alternative realities tentatively incorporated within the very social system that sees itself as their antithesis. The zār universe parallels that of humans, thus it provides a conceptual map according to which Hofriyati women might negotiate the external world. The world mapped via the zār is, so to speak, pre-Copernican, for it is a "relative" world, one that is surrounded by several domains of cultural experience, each represented by a distinct ethnic group. The groups comprise a sequence, the same as that in which zār species are ceremonially invoked, which moves from the most godly of humans and zairan, the Darawīsh, through a number of variations on the theme of moral ambiguity and ambivalence (humanity), to malevolence, animality and paganism at the fringes of the known world. In learning about the zār world, Hofriyati learn not only about themselves, and not only about spirits, but also about the spirits' human counterparts. As such, the zār is something of an exercise in survival, preparing Hofriyati women for encounters with foreigners in which they might experience cognitive stress (cf. Peckham 1967, Sutton-Smith 1972), preadapting them to the inevitable transformations of their culture wrought by the vicissitudes of global politics, over which they see themselves as having pathetically little control.
But, lest we forget, spirit possession in Hofriyat has to do with human illness, illness which villagers, for the most part, associate not with potential stress but with present anxiety. The anxieties which generally lead to acknowledgement of possession affliction are those whose source is the ambiguity which filters through crevices in social and cultural structures generated by the regularizing process (cf. Falk-Moore 1975:219) of interiority: problems having to do with the ambiguities of human fertility, with personal integrity versus kin group obligation, with realities versus ideals of marital situations, with ambiguous residence priorities, and the like. The zar, its system of beliefs and the experiences which they engender, provides Hofriyati with a vehicle for ordering and articulating their untoward and unusual experiences of the everyday world. As much as it habituates village women to the possibility of change from without, the zar is a mechanism for addressing the dilemma of change and ambiguity arising from within.

Now as I have emphasized, zar has the potential to teach Hofriyati about themselves. It instructs not only by implication, that is, by making typical Hofriyati behaviors and values conspicuous by their absence from the trance performances of Hofriyati possessed, and not only by means of the contrasts that such performances set up, but also more directly in the behaviors of those foreigner spirits which
attempt to enact the characteristics of Hofriyati women in whose bodies and in whose midst they appear. Village women observe themselves clearly caricatured and parodied in the vaudevillian antics of prostitute zairan. These spirits make a joke of that most serious of feminine enterprises: the bridal dance. They poke fun at women who are the legitimate embodiments of salient Hofriyati values, who are interiority personified. The zar thus, perhaps, exhorts women not to take themselves or their cultural roles too seriously by reminding them that they and the cultural constructs which order their lives are not one and the same, that the "bride" is not so much an individual as the enduring symbol of an ideal which is but housed in the body of a woman. Perhaps more than other possession dramas such episodes of reversed inversion caution against the reification of conceptual categories and intellectually shatter over-determined boundaries which, as much as excessive ambiguity, can be obstacles to understanding (cf. Hamnett 1967:387).

But at the same time, prostitute zairan invariably are judged and found lacking by those whom they attempt to portray. Apart from their inherent wantonness and in spite of their awesome powers, these spirits cannot pass for village women even when inhabiting the latter's bodies. Somehow they always give themselves away. The laugh that Luliya and her cohorts evoke from the audience when their deceptions become
obvious thus betrays Hofriyati's inner conviction that the qualities these spirits travesty with such art are not the least bit droll. And all of this is said so brilliantly in but a moment's time, when Luliya open its host's eyes and peeks through the hands covering her face as she performs the bridal dance.

When we consider spirit possession to be an esthetic form we do not strictly follow Hofriyati's views concerning the spirit world. For spirits are not only ritual symbols but living beings which, after all, actively intervene in the lives of their human hosts. They are not, as one might wish to think of an expressive genre, somehow set apart from the everyday world: they are key performers in the most mundane of social interactions. If art, and therefore "good to think", zairan are art with vehemence, interacting with humans in ways other than their portrayals in dramatic performance.

Yet, in looking at possession from an esthetic perspective I feel we come closest to understanding what it is that the zar says to Hofriyati, rather, what it is that Hofriyati say to themselves through the zar. For the zar, like Geertz's Balinese cockfight, is indeed a cultural text, an imaginative work built out of social materials (1973: 449). Observed episodes of spirit manifestation bring into focus numerous small experiences of everyday life, attached to those more obscure experiences gathered up from history and from the
remains of meetings between Hofriyati and foreigners. Possession episodes (though not the spirits' influence) are "set apart from life as 'only a game'", for the trance experience is but a temporary event: as with a play the "actor" in a spirit performance does not permanently become her role, the episode has no lasting existence; and they are "reconnected to life as 'more than a game'" (Geertz 1973: 450), for they speak of enduring issues that Hofriyati consider supremely important. Through repeated readings of the cultural text enacted in zār rituals, the adept is enabled to glimpse various dimensions of her own subjectivity, growing "slowly familiar" with the text "in a way which opens her subjectivity to herself" (Geertz 1973: 450-451).

