

Food, Family and Negotiating the Future:
The Effects of Sedentarization and Urbanization
on the Foodways of Bedouin Women in Northern Israel

by

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Abstract

The political framework in Israel discriminates against its Arab citizenry, affecting education, employment, and economy for this minority group. Included in the Arab minority are the Bedouin and a minority within this minority are the Bedouin women. On a state level and community level, Bedouin women struggle against a political and patriarchal system that does not normally support their advancement. Traditionally semi-nomadic pastoralists, the Mawasi Bedouin have become, in most cases, village dwellers and wage labourers. In this thesis I discuss my research on the foodways of Mawasi Bedouin women in Northern Israel and the role food plays in their lives. Operating in a patriarchal system, embedded in a foreign colonial culture, Mawasi Bedouin women have used, and continue to use, food as a source of identity, power and agency, as a means of communication, for reciprocal exchanges and informal economy, and as social control. Food is at the heart of women's relationships and acts as a medium for building social ties, resistance in political and social arenas, and communication when spoken language is inappropriate or politically precarious. Women's interactions with and uses of food have shifted throughout the process of sedentarization, and continue to be renegotiated in tandem with changes in their social roles within the family, the community and the greater world. This thesis is based on data collected using participant observation, food-centred in-depth life history interviews, informal interviews, and photo journaling during two periods of fieldwork (July to August 2007; July to September 2009) in Haifa, Shefar'am, Tamra and I'blin.

Preface

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Chapter 1— Introduction: Separation, Transition, and Incorporation

A story is always situated; it has both a teller and an audience. Its perspective is partial, and its telling is motivated. (Abu-Lughod, 1993, p. 15)

I begin writing this thesis with the disclaimer that the only constant in life is change. This is especially true in the realm of culture and tradition associated with human beings. Although there are certain constants in the cultural constellations, all that passes around them, beyond them and within them is in a constant state of flux and transformation, creative, dynamic, sentient, motivated, reactive and adaptive. The ethnography I present on these unchangeable pages is static and immovable, a mere snapshot of Bedouin culture in Northern Israel in the summer of 2009 in the city of Haifa and the villages of I'blin, Shefar'am, and Tamra, taken through the lens of my Western, feminine eye.

I embarked on this journey of discovery with the naiveté of most apprentice anthropologists, with a plan in hand, determined to realize all my grand ideas and ideals. After a few short weeks in the field, I was reminded of an expression a friend of mine is fond of repeating, “The best way to make God laugh? Tell Him your plans.” In my opinion, the best way to derail any good, solid research proposal is to take it to the field and apply it to human beings and even more so when it is applied in a foreign culture, country, and language one does not truly understand the subtleties of. Add to that two children (mine) aged ten and fourteen, who were themselves suffering from culture shock, extreme heat, a one room apartment with no air conditioning and infested with tiny, biting sugar ants, spice it with financial desperation due to guaranteed research funding that never arrived, homesickness, occasional mind-numbing

boredom and a heavy dose of sibling rivalry and the grand plans fly out the window to be replaced by whatever creative and adaptive strategies that will get the job done.

Did I get the job done? Yes. Despite the various complications and unplanned detours our time spent in the field was intensely rich and rewarding. In many instances, it was unexpected chance events or unplanned conversations, things no research proposal could possibly plan for, where the greatest moments of learning, discovery, and connection occurred. This thesis is the product of our many adventures, wool gathering, if you will, in a variety of settings and social circumstances. Here on these pages I take these bits of wool and spin them into yarn in the hopes of weaving a tapestry that accurately describes the beauty, depth, and complexity of Mawasi Bedouin women in Northern Israel and their relationship with food during the summer of 2009.

The research for this thesis originated with my being awarded an Irving K. Barber Undergraduate Research Award (URA) in 2007. I had the idea to study Bedouin society in Israel when a friend of mine from Haifa told me his mother was Bedouin and it sparked my curiosity. This friend also boasted that his mom was the best cook in the world and at the time I dismissed the comment thinking “Everyone thinks that,” only to discover during three weeks of URA fieldwork during July and August 2007 that my friend was right. Although my URA project in 2007 was centered on shifting cultural patterns caused by colonization and sedentarization, so much of the data I came home with from life history interviews and participant observation was food-related, that my supervisor suggested I turn my eye to the topic of food and culture. When I originally began my MA research project, my focus was to study the food and foodways of Bedouin women in Northern Israel and how sedentarization, the formation of the State of Israel, and the ensuing cultural transitions had affected these categories. Like any good research story, one question lead to another and after opening that can of worms, the only way to get them back

inside was to get a bigger can. The more I read in my literature review and learned from my two stints of fieldwork in Israel in the city of Haifa and the villages of Shefar'am, Tamra and I'blin, the more complicated the questions became until I found myself with a network of interwoven concepts that were difficult to lay out in a neat, orderly fashion.

During my fieldwork, I found myself more heavily invested in and interested in the experiences of women with other women as opposed to their interactions with the State and larger political processes; gender relations became a blinding light that, I felt, could not be minimized. Later, theories in feminist anthropology became path markers that ultimately led to Middle Eastern feminist anthropology, where I discovered a true treasure chest of ideas that augmented my reasoning and aligned perfectly with what I had experienced in the field. Women writers such as Lila Abu Lughod, Leila Ahmed, and Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder, inspired and guided me to a deeper comprehension of global political movements that filter down to the local level in the region and have influenced, and continue to influence, the life stories of the women with whom I studied, while at the same time deepening my comprehension of what it means to be an Arab woman in and from the Middle East. Meanwhile, my constant companion food, with whom I had become complacent and familiar to the point of not really granting her the respect she deserved, began to raise her voice in my ear and demand recognition for the prodigious and multivalent qualities she possessed. "Money can't buy you happiness and love won't pay the rent" she said, "but me, I'm everywhere and involved in everything. Just try to live without me." She had a point. Food is remarkable in that it is symbolic, concrete, ephemeral, liminal, static and shifting all at once. It crosses boundaries economically, politically, socially, and physically; it lives in our imagination as a thing of memory, cultural transmission, identity, sexuality, emotional attachment, and psychological comfort and torment. The list goes on.

Where did all these troves of knowledge and experience lead me? In many ways, the jury is still out and any firm conclusion is inevitably followed by an annoying, buzzing ‘but what about such and such’ in the back of my brain. Eventually though, one must draw the line in order to move forward and finish a piece of writing that is bounded by deadlines and attend to future projects that are patiently waiting their turn. Therefore, this thesis is guided by a somewhat modified thesis statement from the one originally presented in my research proposal. This thesis explores the relationships of Mawasi Bedouin women in the city of Haifa and the villages of Shefar’am, I’blin and Tamra to food, to family, and to each other, as they are situated in the historical and political nexus of a colonial, sedentarized, culturally transitioning circumstance. I contend that Mawasi Bedouin women in the city of Haifa and the villages of Shefar’am, I’blin and Tamra are active, engaged agents adapting to shifting cultural and political tides that have affected their food and foodways, gender relations, relationships with other women, both within the family outside of it, and their identities.

Although I used food-centred life history interviews as a method for data collection for this project, in hindsight I realized that a one hour interview, often the maximum amount of time most people have patience for, is not sufficient. In my opinion, a person’s life story is not something that can be told in one hour or even two. It is something that is revealed over time in pieces. A one hour interview gives only a rough sketch, enough to get the basic idea of the form but not enough to really see it clearly. After spending time with Khazneh, who in 2007 kindly gave me a one hour life history interview for my URA project, I thought I had a good idea of the story of her life, where she grew up, what she did when she was a teenager, what her parents were like, her marriages and her children. When I returned to Haifa in 2009 for my MA research, Khazneh and I had become friends and little by little the details of her life came out in stories.

Khazneh's life history revealed itself in quiet moments when we would be chatting after dinner with our coffee, or in her house in I'blin when an event would remind her of something, or I'd ask a question that triggered a memory. Like this, the rough sketch began to take form, become detailed, and to have colour. Because we cooked together almost every night as she attempted to teach a clumsy anthropologist how to roll *dawali* (grape leaves stuffed with rice) or to hollow out eggplants without puncturing them for *mahashee* (vegetables stuffed with rice and meat and cooked in tomato sauce), I spent a great deal of time with her and her family and came to know more about her every day. The more I learned about her life story, the more I felt that it was a story that demonstrated what it means to be a Bedouin woman in the North of a country formerly known as Palestine. With her permission, I have chosen for this thesis to use excerpts from her life story interspersed throughout the chapters as a means of anchoring the data presented, so that the reader might come to understand how these somewhat disconnected facts come together in the lived experience of a Mawasi woman named Khazneh, and how her life has been shaped by the events, information, and data impersonally titled as 'history' or 'power' or 'gender'.



Figure 1: Khazneh at a family wedding.

The chapters in this thesis have been grouped according to purpose and topic. The appetizers, Chapters two and three, are a discussion of my literature review and research methods. Chapter two, *Food, Can't Live Without It*, commences the thesis with a literature review of food and culture, including a brief history of anthropology's interest in food studies, past and present theories, and the social, economic, and political uses of food. Chapter three, *Beautiful Bones*, moves on to discuss the theory informing my analysis, including feminist anthropological theory and Middle Eastern feminist theory, to examine the historical and political complexities that accompany feminist-based research in the Middle East. The subsection 'Method to my Madness' is a discussion of the ethnographic research methods I used during both sessions of research (2007 and 2009) for data collection, for example, food-centered life history interviews, informal interviews, participant observation, and food mapping. *Feast Your Eyes*, the fourth chapter, is a demonstration of the food mapping data I compiled through photo journaling, accompanied by an explanation of the method and my analysis of the data.

The next two chapters are the first course and focus on historical and political background that affect Mawasi society in its present state. A brief historical background of the Bedouin in Palestine, and the Mawasi in particular, is offered in chapter five *Tents to Town* and a discussion of political, economic and ethnic frameworks in present day Israel affecting the Bedouin is contained in Chapter six, *Where She Lives*.

The final three chapters, the main course, are where I discuss my ethnographic data and make my analysis. Chapter seven, *Sense of Self*, is concerned with Mawasi Bedouin identity based on my data and explores the concept of food and identity and how they are intertwined. Chapter eight, *Culinary Persuasions*, by far the weightiest, is where I tackle gender, sex and sexuality and how these categories are related to food in Mawasi society. Chapter nine, *Talking*

With Your Mouth Full, considers how food works as a language in any society, expressed in metaphors and symbols that are particular to each culture and how Mawasi Bedouin use food in this manner. Chapter ten, Find Your Napkin, Loosen Your Belt, is the conclusion, where I sum up the data and analysis presented, leading on to the coffee and dessert of the end notes and bibliography. Let us begin.



Figure 2: Map of the research area in Israel. © Google Maps 2011

Chapter 2 — Food, Can't Live Without it: Food and Culture

Food. All human beings eat to live, some live to eat, and others eat their neighbours, but why study it? Food resides at the heart of every culture. No meaningful life event passes without the presence of food; indeed, relationships are forged and broken through the giving and receiving of food (Mauss 1990). Food is exchanged between the living and offered to the dead; social classes are marked and gender boundaries and hierarchies are set through food; religious, political and economic processes revolve around it; and, cultural processes are maintained and regulated through it (Counihan 1999; Goody 1982; Mintz and Dubois 2002). Food holds varying symbolic meanings across cultures; it acts as a means of communication in itself (Barthes 2008; Douglas 1972), and is integral to the formation of identity across the spectrum from the individual to family and culture to the greater world beyond (Brillat-Savarin 1948, Counihan 1999, Marte 2007, Sutton 2001). Food is an essential ingredient in the study of human behaviour, as virtually every aspect of culture is connected to the production, distribution and consumption of food in some form (Counihan 2008). In this chapter, I explore the anthropology of food from past and present theories to the cultural expression of foodways on the political, economic, religious, community, familial and individual levels.

Theories, Past and Present

Anthropological interest in food in the nineteenth century was largely focused on religious elements of consumption such as totemism, sacrifice, and communion (Goody 1982:10). Sir James Frazer (1854-1941) wrote a pamphlet titled *Questions on the Customs, Beliefs and Languages of Savages* in 1907 that contained a section on food devoted to questions

of taboos; Ernest Crawley wrote *The Mystic Rose* in 1902 on the relationship between sex and food; and, Robertson Smith wrote on the topic of food and sacrifice in 1889 (Goody 1982:11). During this era of investigation, commensalism was regarded as a strong promoter of community, commitment, and solidarity, establishing and reinforcing common ties, the doctrinal aspect of which came to be known as functionalism (p.12).

Theory in this era focused on the social function of food and how it facilitated the socialization of the individual within the community and played a role in the maintenance of the cultural system (p.13). In the work of A.R. Radcliffe Brown, the symbolism of food was bound up in the transaction of food as an indicator of social relationships and as a means of promoting group cohesion in social events such as marriage, sacrifice and mortuary rituals (p.17).

Structuralists perceived food and food events as resting between and mediating nature and culture (Counihan 1999:20). Claude Levi-Strauss, though originally founding his theories of food on the works of Durkheim and Mauss, moved on to approach food from a structuralist perspective (p.20). He was more concerned with the thought process connected to food than the social process, stating that animals were chosen as totems not because they were good to eat, but because they were good to think with. He perceived food and the processes attached to it as part of a binary system of thought, relating food to language. Food, like language, he contended, contained categories that related to one another. He described the relationship in the form of a triangle with the points representing food that was raw, cooked or rotten. When food was transformed from raw to cooked through the use of fire, this was a cultural process based in the knowledge of human beings and, when it changed from cooked to rotten, it was a natural process brought on by natural forces (Levi-Strauss 1977: 221-230). Mary Douglas, also working within the structuralist paradigm, expanded beyond the single meal and binary system favoured by

Levi-Strauss to consider the meal in relation to all the meals consumed throughout the day, month and year, viewed food categories as being encoded in social events. Douglas (1972) argued that because foods are part of complex systems, they have and convey meaning in a manner similar to the components of language. She states that “if food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message conveyed is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries” (Douglas 1972:61). Jack Goody, in his *Cooking Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (1982), expresses his desire to expand the study of food beyond the binary structuralist system to try to make a connection between the nature of different cuisines and the modes of food production and agricultural systems. In his opinion, the internal differentiation of cuisines is related to the differences between African and Eurasian foodways which he considers to be associated with the differences in the socio-economic situations that define these continents (p.38).

More recently, food studies have been used to examine a wider array of societal processes such as symbolic value creation, the social construction of memory, the construction of political and economic values and as a field for debate between the relative merits of cultural materialism vs. structuralist or symbolic explanations of human behaviour (Mintz and Dubois 2002:100). Additionally, research on food avoidance has continued to refine theories concerning the relationship between cultural and biological evolution (p.100). In *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power* (1999), Counihan considers the correlations cross-culturally among foodways, the body self-image of women, gendered spaces, and gender-power relations associated with food production and consumption (1999). Lidia Marte has applied the use of food mapping to identify how immigrant communities seek to create a sense of home by

re-inventing new cultural regions and a sense of place through food (2007:262). Food studies is a burgeoning field, gaining respect in various academic disciplines and continuously expanding in scope and depth, offering valuable contributions to the study of human behaviour.

We have become accustomed to the age-old adage that ‘He who holds the gold makes the rules’. One could also say ‘He who holds the gold controls the food’. In stratified societies, and in the global political framework, what people eat is a clear indicator of a person’s socio-economic status. Class, caste, race and gender hierarchies are maintained, in part, through differential control over and access to food (Clark 2008:411). As Counihan (1999) states, “One’s place in the social system is revealed by what, how much and with whom one eats” (p.8). Higher classes have consistently used food to differentiate themselves from the lower classes. This is apparent in India where caste is clearly indicated by food habits and restrictions against eating with those of a lower caste (Goody 1982:116). In Eurowestern societies, when the supply of foods that are associated with money, and power—such as sugar and spices once exclusive to the rich (Mintz 1985)—increases, giving the lower classes access, the upper classes seek even more rare substances and establish elaborate systems of manners to maintain the distinction between themselves and their perceived inferiors (MacClancy 1992:120).

On a global level, the hegemony of the Eurowestern world often dictates who eats what and when. Global food supplies are manipulated and controlled through political and economic machinations in the West, often leading to poverty and hunger in other countries or among certain groups of people (Mintz 1996, 1985). Trade deregulation and economic policies largely enforced by Western capitalism and manifested by transnational corporations, are affecting what is grown and what is exported and imported in less affluent countries, seizing natural resources and degrading local environments (McMichael 2000). For example, large amounts of corn and

grain are imported into Mexico due to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) making corn and grain prices from the U.S. cheaper than the price of corn and grains produced in Mexico. In return, Mexico is encouraged to produce crops for the U.S. market based on the demands of the populace there. As a result, Mexican farmers are not free to grow traditional crops that are adapted to the environment but are obliged to produce what is demanded by the US. In response, at the World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996, the notion of food sovereignty began to appear, defined in the Declaration of Nyeleni (2007) as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Declaration of Nyeleni). In a globalized class system, wealthy nations have access to all categories of food regardless of season (i.e. Strawberries in December in Canada) while the poor produce for the rich and eat when and what they can.

A recent topical development in the study of food is the interrelationship of culture, food and memory. David Sutton in his book *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (2001), explores this relationship through his work on the Kalymnos Islands in Greece, considering facets such as embodiment, identity and transnational migration. He presents a convincing argument on the ability of food to evoke memories of events passed and makes logical connections between food, memory and cultural transmission. Rituals, marriages, births and deaths are all accompanied by specific, culturally meaningful foods and the smell, taste and sight of these foods is often enough to evoke memories of past events where these same foods were eaten. As he so aptly puts it, “This is in spite of the fact that it is evident to many that if ‘we are what we eat,’ then we are what we ate as well” (2001:7). Reciprocity with food is also attached to memory, as generosity and debts must be remembered to be repaid. Among the Lelet

of Melanesia, feasting offers fame for the feast-giver, therefore the more memorable the feast, the greater the renown that accrues to him. Magic is occasionally used by the feast-giver to cause diarrhoea in the guests as a means of marking out the feast as memorable. The more memorable, the more it will be talked about (Eves 1998:267). For the Nuu Cha Nulth of the West coast of Vancouver Island, food and memory are also considered to be connected. During a feast, speeches are given when people are eating, especially the children, because it is believed that the words of the speaker are being incorporated into the body along with the food and that they will not be forgotten (J.C. Lucas, personal communication 1998). Transnational migration is another area where food and memory play a powerful role. Food is intimately connected to cultural identity. Immigrant communities invariably bring with them food habits and tastes from their home countries, as can be evinced in the proliferation of ethnic restaurants in any multicultural society (Marte 2007:276). In the words of Farb and Armelagos: “long after dress, manners, and speech have become indistinguishable from those of the majority, the old food habits continue as the last vestiges of the previous culture” (1980:6).

