

## **Al-Madafa and Ad-Diwan among Al-Shboul Tribe: A Case Study in Ash-Shajarah Village of Jordan**

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### **Abstract**

*The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the change in the structure and role of the Al-Shboul tribe that coincides with the change in its institution and its socioeconomic and political roles. The madafa and Diwan as traditional form of guest house emphasizes on the social, economic and political role and function of the Sheikh and mukhtar as traditional leaders, providing them with a place where they exert their power and influence over the members of the 'ashira (tribe).*

**Key words:** Guest house (Al- Madafa and Ad- Diwan), Al-shboul, Ash-Shajarah, Jordan, Institution, Function, Symbolical Changing, Place and Space.

### **Introduction**

In this article, I will focus on the *madafa* and *Ad- Diwan* as guest house and their associations by focusing on them as part of the cultural heritage and their function and as a forum, where the members of the '*ashira* may strengthen their mutual relationships and ties. In addition, the guest house is the traditional institution in which the diffusion of tribal authority is most apparent, and the phenomenon of tribalism as a state of mind is reinforced. In this light, this study analyzes an important factor and role in the process of group formation and the way the individuals today view their identity in the guest house of the tribe.

There is a change in the form and function of the *madafa* and *Diwan*, which were previously considered traditional 'informal' political institutions. The change in their function and size creates tension and coherence in the group, as well as in the meaning of tribe integration and strength. The *madafa* and *Diwan* are two important places where traditional tribal practices demonstrated and deeply embedded in the cultural tribal context. A consequent factor plays an important role in the process of change; it is the meaning and the significance of the *madafa* and *Diwan* as means of combining groups and changing family names.

Additionally, this study examines the role of the tribal leaders in the traditional political institution and bureaucracy. It has been assumed that the *madafa* and *Diwan* as traditional political institutions are instruments to help, create, and maintain a degree of loyalty to the tribe headed by the sheikh, the man who holds power, control and authority. The process of modernization and social change did not erode *Al-Madafa* totally. What happened that the shape of this social institution was changed and became *Diwan*. This is a place where members of AlShboul tribe gathered and as a result the unity between them was strengthened.

In terms of the role of Islam in this social institution, in spite that each member of AlShboul tribe is Muslim, and this place is where many Islamic values are expressed, still it is a place where the traditional values have more power than the religious ones. This does not mean that members of the tribe are not influenced by Islamic values and their practice.

### Background

It should be noticed that there is only one study conducted in Irbid city of Jordan addressed some issues related to the *madafa*. It is a master thesis, which aimed to study the relationship between the tribe and state in one hand and the *madafa* in the second. In his study, æusban (1992) used the term *madafa* for the place where people of the same tribe gathered in the past and present. The study revealed that a significant change has taken place from the *madafa* where the relationship between the sheikh and the others is expressed, to a place where the relationship between "we" and "they" is expressed. In addition, the study showed that in present time all members of the tribe own the *madafa*, while in the past it was owned by the sheikh.

Mahjoub (1974) conducted a study in Kuwait. His study showed that "*Ad-Diwanift*", places where members of the family get together and discuss family issues, some of the political and economical problems. In his study, Maájoub explained that the "*Ad-Diwanift*" are parts of houses. We should differentiate between the term used by Maájoub and the terms used in our study, since we use *Ad-Diwan* for the place where all members of the tribe gathered and totally separated from the houses. *Ad-Diwaniat* played an important role in 1984 elections (Asieri, 1986). According to Khouri (1983) the "Majles" in Bahrain has a similar structure and function of "*Ad-Diwaniat*" in Kuwait.

Ar-Ra' i (1987) used the term "Sheikhs houses" which represent clubs for tribesmen in his study conducted in Wadi Khalid in Lebanon. One of the most important findings of this study is that there was a decrease in the number of these houses toward recent time.

### Methodology

To achieve this research paper, many methodological tools were employed. These include fieldwork, participant observation, in depth- interview with elderly people of Al-Shboul tribe, and informants. We spent eight months of fieldwork to collect the ethnographic data using interview with many old people to document the oral history about *Al-Madafa* and *Ad-Diwan*.

### *Al-Shboul* tribe and *Ash-Shajarah* Village

*Ash-Shajarah* which is located in the northern part of the district of *Ramtha*, is the administrative centre of the district (530 meters above sea level). The name of the *baldat*<sup>1</sup> *Ash-Shajarah* means, place with much trees. According to local historians and depending on the memory of the 'elders', the *Al-Shboul* have inhabited *Ash-Shajarah* for more than 250 years (Al-‘Abadi, 2004).

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<sup>1</sup>. Villages with a population of more than three thousand may have a municipal rather than a village council. The change in the authority from the village council *Al-majlis al-qarawy*' to the municipal '*baladyh*' or '*al-majlis al-balady*' took place in the early 1970s. The advantages of such a change were that the municipality received more authority to tax and spend than the village council. A more formal leader, the *Mukhtar*, has considerable importance, especially in villages without municipal councils (Gubser, 33: 1983).

The eighteen thousand population is composed entirely of Muslims, most of whom work in governmental administrations; and a few of them, especially older members, still work in the land. They still produce different kinds of grain, tend orchard and keep sheep and goats; although all together yield less than the average of a self-sustenance economy.

The collective memory of the alienated *Rummones* in the Palestinian villages (*Rummon* and *Rantees*) and Jordanian (*Ash-Shajarah* and *Umm Juzeh*), as well as the scientific narratives determine that the *Al-Shboul* tribe descended from *Thabet Ben Na'eem Ben 'Uqba* from elder *Jutham* from the *Qahtanian* Arabs ('Ammari, 1999; Ad-Dabagh, 2002; Peake, 1979).

*Al-Shboul* is branch of the *Al-'Amer* tribe, whose homes extended from the outskirts of the *Al-Hejaz* (Peninsula Arabica) to *Al-Balqaa'* (Jordan), where they founded the Emirate "Emarah" lasted more than two hundred years, had been characterized by injustice and tyranny towards other tribes, which led to the formation of alliance by several tribes of *Al-Majali*, *Bani Sakher* and *Al-Huitat* to face *Al-Shboul*. After several battles, the alliance took hold of the sovereignty of *Al-Karak* from *Al-Amer*, who were forced to leave to the neighboring villages. As a branch of *Al-'Amer*, *Al-Thbeet* tribe (Descended from *Thabet*, the grandfather of *Al-Shboul*) left to Palestine and lived in the *Rummon*<sup>2</sup> village, now located within the area of *Ramallah*.

After *Al-Thbeet* settled in *Rummon* during the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century, a large disagreement between the tribes of *Rummon* (*Al-Thbeet*, *Al-Kahlah* and *Ash-Shukha*) that is well-known by *Al-'Etiany* dog quarrel (*Howshet Kaleb Al-Etiany*)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>. *Rummon* is a Palestinian village located to the north of Jerusalem, at a distance of fifteen kilometers, and its sits on top of the hill known as the rock of *Rummon*, and actually takes its place in the middle of the road between the towns of *Ramallah* in the West and Jericho in the East. It is eighteen kilometers to the north-east of *Ramallah*, and twenty kilometers to the north-west of Jericho. It is located between the villages of *Al-Taybeh* in the north, *Deir Diwan* in the south, 'Ein Yabrud in the West and 'Auja in the East?