And here, I feel, we come to an important point. All of the functions and significations of the zār herein discussed appear to work toward cultivating in the possessed a mature, considered perspective of herself and her life situation. As noted in Chapter 10 a woman's initial curing ceremony may be thought of as completing her transition to adulthood, a transition incompletely achieved in the wedding which it parodies, for, unlike the wedding, the zār orients her toward positive awareness of external realities and admonishes that relative "openness", though dangerous, may indeed have certain advantages. Over and above this, however, experiences and messages derived from the zār text may help to strengthen,
preserve and replenish adepts' intellectual and emotional maturity, providing nutriment for what Langer calls "the constant process of ideation" (1948:46). Spirit possession in Hofriyat, and, I would venture, in other societies as well, opens the path to true adulthood for individuals who, because they are secluded and treated as jural minors, might otherwise find their development stymied, their creativity, in a sense, blocked. If a "rite of protest", spirit possession not only is a contained rebellion against an established social order (cf. Gluckman 1965, Lewis 1971a), it is also a rebellion of the human mind against the fetters of cultural constructs. Possession texts, in subtly suggesting fresh interpretations for everyday realities, in their essentially esthetic task, help to develop adepts' consciousness of themselves and in the process provides them with the possibility of dealing more felicitously with those around them.

The esthetic power of the zar rests with its capacity to thrust into proximity disparate ideas and diverse realities (cf. Geertz 1973:444, and Bateson 1972:203ff, Turner 1977:68), to wrest concepts from their everyday constructions and juxtapose them in novel and sometimes highly surprising and informative ways, yet always to keep them apart. The dialectic of self and other, of Hofriyati humans and foreign zairan is one from which no synthesis can emerge. The two systems which contextualize each other: human and spirit, or
enclosedness and openness, also maintain each other in contraposition, each continuously enriching its opposite with subject matter, each supplying its complement with food for thought. Neither is truly reducible, not even, as soon we shall see, within the trance experience itself.

But a further dimension of the possession system's esthetic power is its ambiguity. Throughout our investigation of spirits and their manifestations it has become increasingly apparent that the zar is, at the level of discourse, as much or as little as adepts and onlookers wish to read from, or indeed, into, it. The zar, like the literary text discussed by Ricoeur, is "that use of discourse where several things are specified at the same time and where the reader is not required to choose among them. It is the positive and productive use of ambiguity" (1976:47).

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Up to now I have considered possession trance indirectly and in rather general terms. Indeed, Chapter 11 was concerned mainly with those who attend zar rituals and who experience the spirit world as it is manifest in others, with those who observe a trance episode much as theater-goers observe and participate intellectually in a play.
Here, however, we tentatively explore villagers' accounts of zar trance in themselves in an effort to discover what therapeutic effect trance might have upon a woman who has come to acknowledge a possession affliction. Yet the present emphasis, in keeping with that of the thesis as a whole, rests not with what might be called the psychological aspects of possession, but with its cultural aspects, notwithstanding the undeniable interaction of the two in cases of individuals possessed. This concern with zar trance stems from the fact that the physical manifestation of the patient's intrusive spirit in her body and the corresponding revelation of its identity is at once the object and the climax of the curing ceremony. What, then, is it message to she who would experience it?

During propitiary rituals the known spirits of all zar groups are invoked. Marshalled by the drums and attracted by ascending incense they remain above, awaiting their turns to enter the midān. As their threads are drummed they descend into the bodies of their hosts, actively possessing them in sequence throughout the evening. But if zairan transcend the boundaries between spirit and human worlds in series, all of them are immanent and potential in ritual time and space. For a brief period the patient's room or courtyard becomes the parallel universe, that which is normally invisible to humans and external to Hofriyat.
As the spirits descend they dramatize, through their hosts, a catalogue of relevant other cultures and culture traits, actively symbolizing powers and abilities at a remove from those of village women. The ceremony, for onlookers and adepts alike, invariably is an excursion into the unknown and the unexpected. Women who, in their ordinary lives, strive to maintain an aura of self-restraint and dignity, suddenly take on bizarre mannerisms, dancing animatedly, even wildly, in an already hot and overcrowded room or congested courtyard, a place made doubly eerie by the heady scent of incense and the faint glow of a few small kerosene lanterns. A zar ritual is always something of a surprise to those who attend. Women whose spirits demand their presence approach with a mixture of trepidation and excitement: the spirits are powerful and often frightening, but a zar, on the whole, is a pleasurable event. Still, one never can foresee when she might be seized by a spirit which she did not know she had. And spirits, when they descend, are sometimes startlingly innovative in their gestures or in their demands (cf. Lambek 1978, Crapanzano 1977a:16). Some spirits might choose not to descend when summoned by their chants; others might choose not to depart their hosts immediately when the drumming stops. The actual events of a ritual can never be determined in advance.