The relationship between food and sex has long been recognized by social scientists. Food and eating are used as metaphors for sex in societies all over the world and the word for sex and the word for eating are often interchangeable (MacClancy 1992:70; Goody 1982:114; Farb and Armelagos 1980:84; Feldman-Savelsberg 1999:84; Counihan 1999:62; Bell and Valentine 1997: 54). Body parts associated with sex and sex itself are often referred to with food metaphors: breasts are “melons”, a penis is a “salami”. For the Mehinaku villagers of central Brazil, sex is a form of eating, as male and female genitalia are seen to be feeding one another (MacClancy 1992:72); the Bagangte of Cameroon say sex is ‘hot’ like a freshly cooked meal and when a man impregnates a woman he “cooks the woman” (Feldman-Savelsberg 1999:84); and,

the Yanomami of the Amazon use the same verb to mean “to eat like a pig” and “to copulate excessively” (MacClancy 1992:70-71). A gift of food may in some cases represent an offer of sex and eating together represents intimacy, often sexual or kinship (1999:63). Physically, the mouth is a major erogenous zone and thus forms a powerful link between two basic human drives: to eat and to copulate (Farb and Armelagos 1980:85).

Food taboos are another topic amply covered in social science literature. Why some things are considered inedible by some and not by others or only edible at certain times is a question perpetually present in cultural research on food. Muslims and Jews do not eat pork because it is considered unclean in their religious teachings (Douglas 2003:30-32), and Hindus do not eat beef because cows are considered sacred. Asians eat dogs on a regular basis but Westerners consider the practice an anathema. As MacClancy has so aptly put it, “Dishing up the house pet at dinner would be like feasting on your sister. We are not cannibals: we do not eat Rover” (1992:180). In other instances, food prohibitions are temporal in nature, applying only to certain rites of passage or to the beginning of a particular harvest. The Bedouin of the Negev, for example, must not eat the first butter of the year until the festive *thalathit al-ssy’ayn* meal has been eaten. If the first butter is tasted before the meal occurs, they believe the churns will not give any more butter or only very little (Abu-Rabia 1994:86-87). For the Mehinaku Indians of the Amazon, the first menses for girls and ear-piercing ceremony for boys are the focus for initiation ceremonies. Both are related to blood flow and the same food prohibitions are observed by boys and girls in order to ensure the quick cessation of the bleeding and a favourable dream. For the first twenty-four hours they fast, after that they may drink water, and later they may eat everything except fish because fish are deemed to be filled with blood since they eat other fish

and thus would prolong blood flow. When the blood has completely ceased to flow, fish is reintroduced to the diet (Gregor 1985:189).

Purposefully denying oneself food or fasting is often used for religious purposes, but in the West, fasting is associated with the desire to be thin. At times fasting is used as a means of protest, a famous example of which can be seen in the life of Ghandi. For many religions, fasting is seen as a means of attaining nearness to God and as a means of purifying the spirit from attachment to the world of matter. Rites of passage are often marked by fasting. For Western women, however, fasting has an eight hundred year history that began with religious intentions but is now associated with self-control and concepts of perfection. European and North American women have fasted since medieval times, originally as a means of achieving a saintly nature but transforming in Victorian times, into a desire to attain a state of wasting and weakness associated with social and spiritual superiority (Counihan 1999:110). In modern times, anorexia has been diagnosed as a disease and the women who suffer from it report that they do not eat as a means of maintaining self-control and perfection (Bordo 2008:165-173). The fasting of Western women, even unto death, is a demonstration of poor self-image and a desire for control in a patriarchal environment that devalues and disempowers women (p.171). The phenomenon of women's extreme fasting in the West is culturally rare and does not usually occur in non-Western societies. Counihan (1999) attributes this to the Western concept of the mind/body dichotomy that is not present in other cultures where women and their bodies are associated with food, feeding, and fertility (p. 111). In other cultures, fasting is collective and ritualized and is a temporary event followed by hearty feasting. For example, at sunset during Ramadan, Muslims eat a large meal; the LoDagaa of northern Ghana hold an annual Bagre ceremony where food prohibitions laid on initiates are lifted over a period of weeks (p.100). Feasting and fasting are

means of reaffirming social ties and fulfilling spiritual obligations, while the fasting of Western women is solitary, often secretive and guilt-ridden. I would contend that the extreme fasting of Western women is a symptom of social disassociation commonly present in Western society. While non-Western cultures encourage collective thinking aimed toward strengthening and sustaining social ties, Western cultural norms encourage independence and the power of the individual, leading to separation and isolation from others. By refusing to eat, women are denying their relationship to others and declaring their power over themselves.

Food is inseparable from human relationships. The concept of commensality is indispensable in the study of food. In all cultures, eating together signifies relationship in one form or another and what we eat and with whom often indicates what our relationship is to each other. Exchanges of food are often used to initiate or cement relationships. For example, unmarried couples are prohibited from eating together in the Trobriand Islands (Weiner 1976:171,195); in southern Africa, the Bantu consider exchanging food the formation of a temporary covenant or “a clanship of porridge” and, in the Middle East, commensal events sometimes serve as a venue for making a claim to leadership, as hierarchies of authority are regulated through the offering and acceptance of food (Zubaida and Tapper 1994:12). Hospitality in the Middle East—accepting food that is offered, feeding the stranger and the entertainment of invited guests—is culturally and religiously obligatory (p.12). Food can also be used to end relationships. In many cultures, when gifts of food are not returned, or cannot be returned, this is a signal that no further relationship is desired by the other party. In ancient Rome, the simplest means to insult an unwelcome guest was to relegate them to the lowest position in the dining room (MacClancy 1992:109). For the Kalauna of Papua New Guinea, food is used as a device to shame enemies through the giving of large amounts of food that cannot be repaid by the recipient

(Young 1983). Refusal to eat another's food in the Middle East is sometimes perceived as a direct challenge to the honour of the host or as an act of rebellion against authority (Zubaida and Tapper 1994:12).

Foodways are also a means of expressing and assigning identity. "Tell me what you eat, and I'll tell you who you are," a famous quote by Brillat-Savarin (1948), articulates this idea succinctly. In the Western world, a person's food habits are often a direct statement about their individual beliefs and economic status. A vegetarian or a conscientious omnivore who eats only organic foods, is likely to be concerned with human health, animal welfare and the environment, while a person who eats nothing but "junk food" and consumes large quantities of soft drinks is often perceived as poorly educated on the subject of nutrition and as coming from an impoverished background. In the wider world, food is one means by which an ethnic community is identified: Italian culture is noted for pizza, spaghetti and lasagne; the Chinese for sweet and sour pork, wonton soup, and, for some, the eating of dog meat; and Mexican culture for tacos, enchiladas and jalapeño peppers. Culture is transmitted through commensal events. Sitting down to eat with the family is where children learn customs, manners, reverence for food, and kinship obligations (Armstrong and Farb 1980:7). Food and eating are intertwined with identity, as Zubaida and Tapper explain:

Commensality implies shared understandings and evaluations of what constitutes 'proper' food. Every culture and community is proud of its own food traditions and tends to be ambivalent or contemptuous about those of others. Stereotypes of other ethnic and religious groups frequently refer to food customs. Alternatively, a cosmopolitan orientation may be demonstrated by those who consume 'ethnic' foods (1994:13).

In this way group boundaries and personal identity are established and sustained through the production, preparation and consumption of culturally meaningful foods. The cultures of the world define themselves with fresh baked baguettes, spiced olives, *mansaf* (a traditional Bedouin

dish and the national dish of Jordan), macaroni and cheese, Dim Sum, yam harvests, and sauerkraut, to name a sundry few, and sometimes we traverse those boundaries by eating the ‘Other’ in a daring foray into unknown culinary territory and sampling foods from other regions.

No discussion on food would be complete without the mention of sacrifice and other ritual events practiced by humanity. The offering of food to deities and ancestors is a common practice in many cultures. Food sacrifices and offerings allow the living to maintain relationships with the gods and with those who have passed on. In exchange for these gifts of food, the givers expect (given the rule of reciprocity) that the gods and ancestors will provide aid and assistance to the living that have made the sacrifice (Van Esterick 1998:81). For the Bedouin of the Negev and the Bedouin of the Galilee who are Muslim, sheep are sacrificed in the hopes of gaining the favour of the saints when there are concerns about the health of family members or of the flock. They believe if a sheep is sacrificed in the place of a person who is ill, the person will not die and, when a sheep is offered, that the saints will protect both the animals and the humans of the group, thus increasing prosperity and guarding against disease (Abu-Rabia 1994:89; Ashkenazi 1938:103). The Bamileke of Cameroon sacrifice food to the skulls of ancestors in an effort to placate them and prevent misfortune. Death is considered a change of residence to an invisible location and that the breath or spirit of the ancestors is eternal. Ancestors are omniscient and watch over their descendants and, at the same time, require food, drink, shelter and participation in celebratory and spiritual life (Feldman-Savelsberg 1999:107). For Catholics, communion is the symbolic eating of the body and blood of Christ in an effort to incorporate the essence of faith into the body. These are but a few examples of how food is used in various cultures in spiritual rites and practices to form a bridge between the spiritual and physical worlds.

Food has symbolic meaning and functions as a means of communication. The lexicon of food manifests itself in its body of images (colour, texture, and presentation), the protocols of its use, and the situations and behaviours that surround it (Counihan 1999:19). Food is a gift of love from a family member or a friend, a sexual invitation, a challenge to authority or a bid to change social status. It conveys ideas in symbolic form that sometimes cannot be related in words and indicates inclusion and membership in a family or social community. It is an essential element of life and a quotidian activity. Messages change with its taste, texture, colour, form of preparation, and how and when it is consumed. Manners of eating denote social status, cultural affiliation, and can change depending upon the company with whom it is shared. Food can take on significant symbolic meaning through taboos and prohibitions when it is used for ceremonial or religious purposes such as rites of passage or sacrificial offerings. As Counihan states, “food functions effectively as a system of communication because everywhere human beings organize their foodways into an ordered system parallel to other cultural systems and infuse them with meaning” (p.20). Food is a complex language of metaphors with infinite applications.

Food is a many splendored thing and, as diverse as food is, so too, are the ways it is used to convey meaning and regulate cultural practices. This chapter is by no means an exhaustive discussion of the cultural meanings attributed to food. The diversity of cultural systems is reflected in food preparation, production, and consumption. Relationships are created and maintained through the giving and receiving of food and ended by the refusal to accept or inability to repay its gift. Who eats what and when is often an indicator of social standing and economic status. The subtle language of food is an indirect way to communicate deep emotional messages or spiritual meaning. It is a means of remembering history and relationships, culture and community. The identity of cultural and religious groups is defined by it and cultural

boundaries are established. Cross-cultural communication occurs between individuals and groups when food and culinary practices are shared. Connections are made between the living and the dead through food sacrifices, and relationships are sustained with spiritual forces, relations often considered necessary for prosperous living. Food is essential for life and has grown deep roots into the hearts and minds of human beings the world over. It is as inseparable from culture as language; indeed, food functions as a language in itself. Imperative for physical life, so, too, is food necessary for cultural expression, perpetuation, and well-being.

This is no less true for the Mawasi Bedouin of Northern Israel. Bedouin culture has undergone several transformative shifts with the impact of colonization and the onset of sedentarization over the past six or seven decades, significantly impacting the roles, statuses, and opportunities of women and the food they procure. Operating in a patriarchal and patrilocal system embedded within a foreign colonial culture, Mawasi Bedouin women in Northern Israel have used food, and continue to use food, as a source of personal power and agency, a means of communication, a medium of reciprocal exchange, and to affirm their identity both as Bedouin and as women. In the following chapter I move on to a discussion of the feminist Anthropological theory that has guided the analysis of my data and the methods I used while conducting fieldwork with Mawasi Bedouin women in Israel in 2007 and 2009.

Chapter 3 — Beautiful Bones: Theory and Method

Theory is a hydra. For every ‘answer’ discovered, ten more questions erupt to present themselves for contemplation. One could read, consider, argue and postulate for a lifetime and never feel they had plumbed the depths of the oceans of possibility. Given that my research was with women, I chose feminist theory as my framework for analysis. Choosing one particular line of thought felt limiting and I found it necessary to sample from a variety of writers to obtain the depth and texture I sought. At the same time, it was necessary to narrow the field to a reasonable focus for the sake of time and purpose. Feminist theory is, of course, a broad spectrum that spans a near infinite range of possible philosophical positionings. Therefore, it was necessary to find the tools most akin to my particular research community with which to examine my data. I found myself in agreement with several feminist anthropologists (see below) who conduct research in the Middle East, that many of the dominant models of Western feminism are, for the most part, non-applicable in Arab Muslim women’s worlds. I concluded that was I to apply these models wholesale, I would be obliged to ignore tracts of information or to manipulate data to fit the theoretical mold. That is not to say I have thrown out the baby with the bathwater. I have retained the primary points of historical, political, socioeconomic, and cultural positioning integral to any feminist based analysis, and found myself in agreement with several Feminist anthropologists such as Margaret Mead (1935, 1949), Henrietta Moore (1994, 1988), Sherry Ortner (1996, 1972), Marilyn Strathern (1987), Louise Lamphere and Michelle Rosaldo (1974, 1980) in their foundational works that have greatly affected the development of Feminist anthropological theory. I found the theories of feminist anthropology were the most relevant because they take into consideration class, race, cultural variation, and the exigencies and ethical

challenges of fieldwork among an often foreign culture group. Also, feminist anthropology's dedication to ethics, reflexivity, anti-colonialism, and projects supporting social justice and improving the status of women is in alignment with my personal moral integrity as an anthropologist and as a person. The greater part of my theoretical positioning has been influenced by writers such as Lila Abu Lughod (2008, 2002, 1991, 1986, 1985), Leila Ahmed (2000, 1992, 1982), Saddeka Arebi (1991), Saba Mahmood (2001), Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder (2007, 2006), and Amalia Sa'ar (2006). These anthropologists account for unique cultural, historical, political, economic, and religious particularities that accompany research among Arab women in the Middle East and which have a profound influence on gender roles within those communities. These feminist anthropologists also aim to deconstruct Western Orientalist and modern Western media-fuelled stereotypes about Arab cultures and gender relations. While I am aware that several of the ideas propounded by Abu Lughod, Ahmed, Mahmood, Abu-Rabia-Queder and Sa'ar do not originate with them, but have their roots in the works of feminist Anthropologists who came before them, as well as intellectual ancestors such as Foucault (1977) and Said (1978), their application and expansion of these ideas to and within their own research with Arab women makes them relevant, specific, and resonant when wrestling with my own work.

Like any body of knowledge, Western feminist theory is founded on an intellectual ancestry that spans centuries and is grounded in its own particular historical, cultural and religious foundations. In the West, feminism traces its origins to feminist writers such as Christine de Pizan in the 15th century and Mary Wollstonecraft in the 18th century who inspired women to question the status quo and to make demands such as being viewed by the law as human beings and not as property, obtaining the right to vote, and having the same legal rights as

men to own property themselves. Early feminism's primary concerns were political and social, not academic (Geller and Stockett 2006:4). In the 1960s and 1970s the women's liberation movement referred to the work of the suffragettes who came before them as first wave feminism and their own work as second wave feminism. Second wave feminists focused on a broad range of topics of social and political inequalities for women, such as family and the workplace, legal equality, sexuality, the concept of gender, and reproductive rights. Too often second wave feminists saw all the world's women as united in their experience of inequality and oppression and their concerns "grew beyond the political arena, finding theoretical and methodological niches in academic and intellectual communities" (p.5). In the decades that followed, feminism began to be criticised by women from other parts of the world, and from other socioeconomic strata in their own societies, as a Western, white, educated, middle class feminism that did not account for the experiences and particular positioning of women of other cultures, races, or classes (p.4). At this crucial juncture, feminism blossomed into a myriad of specialized epistemologies keyed to specific groups of women or particular theoretical positions and foci, such as Black, Chicana, Jewish, Islamic, Christian, Third world, lesbian and transgendered, Individualist, Socialist, Lipstick, and Cultural, to name but a few (Suskin 2003:266).

Feminist anthropology developed in tandem with feminism, borrowing from feminist theory to fuel internal criticisms of the discipline while at the same time nurturing its own unique, burgeoning theories of women, gender and culture (Stockett and Geller 2006; Visweswaran 1994; di Leonardo 1991; Moore 1988; Reiter 1975; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). The 19th century produced women anthropologists such as Alice Fletcher, and Matilda Coxe Stevenson who were followed decades later by writers such as Margaret Mead, Elsie Clews Parsons, Ruth Benedict, Zora Neal Hurston and Ruth Landes (Lamphere 2006: xi). These

women, and others, blazed a trail of feminist theory for future generations to follow, carving out spaces for women in university faculties and conducting research that would not be fully appreciated until many years later. They unleashed a tempest of internal criticism that rocked the androcentric foundations of anthropology (and the academy) and called for a restructuring of the discipline that included more complete and complex depictions of women in anthropological writing (1991:2-12). At the same time, feminist anthropologists were adapting and adopting feminist theory and constructing their own, pushing the boundaries and claiming territory, searching for universals that connected all the world's women in their experience of oppression at the hands of patriarchal systems, addressing cross-cultural variation, and discussing and debating the newly minted subject of gender as a separate category from biological sex (1991:3; Stockett and Gellar 2006: 5). Two landmark examples are Rayna Rapp Reiter's edited volume, *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (1975) and Rosaldo and Lamphere's edited volume, *Women, Culture and Society* (1974). Stockett and Geller (2006), remarking on Rosaldo and Lamphere's, work note that, although it "did not topple the androcentric heritage of anthropology," it did offer a solid foundation for feminist inquiry in the discipline and challenged feminist anthropologists to address notions of universality, the prevalence of binary oppositions in society, and the possibilities of variability within the former two constructions (2006:5). In *Women, Culture and Society*, Sherry Ortner first published her now famous article, "Is Nature to Culture as Female is to Male?" where she explores the idea of the "pan-cultural" devaluation of women, arguing that women's reproductive capacities cause them to be associated more closely with nature while men who are free of the reproductive roles of pregnancy, childbirth, labour and nursing are associated with culture and the mind (1972). More recently, in *Making Gender: the Politics and Erotics of Culture* Ortner remarks that what she found most interesting was how this article acted

as a ‘theoretical lightning rod,’ and that she would not likely write this article now because “the questions have changed (universals are of less compelling interest)” and because “exposing an underlying logic seems less satisfying than exposing the politics of representation in play” (1996:173-174). Changing the question from what unites women in universal sufferance to what specific historical, political, social, and individual circumstances interdigitate to create women’s unique experiences and sufferance is what has generated the third wave of feminist theory and a sister wave in feminist anthropology. This starting point, with this new question, is where the Middle Eastern feminist anthropologists and social scientists upon whom I have drawn for much of my analytical framework have centred their work. Although feminist anthropology has been sectioned into waves alongside feminist theory, in reality developments in feminist theory and feminist anthropological theory cannot be neatly divided into tidy epochs of concepts, as there is a fair amount of overlap between the waves. For this reason, I have drawn on anthropologists from all three feminist waves but have drawn most heavily from those who have conducted their research with Arab women in the Middle East or who are themselves Arab and Bedouin women scholars from the region formerly known as Palestine.

