

Analytical Framework for the Analysis of Kinship in North African Rural Societies

A Case Study of Commercial Migration in Southern Tunisia

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Introduction

Kinship is the basic social organization within North African rural societies. Despite its crucial importance, however, its socioeconomic functions have not been studied, primarily due to a lack of micro data and of an analytical framework. Instead, kinship has been studied exclusively as a cultural norm.

The aim of this paper is to examine the framework for analysis of the socioeconomic functions of kinship in North African rural societies, using data from a case study of the commercial migration in Southern Tunisia.

This paper consists of two parts. Part One is an overview of the literature on North African rural societies and presents an analytical framework for the analysis of kinship in these societies. Part Two is the case study, using the analytical framework of Part One.

The data in this paper are a part of the micro data collected through the Family Planning

Household Survey conducted by the author in 1996-1997 in the Tataouine region of Southern Tunisia as a research activity of the Tunisia Population Education Project by the Japan International Cooperation Agency¹. From some of these data, hypotheses will be drawn for future study of North African rural societies.

Part 1 Kinship in the Study of the North African Rural Societies

Part 1 has three sections. The first comments on trends in the study of North African rural societies. The second reviews Chaulet's study as an exemplar of the kinship approach. The third section presents the analytical framework to be used for the study of kinship in North African rural societies.

1.1 Kinship in the Study of North African Rural Societies

Studies of the North African rural societies point out the importance of kinship, *'ā'ila*, translated as the extended family or patrilineal group. In political studies, kinship has been considered a main force for shaping the village politic². In sociological studies, it has been considered a benchmark of rural transformation. The studies of internal and international migrations, a major topic in sociological studies, are a good example. They have described the dissolution of *'ā'ila* that had supported migrants and their families, as a representation of the social changes caused by migration³.

Despite the acknowledgement of kinship's importance, however, few studies have analyzed its socioeconomic function. Kinship has been viewed, implicitly or not, from a solely normative perspective, seen as a basic social unit that determines the behavior of members who supposedly share the collective values attached to their kinship group.

This view of kinship has been particularly strong in the literature on North African rural societies in the 1960s and 1970s. These studies, influenced by literature from the colonial period such as Berque's study of Moroccan and Egyptian villages, have regarded the kinship group *'ā'ila* as a basic unit of village structure⁴. It has been assumed to be composed of a

¹ The household survey was done by questionnaire. The samples were the married women of reproductive age (15 to 49) and their husbands, as the subject of the survey was the circumstances of family planning. The number of sample households is 405. For survey details, see Iwasaki, Erina, "Contraception and Women's Behaviour in Southern Tunisia : Reasons of Nonuse", *The Contemporary Middle East*, vol.23, 1997, pp.97-98 (in Japanese).

² For example, Antoun, Richard & Iliya Harik (eds.), *Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East*, Bloomington/London : Indiana University Press, 1972.

³ For example, Gildas Simon (dir.), *Les Effets des Migrations Internationales dans les Pays d'origine : le Cas du Maghreb*, Paris : SEDES, 1990.

⁴ Berque, Jacques, *Structures Sociales d'un Haut Atlas*, Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1955, *Histoire Sociale d'un Village Égyptien au XXIème Siècle*, Paris : Mouton, 1957, Descloîtres & L. Debzi, *Système de Parenté et Structures Familiales en Algérie*, *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, Editions du CNRS, 1963, Jean Duvignaud, *Chebika*, Paris : Editions Gallimard.

patriarch, his spouse, and his unmarried and married descendants, these forming a community located at different quarters of the village but strongly bound by a collective norm. Thus, kinship has been considered important in defining patriarchy, patrilineality, and patrilocality.

Not only the anthropological studies that had a tradition of studying lineage in North Africa, but also the socioeconomic studies during this period, have focused on kinship. French and Japanese scholars have been the most eager to do so. They have attempted to study North African village structures through the analysis of kinship relations in land management, exploitation, and non-agricultural activities. Their studies assumed that social and economic relations in the villages are a matter of power relations between the different *'ā'ila*. Thus, the Japanese studies that focused mainly on Egypt, as well as the French studies focusing on the Maghreb (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco), have acknowledged the importance of *'ā'ila* in determining the socioeconomic behavior of the villagers, and have set *'ā'ila* as an unit of analysis⁵. This can be called a “family exploitation” or “family strategy” approach, using the French term.

Today, this approach is criticized on two grounds. Firstly, the notion of the kinship group as opposed to the individual or nuclear family is claimed to be a fictive one, created by the colonialists to bestow legitimacy on discourse about the backwardness of indigenous societies⁶. Secondly, the kinship organization is instead a result of the social and economic interactions among individuals who use the kinship relations as strategy. Bourdieu's early study, for example, has criticized his own study of kinship relations in the Algerian countryside and argued that, in reality, the symbolic lineage relations do not determine kinship relations⁷. He argued that villagers who negotiate with each other based on economic and political motivations determine the actual kinship relations.

In anthropological studies, these criticisms have led to developments in the study of cultural interpretation of kinship patterns⁸. In both anthropological and sociological studies, scholars have argued the need to build theoretical bridges between individuals/households, which led recent studies—most of them gender studies—to attempt a conceptualizing of the kinship relations as “relativity” or “family network”⁹.