<sup>3</sup>. Accounts mention that one day of the second half of the eighteenth century a stranger, accompanied by his family, belongings, money and a cattle came to the village of *Rummon*, and was welcomed in the attic (reception) of *Ash-Shoukhah* tribe. This stranger was known by the name of 'Etiany asked for protection being a fugitive from revenge requested from him. He had what he wanted; he was granted the right of protection, so he had the same rights of the people of *Rummon* such as his safety and that of his wealth and his family as well as the right to pasture and drink for his cattle. Further, he had the same duties of the people of *Rummon* such as the conservation and taking into account their habits and customs and to counter the aggression that occurred. 'Etiany had lived within the confines of the people of *Rummon* for a period of time as one of them. 'Etiany had a flock of sheep which some of his sons cared for. One day afternoon, his sons had come to the upper spring for watering their sheep accompanied by a herd guard dog. After they began watering their sheep, a group of shepherds of the people of *Rummon* arrived at the spring and with them their livestock to the same end, and waited until the 'Etiany sons finish from watering their cattle; but their patience ran out from waiting. This prompted them and other shepherds to bring their sheep to be watered before the 'Etiany sons finished. This caused alterations between them, and developed into a fight. During the fight the guard dog to the 'Etiany herd rushed and involved in defense of the 'Etiany sons against those who assaulted them. One of them, according to the account of a man named *Sh'alan Abu Rdainah*, shot a bullet that killed the dog. Subsequently, the 'Etiany sheep scattered and his sons (those who enjoyed protection) fled in the direction of the town (*Rummon*), and when their father saw them in that situation, and after he learned what had happened to them and the killing of the dog, 'Etiany the father hurried to the attic of the *Ash-Shoukhah* tribe screaming "your face has been cut you *Shoukhah* and that who killed the dog, killed the owner (alluding that who dared to kill the dog of the man who is under their protection as if he killed the man himself). These words implied an insult as the one who had given the protection was incompetent. Here was excitement and provocation to those who gave the man protection, so that he gets his right quickly and without delay).

And after the one who shot and killed the dog was known, the tribal judiciary demanded that the weapon to be given to the 'Etiany as well as some cattle to compensate him. However, some people of *Rummon* did not like this matter, and took it as a means to incite and to show the shame that had stricken the sheikh who should be considered incompetent. All this came in the domain of competition for leadership that was witnessed in the region. This ultimately led to failure to comply with the decision of the tribal judiciary issued in that incident. The result of this was disorder and a great massacre and destruction in the town; its effects are still to this day. The consequence of the incitement and sedition between two families from the masters of the town and the region was that no one of them gave to the other. Under such confusion, bloodshed started in both sides. Everyone began to ask the support of their relatives and relatives-in-law. The conflict expanded and lasted for several days to involve all people of the town from all tribes without exception.

As a result of this dispute most of the tribes suffered the bitterness of exile and displacement from their village, great part of Al-Thbeet emigrated to north Jordan where they settled in the village of Ash-Shajarah and Ar-Ramtha. They were named as Al-Shboul, because they descended from their grandfather whose name was Shibley ben Thabet Ben-Na'eem (Al-Rumoni, 2009).

The distinctive physical character of the *As-shajarah* village as in the whole territory had its importance in the way of life of its inhabitants. In the past the physical character, along with the organization of tribe (*'ashira*), afforded them protection from the attacks of the Bedouin. They expressed this by saying: "We have defended ourselves and the valley had protected us", and proudly added: "We are good horsemen (*khyaleh*)". The leadership of the *'ashira* was represented by the sheikh<sup>4</sup>, who was responsible for providing for and redistributing economic surplus, and judging between the members of the *'ashira* and other villagers. His authority was usually based on the military power of the peasants, since the role of the state was limited. In this sense the *'ashira* became a paramilitary apparatus, and its principle political function was to provide protection in return for payment in the form of contributions at harvest time.

Thus, the sheikh had an important role in the social control and politics in the village, and his traditional guest house (*madafa*)<sup>5</sup> provided the place where he operated his military and socio-political power. It was also the place where the villagers could request a judicial decision and where the guests received the generosity of the tribal leader. The tribal customs of generosity and hospitality (*al-karm wa al-diafha*) demanded that he share the slaughtered sheep with as many men as possible. The sheikh as leader of *'ashira* earned his reputation "as a wise man by his skill in settling disputes and [...] as a good man by slaughtering a sheep for the guests who came to pay him homage or to ask for advice and aid" (Antoun, 16:1972). Generosity as an attribute of the sheikh was important in the region also because of the geographical setting, since the district sits between the central government of Irbid<sup>6</sup>.

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After the situation had become very bad, elders of other tribes from the Mount of Jerusalem and East Jordan intervened to put an end to this massacre, in which more than a hundred people of all parties were killed. To stop the bloodshed among them, everyone who had been proven to commit murder had to be evacuated from the town. Since all tribes and all families in the town, without exception, were involved in the killing; all of them demanded blood for blood. Therefore, it was necessary to evacuate all the people of Rummon pursuant to the judiciary of the judges of the tribes. It is not permissible to evacuate some and keep some and everyone is required for each, and each of them participated in the killing. That was the major evacuation of the people of Rummon from their homes because of the incident that became known as "The evacuation of the dog of the *'Etiany*" and also known as "Quarrel of the dog of the *'Etiany*." It is exemplified by the saying, "one hundred men and the dog is *'Etiany*"; i.e. one hundred men were killed because of a dog, an indication that it was not worth all these losses of people as well as the bitterness and homelessness because of a dog.

Due to the "*Al-'Etiany* dog quarrel," -whose owners news has not been known since then- the Bedouins of Rummon lived their alienation, so tribes, families and households were divided and scattered throughout the four sides of the globe. Each of them has had his calculations and considerations in choosing the destination of their evacuation. Some resorted to the kindred, and some sought the protection of those who seemed capable of providing it; most of them resorted to the areas to which they belonged, and some of them settled in north of Jordan in the town of Ash-Shajarah, which became known in their name (Shajarat Al-Shboul). (Al-Rumoni, 2009:92-105).

<sup>4</sup> The term *'sheikh'* applies not only to the leader of a descent group or village, or of a combination of descent groups or villages in a certain area, but also strictly speaking to any elderly man. It is also applied to any man of religious learning regardless of age, for example, the *Imam* (who led prayers in the mosque). (Antoun, 157: 1972). The sheikh, or the 'old man' of the village is considered a source of knowledge or reference about the history of the *'ashira* or even of the other *'ashfir* (tribes) in the region. Moreover, *'sheikh'* was used for both a 'traditional' and a 'charismatic' character. (Weber, 341-386: 1947).

<sup>5</sup> The guest house (*madafah*) of the sheikh was open for every one in the village and played a role as the symbol of social status through the display of generosity. The importance of the sheikh was accentuated by the absence of any centralized administration in the area. At the same time the *madafah* was considered to be the parapolitical centre of the local community or even of the whole region, as in the case of the *Al-Shboul* family in the *Ash-Shajarah*.

<sup>6</sup> Is one of the governorates of Jordan. It is located north of Amman, Jordan's capital. The capital of the governorate of Irbid is the city of Irbid. It has the second largest population in Jordan after Amman Governorate, and the highest population density in the country. Irbid Governorate is named after its capital and largest city. It is divided into nine departments called *Alwiyya* which is plural of *Liwa'* (*Al-Qasabah Ar Ramtha, Bani 'Ubaid, Al-Mazfr Al-Shamali, Bani Kinanah, Al-Koura, Al-Aghwar Al Shamaliyyeh, Al-Taibeh* and *Al-Westiyeh*). Many of these departments are within the sphere of influence (and constitute districts) of metropolitan Irbid.

For example, when a person wanted to travel to the central city of Irbid in the time when means of transportation were very rare, he could not make the journey between the two places in one day. The sheikh guest house was where the members of the *'ashira* could receive and participate in receiving a guest; most of the members of the *'ashira* carried their rice and meat there in the case they themselves did not have a proper room to receive a guest. 'Receiving a guest' (*Istqbal al-daiff*) in the guest house is the responsibility of every male who has reached the age of maturity of eighteen years in the *'ashira*; the importance of participating in receiving a guest is to protect and build the reputation not only the sheikh of the *'ashira*, but of the whole village. If somebody fails to observe 'the obligation of hospitality' (*Haq Al Diaffah*) he exposes the reputation of the whole village to defamation by the others or by the guest himself.