Power, a central concept in feminist anthropological theory, is defined and debated from various positions, the three most prominent being rooted in the works of Weber, Marx and Foucault. Weber defined power as “the ability of an actor to realize his or her will in a social action, even against the will of other actors” (1946:180). In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels (2002) argued that power was held by the economic elite and those who controlled the means of production. Foucault revolutionized feminist views on power when he challenged the orthodox definitions by postulating that power was “productive and capillary yet always entailing resistance” (in Lamphere 2006: xv). Cooper (1994) explains that Foucault’s discourse

on power has been drawn on extensively in feminist literature in four main ways: “power is a phenomenon exercised rather than possessed, it is productive rather than purely repressive, it is not centralized in a state or single apparatus but present throughout social relations, and it is not an entity that can simply be overthrown” (p. 436). She further comments that the antithesis of power is force “since the ‘essence’ of power is the ‘activated’ subject’s own sense of agency” (p. 437). Phelan (1990:437) critiques the humanist and feminist belief that power and knowledge are mutually exclusive, labelling power as ‘bad’ and knowledge or ‘truth’ as ‘good.’ Foucault explains that he views power and knowledge as a single intertwined entity that cannot be separated because power feeds from knowledge and “power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted ‘above’ society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of” (1982:791); and “‘truth’ is undoubtedly the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it has hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking process of history” (Foucault 1977:144).

As may be noted by the emphasis I have placed on Foucault’s discussions of power and the feminist application of these ideas, I consider Foucault’s concepts of power to be the most inclusive and expansive. Also, many feminist anthropologists upon whose work I have drawn for this chapter incorporate Foucauldian concepts in their own discussions of power, knowledge, gender, and identity. I have, therefore, touched briefly on some of the key points of his prodigious works here in order to refer back to them farther on.

Geopolitical Positioning

In keeping with the feminist anthropological concept of political, historical, socioeconomic, and cultural positioning integral to ethnographic analysis, in this section I

discuss theories that pertain to these topics. I begin with metatheories discoverable in general feminist anthropological writings on this topic, and work through to concepts from writers who work specifically with Middle Eastern Arab women, or who are Arab and Bedouin women anthropologists themselves, concerning the positioning on a global, national and local (Israel) scale of Arab women.

When considering the concept of geopolitical processes I imagine in my mind's eye the nexus of power relations that extend outward, like concentric circles, from an individual in any location to the global and back in to the individual again, as if a form of respiration is occurring. The individual breathes in the local, national, and international and exhales out through the local, national and the international spheres. This analogy reminds me that relations of power are in constant flux and that the local, national and international affect the individual and vice versa. Henrietta Moore describes global economic events as transforming the nature of the individual. Transnational economies that instigate large scale migration and technological time and space compression, cause a detachment of the individual from traditional cultural constraints and supports. Everything is for sale, including identity, the body, and culture itself, while those without material means are excluded and ignored, unable to participate in global events (2006:24-26). Moore questions that if gender, identity, even culture itself are shifting and unstable due to these global forces, what does it mean for anthropology if culture is no longer bounded? Anthropology has been, in large part, defined by the relationship between self and Other, with anthropologists, who are more commonly of Western origin, often choosing to study in remote locations in cultures that were distinctly separate and different from their own, viewing the study of their own culture as blurring the lines of the discipline and rendering it closer to sociology or history (Abu-Lughod 1991). Marilyn Strathern (1987) has argued that a key

disjuncture between feminism and anthropology is the relationship between self and Other because feminism “discovers the self by becoming conscious of oppression from the Other” (1987:289) and is united in its resistance to patriarchy, seeking to engage with the Other in a critical and resistant manner while anthropology seeks relationship with and comprehension of the Other; therefore, the two schools of thought are ultimately destined to have an ‘awkward relationship’ because of the difference in how they organize knowledge and establish boundaries (1987:289). Commenting on Strathern’s work, Lila Abu Lughod (1991) points out that, while this is true, compared with feminist work, anthropologists are engaging with the Other from the opposite side of the power divide and the element of resistance is removed for the anthropologist in this equation. This is because the origin of anthropology in the relationship between the West and the non-West has been marked by Western hegemony and most anthropologists are of Western origin seeking to conduct their research in foreign locales (p.467). While I agree with Abu Lughod that on a geopolitical scale, Western anthropologists are in a position of power in relation to their Others, my personal experiences in the field in my interactions with the women I studied with, led me to question just how much ‘power’ the anthropologist actually wields in these interactions, dependent as we often are for everything, including food and shelter, in our foreign research sites. While it is entirely true, on a purely economic and political evaluation, that the Western world is in a position of power in relation to developing nations, if we evaluated the relationship with a different set of criteria such as social relationships, support through family or spiritual knowledge, and development, the Western individual is most often at a remarkable disadvantage in relation to their Other in the developing world.

The historical position of any culture, including their systems of knowledge, profoundly affects ways of knowing and cultural expressions of identity both globally and locally. Foucault

discusses knowledge as embedded in historical processes and, echoing Kant, points out that what we know ultimately hinges on what questions we are able to ask, and what questions we are able to ask are guided by our culture's definition of 'truth' arising from our historical, religious, and intellectual foundations that, in turn, guide the "ordering, exclusion and rarity" of knowledge in any culture (Phelan 1990:423-425). The foundation of conflict between the West and other nations, is in large part, rooted in the West insisting that what it knows is 'truth' and a model of success to be followed by the rest of the world; indeed, demanding conformity as a requisite for inclusion¹ and a seat at the international table, with the hierarchy between nations being measured on how well they have or have not conformed to the western ideal. And so, to resort to a cliché, perspective is everything. Feminist anthropology, alongside feminism, has, of course, in the era of 'posts' (-modern, -structural, -colonial) thoroughly interrogated the position of the individual researcher, how they are situated, and the power relations inherent therein influences their relationship to the Other and colours their interpretation of data (Denizen 2008:4).

What does this mean for Western feminist researchers working in the Middle East and North Africa with Arab and Muslim communities? Lila Abu Lughod succinctly states, "It seems to me that feminist projects must be seen as similarly rooted in ideas about politics, law, rights, personhood, and community ideas part of a modernity that is both related in fundamental ways to Europe and its colonization of the Middle East" (1998:28). From the perspective of the Middle Eastern communities being researched, feminism has a different value from the Western side of the table. Ahmed contends that:

Colonialism's use of feminism to promote the culture of the colonizers and undermine native culture has ever since imparted to feminism in non-Western societies the taint of having served as an instrument of colonial domination, rendering it suspect in Arab eyes and vulnerable to the charge of being an ally of colonial interests (1992:167).

At the same time, Ahmed argues that it should not be underestimated how feminist ideas developed in the Middle East and were selectively appropriated from Western discourse and applied in terms of local struggles and according to local needs (p.28). Arab feminism is unique because these women, rather than detaching themselves from traditional family systems, incorporate the family unit and embrace ties of marriage and children, seeking not equality of the sexes but to create complementary roles (Abu Rabia-Queder 2007:183, Ahmed 1982:154). Returning to Marilyn Strathern's concern for the awkward relationship between feminist anthropology and feminism, here too it can be said that Arab feminism has an awkward relationship with Western feminism as these two practices are also "differently structured in the way they organize knowledge and draw boundaries" (p.289).

If we accept Foucault's ideas of power, knowledge, and history, it is essential to examine the history of the relationship between the Middle East and the West in order to better understand the power differentials between them, feminist anthropology's position, and that of the individual researcher. The history of the West in relation to the Middle East and North Africa has been marked by struggle and competition as the Islamic empire blocked Western access to the Far East and its wealth (Ahmed 1982:523). Ahmed states that "throughout this time the guardians of Western civilization, with the clergy at their head, produced volumes about the evil, irrational, and so forth, condition of the Muslims- naturally including statements about the degraded condition of Muslim women" (p.524). 'They are brutish to their women' was a common justification of Western Imperialism, colouring its actions as rescuing damsels in distress or "saving brown women from brown men," while historically it has been proven that Western interference has ultimately worsened women's conditions (see di Leonardo 1991:12, Abu Lughod 2002:784). Today the Middle East controls 56% of the world's known oil reserves,

while North America and Europe control only 17% (U.S. Energy Information Administration). Middle Eastern countries have largely resisted Western interference in their political affairs and their societies, while the Western world has continued and intensified its pogrom against Muslim nations, continuing to focus attention on the status of Muslim women as one justification for its actions and rhetoric. In “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” Abu Lughod (2002: 785) comments on this subject noting that “we need to be suspicious when neat cultural icons are plastered over messier historical and political narratives, so we need to be wary when Lord Cromer in British-ruled Egypt, French ladies in Algeria, and Laura Bush, all with military troops behind them, claim to be saving or liberating Muslim women.” Returning to Foucault’s ideas that the West demands conformity in exchange for membership and social standing, the Western political narratives concerning the Muslim world surface as a response to the Muslim world’s refusal to submit to Western control and refusal to adopt Western ideologies wholesale in its own societies. Ironically, US interference in Arab countries has caused and is causing a reaction of religious revival as people wish to preserve their cultural and religious identity in the face of the West which tries to culturally pave the world in its image, condemning others for their beliefs (Ahmed 1982:521-522; see also, Mahmood 2001). Though many Western women believe that Muslim women are oppressed and would rather be living a Western life like them, Abu Lughod comments that in her 20 years of research in Egypt, she has never heard a single woman, from the most educated urbanite to the rural village dweller, ever express any desire to be like women in the West and, in fact, they view Western women as “bereft of community, vulnerable to sexual violence and social anomie, driven by individual success rather than morality, or strangely disrespectful of God” (2002:788). For feminist anthropologists of Arab origin, the political

discourse of the West concerning Arab nations puts them in a difficult position when presenting or publishing their research. As Ahmed notes:

In addition to compelling us to devote much time and energy to pointing out that Western so-called knowledge about the Middle East consists largely of a heritage of malevolently fabricated mythologies, it is also impossible, in an environment already so negatively primed against us, to be freely critical—a task no less urgent for us than for Western Feminists—of our own societies. For to be critical in such an environment would be an act of complicity and would make us collaborators in an exceedingly dishonest and racist process (1982:527).

Western anthropologists researching in Arab communities have, unfortunately, been unintentionally complicit in this process. As Abu Lughod points out, the ‘theoretical metonyms’ most commonly found in ethnographies and research of the Arab world are Islam, segmentation, and what she titles ‘Harem theory,’ Harem theory being the topic of women’s veiling and seclusion from men (1989:268). She argues that this rigid set of topics masks the great complexity of Arab culture and serves only to reify longstanding Orientalist doctrines (p.289). Further, Arebi notes that historically, Western writers have insisted on presenting Muslim women as weak, oppressed and silent which has “limited the discussion of women to the narrow topics of veils, honor and shame, patriarchy, kinship and polygamy” (1991:100). Historically and presently, Arab Muslim women have been misrecognized by the Western global and academic communities. Misrecognition is a term used by Nancy Fraser (2009:60) to describe a state of status inequality created by institutional hierarchies of cultural value that deny requisite standing. To be misrecognized is to be “prevented through institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation from participating as a full partner and peer in social life” and constitutes a status injury and has a material effect on people’s lives (Moore 2006:28). Arab Muslim women and academics in this state of misrecognition in the West are hedged around by what Western

history, political discourse, and many Western academics say about them, creating boundaries that are difficult to efface and may often seem insuperable. What must be privileged then is not what others have said about them, but what, in fact, they have said about themselves.

Based on the political, historical and social discourse described above, the individual Western researcher arriving in a Middle Eastern Arab community arrives with politically charged ‘baggage’ regardless of how light they aim to pack and, in turn, the community they arrive in has their own set of luggage packed with a complementary set of stereotyped discourses about the West (i.e. All Western people are Christians and detest Islam; everyone in the West is rich; Western women all drink alcohol and are sexually promiscuous). The questions become, ‘What is my responsibility as a feminist anthropologist in, and to, this community?’ and ‘How do I avoid reifying Orientalist discourses in my work?’ ‘How can I be critical without pouring gas on the fire of racist propaganda about Arab people or contributing to entrenched stereotypes?’ As feminist anthropologists, “we can best measure our success by our ability to convey the stories people share with us, making their motives, feelings and hopes real to the audiences we address through our writings and in the classroom” (Lewin 2006:29). It is, therefore, my intention in this thesis to make every effort to present the women I had the privilege of working with as complex, contradictory and magnificent as they truly are, while avoiding the above mentioned pitfalls. As for the metonyms of Middle Eastern theory (Islam, segmentation, harem), I am choosing not to focus on or spotlight these themes in an effort to evade the reification of what has been identified by Arab researchers as theories rooted in Orientalist discourse and to move beyond them in my own work. I will touch on these subjects only as much as necessary and if they come into view with the topic.

The Method to my Madness

The foundation of the research for this thesis began in 2007 as part of an application for an Irving K. Barber Undergraduate Research Award (URA), which I later was awarded. At that time, I was interested in studying cultural changes experienced by Bedouin women in Northern Israel since the establishment of the British Protectorate (1923-1948), which instigated the process of sedentarization for the Bedouin in the area, and the later effects of colonization with the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. I began with an extensive literature review on the topic of the Bedouin people of Israel and that summer of 2007, I spent three weeks doing fieldwork in the city of Haifa and the villages of Shefar'am, Tamra, I'blin and Arab Shiblee. I conducted four life history interviews, each one hour in length, which were later transcribed and coded.

Participants were chosen based on age—two women were over the age of 45 and two were under the age of 25—in order to collect multi-generational data that would offer a broader perspective of social change. The women interviewed were contacted and invited to participate through my translator and friend, Reham Bayoumi. I engaged in participant observation which included visiting in the villages, informal interviews with women, and observing the traditional preparation of bread and *mana'eesh*, ('flat bread,' topped with *za'atar* 'wild thyme' or red peppers and onions, chopped fine and mixed with olive oil), and visiting a Bedouin heritage museum and talking to the man who is its founder, curator, and administrator in the village of Arab Shiblee. My research during this project (or my stomach) led me to the topic of food as the data I returned home with was overwhelmingly food and foodways centered. I was spurred on by the data and a nudge from my supervisor to study food and culture for my MA research where I delved more deeply into this topic.

My MA research began in August of 2008 with a return to the literature, but this time with a focus on food and culture. Literature review on the Bedouin in the Galilee was somewhat frustrating, just as it was in 2007. There is a monstrous body of literature concerning the Bedouin of the Negev in the South of Israel but there was very little that I could find in English pertaining to their Northern cousins. I found one solid, extremely well-constructed ethnography translated into French from the original Hebrew, written by T. Ashkenazi (1938), official reports from Palestine written by administrators of the British Protectorate established there during the British Mandate period (1921-1948), and a handful of articles written by Ghazi Falah who is himself a Bedouin from the Galilee (1990;1985a; 1985b). Other than these sources, the bulk of my Bedouin references are from the South and, as often as possible, from Bedouin scholars (see bibliography). One Bedouin scholar, Aref Abu-Rabia, who has been writing since the 1980s, has answered my questions posed in emails and I had the good fortune to meet him at a conference on food and power in the Middle East at Beer Sheva University in Israel I was invited to in June of 2010. I dined with Abu-Rabia and his wife and we discussed food, herbs, and natural medicines of the Bedouin of the South.

Exploration of food and culture literature was more fruitful and is amply discussed in the chapters that follow and in Chapter 2. The relationship between food and culture has been a burgeoning field in the past decade but has much older roots in the works of anthropologists such as Audrey Richard's classic work in Northern Rhodesia (1995), Levi-Strauss *The Roast and the Boiled* (1977), the meticulous recording of Kwakiutl salmon recipes by Franz Boas published in 1921 (in Mintz and DuBois 2002:100) and Mary Douglas' analysis of the structure of a meal (1972) and food taboos (2003). Contemporary writers such as Sidney Mintz, Carole Counihan, and Penny Van Esterik have advanced the field of this research exponentially, with Counihan

and Van Esterik deepening the discussion of gender and food from a feminist perspective. At the same conference that I attended on food and power in the Middle East, I met Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik and had the opportunity to listen to them speak and to discuss food research with them during the conference.