⁵ For critics of the approach in the Egyptian rural studies, Kato, Hiroshi “Note on the Study of Rural Societies in Modern Egypt”, *The Memoirs of the Institute of Oriental Culture*, vol.63, March 1983, pp.211-236 (in Japanese).

⁶ Charrad, Mounira, “State and Gender in the Maghrib”, *Middle East Report*, n.163, vol. 20, n.2, March-April 1990, pp. 19-23, *The Origins of Women's Rights: State and Tribe in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

⁷ Bourdieu, Pierre, *Le Sens Pratique*, Paris: Les Édition du Minuit, 1980.

⁸ Geertz et al., *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society, Three Essays in Cultural Analysis*, London et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

⁹ One of the few studies based on fieldwork in rural Algeria is by Miyaji, who argued the flexibility of the kinship organization by way of a reexamination of the segmentary theory. Miyaji, Miekō, “Introduction to the Anthropology of Migration”, *Applied Sociological Studies*, vol.3, February 1993, pp.1-26 (in Japanese). For the recent trend of studies on family, Hopkins, Nicholas S. (ed.), *The New Arab Family*, Cairo Papers in Social Science, vol. 24, n.1/2, 2003. For the study of identity, Joseph, Suad (ed.), *Intimate Selfing in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity*, Syracuse: Syracuse University

In socioeconomic studies of the North African rural societies, on the other hand, such attempts have been difficult, due mainly to the lack of data. Micro data at the household level, especially in regard to land and cultivation, has been limited. In addition, until the beginning of economic liberalization in the 1980s, the state has been conceived as the main driving force of rural development. Such a view, together with the data scarcity, led scholars interested in rural societies to focus on agricultural policy or state intervention. From the 1980s in turn, with the withdrawal of the state, several scholars have focused on “farmer” instead of state. “Farmer” is contrasted to “peasant,” which is a notion more closely linked with the traditional relations of kinship and land¹⁰. But these studies do not take kinship into account in their analysis, claiming that villagers’ behavior could be explained exclusively by economic rationality¹¹. Thus, in socioeconomic studies, the challenge to bridge the individual/household and kinship still remains unmet. The kinship or family has been used, nonetheless, to analyze exploitation patterns, or to explain the regional variances of migration patterns¹².

1.2 Chaulet’s Family Strategy Approach

In this section, the problems of the “family strategy” approach will be discussed, by reviewing Chaulet’s “La Terre, l’argent, et les frères”(1987)¹³. It is one of the excellent studies of post-revolutionary rural societies of Algeria. By focusing on the kinship organization, it has shown how Algerian rural societies were transformed at the time of the Algerian “agrarian revolution,” an event that was known to have divided the rural societies into a governmental sector with collective farms and a private sector composed of small peasants.

Chaulet argues that the “grande famille” model based on kinship solidarity among brothers is the referential model not only for Maghreb, but also for the Middle East and North Africa in general. It is claimed to be the Arab-Islamic model, since Islamic religion preaches solidarity among brothers¹⁴.

Press, 1999. For family history, Temime, Leila Bili *Histoire de Familles : Mariages, Répudiations et Vie Quotidienne à Tunis 1875-1930*, Tunis : Script, 1999. For family sociology, Ben Salem, Leila “La Famille en Tunisie : Questions et Hypothèses”, in *Structures Familiales et Rôles Sociaux*, Actes du Colloque de l’Institut Supérieur de l’Education et de la Formation Continue, Tunis : Cérès Editions, 1994, pp. 13-27. For the household and family network, Singerman, D. & H. Hoodfar, *Development, Change, and Gender in Cairo: a View from the Household*, Bloomington: & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996; Singerman, Diane, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1997.

¹⁰ Mehenna et al., *Farmers and Merchants: Background to Structural Adjustment in Egypt*, Cairo Papers in Social Science, vol. 17, monograph 2, summer 1994.

¹¹ Mitchell, Timothy “The Market’s Place”, in Hopkins, Nicholas S. & Kirsten Westergaard, *Directions of Change in Rural Egypt*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998, pp. 34-35.

¹² For example, Bouchemal, Salah *Mutations Agraires en Algérie*, Paris : l’Harmattan, 1997.

¹³ Chaulet, Claudine *La Terre, les Frères et l’Argent*, Alger : Office des Publications Universitaires, 1987, 3 volumes.

¹⁴ The idea of this “grande famille” model resembles Todd’s argument on the family pattern. Todd, Emmanuel *Troisième Planète; Structures Familiales et Systèmes Idéologiques*, Paris, Seuil, 1983.

According to Chaulet, this “grande famille” model contrasts the family model of Northern France. In that model, the family pattern is based on the conjugal relation, which forms a new nuclear household after the marriage. In the “grande famille” model, on the other hand, the family is based on fraternal solidarity, symbolized in the preference for endogamy, or marriage between paternal cousins. The characteristic feature of this model is the continuity of a fraternal solidarity that would not be damaged by the conjugal relation, whether the sons live together in their father’s household or not or, after the death of the father, whether they would keep the strong ties between them.

This fraternal solidarity is argued to have differentiated the Algerian peasants’ behavior from the Northern French pattern. In the Northern French model, the pattern of forming an independent household after the marriage has led to the fluidization of land, and to proletarianization and social stratification, within the contexts of a limitation of land resources and an increase in labor demand. In the “grande famille” model, however, social stratification took the form of division between the “grande famille”, which diversified its economic activities, and the “petite famille”, composed of small peasants¹⁵.