But this is not to say that trance itself is an unknown or unstructured experience. Nothing could be further from the
truth. Now, in what follows I have set aside questions regarding the genuineness of trance. Suffice it to note that Hofriyati employ various methods conducive to developing an altered state of consciousness in those who participate (cf. Sargent 1964, Prince 1964 and 1968, Nehr 1962, Kiev 1968, Ludwig 1968): the focusing of attention via rhythmic drumming (one long beat followed by three short ones, the same pattern being played by each musician starting at different times on different instruments); consumption of alcohol when available; hyperventilation, including the hyperventilated intake of tobacco smoke; and inducement of dizziness by quick up and down movements of the participant's head and torso from a kneeling position (nizül or "descent"). From an early age, adepts, indeed all villagers, learn to expect and to cultivate alterations of consciousness in themselves, for dreams and visions, what we might wish to call "paranormal" experiences, are accorded positive value and importance. Hofriyati, then, are not burdened by inhibitions which, because of the Western world's tradition of attaching greatest significance to conscious rationality and generally disparaging other modes of ideation, might prevent us from experiencing trance as readily or as willingly as they seem to do. I remember, for example, being fearful that I would lose control of my actions should I unwittingly succumb to trance during the incessant drumming at a possession ritual. But Hofriyati seem not to share my fear.
For them trance, once induced, is "tamed" if initially uncontrolled by developing the entranced's consciousness of the spirit by which she is possessed. Those possessed essentially learn how to conduct themselves so as to prevent causing injury when a spirit intrudes. Further, they learn how to come out of trance when the drumming of a chant draws to a close. Thus Hofriyati not only are predisposed to experience trance, but to experience it under controlled conditions and in an orderly way.

Moreover, questions as to the authenticity or simulation of a trance performance, assuming the entranced remains faithful to the possession text, are essentially meaningless for Hofriyati (cf. Middleton 1969: 225 for Lugbara). The reality of trance, which we might wish to define in medical terms, is perhaps for villagers more a social reality than a physical one. Just as possession is real for the possessed (Crapanzano 1977b:141), so possession trance is real for the possessed in the context of a ritual, whatever her physiological signs might read to a Western observer. For she is involved, deeply or otherwise, in experiencing and being experienced by an alien form of existence. Hers is a transcendent excursion into "otherness", one which, as we soon see, takes place on a social plane as much as a mystical one. Possession trance collapses or conjoins these two planes of experience, and since it does the view that possession is an
esthetic genre is once again apropos.

Yet the mystical or the ineffable, as experienced in possession, is a subjective matter. It defies communication or else is destroyed in its process. As a dimension of trance it is lost to an investigation of the present sort. But the social dimension of possession trance is not lost to us; it is both communicable and communicated by adepts.

I asked several women about what happens to them when zairan take possession of their bodies. Because the answers I received are remarkable for their similarity, one may assume they are drawn from a standard interpretation of the trance experience. But they are no less significant for this. Such similarity merely reinforces the notion that trance is not a frightening, uncontrolled experience, that it tends to conform to a more or less predictable pattern. At the very least the answers provide us with a cultural model of what possession trance is or ought to be like.

My informants said that when the drumming and the singing start, the spirit begins its descent, and its pressure on their heads makes them bob up and down. The zār controls them, it is waiting to enter. Then, as Asia says,

*When it descends into you, you 'go [become] the limit' until the drumming stops, and then the person stops. When the drums are beating you hear nothing, you hear from far away, you feel far away. You have left the midān, the place of the zār. And you see, you have a vision. You see through the eyes of the Westerner. Or you see through the eyes of the West African, whichever spirit it is. You see then as a Westerner sees -- you*
see other Westerners, radios, Pepsis, televisions, refrigerators, automobiles, a table set with food. You forget who you are, your village, your family, you know nothing from your life. You see with the eyes of the spirit until the drumming stops.

Asia's description is echoed by Zaineb, Seraitti, other possessed Hofriyati too numerous to mention. Seraitti, for example, once told me that if she were to see me at a zär ritual when inhabited by her Khawaja spirit, she would see me not in the village, surrounded by dark skinned Hofriyati, their goats and desert sand, but in Canada, in my own country, surrounded by the things with which I am familiar and behaving as it is appropriate for Khawajiyat to behave among themselves: drinking liquor, smoking, going to movies and restaurants with unrelated men.

Among other peoples' descriptions of possession trance are, to my knowledge, rare: adepts in other, similar cults have, or are supposed to have, no memory of the event (cf. Lambek 1978, Leiris 1958). But in Hofriyat such reports are common. They tell us that while she is entranced a woman is indeed "lost from her socially constructed self" (Crpanzano 1977a: 9). Yet equally they demonstrate that her trance is not a matter of the "depossession" of self, the temporary absence to herself of the entranced's soul or essence which deHeusch (1962) has argued is the necessary complement to spirit intrusion. Instead we learn that for Hofriyati possession trance, though controlled by the spirit and
regulated by human drumming, is a participatory act. The spirit fords the boundaries separating visible and invisible worlds to become manifest in its host's gestures and audible through her voice. But at the same time she, too, is transported to another domain of experience — not a mystical domain, but an eminently social one. She transcends the visible world: with the eyes of the spirit she sees through that world into the normally invisible parallel universe. In briefly stepping outside the Hofriyati world and into another, she also briefly divests herself of the strictures of interiority. Moreover, her own everyday reality is given to appear as one among several, becoming in the process less unquestionable, less taken-for-granted, even less subjective.