My fieldwork for my MA research began July 6, 2009 and ran until September 2, 2009. I returned to my previously established friendships and contacts with women in Haifa, Shefar'am, I'blin and Tamra and began collecting data through life history interviews, participant observation, informal interviews, a modified version of food mapping (Marte 2007), journaling and photo journaling, and recipe collection. I conducted nine food-centred life history interviews which were recorded with a digital voice recorder and later transcribed and thematically coded, the participants being chosen and invited through personal contacts as in 2007 and again selected based on age with four women interviewed who were over the age of 40 years and four who were under the age of 30 years, again to obtain a cross-generational perspective. Two of these interviews were lost due to a technical malfunction with the recorder, but I was able to retain portions of these interviews in my journaling notes, written the evening of the day the interviews were recorded. Each interview was approximately one hour in length, though one interview ended abruptly after 20 minutes because the woman did not wish to continue². Participant observation took the form of travelling to the villages to visit with relatives of my host family and their neighbours on various occasions and cooking and recording recipes most evenings with Khazneh. I attended a traditional Bedouin wedding in Tamra for four days, which involved photographing food preparations and the wedding itself, and helping with the wedding preparations and clean-up as much as anyone would allow me to (I was a guest and no one wanted me to work). Informal interviews occurred fairly regularly in relaxed moments during

visits over coffee or tea, eating, going to the market, doing laundry together, or washing dishes after dinner. I had intended to use the method of food mapping, as presented by Lidia Marte (2007), which involves asking participants to draw maps of where they acquire their food and where they prepare it; or taking photographs of their food preparation and finished products, to better understand food routes, food identity, and relationships built on food as the women themselves saw their food capillaries. When I presented the idea to my host family, they considered the idea and advised me that food mapping would not be easily accepted by the women, explaining that many older Bedouin women were non-literate and, faced with papers and pencils, even just for drawing, they might feel intimidated and would likely resist and refuse to participate. I was determined to use the method and so I adapted it to my circumstances by following women to the market where they bought their food and photographing everything I could along the route, I asked questions during interviews that revolved around the women describing their food routes, followed by further questions based on their responses, and I took photographs of women's kitchens wherever I interviewed. This modification, while not ideal, did allow me to get to the information I was hoping to collect such as where food was acquired, what relationships were connected to food acquisition and preparation, and what the food was made of and tasted like. Journal writing was a daily event and sometimes included rewriting hastily scrawled notes on scraps of paper, furtively written in bathrooms or other private spaces after informal interviews, as the presence of a notebook at these interviews would be intrusive and interfere with the natural flow of conversation. I began with photo journaling, in part, for this reason. No one ever minded the presence of the camera and most people enjoyed being photographed, thus offering me a method of remembering certain moments during the day and augmenting my bits of paper. I began recording recipes because, as part of my research proposal,

I wanted to create a cookbook of Bedouin recipes from the women I met and worked with that would be written in both Arabic and English, with the Arabic portion opening and being read from right to left and the English from the opposite direction, thereby privileging neither language. I decided before leaving to do my fieldwork that proceeds from this cookbook would return to the women who contributed recipes as a means of giving back to the community that supported me throughout my research and made this project possible. Khazneh, the mother of my host family, was quite interested in this project and worked with me every possible evening, despite the oppressive heat of July and August, to show me how to prepare traditional Bedouin recipes. I recorded the recipes in my notebook and at the same time took photographs of every stage of preparation, including the finished product and the family happily devouring it. After returning home to Canada, I discovered in the book *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (2008), an article written by Melissa Salazar, Gail Feenstra, and Jeri Ohmart titled “Salad Days: A Visual Study of Children’s Food Culture”(423-437). The authors describe using photo journaling as a data collection method to study how children organized their food at a salad bar. When I attended the conference at Beer Sheva, Penny Van Esterik and Carole Counihan discussed this method of data collection for food research as a new and interesting development in the field. Though for the purposes of this thesis it is not possible to include all the photographs taken (there are more than 1000), I will include, wherever possible and appropriate, portions of my photographic data.

Here I would like to include a note on my status in the community with the women I worked with. When I arrived in Haifa in 2007 for my initial URA research, I was a single mother travelling alone. In July 2009, when I arrived for my master’s research, I had been married two days before in Algeria and was travelling with my children. I found that this elevated my status

with the women since, not only was I married (a status boost in Bedouin culture), I was married to a Muslim man whom they uniformly approved of, and having my children around me gave a visual proof of my status as mother. In this way I shifted into a different category and I found women more relaxed and open with me than they had been in 2007. I had also built relationships with women during my first research period that deepened with my second immersion and there was an increase in the intimacy of our conversations. Many of those conversations will not make their way into the pages of this thesis because of the private nature of the information shared, but they afforded me a visceral comprehension of these women's lives and their internal experiences that has greatly affected how I understood the rest of my more public data that I present in these chapters.

All said and done, research for this MA thesis has been a three year process of reading, writing, working with Bedouin women in the Galilee, and fortuitous meetings with other scholars in the field of my study. I have tried, wherever possible, to include the words of the Bedouin women with whom I spoke and their explanations of what food means to them. In the following chapter I present my food mapping data collected through photo journaling with a discussion of the food and food routes. Other than Khazneh, who accorded me express permission to use her real name, I have used pseudonyms throughout to protect the identities and privacy of the people who are included in the discussion and presentation of the data.

Chapter 4 — Feast Your Eyes- Food Mapping

There are no index cards or folded, stained papers. The recipes are written into her hands, into the strata of her calluses. Oregano shards, lemon dust, fossilized garlickessence, petrified olive oil (Kapsalis 1997:27).

In this chapter, I am using photographs taken during my fieldwork to describe the food routes of two Mawasi families, one urban (Haifa) and one rural (Tamra). Food mapping is an ethnographic method for food research data collection developed by Lidia Marte (2007). She describes this method and its advantages as follows: “Food mapping is an image-based approach to research that pays attention to the way people relate to food in the interaction of senses, emotions and environments” (2007:263). Food mapping is also a means of revealing the global connections of personal histories, households and neighbourhoods (p.263). She further explains that a food map can be “any representational trace related to food produced by a specific person” (p.263), such as a plate of food, an actual hand drawn map or a food narrative. Marte describes how food mapping can follow food in any direction from the local and personal outwards to the political and through ethnographic analysis, can reveal a multitude of data (p.263). In this particular article, Marte is discussing the use of food routes to track how immigrant communities use food to recreate a sense of home through food and how this relates to identity for these communities (2007). I chose to use this method as a means of investigating how Mawasi Bedouin women recreate and affirm their identity and sense of community through food in a Jewish colonial framework that seeks their assimilation, and to demonstrate where and how food is acquired and created by these women (food neighbourhoods) while capturing the intimate aesthetic and sensory moments that food generates. What follows in this chapter then, is a very

truncated sample of photographs from my photo journaling to assist me in describing the data collected through food mapping.

There is an absence of photos of the women in their kitchens or preparing food and this is at the request of the women or their families that these particular photographs not be used for this thesis. Often when we were cooking it was informal and extremely hot and women were wearing clothing that was for working and that uncovered their arms and legs to keep cool. Out of respect for their wishes, I have not included these photos.

Khazneh's Food and Food Routes

Khazneh lives in Haifa close to the Arab food market in the Wadi Nisnas neighbourhood. She walks to work in the morning and most days on her way home she goes to the market where her friend of fifteen years owns a store where she sells the produce from her family's farm and some produce, such as fruit, from other sources. Khazneh helps her friend at the store and her friend pays her for her help. She immediately reinvests her pay, purchasing vegetables, fruit and sheep's milk yoghurt as she needs from her friend. If she requires more produce than her pay will cover, she pays the difference. After this she walks several blocks home with her groceries, passing by several other shops where she purchases items such as dry goods, bread at the bakery and spices on her way home if she has need of them. At every stop, she has built relationships over the years with the owners of the stores and when they see her they greet and welcome her.



Figure 3: Road leading to the market in Haifa.



Figure 4: Khazneh and her best friend.



Figure 5: Khazneh choosing squash at the market.



Figure 6: Khazneh at the sundries store in the market.



Figure 7: A friend's store at the market.



Figure 8: Khazneh preparing lunch at her friend's store



Figure 9: Dry foods store in the market.



Figure 10: Arab cake and pastry store.



Figure 11: Making *lebneh*, yogurt cheese, at Khazneh's house in Haifa.



Figure 12: Khazneh's *Mahashee*, 'stuffed eggplant and squash'.



Figure 13: Khazneh's pickled *betinjan*, 'eggplant with hot peppers.'



Figure 14: Deep frying *bami*, 'okra,' at Khazneh's house in Haifa.



Figure 15: Khazneh's *Bami* in tomato and garlic sauce.



Figure 16: Olive trees in Khazneh's garden in I'blin.



Figure 17: *Dawali*, grape leaves, eaten stuffed with rice and meat.



Figure 18: Khazneh watering her new grape vines and citrus trees.

Tamra: Food and Food Routes

In the village of Tamra, the Mawasi family I observed consisted of three households. A man and his wife, who I will refer to as Mostapha and Almira, owned the main original house. Their daughter, Halima, who was not yet married, lived with them, and their two sons, when they married, had built their houses on top of the main house as second and third levels for their own families. The three families ate together regularly in the main house and shopped for groceries for their own family and for the communal family. They shopped at the local supermarket for their supplies, occasionally picking up the odd item at a convenience store that was extra convenient because it was at the end of their driveway and was owned by the Mostapha's brother. The elder son, Ahmed, and his wife, Samira, have been married six years. In an interview with Samira, she explained to me that she shops at the local supermarket but also goes to a local open market where farmers bring their produce. Her parents are also farmers and give her produce for her family when she visits. The wedding I attended in Tamra was the marriage of the youngest son of this family who I will refer to as Khaled and his new wife whom I will refer to as Fatimah. For the wedding of Khaled and Fatimah, the meat was purchased through a local man in Tamra who raises sheep and cows but who is not Bedouin. Oil, pine nuts, coffee, and spices for the wedding feast were purchased in both Tamra and Haifa. Khaled and Fatimah as newlyweds were not yet independent in 2009 when I was conducting my fieldwork, and borrowed from Almira food and supplies such as coffee, milk, and laundry soap. Almira had a garden beside the house where she grew olives, figs, and herbs such as mint and sage. Samira and Fatimah were not interested in growing food in the garden though Fatimah related to me in an interview that she would like to grow small things like mint and peppers, and flowers for their beauty on the roof of their house (their level was the last built). The wedding feast for Khaled

and Fatimah was cooked by a man who is locally famous for cooking for weddings. When I asked to observe for my fieldwork, he said, “No one will watch me cooking. No man or woman.” Cooking for weddings is competitive and many of the cooks guard their secrets from the eyes of others in the hopes of maintaining an advantage with their unique recipes, hence the photos presented here of the wedding feast are of the food after it was finished cooking.



Figure 19: View from the roof of agricultural fields in the village in Tamra.



Figure 20: Supermarket in Tamra.



Figure 21: Vegetables in the supermarket in Tamra.



Figure 22: Pita at the bakery in Tamra.



Figure 23: Specialty bread at the bakery in Tamra.



Figure 24: Cousins in the upstairs kitchen at Almira's house in Tamra.



Figure 25: Neighbour preparing lunch for wedding guests.



Figure 26: Khazneh testing a spinning chair in Samira's house in Tamra.



Figure 27: Almira's rice with noodles, meat, and pine nuts.

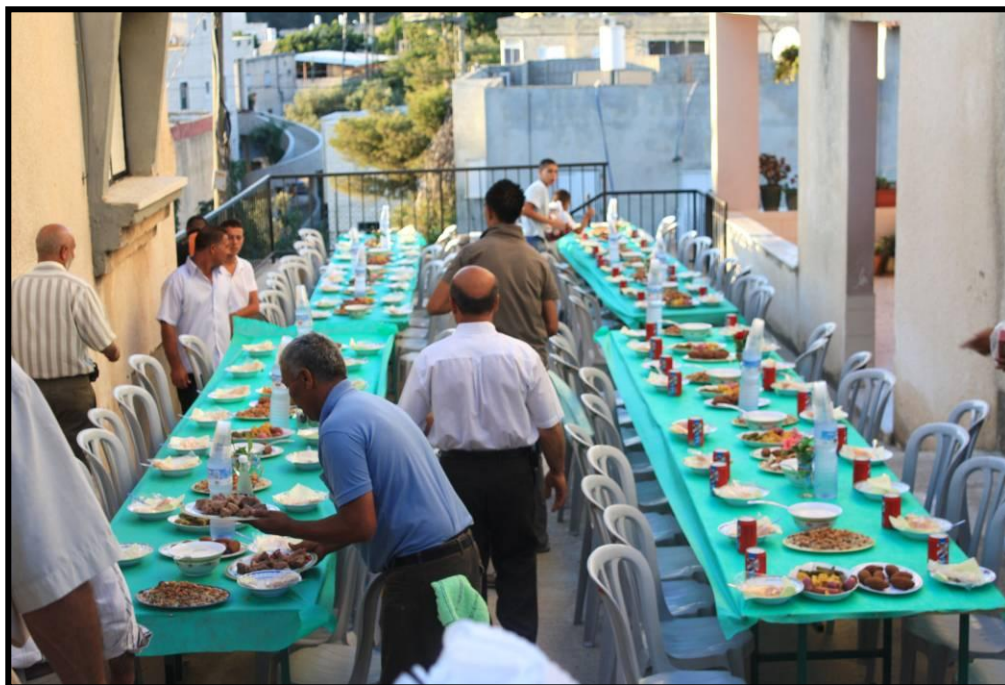


Figure 28: Men's tables for the wedding in Tamra.



Figure 29: Cakes made by Samira using recipes from a book.



Figure 30: Fruit for wedding guests



Figure 31: Women preparing *kube*, ground beef mixed with bulghur wheat and spices, for the wedding.



Figure 32: Traditional coffee pot warming on a non-traditional hot plate.

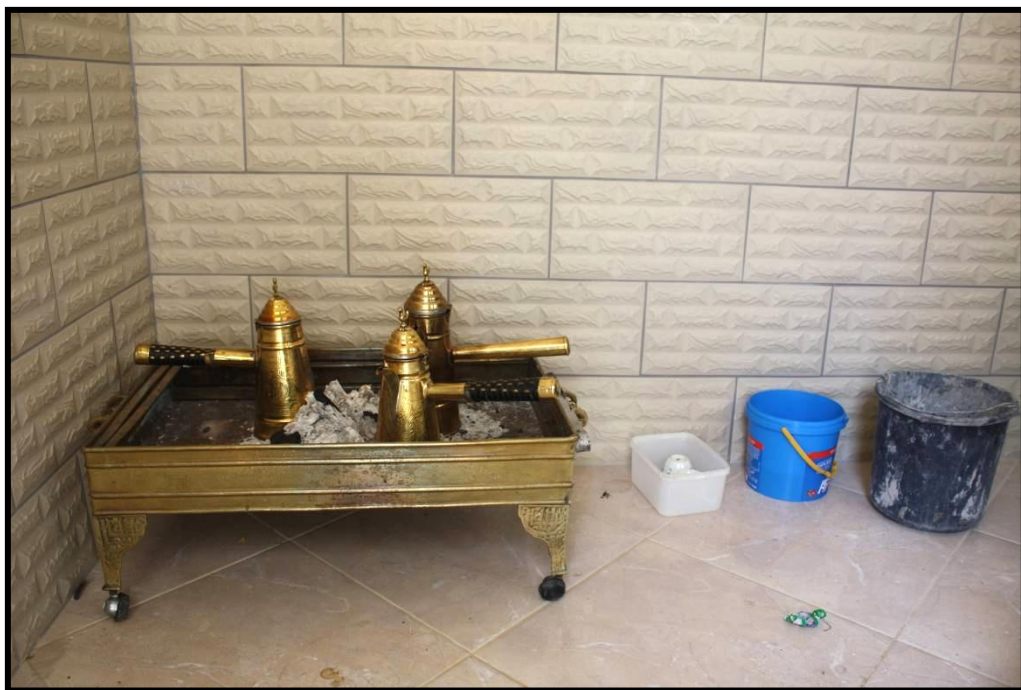


Figure 33: Traditional coffee pots warming in traditional coals at the wedding.



Figure 34: Women's meat cutting ceremony for the wedding in Tamra.



Figure 35: Men cutting large pieces of meat off the bones for the wedding feast.



Figure 36: Young girl in front of refrigerator trailer for food at the wedding in Tamra.



Figure 37: Wedding food cooked by secretive chef for the wedding in Tamra.



Figure 38: Meat cooked in yogurt for wedding feast.



Figure 39: *Lahkme*, meat stew, cooked for wedding feast in Tamra.

The photographs above detail the food and food routes of two families, one from Haifa and one from Tamra. In Khazneh's case, she has two houses, one that was purchased by her late husband in Haifa and one that she purchased from her sister in I'blin. Khazneh prefers her house in I'blin and plans to retire there when all the children are married. She plans to give the house in Haifa to her son when he is married. Her food routes in Haifa are all market based and reflect the urban environment where growing food is not possible other than in small planters on her patio. In I'blin she brings food from Haifa and also eats from her garden where she grows figs, apricots, grape leaves, olives, citrus, mint, and *melamea* or sage for tea. Alternately, when she harvests from her garden in I'blin she returns the processed food to Haifa to prepare recipes for her family. For the collective family in Tamra (three nuclear families living in the same building on different levels as described above), food is purchased at the supermarket or local farmer's markets. As mentioned above, Almira has a garden where she grows olives and herbs such as sage and mint and she shares her garden harvest with her son's families.

This chapter is intended to give a visual display of the food and food routes accessed by Mawasi women in two families, and to describe the different markets available in the urban city and rural village. I will refer back to these photos in the following chapters as the data they represent is topically discussed.

In the next chapter, I offer a brief historical overview of the Bedouin in Palestine (now Israel) with a focus on the Mawasi tribe in particular. It is intended to serve as a background to add depth and texture to the data presented in further chapters and as a means of positioning the Mawasi Bedouin people in their cultural landscape.

Chapter 5 — Tents to Town: Historical Background

When I was a child, I remember my mother made panels for the tent from a mixture of goat and sheep's wool. The tent was cool in the summer and warm and dry in the winter. Everyone had their own blanket and when it was time to move, we put all our clothes in our blanket and tied it, and each person carried their own belongings over their shoulder. We didn't use money. We used to trade. One who had milk and cheese traded with one who planted and so on, like this we got the things we needed. We preserved everything in those days. We had a season for everything. The women used to thread the *bami* (okra) on strings and hang them to dry. Tomatoes they used to cut and put in the sun to dry. However much you can preserve, you do. Just the beans they used to plant in the winter. Soap (oil soap) women used to make it at home. The main ingredient is olive oil. They used old oil from the year before and ate from the new oil. Nothing got wasted. (Khazneh 2007)

The Bedouin, of what was formerly known as Palestine, have an incongruent, non-homogenous history, by which I mean that the tribes living in the South have a different history from those in the North. While they have linguistic and cultural aspects in common, their ways of life diverged at certain historic junctures and different political pressures have been brought to bear on both regions affecting their sociocultural development unto the present moment. Just as all Bedouin in the Middle East share certain cultural forms, yet have differences based on tribal origins³, ecological factors, and political structures encompassing their territories, so too have the Bedouin within Israel advanced uniquely depending upon their circumstance (Ashkenazi 1938:40-43; see Chatty 2006). While it can be argued that each tribe has its particular history and experience, explaining the particularities would require more pages than are currently available. Consequently, in this section, using broad strokes, I paint an outline of the history of the

Southern and Northern Bedouin with a more detailed and specific description of the history of the Mawasi tribe.

The preponderance of research concerning the Bedouin who live within the borders of Israel is focused on the tribes located in the Negev region in the South. The reason these tribes have generated so much interest is that they occupy a region that is hotly contested and the Bedouin living there have more emphatically resisted sedentarization. The Bedouin contend that they have lived in the Negev since time immemorial and have a right to remain on the land. The Israeli government insists that the land belongs to the State as the Bedouin have no papers to prove their ownership and, besides, it is perfect for growing vineyards and will generate an enormous revenue (if the Bedouin would just shove off). This is not a new debate (Abu Rabia 1994:14; Falah 1985a,1985b; Yiftachel 2003,1999:385).