Chaulet gives two reasons for this division between “grande famille” and “petite famille”. One is the economic environment at the time of the Algerian “agricultural revolution”. The land extension and introduction of agricultural technology was difficult, and non-agricultural activity was the unique way to generate income¹⁶. Another reason is the customary pattern of family exploitation among brothers, or with other patrilineal kins.

Algerian peasants practiced this pattern of family exploitation as a system of “association”. It is claimed to be different from the traditional type of family exploitation in which a member of the kinship group holds the land and other members cooperate in the cultivation. Rather, it is a system of joint cultivation among the brothers, each holding land¹⁷.

This exploitation system is argued to be a system well suited to the non-agricultural activity. Firstly, sons hold the land assets together, so that the non-agricultural activities took the form of activity additional to the agriculture. Secondly, the time allocation of agricultural labor would not pose a problem, as in the exploitation done by a householder and his spouse. Thirdly, the revenues earned through this joint exploitation have increased agricultural

¹⁵ These family models are linked with the demography, “petite famille” with low fertility and “grande famille” with high fertility.

¹⁶ According to Chaulet, the social stratification in Algerian rural societies was determined by the linkage with state power and by access to the non-agricultural employment. This was due to the two following factors, which have made it difficult to pursue the income-generating strategy by increasing agricultural productivity: (1) limitation of land extension because of the state’s control over the fertile lands confiscated from the colons, and (2) the chance of introducing the agricultural technology limited to the public sector.

¹⁷ The cases of joint cultivation, not only between father and sons but also between brothers after their father’s death, even for those who lived in separate households, are reported in the present time. Latowsky, Robert J. *Community Experiences of Rural Transformation in Egypt, 1960-1980*, PhD thesis, State University of New York, 2000.

productivity through the introduction of agricultural technology or the purchase of land. Family members have then invested these revenues in commercial activities.

This study by Chaulet can be highly valorized in clarifying the structure of Algerian rural society by her original model, which has shown how the family model specific to the Arab-Islamic societies had been reproduced under state regulation, and how it performed with high economic efficiency.

However, her arguments were not thorough enough to explain the stratification that took the form of the appearance of “grande famille”. For example, she had not explained why “grande famille” has been reproduced at the time of an “agrarian revolution”, or why it had emerged among the large landholding groups of the private sector but not in the public sector governed by the state.

The main reason for this failure lies in the setting of “grande famille” as a unit of analysis. As she has pointed out, the “grande famille” model had appeared not only because of the existence of the norm, but also because it was a strategic organization of peasants under state regulation and institutional constraints. If she had acknowledged the importance of considering the “grande famille” as a strategy in itself, and had not set the “grande famille” itself as a unit of analysis, it would have been possible to analyze the reasons why.¹⁸

1.3 Kinship as a Network

The overview of the literature in the previous sections can be summarized as follows. First is the lack of socioeconomic studies on kinship in the North African rural societies. This is mainly due to data constraints and the economic context in which the agricultural policy and state intervention had attracted the scholars’ interest during the period of the planned economy. In contrast, in the era of marketization the “farmer’s” economic behavior attracted the scholars’ attention as a driving force of rural development. Second is the analytical framework that set kinship as a unit of analysis. The review of Chaulet’s study suggests that this framework is not apt for studying the dynamics of rural transformation, because it disregards the peasants’ economic behavior, which shaped the kinship pattern. The kinship should be analyzed as a strategy of individual/household.

The network approach would be efficient for such analysis of kinship. It is an approach that can analyze kinship as an outcome of individual interactions, in contrast to the approach made in the study of family exploitation or strategy. The latter approach explains individual

¹⁸ According to Kato, a similar system of joint exploitation between ‘*a’ila*’ members existed in 19th century Egypt. Kato criticized the prevailing approach among Japanese scholars focusing on ‘*a’ila*’ as a logic of explaining the socioeconomic phenomenon. He argued that this customary pattern of joint exploitation did not appear solely because of the state’s intention to limit the land-holding right to the head of ‘*a’ila*’, so as to facilitate the taxation. It was argued to be a partnership contracted between peasants to share the land, labor, and capital for the joint management, which functioned as a way of profit sharing and risk management. Kato, pp. 225-229.

behavior by collective value, whereas a network approach views how individual behaviors form an organization.

Two things are required to apply the network approach. Firstly, the household, defined by co-residence and the sharing of a budget, should be set as a unit of analysis, instead of kinship or family. Setting the household as a basic unit of decision-making in production and consumption has the advantage of analyzing kinship as a network of relationships. With the household as a basic unit of analysis, the kinship would be analyzed as a product of arrangements between different actors, rather than as natural or socially given. Secondly, the kinship relations should be considered as a resource mobilized by individuals/households. This makes possible analysis of what kinds of individuals/households utilize the kinship network, and in what kind of circumstances, and these would be indicators of the socioeconomic functions of the kinship.

Part Two: Case Study of the Commercial Migration in Southern Tunisia

2.1 Overview of the Village and its Migration Pattern

Historical Background

The area between Tataouine city and Ghomrassen town in the Tataouine governorate, in Southern Tunisia, is called the Tataouine region. It is the area most remote from Tunisian major urban areas at the Mediterranean coast. The distance between Tunis, the capital city, and Tataouine city is about 550 kilometers.