In a very real sense, host and spirit now participate in each other's essence. For the possessed the experience is quite literal, not figurative or vicarious. However, its construction is such as to warrant comparison to that of a metaphor, for metaphor, like possession, consists in predication (Fernandez 1974, Ricoeur 1976:50). But possession is a mutual predication. To borrow, and rework, some phrasing from Fernandez (1974), the spirit, named or soon to be named, and having certain known characteristics, is predicated upon the inchoate human subject, the woman, who is led to spirit possession because of her feelings of apathy (zihuj), or other events which throw her identity, her
position in the ideal scheme of things, open to question. And as a result the woman's inchoate feelings are structured and objectified (cf. Crapanzano 1977a:16). But the human host, visible, named, and having a social identity known to observers, is reciprocally predicated upon the inchoate spirit. Hence the spirit entity gains concreteness for both possessed and audience alike: formless in its own universe, and variably diffuse in the minds of adepts, it enters the known human world through the visible body of its material host. Spirit and host thus exchange domains of experience. More accurately, perhaps, their respective domains merge or coalesce in the temporary trance experience of the Hofriyati woman. But if spirit and human domains coalesce they do not ultimately unite. When the drumming stops the possessed returns to herself: exhausted, dazed, but as villagers say, "feeling well".

The possession system is a pool of potential experiences and meanings from which individuals might draw both in possession ritual and, in fact, in their everyday lives. The ritual provides those who become spirit-entranced and those who merely attend with the possibility of experiencing what it means to be non-Hofriyati and, indeed, what it means to be themselves. Essential characteristics of Hofriyati culture are dramatically thrown into relief, presented, as it were, photo-negatively: in the antics of zairan, not humans, via
selective portrayals of facets of other cultures. Aside from any cathartic effects of literally becoming, however temporarily, that which you are not, the possession experience might well help to sustain or to renew the meaningfulness of everyday life (cf. Lambek 1978). For not only are particular spirits and individual humans mutually predicated upon each other, but the entire universe of other cultures and alien existents is negatively predicated upon the whole of Hofriyati culture, giving the latter an implied objectivity and significance not always apparent to those who live it day by day. Culture in itself thus becomes a subject for contemplation.

In addition to being an esthetic genre, or perhaps because of it, possession is an anthropological enterprise and the system of possession beliefs a sort of anthropological text. Perhaps we can push the analogy further. Like possession, the doing of anthropological fieldwork is a participatory act, one which involves the literal predication of an investigator on, initially, inchoate others. The investigator, named and having a known ethnic or national identity, predicates her humanity upon a group of alien beings with the conviction that in becoming the other, however temporarily, she will achieve an understanding of, an accommodation to, that alternate reality. Just as the zar ritual provides villagers with the possibility of experiencing
what it means to be non-Hofriyati, fieldwork, long considered a rite of passage for those aspiring to become adepts, provides the investigator with the possibility of becoming "lost from her socially constructed self", and in the process, of learning what it means to be the other.

In "seeing through the eyes of the spirits" my friends in the village were accomplishing, to their satisfaction, what I labored for in living among them, a reciprocal understanding of the world through their eyes. While our assumptions and our theoretical perspectives were somewhat at odds, we both firmly believed in the reality, the possibility, of our ventures. Together we brought to our respective "field" situations a load of cultural biases that undoubtedly colored our visions. Our separate endeavours were coincidentally intellectual and affective; we would come away from them feeling that we had learned something not only about others, but also about ourselves.

Thus both anthropological fieldwork and spirit possession are, in a special sense, forms of esthetic perception. Both stem from what are essentially gnostic traditions, rooted in the conviction that knowledge is achieved through transcendence of the self in the other. But more than this, perhaps, both rest upon the implicit assumption that what is thus attained is as much self-knowledge as it is knowledge of an alien reality. Hofriyati women told me that after
attending zu'r rituals they "see things differently" and they feel happier, more at ease with themselves. Though the question of relative happiness is a debatable one, fieldwork, like possession for Hofriyati, provides the investigator with the opportunity to "see things differently", to view the culture of her origin from a different perspective and perhaps more dispassionately than ever, to assess her own position in it. Indeed, it may not be wholly fortuitous that both spirit possession and the anthropological profession tend to attract individuals who are said to be somewhat uncomfortable with their own everyday cultural realities.

Like possession, the anthropological experience, though temporally limited, is nonetheless continuously interactive, an ongoing reciprocal predication. Just as the spirits of transient non-Hofriyati remain in the village, leaving something of their essence encapsulated in the zu'r, so the "spirits" of our informants remain with us long after we have returned from the field. Much like Hofriyati, we anthropologists exorcise these possessive others, or at least symbolically placate them, in writing our monographs and our ethnographies. We, too, transform our experiences of otherness into cultural texts.

But the corresponding influence of us as symbolic "other" to our informants should not be underestimated. As I was preparing to leave the field Seraitti, a sitt el-'ilba, was
consulted by a woman suspected of being zar-possessed. That night during a diagnostic dream, Seraitti saw her female Egyptian spirit, a Khawaja, fly away to Canada and return to the village in the company of a Khawaja zar by the name of Sitt en-Nisa, Lady of the Women, which brought metal from which to make instruments for the zar. So, if something of my informants' essence remains with me, then something of mine also remains with them — in the form of a female Khawaja spirit whose characteristic mannerisms I recognize too clearly as my own, and, just as I was known for clanging through the village weighed down by camera, tape recorder, and the inevitable house-keys, one associated with metal. Indeed, it was only after the conception of Sitt en-Nisa that I came to appreciate the extent to which zar, whatever else it may do, provides a pathway to knowledge through experiential reciprocity, through spirit and human "participant observation". Above all else zar is a means to enhance villagers' understanding of others, and, in the process, of themselves.