Prior to the British protectorate being established in Palestine (1917-1948), under the rule of the Ottoman Empire (1516-1917), the Bedouin in both the North and the South were left largely to their own devices and the only law was the law of the Shaykhs ('tribal leaders') and their swords. The Bedouin owned the land because they occupied it and *fellahin*, 'village dwellers,' leased the land from the Shaykhs for agricultural use or, as the weaker tribes did, paid *huwwa*, 'tax or tribute,' for protection from other tribes in the region and those who passed through their lands, whether local travellers or tourists (Marx 1967:9, Ashkenazi 1938:24-25, 34). In the North, even the local and central Ottoman government paid certain Shaykhs for their 'favour' (1938:25). In the 1870s, when the government became increasingly concerned about the future of Egypt after the opening of the Suez Canal, the Ottoman Empire began to control the Bedouin with a tighter grip (Marx1967:9; Ashkenazi 1938:35).

The British protectorate brought positive changes for the Bedouin of both the North and South. The authorities maintained law and order and continuous fighting and raiding were replaced by a relative peace, leaving the Bedouin free to focus on matters other than warfare, and the tribes were left to conduct their affairs as they saw fit (Marx1967:10). At the same time, the Bedouin were no longer able to collect *huwwa* (Ashkenazi 1938:35) and so had to turn to other means of generating a cash income. As Keenan remarks:

Most nomadic pastoralists are dependent, even in the short term, and in varying degree, on what we might call secondary or supplementary means of subsistence such as cultivation of one sort or another, hunting or fishing, wage labour, raiding, slavery, trading and even state subsidies (2006:684).

In bad years of drought or disease, these supplementary systems act as a form of insurance.

All of these supplemental systems were utilized by the Bedouin of the North and the South to greater or lesser degree at different times. However, for the tribes in the South, agricultural cropping was a less reliable means of income due to the scarcity of water sources in the Negev desert, low and unpredictable levels of rainfall, and because fierce competition between tribes for pasturage, water rights, and territory periodically necessitated movement to avoid conflict (Marx 1967: 8-12). Higher rainfall in the North made movement for pasturage less pressing. The tribes moved infrequently and were never more than semi-nomadic, moving only to avoid biting insects and when a campsite needed time to purify and renew itself (Falah 1990; Bayoumi, personal communication 2007). This made seasonal dry-land farming a profitable option and the tribes, to a greater or lesser degree, grew wheat, barley, pulses, okra, sesame, and sorghum in the rainy season (Ashkenazi 1938:45). Additionally, tribes located near orchards or agricultural colonies sold farmers the manure of their animals for fertilizer, thus, what once had no commercial value became a reliable source of income (p.178-179).

Thus, due to ecological factors, the tribes in the South remained more heavily dependent on their herds and flocks (Abu Rabia 1994:10), while the tribes of the North began to profit from agricultural endeavours. As a result, the Northern tribes began the process of sedentarization earlier as their fortunes became more closely tied to cultivation and wage labour and they purchased land with their flocks and herds, acquiring papers that proved their ownership (p.153-154). At the same time, reports by the government of the British protectorate remark that the Bedouin way of life was becoming less and less tenable as more land was being intensively cultivated by new Jewish immigrants, thus inhibiting the movement of flocks and herds across the landscape. The officials writing the reports found it difficult to believe that the Bedouin could continue their traditional way of life for much longer (p.32).

With the formation of the State of Israel in 1948, the free migration of the nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralist Bedouin tribes across its borders ceased. Many Bedouin tribes were pushed across the borders into neighbouring countries between 1948 and 1959, until a UN sanction prevented further expulsions (Falah 1985:365). The remaining tribes in the Negev were forced into a military controlled area called the *Sayig* and were not allowed to leave without special permits. Bedouin of the north were 'encouraged' to settle in villages with promises of improved conditions. The land formerly occupied by the Bedouin in the Negev and the Galilee was appropriated by the newly formed Israeli state and redistributed to Jewish immigrants (Abu Rabia 1994:8-9).

Initially, the Bedouin were denied access to jobs as labourers in neighbouring Jewish communities, as the employment was said to be reserved for new Jewish immigrants; but, as time passed, the Bedouin were expected to become a source of labour for the Jewish farms and villages (Abu-Rabia 1994, 2002; Falah 1985). Removed from their traditional lands and unable

to continue their customary movements, the Bedouin of the Negev, to a large extent, lost access to resources that were essential to their pastoralist livelihood (Abu-Rabia 1994; Borkan, Morad and Shvarts 2000:208). As a result, the Bedouin in the South and the North have had to adapt to a sedentary and urbanized lifestyle that has affected their social systems and transformed their relationship with the land.

Before the war in 1948, Bedouin tribes had already begun to settle in the Galilee and had purchased or appropriated land and houses in surrounding villages and had legal papers of ownership, while the Bedouin of the South normally claimed the land by their presence on it, rarely obtaining papers, with the objective of avoiding taxes (Abu-Rabia 1994:15; Jakubowska 1992:87). Today, the Southern Bedouin find themselves embroiled in a protracted, and largely ineffective, land claims process with the State, referred to by the media as ‘The Bedouin Problem’ (Yiftachel 2006:4). For the most part, the Bedouin tribes of the Galilee occupy a higher economic status than their Southern counterparts, having greater access to land and resources, including water, and having started the process of settlement earlier, purchasing or settling in houses or on already established farms left vacant by the war. (Falah 1985:362-366).

Since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the Bedouin population in the Negev region has increased from 11,000 to 160,000 (Borkin et al. 2000: 208). Throughout the intervening years, the Israeli government has made efforts to settle the traditionally nomadic Southern Bedouin in government created villages. The Bedouin have resisted settlement and erected communities of their own in traditional tribal areas. The government deems these communities ‘unrecognized villages,’ bulldozes houses and any other buildings the Bedouin erect, and denies them access to services such as electricity, water, sewer, and garbage removal if

they remain (Abu-Saad 2008:1731-1738). Pressure to move to ‘recognized’ government constructed villages is constant.

The Bedouin continue to resist as settlement in recognized villages includes the requirement of abandoning any land claims, and the villages themselves have the worst records of poverty and social deprivation in Israel. In 2003 and 2004, in an effort to remove the Bedouin from land wanted for Jewish settlement, the Israeli government sprayed Monsanto’s Roundup from airplanes onto the crops of unrecognized villages on seven occasions. Ostensibly the target was the destruction of Bedouin crops surrounding the villages; but there were no warnings, and people were in the fields at the time of the spraying. Buildings were also sprayed, including a school (Spraying 2004). In the North, the Bedouin generally settled in Arab villages close to their original tribal territory. For example, members of the branch of the Mawasi tribe located between Shefar’am and Tamra settled in these villages and nearby I’blin and have formed Mawasi family neighbourhoods. Most land was purchased before the establishment of the State of Israel and legal papers of ownership make government appropriation more difficult.

Of the forty-seven Bedouin tribes in the North documented by Ashkenazi in 1938, the Mawasi was the largest. He reports that the Mawasi tribe was comprised of 1,005 persons, 523 men and 482 women, and occupied three separate territories: one between the villages of Tamra and Shefar’am, another near the Sea of Galilee close to the village of Mghar, and a third further South, between Nazareth and Kafr Kama (1938:34). The average size of tribes in the North was 237 persons, the smallest counted only 40 persons, and the largest, after the Mawasi, 831. The tribes in the North have diverse origins (see end notes) but Ashkenazi reports that over half of the tribes migrated to Palestine from Northern Syria, including the Mawasi (1938:40-43). The Mawasi practiced a mixed economy, as many of their neighbouring tribes did, of pastoralist

activities, seasonal dry-land farming, and wage labour. Women processed milk into products such as yogurt, cheese, and butter that were traded for other goods from neighbours and from the *fellahin* villages.

Khazneh related to me that after 1948 and before settling in the villages, the Mawasi did not move long distances because every time the Bedouin moved, they were required by the newly formed Israeli State to apply for papers and permits. Her family, as mentioned above, moved only when biting insects attracted by food, animals and people invaded the camp and the land needed time to regenerate. When the tribe decided to settle, families would often squat on a farmer's land and wait for the farm owners to enquire why they were there, at which point the squatters would offer to buy the land with their herds and flocks. If the farmer agreed, they made the exchange and signed the papers; if the farmer refused, the Bedouin would say, "We are many and you are only one. What will you do?" This normally persuaded the farmer to have a change of heart. She also explained that the Mawasi used a barter system of exchange rather than cash and that her mother would send her and her siblings to the store to trade milk products she had made for other goods.

The tents, as mentioned in Khazneh's story at the start of the chapter, were made of panels woven by the women from a blend of sheep and goat hair. Due to the nature of the wool in the panels, in the summer the tents allowed dew to enter at night, which kept the people cool, but in the winter tents were warm and kept the rain out completely. When the Mawasi first settled, the houses they built were organized spatially in the same manner as the tents with two rooms, one for men and the guests and one for the women and family; but, as time passed, more rooms were added, such as kitchens and salons, in keeping with their *fellahin* neighbours. Settling in the villages also brought a relief for the women from the constant requirement to seek

firewood and water for cooking and bathing and kerosene cook stoves were much easier for women to cook on. Families at this time also started planting gardens around their houses of eggplants, herbs, cucumber, tomatoes, and the like to augment their food supplies (personal communication, Khazneh, 2007,2009).

The divergent histories of the Northern and Southern Bedouin caused by differing ecological and political factors have shaped their communities in unique ways. In the South, the Bedouin are entrenched in a battle to retain their culture, identity, human rights, and land rights. This struggle has led them to emphatically retain and promote traditional cultural norms as a means of maintaining identity and resisting a State that wishes to remove them from the land. The Bedouin of the North, who settled earlier because the political, economic, and physical environment supported such a decision, have had the protection of legal documents detailing their claims to land and property and they are settled in villages and on lands that are, in general, not contested. As a result, the Bedouin have integrated on their own terms with Palestinian Arab communities and, while maintaining neighbourhoods that are Bedouin, have adapted their culture to accommodate the exigencies of village life. Their identity is not under attack but has blended somewhat with the surrounding cultural landscapes. The Mawasi settled in this manner and can be said to have prospered, to a degree, in their sedentarized communities.

Chapter 6 — Where She Lives: Power, Society, and Economics

As indicated in the previous chapter, power in the Middle East and Israel is a complex web that cannot be encapsulated in a single writing. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on the basic power structures within the State of Israel and how they have affected its Palestinian Arab citizenry since the formation of the State in 1948 and, in turn, the Bedouin as a minority within the Arab minority. Power structures have been, and continue to be, ruled by a system of stratification based on class and ethnic origin, with wealthy Ashkenazi (Western European) Jews at the peak and Palestinian Arabs at the base (Yiftachel 1997).

The establishment of the State of Israel brought with it a period of intensive colonization and, in its initial stages, the implementation of military rule for Palestinian Arabs, including the Bedouin (Falah 1985, Abu-Rabia 1994:8). Access to employment, education, land and resources were, and are, dictated by ethnicity, the political framework within Israel creating an environment of inequality and control (Yiftachel 1997; Saban 2004). Palestinian Arabs are considered second class citizens, must struggle to achieve financial security for their families, and are immersed in the classic contest of a colonized community, bringing with it the challenges of maintaining cultural identity within the foreign body of the State. The Bedouin occupy a liminal space, being viewed as neither Jew nor Palestinian by the State but identifying themselves as Bedouin Arabs and a part of the original Palestinian community existing prior to Jewish colonization (Parizot 2004:4).

Israel has been described by Yiftachel (1997:507) as an ethnocracy, or “a system of ethno-class segregation and inequality,” where resources are distributed and policies are shaped by the dominant ethnic group. Since the establishment of the State, the Ashkenazi elite have

focused primarily on the expansion and Judaization of the State and economic growth, both of which have largely been achieved at the expense and through the labour of Palestinian Arabs living within Israel and in the Palestinian territories (p.506-507). The Arab-Israeli war and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was followed by a 20 year period of ethnic cleansing and military rule for Palestinian-Arabs living within Israel and is referred to by the Palestinians as the Nakba, when Palestinian villages were destroyed and 600,000 to 760,000 Palestinians people were expelled or fled to neighbouring countries, young men and pregnant women were executed, whole families were massacred, and land and property were expropriated without remuneration (Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007:3-5, Abu-Rabia 2002:203, Yiftachel 1999:371, Falah 1985:364, Jakubowska 1992:85, Saban 2004:890). As Abraham has stated:

It is one of the tragic ironies of history that Israel's settler colonial project has done to another people, the Palestinians, what Hitler's Lebensraum project sought to do to the Jews: to use separation, expulsion, ethnic cleansing, legal barriers, illegal land appropriation, imprisonment, settlements, and state terror to erase the existence of a people, whose very being represents a metastasis on the Israeli body politic (2008:722).

Presently, Palestinian Arabs living in Israel struggle to achieve equality in an apartheid system. Control is maintained by the government, and access to land, resources, employment and education is constrained by ethnicity.

Palestinian Arabs living in Israel find themselves in the unenviable position of either choosing to become a traitor or a terrorist. If they choose to accept the inequality forced upon them and submit to the Jewish State, they become traitors; if they fight against the State system—either peacefully, through protest or other legal means, or violently—they are considered insurgents and face the possibility of deportation to the occupied territories or death (Abraham 2008: 716). As Mar'i has noted, "Indeed, many researchers and scholars who belong

to the majority have observed that the security rationale is often utilized to manipulate the Arab minority and deprive them of equal opportunity” (Mar’i 1989:91).

Land and place are never secure for Arab communities and ownership does not guarantee permanent possession. After the war in 1948, the first Israeli government confiscated all lands and property belonging to Palestinian citizens who had been expelled or who had fled, and Palestinian refugees were not permitted to return or to reclaim their property (Sa’adi and Abu-Lughod 2007). Confiscated land passed into the hands of Jewish representatives of the State. Initially the confiscated lands could not be sold but were leased or rented. After a period of time, the Israeli government released the properties for private purchase (p.3).

Presently, discriminatory laws prevent Arab citizens from achieving a permanent sense of place. For example, land belonging to Arab citizens is sometimes appropriated by the state with the declaration that the area will become a protected park for ecological conservation, only to become, after a period of time, a Jewish settlement (Avieli, personal communication, June 17, 2010). At the same time, 80 percent of the land in Israel cannot be leased, used or purchased by Arab citizens and they own only 3 percent of the land, while 93 percent of the land remains in government control as public land; ethnocratic policies favour possession by Ashkenazi Jewish residents, excluding other Jewish ethnicities and Arab citizens (Yiftachel 1999:373).

During my fieldwork, locals related that, when Arab citizens wish to develop land they have purchased or inherited, extensive paperwork is required and restrictions based on the size of the parcel occasionally make building a house an impossibility. Water is scarce and must be paid for in a monthly bill, making agricultural development or the maintenance of gardens a costly enterprise. As a result of discriminatory laws such as these and economic constraints, a large percentage of Palestinian Arab citizens in Israel are living on the surface of the earth while being

denied by the State the right to establish lasting roots and permanence on the land through ownership. Coupled with the aforementioned political position in which Arab Palestinians find themselves, they have to choose between submitting to a discriminatory system that devalues them, or becoming an insurgent. Cultural identity must be continuously reaffirmed.

Economic and social development in Arab communities is hindered by constricted access to high paying positions or positions of power. Employment opportunities for Arab citizens are controlled by the State and senior positions in centres of public, social, economic, and military power are normally denied them (Ghanem 1998:434). When interviewing a young Bedouin man in Haifa, he related to me that, when searching for employment, higher paying jobs are often awarded to Jewish applicants before Arab, or, when applying for jobs, Arab applicants are sometimes told the opening is only available to those who have completed military service which is mandatory for Jewish citizens but not for Arab citizens.

Occasionally, Bedouin Arabs will participate in military service in the hopes of receiving government benefits or access to jobs but they are harshly sanctioned by the Arab community for doing so and normally meet with another excuse from the employer in the workplace for why they cannot be hired even after they have completed the service. Social networking is of great importance in Arab and Israeli culture and relationships damaged in this manner are not easily repaired in the Arab community, leading to fewer opportunities and support from Arab businesses and families. When relationships are torn in this way, doors are closed to possibilities of employment in Arab businesses and, in times of hardship, there are fewer doors open for solace with families and friends.

Education is highly valued in the Arab community and entrance to higher paying professional jobs is often won by Arab citizens through achieving degrees and postgraduate

degrees. However, educational opportunities are not equal for Jewish and Arab citizens. Arab and Jewish students are largely segregated throughout primary and secondary school, only integrating in the college setting. Curricula in Arab elementary and high school programs are not the same as Jewish ones. For example, Jewish students have richer vocational and technical programs. Arab students are subjected to a modified history of Israel that promotes Zionist propaganda and loyalty to the State, whereas Jewish students are able to explore in depth the broader world and global politics (Al-Haj 1995:119).

Bedouin students told me that when Arab students sit their exams for university entrance, knowledge gaps make access to higher learning more difficult and, once accepted, Arab students must work to close these gaps in their classes and contend with Jewish professors who often give lower grades to Arab students. Also, there are more scholarships available to Jewish students than Arab, making tuition and school fees financially difficult for lower income families. Bedouin students in the past have accessed postsecondary education at lower rates than other Arab citizens for varying reasons, such as family responsibilities for men and issues of sex segregation for women, but presently that trend is changing, especially for Bedouin women who have increased university attendance exponentially in the last decade which I will discuss further in chapter 8 (Passate-Schubert 2003:287).

For the Bedouin of the Galilee, this ethnocratic, apartheid system directed against Palestinian Arabs both within and beyond the borders of the State has had an irregular impact. A Bedouin proverb states, “I against my brother, I and my brother against our cousin, my brother and our cousin against the neighbours, all of us against the foreigner.” As Jakubowska (1992:87) has affirmed, the Bedouin regard the appearance and disappearance of State structures as ephemeral and their existence as the only thing that will endure, aptly captured in a popular

saying: “governments come and go, but the Bedouin stay.” In the next chapter I discuss Bedouin identity as it is affected by the particularities of location, generation, and gender and how these factors affect food identity among the Mawasi Bedouin.

Chapter 7 — Sense of Self- Food and Identity

Bedouin autonomy is a core cultural concept associated with freedom, courage, and honour (Jihad Racy 1996:406). For the Mawasi Bedouin, despite the external circumstances applied by the State of Israel that affect residence, employment, education, and other socioeconomic structures, the internal structures that constitute 'Bedouiness' remain, for the most part, undisturbed in the older generations (age 45 to 100). These elders generally have little interaction with the State, other than what is necessary, and continue to live, as much as possible, in a manner that preserves their cultural identity. For the younger generations, however, Bedouiness, for some, has become something to hide or at least modify, to be more easily accepted by the mainstream Jewish dominated culture as the Bedouin have become more deeply integrated and dependent on the State for social and economic opportunities.