The people's livelihood depends on the seasonal agricultural production, which fluctuates widely from year to year due to the unpredictable amount and seasonal occurrence of the annual rains. The seasonal agriculture distinguishes between winter crops, such as wheat and barley, and summer crops, such as seeds and vegetables, which are grown for subsistence. Cooperation in cultivating the land does not usually stretch beyond the extended paternal family. A man with large holdings, in the past, needs many hands in harvesting time to bring in the crops, and thus often hires harvesters in return for a sack of grain or cash payments. The harvesting group may also include neighbours and even friends from the surrounding villages; such help is based on the system of "*'Uwneh*"<sup>7</sup>. The corporate nature expressed in the form of working as a collective through employing '*we were as one family*', this characterizes not any more their life. Today, they refer to the time when the members of the village participated in collecting the grain and transported it to the houses of the village with nostalgia, saying, "today there are no more ploughmen and harvesters" (*al-yaum ma fi Haratheen wala Hasadeen*).

The general tendency was the change from an almost entirely agricultural economy for one in which agriculture occupies only a marginal place. Today, merely 5% of the inhabitants of the district engage in agricultural activities. Since the 1970s, the majority of the agricultural activities have been limited to the area of the Jordan valley. The downfall of the role of agriculture was accompanied by modifications in other fields, such as the *'suq'* (market): the locals import most of what they need from the nearest central market in the region. The change in the service sector, the export of workers to the Gulf states that in return depend on the system of money transfer, effects their life style and gives them the possibility to build new houses from cement rather than the traditional houses constructed from a mixture from 'mud and hay' (*teben wa qash*) with the traditional stone adobe-covered walls.

The transition from an agricultural to a complex economy had its consequences on the peasant life. An agricultural economy with a limited technological level requires a certain degree of solidarity among the members of the *'ashira*. While a complex economy replaces, to an extent, the manual labour with machines, today the handwork carries out more around specific activities under a new concept of peasant folklore in Jordan society. However, a large number of the people of the *baldat Ash-Shajarah* (Ash-Shajarah Village) are working in the governmental administration; the rate of higher education and the well-developed network of roads in the region allows for greater mobility, which has led to new patterns of settlement. A position in the bureaucracy is considered an '*amal muhtarama*' (respectable job). In this manner, they do not reject all of their peasantry culture, but their description for working in bureaucracy emphasizes their way of defining the boundaries between traditional professions and a good job with the government. Those who own enough for cultivation encourage their sons to work in the governmental sector, rather than to fulfil the traditional ideal; the successful peasant has to devote a part of the harvest to a son in order to marry him off and guarantee that he will settle with him or near him, thus increasing the number of hands in his house. Further, the members still refer to themselves as peasants despite of the great decline in tilling the land.

In this manner, they classify people based on profession and life style, in order to differentiate among peasants. Bedouins and the townspeople, *Haj*<sup>8</sup> Ali Al-'Elian Al-Shboul, 97 years old, told me:

<sup>7</sup>. "*'Uwneh*" was the most widely spread form of labour for payment, either in money or in victuals, in the villages, and reflected the social role of labour and a form of coherence between the members of the *'ashira*. Labour also was an object of exchange and sale, but it could also be done as a favor without expectation of compensation

<sup>8</sup>. Pilgrim or elder.

God divided the people into three categories: '*al-badawy*' (the Bedouin) who lives with his camels in the desert and is '*haramy al-dunya*' (the burglar of the world); '*ibn al-madina*' (the townspeople) who sell and buy the products of the *Falaheen* (peasants) and makes profit from that: they are '*ibn ad-dunya*' (the sons of the life of this world); and *al-fallah* (the peasant) or '*ibn al-fallah*' (the son of the countryside) who produces the bread of all people and works very hard, he is meant ironically - *Hemar ad-dunya*' (the donkey of life of this world).

In addition, individuals are attracted to the bureaucratic system because of the traditional prestige of public office: "Public office holders used to form the country's elite", (due to their identification with the government. [...]) Furthermore, the exposure of public office can facilitate contacts and networks that are vital for private enterprise". (Fathi, 184:1994). Bureaucracy is considered as the main sector and attracts a large percentage of the people in *Ash-Shajarah*. In referring to the importance of working in the bureaucratic system they employ the expression 'the son of the state' (*ibn ed-dawleh*). Employing the expression '*Al-wadifah al-thabitha*' in order to refer to the fixed job, they consider work in the bureaucracy free of risk<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, according to their understanding of the role of the bureaucrat in '*tasheel mu'amaleh*', (literally, to facilitate formalities) that is, to mediate, especially when it should be done through the government administration, they see a great advantage in working in the bureaucracy for the benefit of one's own '*ashira*'. For example, if a son of an '*ashira*' works in the bureaucracy, he should help the members of the '*ashira*' meet their needs not on the basis of well-functioning bureaucracy (which is normally not recognized), but by means of his recognizable traditional authority and relationships in the bureaucracy.

The mobility of profession that long characterized the *baldah* (if not the whole district), was made possible in particular by the peasants, who own very little land in the village, and whose income was not sufficient to support their families. They used to leave the village before or after the harvest time, especially during a drought. The elders of the *baldah* remember working for ten piasters<sup>10</sup> a day in the neighbouring small town in Palestine. Normally, they spent four to six months working at many different jobs: in construction, as watchmen, and in the orange fields or banana orchards in the town of Haifa or in Yaffa.

Others had spent longer than six months, and some of them even spent much of their lives in Palestine: my uncle Ahmed Al-Khaleel Al-Shboul (Abu Mohammed) was known as the merchant and earned enough money to be able to handover his marriage payment and to build two rooms for his family. The consequence of such a mobile occupational structure found in the few different kinds of profession; in the district as in the *Ash-Shajarah* most of these professions are connected to the work in agriculture. The *Ash-Shajarah* village was one of five villages in the district affected politically, economically and ideologically after the region of *Ar-Ramtha* was elevated to a district and later to governorate (*muttassarfiyya*). *Ar-Ramtha* became the administrative centre of the district. Access to government offices became easier, opening the way to different opportunities in working in the local government administration<sup>11</sup>.

### **The alliance of Al-Shboul**

Tribes and tribal alliances played a central role in the foundation on which the Jordanian government was built. Once the regime represented by the Hashemite gained the control over the tribe and the tribal alliances, it depended on their loyalty for decisive support. Tribal alliances were established according to certain social, economic and political considerations. The tribes organized themselves under the leadership of the most powerful tribe in the region; this traditional leadership was used by the state to impose its power on the population, while at the same time it represented the interests of the tribe and individual tribesmen in the formal governmental institutions. The state keeps the tribally organized population indirectly under its control through the powerful tribal leaders (sheikhs), who at the same time challenge the state power in the case that the regime payments are stopped. Thus there is a mutual or interdependent relationship between the power of the state and the power of the tribe.

<sup>9</sup>. In the past a job in the army or as a teacher was considered a no-risk occupation with a regular income. By contrast, work in seasonal agriculture depended almost entirely on the rainwater. The employment in the Jordanian army guaranteed a fixed monthly salary and additional services, such as health insurance, for all members of the family of the employed person.

<sup>10</sup>. Ten piasters correspond to 100 fils (one Jordanian Dinar (JD) = 1000 fils).

<sup>11</sup>. The centre of the district now provides most services, such as security, civil and religious courts, which handle all cases involving marriage, inheritance and divorce, social security payments and many other services, such as land registration.