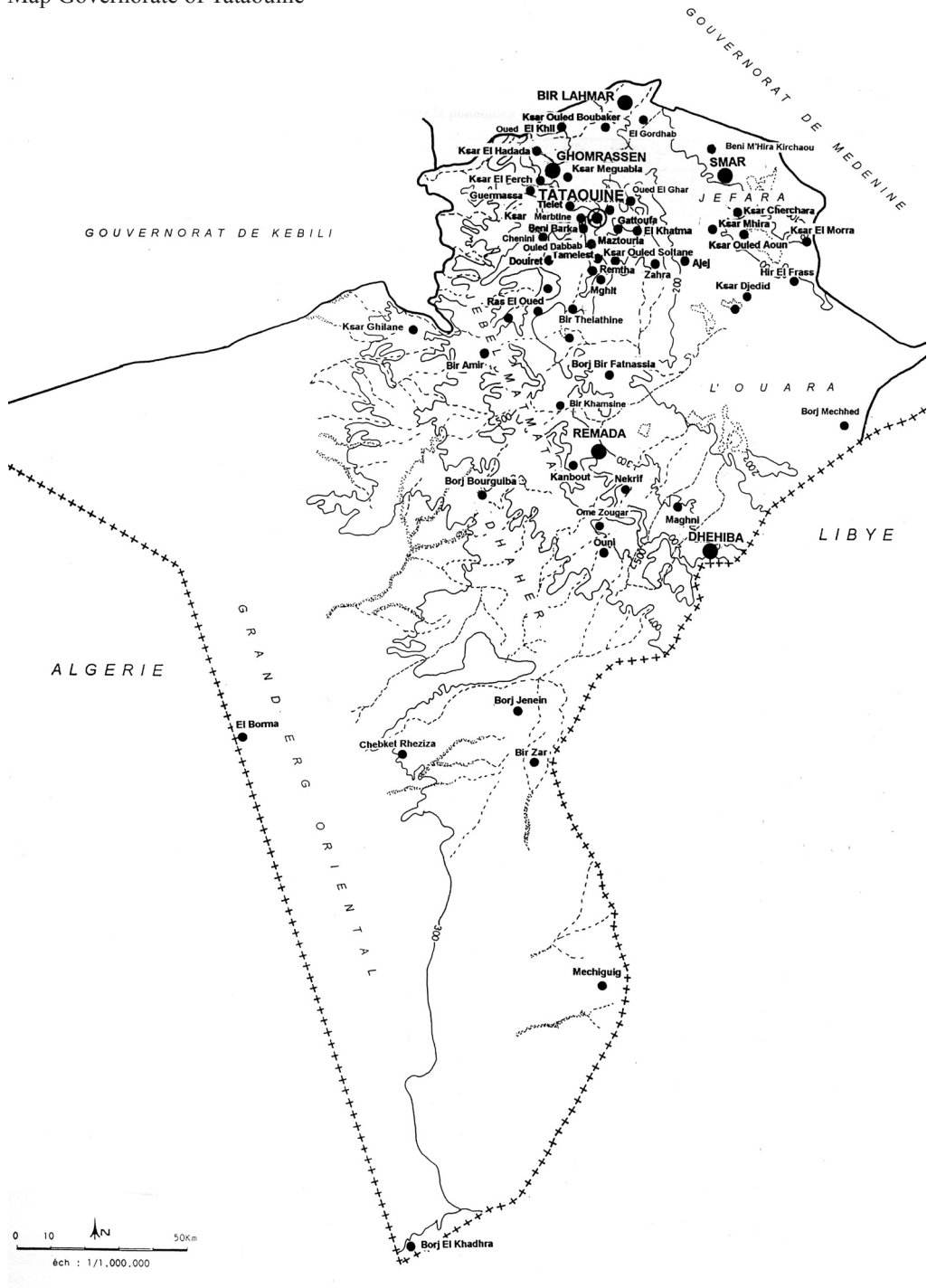
The study area, *Tlalet* and *El-Ferch* villages, is located among the villages of this region (Map). The two villages are situated 12 kilometers south of Tataouine city, toward Ghomrassen town, on the administrative border of North Tataouine district (*mu'tamadīya*) and Ghomrassen district (*mu'tamadīya*)¹⁹. According to the most recent census (1994), the households at these two villages number 321 in *Tlalet* and 264 in *El-Ferch*; the entire population is 1825 in *Tlalet* and 1516 in *El-Ferch*²⁰. These two villages are composed of small agglomerations dispersed within the village borders and consisting of 5 to 10 households each.

Geographically, this region lies between *Jeffara* plain stretching toward the Libyan border and *Dahar* highland toward the Sahara desert. It is a hilly area 200 to 300 meters high. In the past, people in this region have lived on the hillside, where they had semi-permanent residences, but in the winter season went to the plain, where they engaged in pastoral activities.

¹⁹ The households in *Tlalet* tend to be agglomerated around its center, which is also the location for a saint tomb, several shops in a *qasr* (a complex of storage facilities used for the food and other items while the village is left absent during the pasturage), a primary school, and a basic health center. *El-Ferch*, on the other hand, is composed of small agglomerations that are dispersed out of its center, which has a mosque, primary school, and basic health center.