The State has worked to achieve this integration through campaigns to assign a distinct ethnic category to the Bedouin, labelling them as non-Arab or 'friendly Arab' and encouraging loyalty to the State as they have done with the Druze community. The Druze are an Arab minority in Israel who live mainly in the North. They are also Muslim but interpret the Koran differently. During the war in 1948 they chose to ally with the Jewish forces and so were given a separate status from other Arab Palestinians (Firro 1992:323)⁴. In this manner, the State hopes to 'divide and conquer' the Arab community by offering special privileges and status to the Bedouin and Druze communities and the option (or obligation in the case of the Druze) of participating in military service (Abu-Saad et al. 2000:52). During my fieldwork in 2007, when I asked about the relative prosperity of her village, a woman from the Arab Shiblee tribe responded that 20 or 30 years ago the men of her village had participated in military service and,

in turn, the government had reciprocated with financial endowments to the village for development. She followed up by noting that now the men had become better educated they refused military service because of how the state was treating its Arab citizenry. None of the Mawasi families I spoke with have ever entered into military service and many find it offensive that any Arab person ever would do so.

In order to demonstrate how identity has shifted over time for the Mawasi, it is helpful to review what has been said about them by others and by themselves. Emmanuel Marx in his book, *Bedouin of the Negev* (1967), remarks that:

In Galilee, in the north of Israel, where about 7000 Bedouin remain, they have for several generations lived interspersed with the peasant population, and assimilation to the peasants has gone so far that many Bedouin have abandoned their tents for stone houses and thus shed the last outward sign of their nomadic origin. The census describes these people as Bedouin mainly on their own definition (p.3).

During an interview, a woman told me a story of when she had decided to marry for a second time in the mid-1980s. She had chosen to marry an Arab man who was *Fellah*, or a ‘village dweller.’ Her father, even after two decades of living in villages with the *Fellahin*, was greatly distressed by her choice saying, “They are not like us. They don’t understand us.” This story demonstrates that despite all outward appearances that the Northern Bedouin had become like the peasants with sedentarization, it was merely a change of residence. Their internal experience of their own identity remained distinctly Bedouin and social boundaries existed for them between themselves and the *fellahin*.

The children of this marriage, now young adults, related to me that they felt a greater connection to their Palestinian ‘side’ than their Bedouin ‘side’ because they had felt a certain rejection on the part of their grandfather; yet, at the same time they felt closer to their mother’s

sisters than their father's siblings because they lived closer and visited with them more often. Meanwhile, it cannot be forgotten that Arab families mark their descent through the patriline, and therefore these children belonged to their father's lineage and this, too, has affected their perceptions of identity.

When interviewing older generations, women related their family histories and 'times of the tents' and early sedentarization with pride in their voices about how the Bedouin lived and managed their food resources. Younger generations tended to view life in the tents as not modern and seemed vaguely embarrassed by my question as to whether they had ever lived in the tents. They were not interested in keeping animals and farming and sometimes not even in maintaining gardens.

In a group conversation, young women from the city of Haifa and their cousins from the villages made jokes about the villages as backwards, boring, and undeveloped, laughing at each other's comments while elders looked on, unsmiling. In an interview with a young woman of 19 years of age, she responded to one of my questions about Bedouin identity by saying that they were not Bedouin, that the government identified them as Arab and that the only difference was their accent. Her husband looked at her with a puzzled expression but refrained from commenting.

These examples reveal that Bedouin identity is not continuous across the generations and is becoming diffused among the younger people, ceasing to hold great importance to their personal concepts of personhood. It is interesting to note, returning to the historical background, that the Bedouin of the South who have had to fight for their rights, land, and culture have become embroiled in a war of identity politics where being Bedouin is a central theme of discourse both by the government and the communities; meanwhile, the Northern population, not

having experienced these specific pressures, but subjected to others who have encouraged integration or solidarity with their Arab *Fellahin* neighbours, have begun to lose their attachment to their Bedouin identity. However, it is equally important to note that the lack of interest in younger generations towards farming could in fact be a vestige of ancient attitudes of the Bedouin toward agricultural work. The Bedouin in the past looked upon the *fellahin* as peasants and considered the work of farming and wage labour degrading, preferring to live freely on the land with their flocks and herds and take what they wanted by force. Boldness and courage were, and still are, prized character traits and, considering the history of Bedouin conflict with neighbouring tribes marked by frequent raids and skirmishes, the necessity for these attributes becomes apparent.

One evening visiting with family, a Bedouin cousin showed me and his *fellahin* cousins a video he had on his phone that demonstrated the culturally perceived difference between the Bedouin and the *fellahin*. In the first part of the video, two *fellahin* children were in the back of a large truck used for transporting animals. Subsequently, an adult loaded a sheep into the back of the truck with the children who started to scream and shrink back as far into the corner of the truck bed as they possibly could. The second segment of the video showed a Bedouin child straddling a dog and lifting it forcefully by its ears. Everyone laughed watching the video and remarked how it showed the difference in attitudes between the two communities, exhibiting how Bedouin children were fearless and *fellahin* children were afraid of even a harmless sheep. Based on examples such as this and different moments during my fieldwork, it became apparent to me that the Bedouin still mark a class distinction between themselves and the *fellahin*, viewing themselves as somewhat superior.

Considering that the *fellahn* throughout history were the vassals of the Bedouin, paying *huwwa* (taxes, tithes and protection money), it is no surprise that this perception of stratification would develop; and, even in the present, after living alongside the *fellahin* for decades and in the same manner as the *fellahin*, attitudes of superiority have not subsided. As a result, it is possible that the present rejection of farming as an economic activity could have its roots in this historical precedence. On the same note, though I posed the question repeatedly in different ways to different members of the family and was told it was not the case, I had to wonder if the women I interviewed whose mother was Bedouin but whose father was *fellah* felt this caste-like distinction between themselves and their Bedouin cousins in their relationships with their Bedouin relatives.

Other than the one comment made during an interview when they reported their feelings of rejection from their grandfather, they never stated that they felt this distinction between Bedouin and *fellahin*. However, I noted in the villages that these women normally preferred to remain in their cousin's room and seemed resistant to mingling with the other women. From the other side of the issue, these young women were from Haifa and tended to view the villages as boring and uncultured compared to their normal urban environment. I sensed that there were also undercurrents and politics among the women that I was not privy to and though I registered the effects in the behaviour and facial expressions of the women as they interacted, it was not a door that was opened to me and any commentary I might offer would only be speculation.

Fashion and Identity

Wearing the *abaya*, a flowing robe style dress, and the *hijab* head covering, and other forms of modern Muslim fashion, forms a part of Bedouin women's identity. Wearing the *hijab*

and dressing modestly, as in most Muslim cultures, identifies a woman as coming from a good family and having high moral values. Even for women living in the city who choose to wear Western clothing and do not wear the *hijab*, there are standards of modesty that are higher than their Jewish counterparts. An Arab woman, for example, would not normally wear a miniskirt, a tank top, and high heels or other excessively revealing clothing, a style of dress common among young Israeli women. Bedouin families insist on standards of modesty in clothing and view this as a protection for women from the unwanted advances of strange men.

It has also been stated that the *hijab*, in Muslim cultures and communities in the diaspora, has come to be associated with resistance to Western interference in the Arab world and the West's obsession with women's veiling to the point of enacting laws to prohibit Muslim women from wearing the *hijab* (Abu Lughod 2002:786, Mahmood 2001:209, Tarlo 2010:4). Abu Lughod remarks that, since the mid1970s, educated Muslim women adopted modern Muslim modest dress as both a public mark of piety and as a sign of urban sophistication (2002:786). It is possible that veiling, in part, is used by Mawasi women as defiance toward Israeli colonialism; but, it is certain that younger women, who create and have created for them elaborate *hijabs*, are influenced by the Muslim world through internet and the media by trends in fashion in connection with greater global movements. As Tarlo (2010) has commented:

In fact, far from promoting an image of dull uniformity, the headscarf is often the most self-consciously elaborated element of an outfit, carefully co-ordinated to match or complement other details of a woman's appearance. Worn in a diverse range of colours and textures, built using different techniques of wrapping, twisting and layering and held together with an increasing variety of decorative *hijab* pins designed for the purpose, the headscarf has in recent years become a new form of Muslim personal art (p.1).

Older generations of Mawasi women also showed an interest in *hijab* fashion, though not in the same styles as their younger counterparts. To put it into a Western context, it is akin to the difference between the styles of dress a twenty-something would wear here in Canada vs. the style of dress likely to be chosen by a fifty-something mother of three.

As mentioned above, standards of dress are different in the city of Haifa than they are in the villages and are also generationally diverse. In Haifa, in her daily dress the mother of my host family wore western style clothing with a headscarf tied in the back, only donning traditional



Figure 40: Different styles of dress at the wedding in Tamra.

dresses when she attended a social event or went to Tamra to visit her sister. Her daughters preferred jeans and t-shirts and never covered their hair. In the villages, married women and women of the older generation wore traditional abayas and hijabs, while young unmarried women wore western style jeans and t-shirts with or without a hijab, depending on their personal beliefs, or modern modest

Muslim women's fashions with a modern style hijab fashionably folded and pinned.

Preadolescent girls wore jeans, skirts, shorts and t-shirts and rarely wore the hijab (see Figure 40).



Figure 41: Young Bedouin woman wearing an elaborate *hijab* for the wedding in Tamra.

For special events, dresses, hair, and makeup occupy as much attention with Bedouin women as they do women in the West. Younger women who wear the *hijab* often pay to have an elaborately decorative *hijab* created for them to match their dress and to have their makeup done professionally (see Figures 41 and 42).

One young woman took courses to learn how to do makeup and *hijab*

folding and sometimes profited from her talents when women came to her for weddings or other special events. Her cousin wanted to take the same course to make some extra money in Haifa. For the wedding I attended, the groom's family had paid 8,000 NIS (CAD 3,000) for two dresses for the bride (her bride's party and wedding party dresses) and two sessions of



Figure 42: Young Bedouin woman wearing a stylishly folded hijab.

makeup, one for hair (at the bride's party she did not wear the *hijab* because she was among family) and one for an elaborate *hijab* for the wedding party.

In the villages, gossip is used extensively as a social control. Fashion can be a point of contention and clothing is often a topic of such conversations. One woman, who was young and newly married, wore a dress that was made of a light fabric and bright beautiful colours to a wedding party. She was later criticized by the other women because, unfortunately, she had passed in front of a flood light which turned the normally opaque fabric translucent, clearly showing the silhouette of her form. On the night of the bride's party at the wedding in Tamra, the women sat in the front of the house waiting to go to the bride to bring her and her guests the henna they would apply to their hands as part of the wedding celebration. Later that evening, during conversation in the women's space (at the back of the house in the garden), it was revealed that a man had complained because he had seen a woman's ankles and lower calves exposed beneath her *abaya* when she sat down. The women were irritated by this and one woman commented that "If he is so religious, he should not be looking at women's legs anyway. It's his responsibility not to look." Her comments were met by murmurs of agreement.

Food and Identity

Food and identity are loving, intimate partners but they have an open relationship. When identifying cultural boundaries, food is a marker that stands out in bold relief epitomized in the euphemism 'you are what you eat' and as previously mentioned, "you are what you ate as well" (Sutton 2001:7). Every culture has its list of food icons that immediately invoke a mental association for others. For example, all one has to say is 'pizza', 'pasta' or 'lasagne' and Italian springs to mind and like-wise for such greats as 'chow mein'(Chinese) or 'fish and

chips' (British). Globalization has increasingly brought other people's food habits onto our plates as recipes are exchanged through friends or downloaded from the internet and multi-cultural societies eat from each other's plates when ethnic restaurants purvey the creations of their country of origin as communities in the diaspora long for a taste of home (Marte 2007).

Food is a boundary marker but it is also osmotic in nature and passes through cultural or class 'membranes' to nourish the curious and tempt the adventurous from other societies or groups. Discussing the exchange of recipes among women in India, Appadurai has commented that "In a society where dining across caste or ethnic boundaries is still a relatively delicate matter, recipes sometimes move where people may not" (2008:292). Younger generations of Mawasi Bedouin women are curious eaters as well and search for new dishes to offer their families on the internet, television cooking shows, and from other women. Their elders also have learned, and are interested in learning, new dishes to please finicky palates but have relied on recipes passed among women of the community, having a far more limited pool to draw from before technological changes made information infinitely accessible.

Today, food production, food processing, and food preparation are all affected by current structures of Mawasi families. Where once a woman remained in the home and created elaborate dishes that required hours of preparation, working outside the home now precludes the likelihood of having the time to prepare such recipes. Also, as mentioned above, with greater access to external resources such as internet, cookbooks, television cooking shows and the influences of colonization, Mawasi women are experimenting with non-traditional recipes. At the wedding in Tamra, the sister-in-law of the groom had created small squares and cakes to be served to guests from a recipe she had found in a book (see Figure 29). The young woman who was married at the wedding was teased regularly by her in-laws about how the only food she could cook was

pasta. When I interviewed her, she told me that she loved pasta and had learned recipes from the television, the internet, and her friend but had not yet learned to make traditional recipes from her mother. She told me now that she was married, she would learn her husband's favorite traditional recipes so she could make them for him.

Young women I interviewed in Haifa also related to me that they enjoyed making Italian pasta recipes and experimenting with sauces. When I asked about traditional recipes, they said that they had learned to cook from helping their mother, starting at the onset of adolescence, and enjoyed eating traditional food but that cooking the rice to go with it frequently ended in disaster as it always turned out mushy or sticky. Pasta was easier to control. The children in the family in Haifa also favoured an Ashkenazi Jewish recipe called schnitzel, chicken cutlets breaded and deep fried, though I thought Bedouin food far excelled this dish. Asking about recipes when interviewing older women revealed that they had learned to cook from their mothers, also normally commencing at the age of 12 or 13.

For Khazneh and her sister, culinary and life lessons came earlier than for most girls. She explained how her mother had given birth and the baby had died within hours, after which her mother became despondent and had taken ill. The women who came to attend the birth talked with her elder sister, who was ten years old at the time, and told her that she must learn to do everything because it was possible her mother would not recover. Khazneh related how these neighbour women came every day during the time of *nafas* for her mother⁵ and had trained her sister how to cook everything, including the baking of bread on the big *tabon*⁶. She was also responsible for collecting all the firewood and making regular trips to bring water for cooking and washing. In Khazneh's words, "She used to carry a big pot of water on her head and she would give me the little one. When she got firewood she carried the big bundle and I carried a

smaller one. She learned to do everything and I was her helper.” Their mother did eventually recover her health but Khazneh and her sister still helped their mother with everything and their father encouraged them to do so.

The examples above offer a view of how concepts of food and food identity are shifting for Mawasi women, influenced by factors such as sedentarization, urbanization, globalization and education. The internet, television, and education draw young Bedouin women into the global community and have broadened their scope of possibilities for food and identity. In my opinion, young women’s identification with Italian cuisine indicates a sense of belonging to the larger European community as Israel and most of the countries on the Middle Eastern and North African side of the Mediterranean do. Just as Canada and the US share a great deal of cultural markers, so too does the Mediterranean region as media, advertising and importation and exportation of goods and the to and fro of people themselves leads to an exchange of ideas and information, including food. This is nothing new. Mediterranean societies have been interconnected since ancient times. What is new is the greater influence this cultural interaction is having on younger generations of Bedouin women and their food preferences and preparation.

Elder generations, coming from a more closed and endogamous community, learned new recipes from their mothers, confined by the boundaries of the tribe and relying on exchanges of information among women in the local, tribal and intertribal networks of women. For Mawasi women, food possibilities have become unlimited. However, though Bedouin food identity has widened somewhat to allow a few recipes to pass its borders for a little experimentation with the food of Europe (pasta) and the food of the colonizer (schnitzel), families still demand traditional favourites and husbands long for food that they ate from their mothers kitchens. Mawasi food identity, like any society’s foodways, is both shifting and stable.

In the next chapter I move to the topics of gender, sex and sexuality to discuss my data concerning gender relations among Mawasi women and men, and how food is implicated in gender relations. Here I describe the Bedouin wedding that I attended and how women use food as a means of agency and how education and economy have influenced gender roles and foodways in Mawasi Bedouin society.

Chapter 8 — Culinary Persuasions: Food and Gender

When my Grandfather died, he left his house (in I'blin) to his girls in case they ever needed a place to go... if they got divorced or something, you know. When mom went to take the house, her brother had moved in there and he wouldn't leave. He wanted the house for his son, who was thirteen then, for when he got married. We think his wife was pushing him for that. Mom tried to talk to him but he hit her, in front of all of us. After that we didn't talk to him. Her and her sisters had the papers but they didn't get a lawyer. When her sister moved to Tamra, mom bought her house in I'blin (Khazneh's story, as related to me by her daughter, 2009).

Gender, sex and sexuality are central categories for any feminist based ethnographic analysis. These categories reveal the interrelations of women and men and, in turn, how these relations affect the structuring of the society, its history, ideology, economic systems and political structures (Moore 1988:6). Families form the most basic unit of a society and relationships between men and women (or women and women and men and men) expose lines of power and uncover what is important to people in the community. How agency is exercised, who controls and has access to resources, and who, man, woman or child, is responsible for what tasks, all divulges a cultural template that expands to the entire community and the State and contracts to the formation of the individual identity. Gender differences react with age, class, race and other social locations producing a variance in experience for each individual (Lamphere 2006:xv). At the same time it is important to consider, as Rosaldo has pointed out, that “to claim that family shapes women is, ultimately, to forget that families are things that men and women actively create and that these vary with particulars of social context” (1980:416). Discussing the circumstance of Bedouin women in Israel, Abu-Rabia-Queder explains that, “the Bedouin woman is marginalized twice: once, as part of a Bedouin minority among a Jewish Israeli

majority and an Arab minority, and, again, as a female in a Bedouin male-dominated society. This dual discrimination affects women's status in all aspects of their lives" (2007:162).

Mawasi women, while embedded in a traditional patriarchal system modified by colonial influences, have more rights and freedoms than their Southern cousins. Generations of Mawasi women are not homogeneous and are separated by factors such as urban or rural residence, education, employment, and social change; yet, younger generations still hold firm to foundational elements of their traditional culture, such as family honour, collective responsibility for the group, hospitality and reciprocity.

Food engages with gender relations on all levels both generationally and socially, extending its fingers into every woman's life from childhood to old age. When discussing food and gender, Carole Counihan (1998) emphasises that "men and women's ability to produce, provide, distribute and consume food is a key measure of their power" (p.2), and that the important questions to ask are whether women's and men's relationships to food and its meanings contribute to a valued sense of self (body image, legitimate appetite, importance of food work), if relationships with food are validating or denigrating, and if they facilitate gender complementarity and mutual respect or serve to produce or reinforce gender hierarchy (2). For Mawasi women, food plays a primary role in gender complementarity and their abilities with food are culturally respected. Food offers them an avenue of resistance and a means of maintaining vital social and informal economic networks and communicating their status and emotional states.