3. This view certainly is not original; both Leiris (1958) and Lambek (1978) have discussed possession from an esthetic perspective.
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The following is a chart of some of the major symbols and symbolic contrasts dealt with in the thesis with respect to Hofriyati culture. It is by no means complete; nor is it wholly descriptive, for cultural symbols invariably resonate with more meaning than can be depicted diagramatically.

The contrasts are meant to be read in rows, from left to right. However, the reader will note that a certain level of association can be seen among items in the several columns as well.

Because it could not easily be included in the larger chart, a table showing aspects of the sexual dialectic in Hofriyat is also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Symbols and Symbolic Contrasts</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hofriyati culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural symbols</td>
<td>Invariably resonate with more meaning than can be depicted diagramatically.</td>
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<td>Dimension</td>
<td>- Closure</td>
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<td>Human (negative)</td>
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<td>Hofriyati</td>
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<td>Non-Hofriyati</td>
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<td>Sexes</td>
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<td>Married Women</td>
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<td>Married Men</td>
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<td>Married (Transvestites &amp; Homosexuals) Men</td>
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<td>Sexes</td>
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<td>Brides</td>
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<td>Married Women</td>
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<td>Married Men</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married (Transvestites &amp; Homosexuals) Men</td>
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<td>Boys and young men</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncircumcised males</td>
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<td>Sexes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unmarried circumcised girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unmarried adult females</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legitimately pregnant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illegitimately pregnant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enclosed womb</td>
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<td>Vaginal orifice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penis &quot;unveiled&quot; through circumcision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small orifices &amp; cavities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body orifices &amp; cavities</td>
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<td>Fusion by heat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Injuries &amp; headache</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dirty, foul-smelling, long fingernails,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dirty, unoiled &amp; unbound (or unshaved) hair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>little or no perspiration</td>
<td>profuse sweating</td>
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<tr>
<td>inability to eat</td>
<td>eating dirt and excrement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inability to eliminate</td>
<td>uncontrolled elimination, diarrhea &amp; vomiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inability to speak or to move</td>
<td>restrained emotions &amp; mannerisms</td>
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<tr>
<td>over-abundant blood, &quot;heavy&quot;</td>
<td>plentiful blood, weak, thin blood, &quot;light&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>amenorrhea</td>
<td>old, &quot;black&quot;, foul-smelling blood, blood of childbirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>&quot;poor foods&quot;</td>
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- clean blood                                   |
- blood of circumcision                          |
- pregnancy and demonstrated fertility          |
- menstrual blood                                |
- amenorrhagia, miscarriage                      |
- chickens, dirt and inedible animal flesh       |
### Animals

- Pigeons and waterfowl
- Cattle raised in family compound
- Hyenas, crocodiles, (dogs)
- Animals bought at market

### Household Items

- Gulla, ostrich eggs, decorative gourds
- Porous water jars (zir)

### Space

- Nile
- Hosh, marked thresholds, social space, and rooms (windows)
- Village paths, desert, cemetery
- Back of house, women's quarters
- Front of house, men's quarters

### Marriage, Incest, Mortality, & Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incest</th>
<th>Mortality</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matrilaterl cousin</td>
<td>Patrilateral cousin</td>
<td>Marriage of Second and Third Degrees of Closeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel cousin marriage</td>
<td>Parallel cousin marriage</td>
<td>Marriages to non-kin, strangers &amp; foreigners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross cousin marriage</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Quarreling with kin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suicide</th>
<th>Usurping another's property, respect for individual property, violations, violations of integrity</th>
<th>Evil eye for individual violations, mixing of domains (unintentional admiration or envy)</th>
<th>Sorcery, intentional sorcery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Cannibalism (figurative)

- dignity,
- self-restraint,
- forebearance

Cannibalism (literal)

- lack of restraint,
- quarrelsomeness,
- mourning

| lack of communication | respectful communication, being "shy",
| centripetal excess, over-determined boundaries of the human world | respectful communication, being between affines |
| cross-sexual communication, | respectful communication, being forthright (males) |
| being "shy", retiring (female) | respectful communication, being forthright (males) |
| | respectful communication, being forthright (males) |

--- HUMANS: IN BETWEEN EXTREMES ---

Non-Humans

| Non-Humans | ALLAH (positive closure: ONE) | Saints, angels, white | -- ZAIRAN -- (red jinn) | Black jinn, devils |
### SEXUAL DIALECTIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>BOTH</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>water (fluid)</td>
<td>human</td>
<td>earth (substance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nile Water</td>
<td>kisra</td>
<td>seeds, grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blood, flesh</td>
<td>child</td>
<td>bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milk</td>
<td>jirtig: wedding, activated</td>
<td>sprouted grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fertility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back of hōsh</td>
<td>household compound</td>
<td>front of hōsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domestic, enclosed</td>
<td>village</td>
<td>external, market, unenclosed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awlad khalat genealogies</td>
<td></td>
<td>awlad 'amm genealogies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village integration</td>
<td></td>
<td>village structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cattle, pigeons, water fowl</td>
<td></td>
<td>(wild animals?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II