²⁰ Al-ma'had al-qaumī lil-iḥṣā', *Al-natā'ij al-awwalī lil-ta'dād al-'ilm lil-sukkān wa al-sakanī* 94 : *Al-natā'ij ḥasab al-manāṭiq*, Tunis : Al-ma'had al-qaumī lil-iḥṣā', 1994, p. 77.

Map Governorate of Tataouine



The land productivity is low because of geographical as well as climate conditions. Population pressure from the 20th century added to this difficulty. Due to these climate and environmental constraints, since the 19th century the people in the region have begun a seasonal emigration to the olive farms of the Mediterranean coastal region. There, the male villagers have been seasonal agricultural workers in the olive collecting of the coastal region.

The migration to major coastal cities started in the beginning of the 20th century, in parallel with the decline of Tripolitan-Algerian trade and development of the Mediterranean coastal cities as colonial trade centers. After the country's independence from France in 1956 and the withdrawal of French troops, which brought the economic structures of the Southern regions into disorder, the commercial migration developed rapidly. Its characteristic is specification of the job by village. Each village had its own specific job in the coastal cities. For example, villagers from *Guermassa* were known as dockers; from *Duiret*, as porters at the central market of Tunis; and from *Chenini*, as journal vendors²¹.

²¹ For the migration pattern in Tataouine region, Iwasaki, Erina, "Temporary Migration of Ghamrassen, Southern Tunisia," *Ajia Keizai*, vol.37, n.1, pp.40-62 (in Japanese).

Employment Structure

The study village also has its specific pattern of migration, that is, the *fṭāyirī*, who sell *fṭair* (fried doughnuts), and the *ḥammāṣī*, who sell chickpeas (*ḥomms*), seeds, and nuts. They do these activities in either a small shop or a hut, owned or rented. These food-related commercial activities are exercised in the coastal cities, notably in Tunis, comprising 134 out of 165 internal migrants (Table 1).

Table 1 Occupation by workplaces (number)

	Workplace					
	Village	Near town	Large cities	Europe	Algeria	Total
Farmer (self-employed)	82	0	0	0	0	82
Agricultural waged laborer	3	0	2	0	0	5
Casual laborer (general)	48	6	14	23	0	91
Casual laborer (in construction sector)	26	1	3	6	0	36
Ḥammāṣī	1	1	109	0	0	111
Fṭāyirī	1	3	8	0	11	23
Food vendor	6	4	23	3	0	36
Worker in hotel/restaurant	1	2	0	11	0	14
Vendor of non-food commodities	2	5	4	0	0	11
Mechanic/Painter/Carpenter/Electrician	1	4	0	0	0	5
Waged laborer in Manufacturing	1	1	0	4	0	6
Clerical worker (public/private)	1	5	1	0	0	7
Teacher (primary/secondary)	10	3	1	0	0	14
Driver (taxi, bus)	1	5	0	2	0	8
Waged laborer in public administration	6	1	0	0	0	7
Waged laborer in other services	0	2	0	0	0	2
Other	3	2	0	0	0	5
Total	193	45	165	49	11	463
Percentage	(41.7)	(9.7)	(35.6)	(10.6)	(2.4)	(100.0)

Note: (1)The workplaces are categorized according to distance from the village.

(2)“Near town” refers to a town that is within the daily travel limit from their homes.

(3)“Large city” refers to cities located inside Tunisia and in the Mediterranean coastal area.

Source: Family Planning Household Survey

Migrants also go to Europe, notably France, but their numbers were fewer than expected. According to the interviews, their number has declined with changes in the French labor market as its service sector absorbs more Asian migrants and entrance regulation becomes stronger.

The main feature of this type of commercial migration is that it is done as family business, that is, among father’s side brothers, cousins, and uncles living in different households. They work either as partners or as waged workers in a shop, while their spouses and children stay at home in the village. Thus, the nature of their migration is temporary, commercial, and held among patrilineal kins.

Household Structure

It should be noted that the commercial activities are not done among the members of the same household. The households, defined as basic units for sharing basic expenditures (sharing food made in one plate *ḡasa‘a waḥda*), are usually composed of a nuclear family, regardless of job and working place. The households composed of nuclear families are 70.0% of the village total (Table 2). Thus, it can be said that partnership among the kinship is not the strategy of a single household, but that of different households who cooperate in maximizing production.

Table 2 Household compositions by workplace & employment situation of the household head (%)

		Household composition					total	(number)
		couple + unmarried children	couple only	father's side parent/couple (& other relative)	divorced/widow + unmarried children	single		
Workplace	Unemployed	63.6	13.6	18.2	4.6	.	100.0	(22)
	Village	75.5	9.0	14.8	0.7	.	100.0	(155)
	Near town	77.8	11.1	11.1	0.0	.	100.0	(27)
	Large city	74.6	9.0	14.9	1.5	.	100.0	(67)
	France	82.5	5.0	12.5	0.0	.	100.0	(40)
	Algeria	71.4	28.6	0.0	0.0	.	100.0	(7)
	Total	75.5	9.4	14.2	0.9	.	100.0	(318)
Employment situation	Unemployed	63.6	13.6	18.2	4.6	0.0	100.0	(22)
	Farmer/Agricultural waged laborer	79.4	5.9	13.2	1.5	0.0	100.0	(68)
	Casual laborer	73.5	9.2	16.3	1.0	0.0	100.0	(98)
	Vendor/Hotel, Restaurant	74.7	12.1	13.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	(83)
	Laborer in Manufacturing/ Electrician, Mechanic	92.3	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	(13)
	Clerical worker/Teacher (public/private)	79.0	5.3	15.8	0.0	0.0	100.0	(19)
	Worker in other services	71.4	14.3	14.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	(14)
	Retired/sick	45.7	15.7	37.1	0.0	1.4	100.0	(70)
	Total	70.0	10.6	18.4	0.8	0.3	100.0	(387)