Sex and Sexuality

It is the nature of food to be transformative and to cross boundaries. Seeds react with earth and water, generating into plants and becoming food for humans or fodder for animals that transform it into meat. Raw ingredients are transformed into dishes that appeal to the palette. The spiritual aspects of these cycles are not lost on humans who incorporate food into religious ceremonies and hold food as sacred. So, too, does a woman hold these transformative and boundary crossing powers. A seed is planted and grows in the 'earth' of her womb, cells multiply and specialize transforming into a human being who crosses the boundary of her body into the world where it is fed from food she has transformed into milk in her breasts. The child grows, lives, and dies, eventually going back to the earth.

Women are creators and sustainers of life and act as gateways that connect the spiritual world with the physical. Who better to be our companion than food which carries many of the same transformative and generative properties as women, and gives us the raw materials we need to keep our families alive and healthy. Food is all around us. Women are most often responsible for the growing or purchasing of food and for processing food from raw to cooked and to preserves for later use. What greater power is there than to generate life and, on a micro level, to control the substances that maintain it?

Western Feminist discourse tends to avoid this conversation, as too often women have felt disempowered by their relationship to food. One only has to think of the old Western adage "A woman's place is in the kitchen" to understand why. Penny Van Esterik (1999) has commented that:

Feminists, not surprisingly, have resisted making too close a link between women and food; it is a troubled relation and one that will draw feminist fire if it is not analyzed with care. Fears of essentializing women and of reducing them to food or to food providers have kept many feminists from delving into this relationship (p.157).

While I agree and recognize that women's reproductive capacity and relationship to food and food management has been used in many instances to subjugate women and to keep them from pursuing educational and career goals, at the same time I disagree that women should reject these aspects of their femininity. I can hear other feminists in the crowd muttering under their breath "what makes these aspects uniquely feminine? Men can cook and care for children just as easily as women. It is only outdated, limiting gender norms that reproduce the fiction that women are the only nurturers." Yes, but from the perspective of women who celebrate the power of their reproductive capacities and who, rather than feeling oppressed by food and nurturing responsibilities, feel empowered and identified by them, this particular feminist discourse is counterintuitive. The message that babies, cooking, and maintaining families only serves to oppress them further, devalues the work that the greater part of the earth's women do every day.

Bedouin women celebrate their reproductive and food related powers, which are not considered a weakness but strength, and these powers are valued by their society as meaningful and of great social importance. At the same time, however, women's reproductive role is constraining, as Abu-Rabia-Queder (2007a), herself a Bedouin from the South of Israel, has explained:

Sexuality plays a dual role in a woman's life. As a vehicle of procreation, she is both marginalized and important. Her primary reproductive role emphasizes her connection to uncontrolled nature, which restricts her ability to be morally equal to men. But her procreative power also makes the woman the center of homemaking and the bearer of tradition; as such, she is highly protected by Bedouin traditional law, and any offense against her may lead to revenge by her collective male kin (p.164).

Reproduction is highly valued in Bedouin culture and having children raises a woman's status and position in the family and in the community. Watching young girls in Tamra picking up and packing around anyone smaller than they were, a young woman told me that every little girl wants to be a mother.

Traditionally, a woman who was infertile was stigmatized and occupied the lowest status in the family. "La femme stérile est le rebut de la famille. Elle se résigne à son sort, se fait toute petite, et s'efface devant les autres femmes de son mari, qu'elle sert comme une servante" (Ashkenazi 1938:69).⁷ Sterility was grounds for her husband to divorce her or to take another wife. An elder woman I met during earlier fieldwork was infertile. The family cautioned me repeatedly not to ask about her lack of children as she was very sensitive about it, but it was she who broached the subject. She explained with sadness, how her mother-in-law had given money to her husband's brother's wife to see a doctor about her infertility but did not give money to her. She did not mention if she had pursued the matter herself when she and her husband moved to their house in Shefar'am and became independent from his family.

This woman was deeply respected and loved by her family for her kindness, piety, and generosity, and she was admired for her abilities with food. Her husband had remained with her and had not taken a second wife. Before and after this interview, members of the family had described in great, passionate, and mouth-watering detail this woman's extraordinary gifts with cooking and how there was no one who could make rice the way she made it. I was also told that many people asked this woman to cook for their weddings and that she was well renowned for her dishes. Through her abilities with food and cooking and her own loving character she had translated a culturally ascribed negative status associated with sterility to a positive achieved status by excelling in the culinary arena.

Nowadays with access to reproductive technologies, a Bedouin woman who is sterile need not remain so. In vitro fertilization (IVF) is part of the health care services available to every Israeli citizen (including Arab Palestinians living in Israel), and citizens are entitled to receive unlimited rounds of IVF up to the birth of two live children (Kahn 2002:284). One of the women I interviewed had pursued this option at the age of forty and had borne a daughter. She did not resemble her mother or father in her features or colouring and many of the women speculated that she had used both a donor egg and sperm. No one had directly asked her about her experience as the question would be impolite.

Islamic laws regarding IVF state that it is permissible providing the child is the product of the wife's egg and the husband's sperm. Introducing a third party for surrogacy or sperm and egg donation is considered tantamount to adultery (Inhorn 2006:432-433) and the practice is judged *haram*.⁸ Arab fertility, and Bedouin fertility in particular, is a contentious issue in the Israeli political consciousness. It is said that the Israelis are fighting a war of demographics as the Arab population has a much higher rate of reproduction than the Jewish population, and the State continues to encourage immigration to maintain their majority (Abu-Duhou 2007). Consequently, IVF treatments are available to Jewish populations living within the Palestinian territories but not to Palestinian Arabs who are not citizens of Israel (Kahn 2002:294).

While Bedouin fertility is said to be higher than any other minority within Israel, largely due to polygynous marriage (Gielchinsky et al. 2006), this was not reflected among the Mawasi women I interviewed. First, polygynous marriage is a rarity in the North, attributed by one man I interviewed to the fact that the Northern tribes interacted much more than in the south, and no woman had difficulty finding a marriage partner. Second, presently, Mawasi women tended not

to have overly large families, the largest number of children in one family that I saw was four, though I heard of families in the past with up to sixteen children from one mother.

Connected to this lower rate of fertility was that many of the married women I interviewed had encountered reproductive problems. Of the nine women interviewed in 2009, six were married and had produced children or were intending to. Of these six women, five had had one or more miscarriages, one had failed to conceive after trying for six years, and one had had problems conceiving after her first two children but had eventually succeeded in having a third. Of all the families I came into contact with in the three villages, only one was polygynous, with a man who had three wives. One of the younger women was keen to tease her uncle about taking another wife, but she said she knew he could not because he could not afford to do so. A man who has more than one wife is obligated to treat each wife exactly equally with resources being distributed to all wives in equal measure, a difficult and costly enterprise.

One of the reasons women want to have children in addition to their status as women and mothers, is to have a son. Traditionally, augmenting the fame and political status or 'face' of the family can only be accomplished by the men of the family through male-dominated roles such as public hospitality, generosity, political alliances and manoeuvrings with more powerful groups and, in the past, through courageous exploits such as the raiding and looting of other tribes. However, though men can increase the fame and prestige of their family through their efforts, the nobility of the family is a question of lineage marked through bloodlines connected to a powerful ancestor; it cannot be altered through any of the aforementioned actions (Nippa 2006:558, 564; Jihad Racy 1996:406). Additionally, a son is form of old age security as a man is responsible to take care of his aging mother if she is widowed or both parents if they are still living (Lewando-Hundt 1984:105). As Khazneh explained to me, in the past, having a girl was cause for

lamentation among the Bedouin. No one celebrated her birth and, in fact, the community offered condolences to her mother, encouraging her by saying that next time she would, God willing, have a boy.

Presently, young women do not mind if they have a boy or a girl and would be equally happy with either, only hoping that the child is healthy. One newly married woman I interviewed actually said that she would prefer to have girls as they are sweeter. In my mind, this reflects social and economic changes in the culture as women are no longer reliant on their boys in their old age given the availability of State pensions and savings from their own work life and because traditional ideas mentioned above concerning the increase of family fame and power are fading for the younger generations as tribal political systems have become less emphasized. While attending the wedding in Tamra, a man asked me to take his picture and told me that he was the shaykh of the village. When I asked Khazneh about it later she said “yes, but they [the shaykhs] don’t have any real power anymore.” I believe that as the economy has shifted to centre on wage labour, and State influence has gained a certain amount of purchase with the Bedouin through laws, taxes, transfer payments and the like, dependence on the State has taken hold where fealty to the shaykhs once reigned.

Older generations still adhere to this responsibility to produce a boy, however, and one widowed woman upon hearing that her son was considering marriage to a woman who lived in the U.K., asked me to tell him that she would die if he married her. To have her only son far away when she was entering her old age was disconcerting for her. He was the only male representative of the family as her other three children were girls and she had no father or uncles still living. Additionally, if she had a health emergency or needed help in any way maintaining

her house or taking care of business affairs, he would be too far to be of much assistance and, of course, she loves him and dislikes the idea of him being far from home.

Concepts of honour for the family and the tribe, which are paramount in Bedouin culture, are, in certain ways, connected to women's sexuality. A woman who is chaste before marriage and faithful to her husband after marriage brings honour to the family, but a woman who does otherwise, brings shame and weakens the power of the group. In her role as honour preserver, a woman is constantly watched and restricted (Abu Rabia Queder 2007a:164) by both her male and female kin but the responsibility for protecting—and avenging if necessary—her honour falls upon the men in her family. It is important to note here that the Bedouin do not believe in the suppression of sexuality, but in its regulation and control. In accordance with teachings in the Koran, chastity before marriage and fidelity after marriage are obligatory for both sexes, and sexuality after marriage is expected to be pleasurable for men and women equally (Makhloufi, personal communication 2009). In fact, providing a normal sexual life for their wives is a man's obligation and a woman has the right to seek a divorce if he does otherwise (Lewando-Hundt 1984:88,116).

At the same moment, honour is a double-edged sword for women in Mawasi society. While her chastity and sanctity is protected by the family, men external to the family can use her honour to harm or to control her. Malicious gossip can cast a shadow of doubt on a woman even if it is unsubstantiated and many Bedouin and Palestinian folktales remark how men who have wanted a woman and been rebuffed have retaliated by speaking against her (Patai 1998). Dishonourable men could also violate a woman with the idea that if he takes her honour she will be obligated to remain with him for her life to salvage her reputation and the family face. I heard

rumours of such things happening between fiancées, but the woman in the story chose to leave the man.

From my observations during fieldwork in both 2007 and 2009, as in many cultures of the world, the same rules do not apply to men. Providing he is discreet, an unmarried man can engage in sexual liaisons as he pleases with no recriminations being brought against him. Though many may frown upon this type of behaviour, for a man it is not a matter of shame or, as in some cases, life or death, as a Bedouin man's honour is not tied to his sexuality but rather to concepts of courage, generosity, and the protection and advancement of the 'face' of his family.

In conversations with Mawasi women, I discovered that the topic of sexuality was not a shameful subject. Women spoke and joked about it openly with other women in intimate groups of close friends and family. After the wedding I attended, the family members of the groom teased him and made jokes regularly in the days following the wedding about his wedding night and how he was spending so much time alone with his new wife. He responded by blushing, which only spurred his teasers on to greater efforts. Sexuality was only shameful in certain contexts such as an unmarried woman who sought sexual encounters for pleasure or lived with a boyfriend, two circumstances that did not exist among the women I studied with, and which would have been strongly condemned by their families. This leads to the topic of who controls women's sexuality.

Women are trained from childhood through gender norms embedded in cultural discourses in what is permissible and what is punishable. A woman's father and brothers are responsible for the protection of her honour (Abu-Lughod 1985:646). In one family, there was only one brother with three sisters and their father had passed away some years ago. Speaking

with the brother in an informal interview I asked about this responsibility for his sisters that he carried, mentioning I had noticed that he had not been overly controlling of or strict with his sisters. He responded by saying, “My sisters are strong, intelligent and capable women. I find that they have very little need of me or my interference.” On a different occasion a conversation with another man revealed a story that his cousins had tried to drown their sister because she was raped and her honour was taken (they did not kill her). I responded by saying, “but it wasn’t her fault.” He said, “I know,” with a pained expression on his face. These examples demonstrate how situations for Mawasi Bedouin women are diverse depending on the mindset of their male family members. This too, affects such things as education and work outside the home, neither of which is antithetical to Islamic beliefs, but places women in an integrated environment with men who are not their kin, which ordinarily is not permitted (Abu Lughod 1985:640; Ahmed 1982:528). In my observations, Mawasi men who are flexible and educated tend to be less controlling of women’s movements, trusting them to make choices that will not harm the family face or honour.

Included in men’s deportment on this subject today are economic pressures that have created the need for two paycheques in any family and more educated Bedouin men prefer to marry a woman who is also educated (Abu-Rabia-Queder 2007b). For these reasons, as well as the fact that the younger generations of men in general have become more relaxed about such matters, Mawasi women are given more freedom to attain an education and to engage in wage labour. Of the eight women I interviewed, six were working outside the home and one had plans to work. The older women were working domestic jobs cleaning houses, while two of the younger women were working doing janitorial work in public buildings (one of whom was studying for a degree in Biology at the same time), and another worked as a dental assistant. The

woman who was planning to work had taken a course in music and movement for young children and hoped to find a job working in this field.

According to the tenets of Islam, whatever money or wealth a married woman has made or brought into the marriage belongs to her and she is not obligated to use it to pay household expenses; the responsibility for the upkeep of the family falls on the shoulders of the husband (Hessini 1994:46). Indeed for the Mawasi, a man cannot marry unless he has at least a house and a car and the means to take care of his family. This, of course, is the ideal but how it plays out in reality is another matter. For some Mawasi families, the second income is needed just to keep up with living expenses and a woman cannot keep her pay; for others the ideal is maintained.

Education

Formal education has become accessible for Mawasi women both in the urban centres and in the villages. Girls normally attend elementary and high school and more and more frequently are accessing postsecondary education (Pessate-Schubert 2003). While many authors have reported cultural restraints concerning modesty and honour preventing young Bedouin women from attending educational institutions in the South (2006, Abu-Rabia 2001, Abu-Rabia Queder 2006, Elbadour et al. 2006), women in the North are not prevented from accessing education, although they are not always encouraged to do so. Some families facilitate education for their girls and others do not see the purpose of it. While visiting the village of Tamra, a friend commented to me, “Do you see this girl? She is fourteen now. Her family is not so concerned about her education at this point but rather who she will marry.” Yet, I met a woman who had just completed her master’s degree in Science and Nursing. Young women I met in Haifa were attending university for degrees in Biology and Biological Food Engineering.

While the older generations of women are, for the most part, non-literate, younger people normally have much more book learning than their parents or grandparents. However, in my observation, the greater part of the vast traditional ecological knowledge that their elders hold concerning the land, plants, and animals, is no longer being overtly passed on to children through daily activities. Traditional Ecological Knowledge, or TEK, is valuable because this knowledge is cumulative and dynamic and based on a long history of resource use in a specific area, a product of the experience and practice of many generations (Menzies 2006:2). Aboriginal communities globally are endeavouring to preserve this knowledge as environmental degradation due to poor resource management has led to a search for alternative practices and perspectives for solutions (p.4).

As drought becomes a persistent issue, not only in the Middle East but in many dry regions of the globe, expert traditional ecological knowledge tailored to food production in dry environments is critical. Bedouin girls learn basic food processing techniques from their mothers, such as how to prepare *lebaneh*, ‘yogurt cheese,’ to preserve olives and baby eggplant, and to keep certain plants that are used regularly, such as *melamea*, sage, for tea or *nana*, mint, for seasoning. However, few of the younger women I encountered were interested in farming or keeping large gardens, nor did they have any knowledge of goats and sheep or how to process their milk. When I asked about these subjects, the general response was that this type of work was hot, dirty, difficult and time consuming, and it was much simpler and efficient to buy what they needed at the store. In contrast, the older generations keep gardens with olive trees, fruit trees, such as citrus, figs and apricots, grape vines, and herb plants used in main dishes or teas. One woman kept goats next to her house for their milk and occasionally for meat. One young

woman whose parents grew a variety of vegetables on their land, such as *betinjan*, eggplant, and *hriar*, cucumbers, would return home with bags of produce from her family.

In my observations and discussions with my hosts, a large contributing factor to this abandonment of gardens and goats is the scarcity of land. Traditionally, Bedouin sons, when they married, built houses (or erected tents) next to their father's house. Today, because land is scarce, expensive, and difficult to purchase, Bedouin men build their houses on top of their father's house as a second level, and younger son's build on top of their older brother's house and so on. Garden space, in this system, is owned by a woman's mother-in-law, and young wives do not often have access to land to garden or to keep animals. Also, as is common in other parts of the world, as women become formally educated and engage more frequently in wage labour outside the home, subsistence practices and local knowledge of the land has begun to fade.

The prevailing pattern of change for the Mawasi toward an exclusive reliance on a wage economy, disconnection with the land and food acquisition in grocery stores is disconcerting. In their pastoralist past, the Bedouin always had a backup plan. If disease destroyed herds or drought ruined crops they had other resources to draw on whether it was raiding, hunting, wage earnings or trade (Keenan 2006:684, see p. 41-42). To guard against future want, they preserved every food they made or grew by drying, salting, or submerging it in oil. The question that disturbs me is what will happen to Mawasi food security if they are no longer diversifying their resource strategies, not to mention the lamentable loss of Bedouin TEK that is specialized for the Galilee region. When the older generations are gone and no one is producing food in gardens or keeping goats to supplement current market food systems, food security for younger generations could be gravely challenged in times of need. Though none of the women I spoke with during

my fieldwork indicated that they felt the same concerns, Aref Abu Rabia related to me that the loss of TEK in the Southern Bedouin tribes was of great concern to him.

Status

In Bedouin society, ascribed status is clearly delineated. From my observations, the elder men hold the highest rank, followed by the younger married men and in turn by the unmarried men. In fact, until they are married, a man or woman is not considered a full adult regardless of age. Mawasi women are ranked according to age and marital status as well, with elder women holding the highest position followed by married women with children, newly married and lastly unmarried women. A widow holds a unique status. She is no longer 'under' a man and ranks higher than her children, both male and female. She retains the status marriage bestows and has complete freedom to make choices for herself economically and socially as the head of her household. She holds a higher position than a divorced woman who is no longer considered a child but is returned to the protection of her father and brothers (Lewando-Hundt 1984:102). As women pass childbearing age they have greater social freedom, being perceived as neuter rather than female and have the liberty to do such things as cross gender boundaries between men and women's space (p.99).