LIST OF NAMED SPIRITS AND THEIR ATTRIBUTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPIRIT</th>
<th>ATTRIBUTES AND DEMANDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. DARAWÎSH:</strong></td>
<td>Holy Men and their Daughters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>General: white rams, white <em>jelabîya</em>, white prayer shawl, prayer beads, forked walking stick; behave calmly and with dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdelgadir el-Jaylani</td>
<td>green sash, associated with the Qadriya order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SayIdî Bedawi</td>
<td>associated with the Bedawiya order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh Hamid</td>
<td>local, associated with the Qadriya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh Mohammed</td>
<td>silver signet ring, associated with the Khatmiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>General: request white shawl or tòb, gold jewelry, perfume; behave with dignity, are embodiments of the feminine ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitti Khudera</td>
<td>green dress or <em>jelabîya</em>, el-Jaylani's daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedawiya</td>
<td>white dress, Sayidi Bedawi's daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. HABISH:</strong></td>
<td>Ethiopians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>General: reddish ram, red <em>jelabîya</em>, fez, ebony and/or ivory walking stick, cigarettes; behave in a proud and stately manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birono</td>
<td>petty king, husband to Sitti Khudera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shamharush</td>
<td>petty king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yo</td>
<td>high court official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bîshîr Tadîr</td>
<td>dark skinned nobleman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sultan el-Habish  king of Ethiopia, rides a horse
GasIs el-Habish  Ethiopian priest
Sheikh Mohammed Sa'adabi  leader of Shendi Sa'adab, lives on Ethiopian frontier
Sultan er-Rih, Sultan el-Ahmar  king of all zairan
Galay Galay  chief of the Galla, requests a spear
Romani  Italian living in Ethiopia
Sulayman Ya Jenna  male homosexual, requests a jelabiya, chews tobacco, drinks beer, and carries itself like a woman

Sex Unknown or Problematic

Wilad Mama (or Awlad Mama)  "mother" and emissary of zairan, seen as a plurality
Jebel Nado  hill on which coffee is grown
Female

Raya
Shilshila
Amerio
Shamiya
'Aya (illness)
Beney Showina

General: red dresses, red head shawls; prostitutes and loose women—spirits

Dodo, Sitt ej-Jebana  "Lady of Coffee", requests an Ethiopian cross of gold and a Sunday coffee service in the shade.

Hamāma-t-el-Bahr  "Pigeon of the River", a prostitute, performs gestures of swimming or enacts the local women's dance ("pigeon" dance)
Maray  noblewoman and a prostitute
Sitt-em-Mendil  "Lady of the Handkerchief", a prostitute, highly flirtatious
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Request/Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luliya Ḥabishiya</td>
<td>requests bridal incense, agate beads, gold nose-ring, silver earrings, red bridal mat, garmosis, a prostitute which dances as a bride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er-Tomat Rongay</td>
<td>the Splendid Twins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 'ARĀB: Muslim Nomads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>General: request baggy cotton pants, loose shirt, and weapons; behave fiercely and aggressively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiba 'Arabiya</td>
<td>Beja lorry driver, requests a hair pick and a head scarf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulayman el-Bedawi</td>
<td>&quot;Sulayman the Bedouin&quot; asks for scented jirtig paste; a bridegroom, Hadendowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamali</td>
<td>sword, whip, and Beja töb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Bikeyfu</td>
<td>Beja warrior, demands a sword which it draws and resheaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernowi</td>
<td>&quot;Baggara&quot; military officer, turn of the century, requests a spear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wad el-'Arab</td>
<td>&quot;Son of the 'Arāb&quot;, schoolboy, requests a töb to wear across its chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Ababa</td>
<td>child, wears an 'Arab töb and cries for its father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wad el-Badiya</td>
<td>&quot;Son of the Steppe&quot;, a West Asian camel nomad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budwani</td>
<td>an Ethiopian 'Arāb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>el-Kuraishi</td>
<td>a member of the Prophet's tribe, demands a Saudi four cornered headdress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eṭ-Ṭulub</td>
<td>&quot;The Request&quot;, an assembly of 'Arāb zairan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassina 'Arabiya</td>
<td>Hadendowa brides, ride in a howda, perform the jaboudi dance, request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luli Hassina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KHAWAJAT: Westerners

4. Males

All: light skinned and wealthy, request liquor, cigarettes, Pepsis, expensive foods, hooked canes

Mistair Brinso
"Mister Prince", an archaeologist, requests khaki outfit, black shoes, pith helmet, eye-glasses

Dondo, ya Rondu (or Rondo or Rundu) a wealthy Westerner, sleeps on a bed, rides in a taxi, drinks whiskey and smokes cigarettes

Dodomayo Greek spirit, fond of wine and women

Donnabey North American doctor and big game hunter, requests khaki suit, liquor and a rifle; hunts little antelope and Sudanese girls

Bamba Beya a Turk vacationing at the pyramids of Bejrawiya

Wad en-Naṣara "Son of the Christians", an Italian which hunts water fowl (symbols of Hofriyati womanhood)

Ard es-Sīn "Land of China", lives in England and owns China

Kapitan Ṭiyarat airplane captain

Gasis Romay Roman Catholic priest

Gasis Gam bi Ṭiyara priest which lives in a monastery (Coptic) and takes off in a plane