Note: (1) Of those persons aged 15 or above who stated they were holding a job at the time of the survey, all but two were male.

(2) Those who were unemployed and living in the village at the time of survey are classified as “unemployed” in the “Workplace”.

(3) The workplaces are categorized according to distance from the village.

(4) “Near town” refers to a town that is within the daily travel limit from their homes.

(5) “Large city” refers to cities located inside Tunisia and in the Mediterranean coastal area.

Source: Family Planning Household Survey

2.2 Management System of the Commercial Activities

The *ḡāyirī* and *ḥammāṣī*'s management system has two characteristics. Firstly, it takes the form of an *association*, that is, two or three joint partners sharing the capital and labor. Their *associations* are called *association* in half, third, or fourth according to the partners' contributions at the opening of business. Secondly, the system uses rotation, in which each partner works 3

or 6 months, depending on the number of partners. When a partner comes from the village and takes his rotation, the other partner goes back to the village. Under this system, the profit is divided equally between the partners every month, 3 months, or 6 months, after calculating the variable cost and fixed cost that would be kept for the next rotation turn²².

The reason villagers prefer this system of *association* can be explained not only in terms of difficulty of access to the capital market for the small-scale entrepreneur, but also in terms of risk management. According to the interviews, the *ḥammāṣī* profit largely differs according to the season. For most of the year, the major commodities are low-profit items such as sunflower and pumpkin seeds, or chickpeas. These are sold either raw or dried, and the purchase price and sales price do not differ much. In contrast, in the month of Ramadan or the summer season for wedding festivals, expensive nuts such as roasted almonds and peanuts sell well. These roasted nuts are sold at higher prices.

Sales of *fīṭyirī* also depend on the feast season. *Fīṭyirī* is known as a low-profit job. In Tunisia, they are often made a joke of as peasants (*fellah*), earning little money although they work hard. Their yearly profit depends on how much sugar-syrupped *fīṭair* they can sell to the visitors at a saint festival who buy these *fīṭair* as gifts, and how much oil-fried ring *fīṭair* they can sell during Ramadan, a period known for the custom of eating *fīṭair* at breakfast.

Despite these uncertainties in the commercial activities, the *association* is a good solution for those who want to invest or who want to borrow money. It avoids the risk of repayment default, since each investor also has to take responsibility in the management.

This type of joint investment system requires regularly scheduled distribution of profits among partners, which prevents an increase of working capital. For this reason, it is not an efficient system at the shop level. Instead, the partners try to increase their gain while avoiding the risk, by increasing the shops for joint investment. After making enough savings from the shop, which is making a good profit, they open a new shop with their colleagues instead of investing the profit for the existing shop. Some, although few, co-own shops in Wahran (Algeria) or Paris.

2.3 Profiles of the Migrants and Their Job Searching

According to the interview, employees recruited from among the kins are paid less than those who are strangers. If so, this seems to be a reasonable reason why the employers prefer recruiting workers from among the kins. But, why do employees prefer working in the kin's shop? In this section, the issue will be analyzed by examining the role of a kinship network in the job search.

²² For the system of *association* among the commercial migrants in France, Boubakri, Hassan, "Modes de Gestion et Réinvestissements Chez les Commerçants Tunisiens à Paris", *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, vol.1, n.1, Sept. 1985, pp.49-54.

Commercial Migrants' Profile

The profile of the commercial migrants can be summarized as follows. Firstly, younger men tend to exercise commercial migration. The proportion of workers in the restaurants and working in the internal cities, including Tunis, is highest in the age groups of 15-24 and 25-34 (Table 3). Secondly, men of less education, primary or elementary levels only, tend to become commercial migrants in large cities. On the other hand, highly educated men tend to become unemployed or to work in administrative, educational, or private clerical jobs in nearby towns.