Although there is more than one means of access and influence which allow the tribe ('*ashira*) to intervene in behalf of its members in order to promote their interests, they depend on the strong relationship with the regime. In *Ash-Shajarah* the '*ashira* still maintains its importance as a social political group, but, relatively, in the *Ar-Ramtha* district it has lost power not only because of the establishment of central government, but because of the change in the formation of new alliances. This change coincided with the gradual changes in the economic nature in Jordanian society that affected not only the life of the peasants, but also the life of the Bedouins, who abandoned their nomadic life and settled down. It also brought gradual changes in internal tribal power that led to a change in the form of tribal alliances. However, alliances have often applied pressure on the government to increase the process of development in its area; a representative body of the alliance council continued to show a relative effect.

In this light, tribal alliances were established according to a general rule, that participation in 'booty and misfortune' (*al-ghanimeh wa al-musibah*); that is, they share captured booty and have a degree of solidarity and cooperation in times of crisis and misfortune. Therefore, alliances among the people of *Ar-Ramtha* were established in times of drought and crisis, mainly in the case of external attack on one of the '*ashaaer*. The people of *Ash-Shajarah* belonged to an alliance with the other villages in the district of *Ar-Ramtha* under the leadership of the '*ashira* Fauaz Az-Zu'bi in order to defend themselves against the attacks of the Bedouin, who were considered the enemies of 'the Coalition of the *Ar-Ramtha* Tribes ' (*Tahaluf 'ashaaer Ar-Ramtha*) (Oppenheim, 227: 1943).

### **The Guest House**

In the early stages of Jordanian political development, power and jurisdiction remained almost exclusively with the local tribal leaders. The dominant position of these traditional leaders is based on tribal institutions and functions, embodying certain social and religious values of the traditional way of life. Traditionally, certain personal qualities distinguish a sheikh from the others in his tribe according him a special function in the exercise of power. The association of traditional leaders with the traditional institution of the guest house constitutes the basis of their influence, power and jurisdiction on the internal and external levels. In the case of decision-making, the elders gathering in the guest house display the networks and distribution of power in the '*ashira*. An analysis of power relationships as displayed in the guest house will allow a better understanding of the local politics, and show the reality of cooperation between the traditional institutions and the formal institutions represented in the Jordanian society.

### **The Madafas Village Institution**

The traditional institution of the guest house is a symbol of integration for the '*ashira*, and the means of promoting group political identity, creating a common feeling of shared practices. *madafa*<sup>12</sup> played an important social, economic and political role in the life of Jordanians, who considered it representative of the structure of local politics in the villages. The *Al-Shboul's madafa* is the institution which carries the core of our values, and the place where we can see these values in action, which are implicit in our way of life and build on a democratic principle rooted in our tribal history, and make clear the intimate relationship between the members of the '*ashira* and the guest house

The importance of establishing the guest house comes from the participation of every member of the '*ashira* in its activities: it is, according to Abu Mohammed, "the place where we feel and touch the meaning and the basis of the democratic social institution". In this sense, the members consider the guest house a symbol representing a 'democratic' form in their life, and, the place for discussion and making decisions concerning matters of the tribe, which is the most important 'democratic' function represented in such a house belonging to the tribe. The lives of the villagers are centred on a number of institutions whose complementary character reinforces the '*ashira* and the personalities represented in the central institutions in the village.

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<sup>12</sup>. The Arabic term for the guest house, or *al-madafah*, is known as an old feature of Bedouin social life: "In the pre-Islamic era the sheikhs of the Bedouin tribes of Arabia used to keep 'guest house' tents to feed and accommodate travelers in the desert or as meeting places for all the men of the tribe. As hospitality was a major duty for all Bedouins, guest houses were an essential adjunct to their life, and much of the prestige of the sheikhs of those days was based on the hospitality they showed to their guests" (Salim, 72: 1962)

The analysis of continuity and change in the structure of traditional political institution shows that the *madafa* in Jordanian villages was the place where men gathered in evenings to discuss agricultural conditions, folklore, tribal law, conditions of marriages, local gossip, and occasionally political affairs. Moreover, the *madafa* played an important role in information conveyance: complementing the broadcasts, news could be obtained sometimes from visitors or guests. A further aspect is that the officials in the district went regularly into the *madafa* of the sheikh or the *mukhtar* in order to talk over current political matters with him.

The guest house is one of the important social institutions in the *baldah*. There, the traditional leader (sheikh) and his council of elders played an important role in social control and redistributing economic surpluses; the role of the council, which usually consists of the heads of the *'ashira*, was embodied in the village institution, or the *madafa* (Patai, 209: 1958). According to traditional law, justice was rendered in the sheikh's guest house. The villagers and others from neighbouring villages asked for justice in the guest house of the sheikh, which was the final court of appeal and the fount of generosity. Men came from throughout the district seeking the sheikh's arbitration in their disputes. "It was not only his power that made him the supreme arbitrator but also logistics and local custom" (Antoun, 71: 1972).

The village was a unit of social control, in which the elders could ask anybody to appear in the guest house of the sheikh to tell the truth or to explain his dispute with the other party. In other words, every member in the *'ashira* or village could demand justice in the guest house from the assembled elders of the village council. In case of a dispute, representing both parties would go to the *madafa* of the sheikh to demand justice in the presence of the assembled elders of the village. Usually the *'ashira* have a council (*majlis*) of the leading elders. The villagers use the expression *'ekbariyyeh*' in referring to the prominent persons of the *'ashira*, often referring to them as "*al-rajul al-Kabeer*" (the old men): these are considered "*Asshab al-mshwrh wal-ra'I*" (literally, the members who give opinion or advice). The elders are also the memory reference source and of the *'ashira* because they possess a good knowledge of local history, tribal custom, and agricultural collective knowledge; and they are hospitable, recognized mediators, and givers of advice for every member of the *'ashira*.

The sheikh's guest house was much more than just the focal point for hospitality and entertainment; it was also a "semi sacrosanct house of justice": "A violator of village mores was 'called to justice in the Sheikh's guest house" (Antoun, 72: 1979). Politically, the guest house was the place where the sheikh and the elders made the decisions regarding war or alliances with the other tribes in their region and matters concerning the interests of the *'ashira*; furthermore, the *madafa*, before the establishment of the state of Transjordan, represented the military headquarters of the sheikh whom the Ottoman authorities contacted as the representative of his *'ashira* or region.

The relationship between the centre of the Ottoman government and the periphery of the empire was very weak. The Ottoman central government lacked the power and material means to maintain a permanent representative in the region. The Ottoman authorities in the territory of Transjordan found it very easy to deal with the single authority of the sheikhs in collecting taxes from the villagers and maintaining some sort of order in their regions. For example, the *madafa* of the sheikh was the place where the Ottoman tax-collector came into contact with the peasants who obeyed the state and even paid taxes (Salibi, 43: 1993) Thus, the guest house (*madafa*) was the link between the Ottoman bureaucracy and the local social organization. This relationship increased the power of the sheikh within his *'ashira* due to his power to influence the amount of taxes the villagers were obliged to pay to Ottomans. This kind of influence was taken into account in sheikh's relationship with the Ottoman bureaucrat (the tax collector). Although, a few other personalities in the *'ashira* (such as the mayor '*mukhtar* ') could afford *madafa*, these did not have the same importance as the guest house of the sheikh, which was the political centre of the village.

In the fact, a change in the distribution of power and political influence occurred as a result of the cooperation between traditional institutions and the state as a power centre. This cooperation shifted power, decision-making, influence and certain responsibilities from the village elders to the *mukhtar*, who, as mayor, is approved by the state the protector of the local authority. This association of the *mukhtar* with the centre of power creates a situation in which the attributes of the personal traditional leadership, represented in the traditional institutions, existed and cooperated with the state institutional authority for two main elements, the first one was a personality (leader) in the village or in cluster of villages was recognized as the natural political leader by consensus, and on the other the Jordanian authorities, like the Ottoman policy authority, always preferred to deal with a personality at the local level.