Ab-Beram Shinebo a Turk which twists its moustache

Nimr ekh-Khala English boatman and military officer, "Tiger of the Desert"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sitt Mama</td>
<td>&quot;Lady Mother&quot;, wife of Dondo, requests pigeons and gold caps for its host's teeth, a Copt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aziza</td>
<td>&quot;Lady of Bracelets&quot;, a Coptic Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindiya</td>
<td>East Indian, demands its host's tūb be worn like a sari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hashira</td>
<td>rides in a carriage over a bridge, above the heads of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam el-Azrak</td>
<td>the Virgin Mary (&quot;Mary the Dark&quot;) requests a black dress and head shawl, similar to a nun's habit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamama</td>
<td>Chinese which walks with its husband through a fig garden, requests a dress of floral silk with a high collar and slits up the sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitt en-Nisa</td>
<td>&quot;Lady of the Women&quot;, Canadian, associated with metal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. BASHAWAT: Pashas, &quot;Big Ķhawajat&quot;</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>General: military officers, doctors and bureaucrats; also called Turks; request fezes, walking sticks; typically strut and swagger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ħakim Basha</td>
<td>&quot;Doctor Pasha&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) white jelabiya, black top coat, fez and walking stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) white lab coat, trousers, stethoscope, tongue depressors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ħakim bi dor</td>
<td>&quot;Doctor by turns&quot;, requests white lab coat and stethoscope, sees patients one by one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basha Basha</td>
<td>&quot;Pasha Pasha, sheikh of the long march&quot;, slave owner and trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basha BishIr</td>
<td>British colonial officer, hates desert heat and dust, mops its brow with a handkerchief, swims in the Nile; requests a towel plus a khaki outfit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bahsa-t-Adel  
railway engineer, builder or conductor; requests a whistle, a peaked cap and a suit

Abu Rish  
"Owner of Feathers", emir of the armed forces; a military officer, requests khaki uniform with a wide belt and epaulets, a helmet with feathers

Basha Korday  
? Alexander Korda

6.  
HALIB: Syrian gypsies  
General: itinerant peddlers and tinkers, Muslim but outgoing and forceful, considered charlatans

Males  
Abu Minira  
"Father of Munira"

Nahali  
"Skinny one"

Baraw Nayyar  
"Luminous scraps"

Females  
Halibiya-t-eg-güffa  
"Gypsy of the Basket", begs and hawks its wares in the midan; requests a green dress, blue tob and a peddler's basket

7.  
FELLATA: West African Muslims  
General: majority on an extended pilgrimage to Mecca, working their way across Africa; associated with more severe forms of illness brought by zairan, sometimes classed with the Khudam; most are poor

Males  
Sarkin Borno  
Sarkin (king) of Bornu, alternately classed with the Darawish; requests a striped jelabiya

Nimr ek-Kondo  
itinerant merchant from Chad, speaks French, sells perfume and sundries; requests a white shirt, a blue vest, and a fez
Abu Bukari travels by camel, begs, requests tea and boiled grain
Tekonday lives in Darfur, requests boiled grain
Females
Meriam considered shameless, demands a mortar and pestle
"Fellatiyat" a group of spirits, not individually named; Western Sudanese peanut sellers; request bright tiyab with geometric border, gold nose rings

8. **KHUDĂM, 'ABĪD, ZURŪĞ:**

**Servants, slaves or blacks,** Southern Sudanese

**Males**

Khadim esh-Shilluk Shilluk servant, requests a spear
Dinkawi Dinka herdsman, requests cow's milk
Maryjan an elderly servant, a Nuba
Khadim ej-Jebel comes from Darfur

**Females**

Ferigallah pagan, an elderly Nuba
Baharanil "River Nile", also elderly
Jata, Sitt er-Rāhaṭa "Jata, Lady of the Rāhat; requests a rāhat skirt, white satin dress, and jewelry, a prostitute, performs pigeon dance
Muna, Sitt esh-Shabal "Muna, Lady of the Shabal", a prostitute, dances the pigeon dance
9. **SAHAR:** Cannibal-witches

General: cause the most severe of zār diseases, considered Azande, include witches and the animals into which they can transform themselves, all presumably are male

**Bayakuba, es-Saḥar**
Juba

"Bakayuba the witch of Juba"; requests its host remove her clothing (or some of clothing). Loves to eat dates

**Nyam Nyam Kubaida**

"Azande the Severe Afflictor"; requests removal of clothing (as above), loves to eat raw liver

**Et-Tomsah**

"The Crocodile", a witch in its animal form, requests its hosts wear rags, eat raw meat, bite at members of the audience, and crawl on their bellies; prefers human flesh; does not speak
APPENDIX III

GLOSSARY

The following is a list of colloquial terms appearing frequently in the text, presented in English alphabetical order. Standard plurals follow singular forms in some cases. Where applicable, feminine forms (f.) are also given.