Table 3 Workplaces and employment situation by age class (%)

		Age class						
		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 & above	Total
Workplace	Unemployed	36.0	5.8	1.7	6.3	11.3	50.0	14.4
	Village	13.7	23.4	55.1	50.0	67.9	35.7	35.6
	Near town	7.2	10.4	11.0	9.4	1.9	0.0	8.5
	Large city	41.0	46.8	22.0	12.5	1.9	7.1	30.4
	Europe	1.4	10.4	8.5	20.3	13.2	7.1	9.0
	Algeria	0.7	3.3	1.7	1.6	3.8	0.0	2.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(Number)	(139)	(154)	(118)	(64)	(53)	(14)	(542)
Employment situation	Unemployed	36.0	5.8	1.7	6.3	11.3	50.0	14.4
	Farmer/Agricultural waged laborer	2.9	7.8	29.1	25.0	24.5	21.4	15.2
	Casual laborer	12.2	23.4	25.6	35.9	43.4	21.4	24.4
	Vendor/Hotel, Restaurant	43.2	48.1	25.6	18.8	13.2	7.1	34.0
	Laborer in Manufacturing/ Electrician, Mechanic	2.2	1.3	6.0	3.1	3.8	0.0	3.0
	Clerical worker/Teacher (public/private)	1.4	7.1	8.6	4.7	3.8	0.0	5.2
	Worker in other services	2.2	6.5	3.4	6.3	0.0	0.0	3.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(Number)	(139)	(154)	(117)	(64)	(53)	(14)	(541)

Note: See the Note in Table 2 for the classification of the workplaces.

Source: Family Planning Household Survey

The uneducated tend to become farmers or casual-wage laborers in villages (Table 4).

When the age variable is controlled, the tendency appears obvious. Those of age class 15-24 with low educational levels tend to become commercial migrants, whereas those of higher educational levels in the same age group tend to become unemployed (Table 5).

The fact that the youth with less education tends to be pushed out for migration can be explained in terms of employment opportunity. Firstly, the agriculture in the region is not capable of absorbing the labor force for environmental reasons. Secondly, non-agricultural activities have not developed enough in the region. Public administration is the region's major source of non-agricultural labor absorption, and clerical jobs open to the more highly educated predominate. Thirdly, the option of going to Europe, especially France, which had prevailed until the beginning of the 1980s, is limited at the present time due to the difficulty of entering

European countries. Thus, these employment constraints have led the youth to the migration to the coastal cities.

Table 4 Workplaces and employment situation by educational level (%)

		Educational level					
		None	Primary	Preparatory	High School	University	Total
Workplace	Unemployed	11.5	11.6	21.3	29.7	22.2	14.4
	Village	63.2	32.9	21.3	29.7	22.2	35.7
	Near town	6.9	6.4	10.0	18.9	44.4	8.5
	Large city	9.2	36.3	36.3	21.6	11.1	30.5
	Europe	8.1	10.7	8.8	0.0	0.0	9.1
	Algeria	1.2	2.1	2.5	0.0	0.0	1.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(Number)	(87)	(328)	(80)	(37)	(9)	(541)
Employment situation	Unemployed	11.5	11.6	21.3	29.7	22.2	14.4
	Farmer/Agricultural waged laborer	20.7	17.7	7.5	0.0	0.0	15.2
	Casual laborer	48.3	22.9	11.3	16.2	0.0	24.4
	Vendor/Hotel, Restaurant	12.6	38.5	48.8	18.9	0.0	33.9
	Laborer in Manufacturing/ Electrician, Mechanic	4.6	2.5	2.5	5.4	0.0	3.0
	Clerical worker/Teacher (public/private)	1.2	2.5	5.0	21.6	77.8	5.2
	Worker in other services	1.2	4.3	3.8	8.1	0.0	3.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(Number)	(87)	(327)	(80)	(37)	(9)	(540)

See the Note in Table 2 for the classification of the workplaces.

Source: Family Planning Household Survey

Table 5 (Aged 15 to 24) Workplaces by educational level (%)

	Educational level					Total
	None	Primary	Preparatory	High School	University	
Unemployed	0.0	30.3	37.2	64.3	100.0	36.0
Village	100.0	9.2	16.3	7.1	0.0	13.7
Near town	0.0	6.6	9.3	7.1	0.0	7.2
Large city	0.0	52.6	32.6	21.4	0.0	41.0
Europe	0.0	1.3	2.3	0.0	0.0	1.4
Algeria	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Number)	(4)	(76)	(43)	(14)	(2)	(139)

See the Note in Table 2 for the classification of the workplaces.

Source: Family Planning Household Survey

Role of the Kinship Network in Job Searching

To understand why the kinship network is used in migration, the jobs of brother and father

are used as proxies of that network utilized as a job channel in their job searching. When the jobs match, whether between brothers or between son and father, the kinship network is considered to have been the job channel. Followings are the results of cross-tabulation of jobs, and of workplaces, for son and father and for brothers.

First, father and sons do not participate in the same jobs (Table 6). In no case were father and son both in the same job. When the father is a farmer, casual-wage laborer, or retired, his son tends to be a commercial migrant. It should be noted that this phenomenon is observed only for those living in the same household, and not for those living each in a separate household, which suggests the nature of this type of work division as a way of maximizing household income.

Table 6 Occupations of father and son (number)

Father's occupation		Son's occupation								Total
		Unemployed	Farmer/ Agricultural waged laborer	Casual laborer	Vendor/ Hotel, Restaurant	Laborer in Manufacturing / Electrician, Mechanic	Clerical worker/ Teacher (public/ private)	Worker in other services	Retired / sick	
Same household	Unemployed	7	1	2	7	0	1	0	1	19
	Farmer/Agricultural waged laborer	8	3	1	19	0	1	0	2	34
	Casual laborer	15	1	10	18	0	0	1	1	46
	Vendor/Hotel, Restaurant	4	2	1	7	0	0	0	1	15
	Laborer in Manufacturing/ Electrician, Mechanic	1	0	2	5	1	0	0	1	10
	Clerical worker/Teacher (public/private)	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	4
	Worker in other services	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Retired/sick	12	6	13	35	1	2	4	1	74
	Total	48	13	31	93	2	4	5	7	203
Different household	Unemployed	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	0	7
	Farmer/Agricultural waged laborer	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Casual laborer	0	2	3	2	0	2	0	0	9
	Vendor/Hotel, Restaurant	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Laborer in Manufacturing/ Electrician, Mechanic	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Clerical worker/Teacher (public/private)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Worker in other services	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Retired/sick	4	10	16	11	3	1	1	1	47
	Total	4	13	19	19	4	3	1	1	64

Note: (1) "Father" is limited to the household head.