The personal qualities of the mayor, or *mukhtar*, allowed him to rule in accordance with the customs while at the same time reinforced "the mechanisms used by the state to ensure conformity" (Farrag, 235: 1977). The traditional institutionalized leadership merged with or participated in the state institutional authority, effectively using its power and influence to represent local interests. The traditional leader served in his official function as a bureaucrat while using the tribal general practice of mediation (*wastah*) to win the support of the members of his '*ashira* for his own interests.

The guest house (*madafa*) was the place where the traditional leaders enhanced their social status through displays of generosity; thus, these leaders made practical use of their economic tribute to gain more followers. The *madafa* of the sheikh or *mukhtar* was where the sheep were slaughtered for the guests in offering hospitality. The members in *Ash-shajarah* used to take their guests to the household of *mukhtar* Abu æabes who was the only one in the village with a guest house. The stranger or the visitor to the village, the district official or a poor peasant, could be sent to the guest house of the sheikh or *mukhtar* in order to insure that he would receive suitable hospitality. The poor members of the '*ashira* carried cooked rice and meat from their houses to the *madafa* of the *mukhtar*, the proper place to show hospitality and to improve and protect their reputation. They described this collective action of participation and cooperation with the words, "the guest house of the *mukhtar* is the house of every member of the '*ashira*. In return, after receiving a dish full of cooked food, the owner of the guest house would send the dish back full of uncooked or dry food. This action illustrates the concept of mutual interests and reciprocity among the members of a village.

The guest house also maintains the village reputation through the ritual of hospitality (*ekram al-daif*) required in honouring the guest. The stranger or guest was sent to the guest house, where he was assured of abundant resources for his reception. Abu æabes, himself a mayor (*mukhtar*), described the hospitality ritual in the *madafa*, "the guest house is the front of the village and represents the people of the village" (*beit al-Diaffah wajehat al-qarieh wa yumathel ahil al-qarieh*). Thus, the owner of the *madafa* was seen as the protector of the village's reputation for hospitality. The villagers stress the attributes of generosity (*karam*) and hospitality (*al-diaffah*)<sup>13</sup> by saying, "the coffee in his *madafa* was never cold, emphasizing the fact that the owner of the guest house is a generous and honourable man with network of relationships. Consequently, closing a guest house has serious consequences for the owner's social position. In the history of the *baldat Ash-Shajarah* this happened only once: Mohammed Ali Öaleb, a prominent man known for his generosity, was forced to close his guest house due to financial difficulties. As a consequence, he was no longer able to maintain his reputation as a skilled mediator, even in the other guest houses in the village. Thus, in addition to safeguarding and promoting traditional values, the guest house also serves to strengthen the power of the traditional leaders.

The ritual of hospitality and generosity (*bayt al-kram wa al-Diaffah*) in receiving a guest in the front of the guest house consists of more than just offering good food. According to the villagers, the way of receiving the guest is more important than the good meal offered<sup>14</sup>. Hospitality requires that poor peasants only consume items considered luxury goods store when receiving a guest; thus meat (especially lamb meat) is one of the most highly regarded item of hospitality. Offering a guest such costly food is said to "make one's head tall" with pride (*'amal berf'a' el-r'ass*). In return, the guest will tell others of the hospitality and generosity of his host, saying, '*qam bi al-wajeb wa akthar*' (he [the owner of *madafa* has done his duty [*wajeb*] and more). Disregarding the expectations of hospitality and generosity is considered a moral blemish (*'aieb*). A stingy host can be subjected to social and cultural sanctions: the entire village talk about him, saying "God does not like a miser" (*Allah ma bi-heb el-bakheel*), or the community will isolate him, refusing to talk with him or greet him and failing to invite to various occasions.

Thus, the personal guest house as a village institution (*madafa*) was the place where the attributes of traditional leaders were represented and practiced. These attributes of traditional power were accepted and practiced through the *madafa*, which, as the village's social, economic and political institution, was the place where different kinds of relationships could be established.

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<sup>13</sup>. The term '*karam*' (generosity) is an attribute in the Arab way of life expressed in sayings such as "the generous is beloved of God"; the guest house it stands for generosity and hospitality (*ekram al-diaff*). *Al-Kareem* is one of the ninety-nine names of Allah known to Muslims.

<sup>14</sup>. The members express that in saying "receiving me good better than you offering me good food" (*laqini wala tghadiny*).

As long as the means of transportation in Jordan were very limited, the *madafa* played an important role in providing and establishing contact with the outside world. The different kinds of relationships established by the owner of *madafa* were considered extensions of his external and internal network of relationships: the relationships with the members of his '*ashira*' and between '*him*' and the '*other*' (the stranger) who came from another place. In other words, the different activities practiced in the *madafa* reflected a dual relationship between the owner of the *madafa* and the guest. Furthermore, the way of receiving the '*other*', or the stranger - a male over eighteen years old who is considered one of the men by the members of the '*ashira*' - is a general value in the community connected with offering hospitality, which is the responsibility of all the members of the '*ashira*'.

### **Diwanas an 'Ashira Institution**

The change in the structure and role of the '*ashira*' coincides with the change in its institutions and its social, economic and political roles. The guest house emphasized the social, economic and political role of the traditional leaders, providing them with a place in which to exert their power and influence over the members of the '*ashira*'. The change occurred on the national and local level affecting the form of both formal and traditional institutions in the Jordanian society. The structure and functions of the guest house changed from those of a traditional political institution and meeting place of all members of an '*ashira*' (based on a restrict membership a descent to a common ancestor) to those of a *Diwan*<sup>15</sup>.

The *Diwan* as an '*ashira*' institution represents a new form of guest house and representative traditional political institution, designated by a mutual relationship with the formal political structure. In its function as traditional institution for organizing the major social and political events, the *Diwan* is the traditional executive council, represented by 'the council of '*ashira*' (*majlis al-'ashira*). It is supported and financed by all members of the '*ashira*', operating in a way naturally subjected to the personalized authority of participants or representatives of the lineages (*Fakhed*) that comprise the '*ashira*' (or alliance of '*ashair*'). Officially, a *Diwan* must be registered with the Ministry of Interior in the name of all members of the '*ashira*', and not merely in the name of a definite person or the leader of the '*ashira*'. The financial resources of the guest house (*Diwan*) must be placed under the control and supervision of a representative of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance. These regulations serve to prohibit any member of an '*ashira*' from taking an action against the *Diwan's* right of ownership.

The changes in the role and form of the guest house coincide with those in the social, economic, political and institutional spheres. The expansion in the governmental institution at the beginning of 1970s caused a gradual decrease in agricultural activity, as the expansion of the bureaucratic system led to increased recruiting for jobs in the governmental sector. The bureaucratic system appeared to job seekers as a pragmatic sector, which in turn has led to the appearance of a new social class. The changes in the economic life of the peasants (*fallaheen*) due to the expansion of governmental institutions led to a greater influence of political factors in the lives of the peasants and affected the form and context of the guest house. Political factors, i.e. the power of government institutions to pass laws and regulations, did not, however, fully replace or even change tribal institutions for settling disputes. This cooperation between tribal and government institutions contributes toward increasing and encouraging the establishing of new guest houses (*dawween*)<sup>16</sup>.

Political factors even encouraged a dominant political discourse concerning the role of the guest house; political events such as the elections to the lower house of parliament helped the work of the *Diwan* to flourish. However, the increasing importance of the *Diwan* in public life emphasizes the fact that tribal institutions continue to be a significant ingredient in Jordanian elections, playing, as it does, a complementary role by cooperating with formal institutions. Indeed despite the existence of strong formal institutions, tribal institutions have been allowed to continue carrying out their function of settling disputes.