'abid, 'abId slave, slaves
'adat customs
ahmar, ḥamra (f.) red, medium in tone
akhḍar, khuḍra (f.) green, fairly dark
akal (to) eat
akil food
'alomiya ceremony where a prospective bride is taught the wedding dance
'amal (to) do; black magic
'ammm father's brother
'ammat father's sister
angarīb native rope bed
'Arāb nomadid Muslims of the Eastern Sudan; Arabic speaking nomads
araki a distilled liquor
'artīs bridegroom
'arūs bride
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>awlad</td>
<td>children, sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awlad 'amm</td>
<td>patrilateral parallel cousins, real or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>classificatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awlad khalat</td>
<td>matrilateral parallel cousins, real or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>classificatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'aya</td>
<td>illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'ayana</td>
<td>one (f.) who is ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bāb</td>
<td>door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baraka</td>
<td>divine blessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benat</td>
<td>girls, daughters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beyt</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beyt el-wilāda</td>
<td>womb, &quot;house of childbirth&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilīla</td>
<td>boiled grain; a sweet made of boiled grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bit/bint</td>
<td>girl, daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bit 'amm</td>
<td>father's brother's daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bit 'ammat</td>
<td>father's sister's daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bit khal</td>
<td>mother's brother's daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bit khalat</td>
<td>mother's sister's daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bowāb</td>
<td>doorman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dallūka</td>
<td>drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darawīsh</td>
<td>holy men, &quot;dervishes&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dastūr, dasatīr</td>
<td>synonym for zar spirit(s), doorstop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diwān</td>
<td>men's quarters, guest room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dura</td>
<td>a type of millet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
fakka-t-er-ras  "opening of the head", rite occurring at the close of a zār ceremony, when the sheikha pulls apart the jaws of the sacrificial ram.

fekī/fagīr, fugāra  religious practitioner(s)

Fellata, Fellatiya (f.)  West African Muslims

garmosīs  red and gold bridal veil

gūlla  squat, non-porous pottery jar

Ḥabīsh, Ḥabishiya (f.)  Ethiopian

ḥabōba  grandmother

ḥāj  pilgrimage to Mecca

ḥaishan  plural of ḥōsh

ḥal  (to) loosen

Ḥalib, Ḥalibiya (f.)  Syrian gypsy

hamāmat  pigeons

ḥarr  hot, painful

ḥōsh  walled household enclosure, courtyard

ḥulalā  "loosening", sacrifice of an animal following childbirth or at the close of a wedding

'id  Feast

'Id el-Adḥa  Great Feast

'iris  wedding

iṭharīg  (to) inflame

jaboudī  dance of the 'Arāb

jelabīya  men's long shirt-like gown
jenā  fruit, offspring
jinn  spirits, invisible beings
jirtig  protective charms and substance
karro  donkey cart
Khadim, Khudām  servant, servants
khal  mother's brother
khalat  mother's sister
khashm  mouth, nostril, orifice
khashm el-beyt  front door, sub-lineage or household
Khawaja, Khawajiya  Westerner
(f.)
khudra  green
kisra  wafer-thin bread of dura flour
laila-t-ed-dukhla  "night of the entrance", first night of wedding ceremony
laila-t-eg-gaila  "night of the staying", first night which the newlywed couple spend together
laila-t-el-henna  night preceding wedding on which the bride and groom receive jirtig ornaments
lahma  meat, flesh
marbut  tied
marissā  native beer
mek  king, leader
meshat  braids
mīdān  open area, area in which the possessed dance at a zar ritual
mushāharaḥ  customs and beliefs surrounding childbirth and circumcision
na'īm smooth
nas people
nazīf hemorrhage
nazīf(a) clean (f.)
ragīs bi šulaba wedding dance, "a dance from the buttocks"
ragīs bi rugaba women's dance, "a dance from the neck"
(plague dance)
rāḥat leather thong skirt formerly worn by unmarried girls
rakūba square hut constructed largely of palm fronds, poles and grass
riḥ spirit, wind
rowhan plural of riḥ
sagīya water wheel or the (registered) plot of land that it irrigates
saḥar cannibal-sorcerer
shabāl when a dancing woman inclines her head toward a dancing man thereby conferring luck
shaila "burden", trousseau
shāmūṭa prostitute
shawaṭīn plural of shayṭan
shayṭān devil, black jinn
sheikh leader
sheikha leader (f.), zār practitioner (f.)
sīmaya naming ceremony, held seven days after birth
sitt lady, woman
sitt el-'ilba
"lady of the tin box", a zăr functionary

sük (or sūq)
market

ṭahir
pure

ṭahūr
purification, circumcision

tajrūba
test, zăr test

ṭalag
(to) divorce, let go

ṭarīga
path, religious fraternity

ṭawālī
immediately, of lengthy duration

tiyab
plural of töb

töb
nine meters (a bolt) of cloth, worn wrapped around the body by women, or criss-crossing the chest by nomadic men

wad/walad
boy, son

wad 'amm
father's brother's son

wad 'ammat
father's sister's son

wad khal
mother's brother's son

wad khalat
mother's sister's son

wadi
watercourse, usually empty except during the rainy season

wazīr
minister, "best man" at a wedding (groom's proxy and assistant)

wazīra
"maid of honor" at a wedding (bride's assistant)

wilāda
childbirth

wirāsa (wirātha)
inheritance

zairan
plural of zăr spirit
| **zār** | a type of spirit, the spirit possession cult, a type of illness caused by intrusive spirits, the ceremony for alleviating that illness by propitiating the spirits |
| **zihuj** | apathetic, bored, depressed, "blue" |
| **Zurug** | Blacks, Africans |