(2) The case of the father and his son forming a different household refers to those who are themselves heads of the separate households.

Source: Family Planning Household Survey

Second, in regard to brothers, when a man is a migrant to the large city, his brother tends (70 percent) to also be a migrant in the same city (Table 7). Equally, when a man is working in a restaurant, his brother tends to work in that same industry (Table 8). In contrast, when a man is working in agriculture or as a casual-wage laborer in the village, his brother does not become a commercial migrant. These data show the importance of brothers as job channels for

Table 7 Household head and his brother's workplaces (%)

Brother's workplace	Household head's workplace						
	Unemployed	Village	Near town	Large city	Europe	Algeria	Total (Number)
Unemployed	50.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	100.0 (4)
Village	2.2	71.7	8.7	6.5	8.7	2.2	100.0 (46)
Near town	14.3	42.9	28.6	14.3	0.0	0.0	100.0 (7)
Large city	0.0	8.7	4.4	73.9	13.0	0.0	100.0 (23)
Europe	13.3	26.7	0.0	13.3	40.0	6.7	100.0 (15)
Algeria	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0 (1)
Total	6.3	43.8	8.3	24.0	15.6	2.1	100.0 (96)

Note: (1) See the Note in Table 2 for the classification of the workplaces.

(2) "Brother" refers to brothers of the household head who are themselves heads of separate households.

Table 8 Household head and his brother's occupations (%)

Brother's occupation	Household head's occupation							Total (Number)	
	Unemployed	Farmer/ Agricultural waged laborer	Casual laborer	Vendor/ Hotel, Restaurant	Laborer in Manufacturing / Electrician, Mechanic	Clerical worker/ Teacher (public/private)	Worker in other services		
Unemployed	33.3	16.7	0.0	33.3	0.0	16.7	0.0	100.0	(6)
Farmer/Agricultural waged laborer	0.0	45.8	37.5	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	100.0	(24)
Casual laborer	0.0	34.5	34.5	20.7	3.5	6.9	0.0	100.0	(29)
Vendor/Hotel, Restaurant	3.9	3.9	23.1	65.4	0.0	0.0	3.9	100.0	(26)
Laborer in Manufacturing/ Electrician, Mechanic	0.0	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	(4)
Clerical worker/Teacher (public/private)	33.3	0.0	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	(3)
Worker in other services	0.0	50.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	(2)
Total	4.3	28.7	29.8	27.7	5.3	3.2	1.1	100.0	(94)

Note: "Brother" refers to brothers of household heads who are themselves heads of separate households.

Source: Family Planning Household Survey

commercial migration.

Third, when a man is working in a large city or a restaurant, his brother does not become unemployed. In contrast, when a man is unemployed, working in the near towns as a public servant (in administration) or private clerical laborer, or in Europe, his brother is more likely to be unemployed. These data show that the kinship network demonstrates efficiency in securing a job, and inefficiency in relation to political borders, or educational requirements.

Fourth, a man with a high educational degree will not choose to become a commercial migrant, regardless of his brother's occupation. He instead becomes unemployed, as is shown in Table 4. Hence, utilization of the kinship network is limited to those with less education. This may be related to the rarity of sector mobility. If, after a brother of high educational level worked a while as a commercial migrant like his brother, he could shift to a job that matches

his educational level, he would have chosen to do so during the original job search. But since he does not do so, it seems that there is no expectation for such chance of the sector mobility.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the commercial migration, a principal activity of the study area in Southern Tunisia, in order to develop the analytical framework necessary for future analysis of North African rural societies. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of why the commercial migration is organized among the kins, although still at the level of hypothesis, are as follows.

First is the preference for joint association in capital and labor as a risk management. It is an efficient system to cover the shortage of capital, while avoiding the risk that may arise from the uncertainties of commercial activity. Second is the insufficiency of employment opportunity, especially for less-educated youths. For them, commercial migration to the coastal cities through the kinship network is the best way to secure a job.

In sum, it can be argued that the system of joint association within the kinship relation has been organized to cope with constraints in the labor market and with capital.

This hypothetical conclusion suggests the efficiency of the network approach in analyzing the role of kinship without neglecting the diverse economic behaviors of the individuals and households. When regarded as a network, the kinship would not be interpreted as a static organization that governs individuals' behaviors, but as a flexible network established by individuals who pursue profit while lowering the cost of transacting the capital, labor, and factors of production.

To further develop this argument, detailed studies of the management of commercial activities, as well as of the agricultural activities and land holding, are necessary. This should be done through the comparative study of different regions, for each region in North Africa has different institutional and environmental settings, and therefore economic behavior and kinship patterns would have different outcomes.