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<sup>15</sup>. The term *Diwan* (pl. *dawween*) is used in the local context to refer to a place for meeting or sitting together, hence a group of people convening in one place for a continuous period of time. Thus they refer to a number of people sitting and discussing in a common or private place. In Arabic the word *Diwan* has different uses and can refer to a piece of writing, a document or a record, and in Arabic proverbial expression the poetical work is the *Diwan* of Arab (Puin, 19-24: 1970).

<sup>16</sup>. In 1950s political parties and other political institutions gave individuals the possibility of meeting to practice their own political activity; but after 1957, the legal dissolution of all parties in 1957 meant the end of 'democratic' life in Jordan until the end of 1980s - the political vacuum seemed to be a reason for the flourishing of the informal political role of the guest house (the place originally connected to the '*ashira*') as a substitute political institution.

The following example illustrates the important function of the *Diwan*: A conflict in the Irbid municipal occurred between the Mayor of Irbid Abdel Raouf At-Tall (representative of the *At-Tall 'ashira*) and the Parliament member Zaid Shkirft (representative of the *Shkirft 'ashira*). Shkirft attacked *At-Tall* during a sharp conversation related to a sit-owner of transport vegetables vehicles in the central market in Irbid to protest the pay back of fees. Following the normal procedure, the president of parliament referred the case to the Department of Justice for investigation. At the same time, however, the president and other distinguished personalities asked *At-Tall* and *Shkirft* to solve the conflict between them, promising to drop the case if they reach an agreement. After several weeks of mediation and informal negotiations carried out by other members of parliament and by some prominent personalities, the two parties in fact reached an agreement, arranging a peacemaking ceremony (*Sulhah*) in the *Diwan* of the *At-Tall 'ashira* (Assabeel.net, 2011).

This case illustrates the lack of independence in the workings of government institutions; the traditional leaders serving in formal political institutions continue to exercise their power and influence much as they do at the *'ashira* level, and traditional institutions take precedence over the civil court in settling disputes. The case also shows that political cooperation does take place on the formal and informal level. In addition, this incident shows how the president of the lower house of parliament, himself elected by its members, capitalized on the numerous ties, including the conflict parties, in order to persuade them to accept an agreement of peacemaking rather than relying on and encouraging the work of governmental institutions. In fact, gatherings of the assembly at the *Diwan* of an *'ashira* to mediate between the two parties follow a highly institutionalized pattern.

It was, however, the transformation from the *madafa* or private guest house, to the *Diwan*, or guest house of all members of *'ashira* or alliance of *'ashaer*, preserved the role of the traditional leaders in the community. Despite the establishment of a central government authority in the *Ar-Ramtha* district, the traditional leaders continue to possess a considerable prestige not because of their function of providing protection, which has been taken over by the central government, but as a leading agent in the implementation of traditional customs and tribal law in the guest house (*Diwan*)<sup>17</sup>.

### Functions and Activities of the *Diwan*

The members of *'ashira* intend to recreate traditional living patterns contained in the manner of organizing the social space surrounding their households and utilizing their traditional *Diwan* to organize different social and political occasions. Their reason for establishing a guest house was to promote and re-establish their identity as *Al-Shboul* tribe (*'ashirat Al-Shboul*), depending on the reconstruction of their special history that explains a part of their genealogical relations. The *Diwan* is the meeting place for all members of *'ashira*, and it expresses the ideology of *'ashira* or group identity based on common descent. This ideology was given a particular form through the historical line of the ancestors redistributed in genealogical relations around the guest house where the specific history practically replaced the expression of *'ashira* identity based on descent. Therefore, the importance of descent is identified and articulated by the members of *Al-Shboul* in a series of associations with the others in the community to express the aspect of power relationships and practices of mediation. Moreover, the new form of the guest house (*Diwan*) gives a new meaning to the different activities which are considered a response to the change in the needs of the members and their expectations. These changes in the needs and expectations took place in the social, economic and political structures which influence the form and the role of the guest house as traditional political institution. Hence, the guest house has come to symbolize and represent no longer the personal identity of the owner of the *madafa*, but rather the *'ashira* identity, which explains the collective character of the activities in the *Diwan*.

The *Diwan* is the place where all members of the *'ashira* gather for various social events, such as marriage ceremonies, engagement parties and religious condolences. In family politics, the *Diwan* serves as a place for settling internal disputes. It also serves as a centre for assisting poor families in the *'ashira*, for example, with paying tuition for needy students. The *Diwan* is also used as a meeting place for social events such as the delegating of notables (*jahah*) in the process of peacemaking, and particularly as an arena for political debates and as the campaign headquarters of the candidate of the *'ashira*.

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<sup>17</sup>. The members of the *baldah* and even individuals from outside the district still asked to participate in arbitrating disputes, thus emphasising the effectiveness of traditional legal practices in the *Diwan*.

It is a site of public participation, in electoral politics, hosting the elections of the mayors and the president of the municipal council and the nomination of the candidates for parliamentary elections. During election time, the *Diwan* serves as a political tribune for candidates from inside and outside the *baldah*; the participation in the activities of the *Diwan* reaches its highest level if there is a candidate from the 'ashira present. The candidates in the region normally visit guest houses in other tribes or 'ashaair, where they participate in meetings to clarify campaign programs and make temporary alliances to win support in the election<sup>18</sup>. These functions and activities in the *Diwan* emphasize the important role of this traditional institution, based on the important role of kin relations in social and political interaction; indeed the candidate is considered as 'the candidate of the 'ashira, and not merely of a political party.

The change in the functions and activities in the *Diwan* involved the extension of some of the activities once practiced in the *madafa*. These changes coincide with the change in the size and form of the guest house. Whereas the *madafa* occupied the largest room in the house of a distinguished personality in the village, today the *Diwan* is a separate place, normally located in the centre of the *baldah*, in the midst of private houses. The membership charges an amount of money. Every household pays a membership fee, which varies depending on the number of the males of the house<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the improved transportation had two effects on the work of the guest house. On the one hand, the ability to move quickly from one place to another enables individuals to make round trips in a single day, which could be understood as a factor contributing to the decreasing the need for a guest house. On the other hand, the villagers connect the mobility factor with an increasing need for the guest house as a meeting place for everybody in their 'ashira. This function, however, represents a change from the role of the guest house: rather than receiving the stranger the members of the 'ashira now meet each other more in the guest house. This particular function of the *Diwan* is especially relevant for the members who live and work in towns and cities outside the village (*baldah*), but occasionally participate in events, in their 'ashira and for relatives living in other villages (*baldaat*).

The biggest change, however, occurred in the functions and activities practiced in the *madafa* in connection with the reception of a guest or stranger. The form of *madafa* was reduced to the household level in the form of the guest room, which, although one of the largest rooms in the house, does not have the same function as a *madafa*. The existence of a guest room in every house did not affect the role and importance of the *Diwan*. In the *madafa*, where receiving guests or a stranger was the obligation of the owner, the relationship was between the 'ego' (the owner of the *madafah*) and the 'other' (the stranger). With the *Diwan*, this changed to a relationship between 'us' and the 'others': us refers to all members of the 'ashira that owns the *Diwan*, and the others refers to relatives living in other villages and to visitors who might, for example, be on a mission to arrange peacemaking or reconciliation '*jahah ÷uláah*'. Thus, the change from the *madafa* to the *Diwan* came to emphasize the social and political status of the guests.

The 'others' often received in the *Diwan* are personalities with positions in the bureaucracy who enjoy a high tribal, political and social status. This change in the 'others' coincided with a change in relationships and social values, which led to a collective feeling based on the social and political status of an 'ashira as measured by the prestige or rank of its guests. In addition to creating a feeling of unity based on kin relations and the tribes ('ashaer) social and political reputation, the *Diwan*, in a way not possible with the *madafah*, reinforces the idea of group reformation and increases the possibility of drawing on common descent to make alliances and expand relationships on both personal and group levels.

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<sup>18</sup>. The temporarily alliances depend on how much the candidate supports the members of the group. They use the expression of 'service' (*khedmeh*) similar to 'mediation' (*wastah*), and consider election time the best chance to establish such a relationship and to ask for services. This explains the meaning of mutual interests, or service in exchange for service, and also that the campaign program is not as important as the services which the candidate can offer.

<sup>19</sup>. The guest house remains part of the male political culture and is controlled by this pattern. The *madafah* was used to receive only male guests, and there were almost no activities of the women mentioned. The only activity that involved the wife of the owner (or the wife of the son and the wives of the close relatives) was to clean the guest house and to prepare the food for the guests. The fact that the *madafah* occupied the largest room of the family house emphasizes the marginal role of the women in the guest house. Women are generally not allowed to enter the guest house in the presence of a guest. In the absence of the owner of the *madafah* however, his wife would send her under age son to one of their close relatives to replace her husband while she shows the guest the way to the guest house; and she will not sit with him, however.

The *Diwan* lends formal agreements to a collective character. For example, the formal deputation (*jahah*) to ask a girl's hand in marriage, usually composed of the respected elders and certain distinguished personalities or honored guests of different '*ashaaer*, normally goes to the guest house of the bride's '*ashira*, where many members of the '*ashaaer* of both the bride and the groom participate either in the reception or the *jahah* itself. The collective character of the deputation validates the marriage, representing the union not only between two individuals or two families, but also between two tribes. Another important activity in the *Diwan*, voting, also takes on a collective character as members of the '*ashira* evaluate the candidates according to their promises of future support for the interests of the '*ashira*.

In contrast to private guest room in one's household, the collective character of the *Diwan* affords individuals meeting there the feeling of providing the possibility of meeting free of any social commitment. Activities in the *Diwan* are usually organized by the *Diwan* committee (*Lajnet Ad-Diwan*) who is also responsible for the maintenance and daily up keeping of the *Diwan*. Perhaps for this reason, the members of *Al-Shboul* refer to the *Diwan* as a being or as a subject performing various activities itself. In using expressions such "the *Diwan* done this or that" or "the *Diwan* helped somebody"; however, they ignore the fact that the *Diwan* is a structure and institution; they also ignore the individuals carrying out the various activities in it.

### Symbolical Change in the Place and Space

The guest house, *Al-madafa* or *Ad-Diwan*, with its social context as the place of hospitality, is occasionally a council of the '*ashira*, and a place where the members gather to maintain their courts of justice and various ceremonies. Every '*ashira* member has the right to a seat in the *Diwan*. Sitting in the guest house subjects one to the customs displaying the social and political status of the members of '*ashira* and the 'others' as guests in different occasions. The importance of sitting in the guest house is reflected in its physical form; indeed, the significance of sitting provides a determining architectural constraint on the structure of the guest house<sup>20</sup>.

The space in the *Diwan* has clearly defined functions. Because the likelihood of sleeping in there is very small, the furnishings in the *Diwan* are divided between 'traditional' and 'modern' furniture. There are a few mattresses stored in a small room connected with the guest house for the event that someone needs to spend the night. Chairs and couches are permanently fixed around the perimeter of the *Diwan*. The differentiation between the meanings of space in the household and space in the guest house lends the activities in the communal space certain dynamism. The patterns of sitting, eating, sleeping, paying visits in private space or the household (*bayt*)<sup>21</sup> can be altered at once. This flexibility does not exist in using the collective space in the *Diwan*. The space in the guest house is reserved for males above a certain age<sup>22</sup> with fixed seating for local men and visitors, in which priority is given to individuals of high social or political standing. Here, the spatial arrangement of social actors reflects the social relationships of status and authority among the members of the group and guests of honor.

The centre portion of a private house usually contains a long receiving hall, in which the members entertain their guests and petitioners. The hall is lavishly furnished, and its interior design is an objectification of the '*ashira* mastery over past and present. The *Diwan*, on the other hand, is divided into two sections. One section contains authentic peasant furnishings (*fallahy*). Stuffed wool mattresses (*fraash*) measuring one by two meters but varying in thickness line the walls, and soft and hard pillows (*makhdeh*, *wisadeh*, and *missnad*) in sets of two and three are placed at intervals of one meter. The pillows are used as back cushions when sitting on a mattress and leaning against the wall, and as normal pillows when sleeping.

<sup>20</sup>. "[...] in space defined by architectural structure a special quality arises partially as a consequence of the constraints of that structure but more importantly as a consequence of the activities that take place within that space" (Fernandez, 39:1977).

<sup>21</sup>. When the term *bayt* is used alone it refers to a goat-hair tent (*bayt ash-sh'ur*). In other kinds of houses the term *bayt* is used to refer to a mud house (*bayt men teen*), or a cement house (*bayt cement*) (Layne, 55: 1994).

<sup>22</sup>. The space in the house is defined by the people, and not by the places, which are not fixed and permanent. The other way of defining space occurs not only in the construction of the house, but also in terms of social and geographical location when the people inquire of an unknown individual certain parameters they define him in space. For example, one of the members of the '*ashira* asked me "where are you from, brother?" (*min win el-'akh*), and I answered "from the people of north" (*min Ahil al-Shamal*). He asked again, "from where in the north" (*min win min Ahil al-Shamal*), I answered, "from *Ar-Ramtha*", but he noticed that I speak a northern dialect of peasants (*fallaheen*), and he asked again, "from which small town in the north" (*min ay baldah fi al-shamal*) and then, "from which '*ashira*" (*min aiy 'ashira*).

The other half of the *Diwan* is equipped with modern furnishings. In place of mattresses, there are over-stuffed armchairs and carpets cover the floor with oriental forms, and articles of the bitter Arabic coffee kitsch serve as decoration; in the centre of the *Diwan*, normally in the wall facing the main entrance, hangs a portrait of the King, as is usually found in every guest house and household in the community. Near the portrait hang a framed passage from the Holy Koran, a clock (*as-sa'ah*), and a painted pedigree (*shajarat al-nasab*). These elements on the wall produce a shrine space containing very different representations of time (*az-zamfn*), identity (*al-hawiyah*), and power (*al-quwwah*). These elements on the wall of the *Diwan* and *madafah* also symbolize the Holy Koran as an emblem of eternity, sacred truth and the authority of God. Common belief has it that 'if somebody put his hand on the Holy Koran, he must speak the truth (*al-haqq*)<sup>23</sup> especially *al-haqq* is the basis of a man's creditability. The clock symbolizes earthly time while simultaneously referring to the Day of Judgment as the beginning of eternal life in heaven. The portrait of the King symbolizes the steward of God's authority on earth; they express by saying "Allah is the God of all people, He is in the heaven and the father of the family is a small God on the earth, and the King is the father of all Jordanians".

The *Diwan* is constructed, used and defined to perform special functions. It shows the established power through the ordering of space based on the awareness of relations and hierarchy<sup>24</sup>. The change in the traditional form and function of the guest house was determined by economic and cultural factors; the design and furnishing of the *Diwan* are thus indicators of a wider process of changes in the community. The size of the *Diwan* is necessary to accommodate the status of the 'ashira while meeting the demands of hospitality incumbent upon members of the 'ashira and the 'head of the 'ashira'. Moreover, the *Diwan* is a visible collective space. It displays architecture as conspicuous consumption, as a cultural and political sign of a shared status of the visiting group or of the 'ashira members, and of relationships among individuals and 'ashaer.

The *Diwan* offers the members of the 'ashira and guests the opportunity to meet and mingle across social levels on special occasions. This change in the form and significance of the guest house's space has had an impact on domestic and public life in the community. The particularity of the space shows a form of behaviour that adheres to customs, traditions and hierarchical relationships between individuals. *Diwan* is a key space in the community and a symbolic and social place, used for different social occasions, wedding ceremony, formal deputation (*jaha*) or peacemaking (*Sulhah*); within an organized space in traditional manner it shows a function and draws attention on itself in a way that serves different purposes and creates many meaningful social patterns. For example, guests in the *Diwan* are expected to sit in order of seniority and precedence, with the most senior and high-ranking individuals seated along the wall opposite the entrance<sup>25</sup>. Every guest has a particular place in the *Diwan*, and a glance around will reveal the whole scale of ranking among 'ashira members to the distinguishable guests, who are accorded particular honour. On occasions such as weddings or religious condolences, the junior members of the 'ashira (particularly the unmarried males) sit near the entrance of the *Diwan*, at the point most remote from the guests. They enter the space only to serve water or the bitter Arabic coffee. In the case of dispute settling, junior members are only allowed to enter the space to announce the arrival of the peacemaking delegation, and married males are selected to serve the bitter Arabic coffee to the guests<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup>. "In pre-Islamic Arabia, it has been argued, *ḥaqq* conveyed a sense of social duty, including that owed by the noble to the poor and needy members of one's tribe. In the Koran, where the term appears in a variety of context, the idea of *ḥaqq* as social obligation is continued and supplemented as pleasing to Allah [...] *ḥaqq* has a variety of interconnected meanings, among them 'right,' 'duty,' 'reality,' 'title,' 'claim,' and 'obligation'. *Al ḥaqq* is one of the ninety-nine names of God known to man. [...] In its most fundamental sense, *ḥaqq* means 'reality' but a reality that, because it centres on Allah [...] God is, as the root of the word *ḥaqq* may imply, 'fixed' and permanent. He is the source of those 'creative commands' which bring the world to life. In the Koran, therefore, *ḥaqq* is usually opposed to *batel*, 'impermanence' and 'nothingness,' that which is 'vain' and 'futile'" (Rosen, 61- 60: 1984).

<sup>24</sup>. There were always local and indigenous patterns of inscribing hierarchy in space through sitting places subjected to the form of the *Diwan* as an important element in the culture of the peasants and their practices. In addition, shaping of space in the *Diwan* emphasizes its importance through the knowledge obtained by the reason of using the space.

<sup>25</sup>. The way of welcoming a guest is very important in the community; one shows respect and happiness at having a guest by saying to him, "the centre place is for you and the place near the door is for us" (*elak Sader al-bayt wa al-'atbeh ilna*).

<sup>26</sup>. In every space where the guest can be received Arabic coffee is offered. It is offered first to the leader of the visiting group and not to the leader of the group visited. The bitter Arabic coffee is prepared and served with different ceremonies than the sweet Arabic coffee, which is not served in the guest house.

As soon as the guests leave the *Diwan*, the unmarried and younger married men move forward and seat themselves on the sides, but away from the elder and distinguished persons in the *'ashira*. Thus, these formalized seating arrangements in the guest house spatially represent the hierarchal structure within the *'ashira*, as well as between the *'ashira* and its guests. The *Diwan* is the most important space for practicing rituals, offering a setting for general social occasions that show the distribution of power in the *'ashira*. Interaction in the *Diwan* is carried out through forms of group expression which delineate boundaries and relationships among those present. A man's entry into the *Diwan* assumes a symbolic form as he greets those already seated with a well-known Islamic religious formula: "peace be upon you, and grace of God and His blessing" (*Alsalam 'aleikum wa ra'ámatu Allah wa barkatuh*). This greeting calls the attention of the seated men to the new arrival. If the newcomer is but of average account in his *'ashira*, the others do not rise to greet him and his friends and close relatives invite him to sit near them, by saying "come and sit beside me" (*t'all uq 'ad janby*). If, on the other hand, he enjoys a high social or political status, everybody stands to receive him, and the newcomer will go and greet each man individually. Thus, the act of standing to receive a guest — or of remaining seated — serves to distinguish individuals based on a social scale of influence, prestige, connections, family name, and seniority<sup>27</sup>. Accordingly, the guest house allows local political notables to demonstrate their position in a social order, dominated by practices of traditional values and economic differentiation.

The *madafa* was an open social space in the private sphere: there was the possibility to revert to private use of the family of the owner. A member of the family might have used the space permanently or temporarily for sleeping, or a guest might have spent the night there. It was also the key space of the symbolic and social world, for instance when it was used for prayer, the men gathering there under the leadership of one with a good knowledge of the ceremony<sup>28</sup>. Guests were served food and bitter Arabic coffee in the *ma'afah*, - normally prepared in one of the corners - during public rituals such as the death of one of the members of the *'ashira* or the conclusion of a marriage contract. During such public events, women were not allowed to appear in the *madafa*; they existed only in the private domain (social closed space), where they were seen only by very specific close relatives. But as soon as the *madafa* had returned to private use, the space once again belonged to the family domain and was thus accessible for the women of the household. Thus, the *madafah* was the one space into which outsiders could enter without violating the privacy of the family space in the household.

Whereas the *madafa* was a multidimensional space with clearly defined boundaries, the *Diwan* is a social space that forms a highly codified structure and set of relationships in the community cultural context. Its material structure embodies and strengthens spheres of power, which are defined and maintained through the interaction with others sharing and participating in the same cultural system. Both in the relatively open space of the *ma'afah* and the completely open space of the *Diwan*, appropriate behaviour and values are enforced. The guest house through its enormous symbolic and practical social significance makes it a community institution. It also represents the prestige and power of the group members. The size of the guest house reflects not only the size of the group, but also its social and especially political status. It is a moral setting which reflects the local and universal conception of space, simultaneously possessing political significance. The guest house emphasizes an awareness of and a kind of loyalty and obligation to the Jordanian cultural identity and a rooted historical identity.

## Conclusion

Despite the changes that have taken place in the structure of the *'ashira* in the *Ash-Shajarah* village, the *madafa* as a personal guest house and village institution and the *Diwan* as a collective guest house and an *'ashira* institution are still considered as façade of the village society; their function as socio-cultural institutions in the village, where all issues related to the tribe are discussed to strengthen ties and social relations among them. In other words, their function is necessary to establish a social consensus and maintain its integrity and alliance among the *'ashair* in *Ash-shajarah* society.

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<sup>27</sup>. The actions and events occurred in the guest house show a convention of social etiquette, which is a key index of notions of person and value.

<sup>28</sup>. The guest house is a social space full of different patterns, disjunctions and relations; but it is important to emphasize that it would be misleading to say that the traditional social space (the guest house) is predominantly articulated by the other spaces (for example, the 12 mosques in *Ash-Shajarah* village). But it can be said that the guest house sometimes plays a complementary role in some practices usually practiced in other spaces in the *balдах*.

In addition to their other functions and symbols, the *madafah* and *Diwan* as guest house are for the collective use of every one in the 'ashira, and thus both provide an expression of group identity. The *Diwan* not only symbolizes the unity of the members of the 'ashira, but also it symbolizes the continuous descent from the tribal ancestors; thus it gives the 'ashira a sense of continuity, duty and obligation to its history. The *Diwan* serves as an ideological statement useful to the various purposes of the members of the 'ashira. The leaders (sheikh and *mukhtar*) realize that the establishment of the *Diwan* would further fortify their mutual interests in both formal and informal aspect of the 'ashira and the *baldah* issue.

Finally, the *madafa* and *Diwan* are playing an important role to exhibit the history of the 'ashira. They show an image that not only presents a unified identity but also provides social legitimacy and status to the members of the group. The activities that take place in the *Diwan* may be seen as evidence of 'ashira power and authority as a symbol and an expression of group identity. Indeed, the very well established guest house can be claimed by every person descended from the founder father of *Al-Shboul* tribe, which is a powerful expression of identity.

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