Status among Mawasi women is reflected in food relationships within the family and in social interactions with other women.. A woman's ascribed status changes throughout her lifetime. An unmarried woman has little authority, a married woman more, and a mother-in-law has the greater power (Lewando-Hundt 1984:99). A single girl serves guests, helps with cooking, and makes coffee for visitors. For approximately two months after she marries, while she adjusts

to being married, she and her husband often eat at her parent's or his parent's house, where she learns to make the dishes her husband likes. During this time, she is under the tutelage and care, which sometimes translates to control, of her mother-in-law and will make coffee and serve guests who come to visit her mother-in-law's house (when she is there) and, as was the case in the family I observed, show humility and respect to her husband's parents. As a mother and a mother-in-law, a woman has a higher status than her daughter-in-law and daughter and this is communicated through her control of main meals and of the younger women's obligation to serve her and her guests (1984:91). Elder Bedouin women in the family are normally shown great respect, served by both the unmarried and married younger women.

In an environment where gossip is used as a means of social control, above average cooking skills can give a woman a certain edge and render her invaluable to other women during social events. When gossip is positive, a woman can generate a certain amount of prestige with other women and by gaining renown for her culinary abilities within the circle of women, a woman can raise her achieved status within the group. During my fieldwork in 2009, a woman I interviewed had been asked to cook lunch for the bride's guests at the wedding I attended. When she was not present, a woman began to criticize her for a comment she had made the evening before but another woman pointed out that she was kind-hearted and was always willing to help with the cooking for weddings. This effectively ended the criticism and shifted the topic of conversation. Had she not raised her prestige among the other women by cooking for the wedding, the criticism would have likely continued.

Marriage

Contrary to their Southern cousins and past tribal dictates that favoured parallel first cousin marriage and insisted on marriage within the tribe or at least within the Bedouin community (Ashkenazi 1938:57; Abu-Rabia-Queder 2007b), Northern Bedouin women are generally free to marry a man of their choosing, providing he is Arab and from a family with a good reputation, although marriage within the tribe is still preferred and promoted by older generations. As Abu Rabia Queder has explained:

A crucial factor impacting marital patterns in Arab society in general, and Bedouin society in particular, is the issue of origin. The origin of the family is considered an important factor affecting the status of the tribe, the *hamula* (a group of tribes belonging to the same clan) and the family. For instance, Bedouins originally from Saudi Arabia will not allow their daughters to marry Bedouin men who are of a different origin (2007:303).

One of the young women I interviewed had encountered such a problem. She wanted to marry a man from Egypt but her family refused based on his origin.

In an interview a young woman who was planning to marry remarked that, “Marriage was the first responsibility to your family.” Abu-Rabia-Queder, commenting on this topic, says that women are driven to marriage by their responsibility to the collective group to increase the size and strength of the tribe with their children and, in return, they are given the honour and respect of the group (2007a:164). For Bedouin women, corporate identity is more important than individual identity. The wellbeing of the tribe or family is put before the needs and wants of the individual. This does not mean that women do not make efforts to sway the position of the family concerning their marriage partners. The means by which they accomplish this is by campaigning for support within the family network, thereby applying strategies that will enable

them to remain within cultural boundaries since stepping outside the boundaries leaves them without support from the social circle, something no woman would wish for (2007: 167).

In Bedouin, and Arab society in general, collective identity is much more emphasised than individual identity. Social networks play an enormous role in people's lives providing a great deal of support such as mediation when a couple is having problems, grandparents taking care of grandchildren or cooking meals when parents are working, friends and family helping each other when they are preparing a wedding or have given birth to a new baby; day to day life and every major life event imaginable is connected to social networks. Families and communities take care of each other and help one another, especially in times of hardship; no one would ever go hungry or become homeless in a Bedouin village. Cutting oneself off from the support of family and other social networks is to impoverish oneself. Taking the example of Khazneh's story from the beginning of the chapter, though her brother may have gained a house, he lost a great deal of family support that would have been available to him through his sisters by his actions.

Discussing this topic during an informal interview with a young man revealed that, in the villages, support often comes with a certain amount of control, and gossip leads to everyone knowing your business. He explained to me that because of the control and gossip that comes with the community, he prefers to keep much of his private life to himself. Women, too, I noted, were selective in their speech depending on who was present, and levels of intimacy dictated topics of conversation. In this way, collective identity and the social networks that evolve from it can be both a hindrance and a help manifesting in both positive and negative ways in people's lives.

Traditional Bedouin weddings among the Mawasi are joyous affairs and last for four days. The first night is the bride's party, the second the groom's, the third is the day of the wedding ceremony and the wedding celebration, and the final day is an after party where leftover meat is barbequed and shared with a more intimate circle of family and friends. The mother of the groom is solely responsible for the planning and preparation of the menu. She enlists the help of every woman she can and she hires the most renowned cook possible.

Marriages are often costly; expenses beginning at the time of the couple's engagement that can sometimes be as much as two years in advance of the wedding. The groom is responsible for providing a house, living room and bedroom furniture, and underclothing for his new wife. The bride brings with her all the bedding and linens and the electronics for the house, such as the television, stove and fridge. Khazneh remarked that it was not always like this and in the past, a groom need only provide four walls and a bed and a bride three or four mattresses and bolsters, the rest of the household needs being acquired over time. For the wedding I attended, just the cost of the food alone was staggering. Three hundred kilos of mutton were purchased at a price of 15,000 NIS (New Israeli Shekels) (4,100 CAD). A team of three (a man, his wife and his daughter-in-law) was hired to make fifteen hundred pieces of stuffed, fried *kubeh* (a prestige food item due to its cost and time consuming method of preparation) at a cost of 4,000 NIS (1100 CAD). Thirty kilos of pine nuts to put in the rice were commanded by the man hired to cook the main wedding feast at a cost 3,000 NIS (820 CAD) (when Khazneh heard this she said, "What is he going to do? Put one pine nut for each grain of rice?"), and thirty litres of oil. The grand total came to 22,000 NIS or approximately CAD 6,000. This cost, of course, did not include sweets, drinks, coffee or bread.

Hospitality

Hosting well is imperative in Bedouin society. As mentioned earlier, hospitality in the Middle East—accepting food that is offered, feeding the stranger, and the entertainment of invited guests—is culturally and religiously obligatory and commensal events sometimes serve as a venue for making a claim to leadership, as hierarchies of authority are regulated through the offering and acceptance of food (Zubaida and Tapper 1994:12). For the Bedouin, honour, prestige, and status are bound up with hospitality which affects face, dignity, and the corporate power of the family or tribe (Nippa 2006:550). Additionally, hospitality creates bonds of reciprocity and social ties where no family ties exist (2006:558). Conspicuous consumption, as a public proclamation of family loyalty and strength, is a means by which families can raise their prestige and power within the community and in certain instances to issue a challenge to a rival or rival family (Kressel 1996:60, Marx 1984:6). At the same time, hospitality puts the host at the mercy of the guest through how their hospitality is talked about after the event, exemplified in the Bedouin proverb that states “The host must fear the guest. When he sits [and shares your food], he is company, when he stands [and leaves your house], he is a poet” (Nippa 2006:562).

Status is marked by the number of guests who respond to the invitation, how well they are hosted, and the lavishness and amount of food served at the event. At the wedding I attended in Tamra, six hundred guests were invited, all of whom had to be given their invitation personally by a member of the groom’s family. The feast included great vats of rice with pine nuts and almonds, *lakhme* (stew) and *leban* (meat in yogurt), fruit, sweets, nuts, an endless supply of coffee and sodas, and pickled cauliflower and *betinjan*, baby eggplant preserved in vinegar and salt with hot peppers and garlic, graced every table. On the first day the groom’s family brought lunch for the bride and her guests⁹ and in the evening the bride had her party and

the groom's family brought henna for her and her guests. The second day, family and friends who were helping cut up the meat for dinner the next day were served lunch and the groom had his party in the evening; the third day the wedding feast was served; and, on the fourth morning brunch was served to friends and family who were at the house.

Throughout the entire four days and for a week before the wedding, sweets, coffee, cinnamon tea, water and juice were constantly being offered to guests who arrived and departed in waves. The evening of the bride's party the groom went to her with his brother, surrounded by the women of his family singing and clapping with a *darbuka* drum and carrying henna for her and all her guests to put on their hands. Everyone climbed into a fleet of cars and went to the outdoor venue where she was hosting her guests. They were greeted by her family and the women danced while the bride and groom danced with each other and his mother and cousins in turn. After perhaps half an hour, the groom, his brother, and the women of his family all departed and returned to their home.

The night of the groom's party a DJ was hired and the street beside the house was blocked off with cars for dancing. At the beginning of the night, a relative wrote the initials of the bride and groom on the groom's hand in henna after which he was lifted into the air on a small table on top of which he proceeded to dance fearlessly for some time. Following this, the groom was "shaved" symbolically: he was passed from the shoulders of one friend to another, while friends up on neighbouring sets of shoulders gleefully doused him with water and soap and lathered him up to the enthusiastic encouragement of the onlookers.

The next day was the day of the wedding and around five in the afternoon all the women from the groom's side went singing, clapping and ululating with a *darbuka* drum to bring the

bride from her house. Because this was a traditional parallel first cousin marriage, her house was next door to his and the women joked about not having to go too far to get her. As they entered the bride's house, she was seated surrounded by her family, men and women, with her father and uncles beside her, dressed in an elaborate gown with a beautifully constructed *hijab* and a long necklace made from \$200 NIS notes (see figure 43). She was escorted from her home by her father and uncles, all with sombre expressions, to the groom's house, with her little brother,



Figure 41: Bride is welcomed by her mother-in-law.

marching proudly beside them. The women followed behind and watched as she was greeted in front of the house by her father-in-law and mother-in-law.

She was given a handful of bread dough which she placed on the wall beside the door of the

house with an ornament

embedded within it to indicate to any visitors in the days to come that a marriage had taken place and the family had a new bride. The bread dough itself is also highly symbolic as bread is extremely important in Bedouin foodways. It was explained to me that bread has two names, one that means bread and one that means life, connecting it to ideas of fertility, family, and longevity. The shiny ornament embedded in it is a modern addition and in the past, fresh flowers were used instead for this purpose. She began to cry and was led into the house by the women until she

could calm herself and they fixed her makeup. After this, she was led on to the neighbour's terrace where she sat on a small couch and awaited her groom who came with his brother, a handful of flowers, and a matching necklace of money. They exchanged rings and drank juice from decorative goblets and then danced briefly while the women sang and played the *darbuka*. Thus, they were married.

Meanwhile in front of the groom's house, the family were welcoming guests for the feast with the men of the family to one side to greet the male guests and the women to the other to greet female guests. As the men greeted their host, as is the custom, the guests pressed envelopes of money into his hand as a gift to help defray the costs of the wedding. The feast began around 7 p.m., and people came and ate in waves. Every time someone finished eating, their plate was cleared and a new one set for the next guest.

Following the feast, a band was playing and the street above the house was blocked off. I was told that this night the women would not be dancing, just the men and though the evening began this way, with the men making an impressive display with their *dabke* dancing while the women looked on, by the end of the evening everyone was dancing. I overheard one family member say with pride, that more than the number of people they had been expecting had come and that only two hundred people had come to so and so's wedding the month before.

By 1:00 a.m. most of the guests had gone home and everyone, family, friends and neighbours, including the children, began to help clean up, putting away chairs, picking up garbage and sweeping the road. The floor of the house was washed and the outdoor kitchen where the food was served was cleaned and the food put away by the men. By 3:00 a.m. everyone straggled to their beds.

The next morning, the women of the family cut the remaining meat into cubes which were threaded on skewers for barbequing to feed close family and friends before they departed to their homes. Women who were cutting the meat were obligated to cover their hair, even if they normally did not do so, and women who had their menses were excluded from the work. A young woman explained to me that the reason for these requirements is to keep the meat 'pure' and many believe if a menstruating woman cuts the meat, the flavour of the meat will be ruined.

Central to all of these events was the food and central to the food were the women and men working together in a complementary fashion. The wedding feast was planned and organized by the mother of the groom, women of the immediate family and young girls served water, coffee and sweets to the women guests; women friends and family spent hours helping to cut the meat into small pieces for the wedding dishes (men cut the big pieces off the bones), a woman relative cooked the luncheon for the bride and an army of women served food at the women's tables on the night of the wedding. Men set up the tables, supervised to see all the tables were replenished and young men served at the men's tables. It was related to me later that though this was a traditional wedding, many couples now prefer to have their wedding on one night and to have it catered at a set price per plate in a rented hall because it is easier for the family and less expensive.

When I discussed hospitality, one woman told me, "We do not say in Arabic 'would you like', we say take! Eat! Have! Because in Arab culture, to ask 'would you like' is to forbid the person from taking it. You are saying, 'I want to offer you this to be polite but really I don't want you to take it.' In Jewish houses people will often ask you 'would you like.'" At another time, I asked a woman about this and she replied, "In the old days, one person in the family worked and it was enough. Today everyone works and it is still not enough. It used to be when people came

we just served whatever we had, but now people expect juice, soda, fruit and sweets and it becomes expensive. Today we say ‘take’, ‘eat’, ‘have,’ but perhaps soon we will become like the Jews and start to say ‘would you like.’”

The traditional Bedouin wedding I attended exemplified many events that influenced personal and political relationships, reciprocal exchanges of labour and gifts of money, and the strength and unity of the community. It is difficult to imagine what the effects will be for the Mawasi if economic pressures lead to traditional weddings being abandoned in favour of having them catered. Likewise, if traditional Bedouin hospitality is transformed through the same pressures, it would have a profound impact on prevailing patterns of social interaction and the transmission of foundational cultural models.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is fundamental to Bedouin culture. In all relationships, balance is sought and no gift or favour goes unanswered lightly. As in many cultures, food is the most common article of reciprocal exchange (Mauss 1990) and its giving or refusal is a means of attaining power and creating or severing social connections (Counihan 1999:6). For the wedding described above, it was beneficial for the groom’s mother to have developed good relationships with her friends and family to be assured of their aid, while women who helped were banking a credit for when their own children got married or repaying an obligation from weddings or celebrations in their own families in the past.

Though honour, status, and prestige were enhanced by the sumptuous feast and huge turnout for the wedding, reciprocal obligations were also incurred. For every friend and family member who helped or who came and brought gifts of money to the groom’s family, a debt

exists. I brought a gift of money for the groom's family because I was aware of the protocol but the family tried to return the gift citing that, because it was unlikely my children would be married in the Bedouin style in Israel, there was no way for them to reciprocate. I insisted that attending the wedding contributed enormously to my research and so was of great benefit to me. As I was leaving on the fourth day, the father of the groom thanked me for coming and asked me to forgive any lapses in hospitality due to the stress and busy time of the wedding and that he hoped my son would perhaps marry a Bedouin girl and would be married in the traditional Bedouin style. I inferred from this exchange that despite my protestations to the contrary, he still felt that a debt had been established between us and that the stories I carried away with me concerning the hospitality of the family would be favorable.

For every major life event, such as weddings, circumcisions, graduations, engagements and the birth of a child, reciprocity comes into play in the Bedouin community. An invitation demands an invitation, and if a person does not attend an event they have been invited to without a very good reason, or fails to invite in return, they will not be invited to events by that family in the future. As mentioned above, social relationships are of great importance and the mutual support and exchange that comes with them is indispensable in the traditional system.

With every milestone event, there is, of course, food. Women arrange, purchase, plan, cook, present and serve. They are intimately involved at every stage and the success or failure of social events depends heavily on their skills, ingenuity, knowledge, and ability to develop and foster social networks with other women. For this reason, to a great extent the fame and prestige of the family enhanced by these social events, which are within the purview of the men, hinges on the cleverness and abilities of the women. Thus, the augmentation of the family face and

honour is dependent on the efforts of both sexes and the fluid functioning of complementary roles.

Informal Economy

During both occasions of my fieldwork, I was struck by the constant to and fro of food among women. There exists a lively informal economy that flows continuously between friends and family in the city of Haifa and in the villages. The mother of my host family has a friend whose family owns a farm and runs a produce store in the Arab market in Haifa. After she finishes her work, she often goes to the market to visit her friend and helps to clean the store and returns home with bags of vegetables, fruit, and sheep's milk yogurt. She keeps her own garden in I'blin and shares the olive oil and olives she gets from her trees with friends and family in the villages. Another woman has a family who owns a farm and returns home from visits with produce from their land. Friends and family never arrive for a visit without some form of food, whether it be coffee, sugar, juice or fruit, and a visit to family normally means returning home with a bag of some kind of food in your hand.

Food is also a means for women to generate extra income. In the market in Haifa, I observed an old woman removing leaves of *molokhia* (Egyptian mallow) from the stems and putting them into bags. I asked what she was doing and they said women paid her to do this and that sometimes women paid other women to chop *molokhia* or to clean and prepare vegetables for stuffing when they did not have time or preferred to avoid the chore (*molokhia* is sticky when chopped which makes chopping an unpleasant task, and scraping the inside of squash, eggplant and zucchini for stuffing, while not unpleasant, is time consuming). Although these activities do not generate a large income, they help to build relationships between women and contribute to family resources, however modestly.

The informal food economy among women contributes to the food security of families and at the same time strengthens and establishes reciprocal social relationships and networks. In times of difficulty, these relationships are a form of social security, allowing for the sharing of food and resources without the exchange of money. When times are good, generosity is a means of raising achieved status and creating social credit; when times are poor, social networks are a means of food security for the family.

Gendered Space

A woman is like a glass vase, she is fragile. If a man cannot treat his wife with kindness, he should divorce her (Aisha).

A woman influences how her husband behaves when he is out in the world. If she is kind and generous with him, he will act this way. If she is cruel with him, he will behave cruelly with others (Halima).

The above are examples of conversations that took place in Mawasi women's space. Space is strictly gendered in Bedouin society. Men live and act primarily in the public, political sphere; and women in the private, domestic sphere (Lewando-Hundt 1984:83; Passate-Schubert 2005:250). The mixing of unrelated men and women is contraindicated in Islam and women and men spend the greater part of their social time with members of the same sex (Abu Lughod 1985: 640; Ahmed 1982:528; Lewando-Hundt 1984:84). Women use this segregated space to full advantage and guard it from interference by men. It is a space for female networking, increasing their power and reducing their dependency on men; here they gather information from other women that they can use to influence the decisions of men from behind the scenes (Abu Rabia Queder 2007:167).

For Bedouin women, this space offers them freedom to relax and ‘let it all hang out’ so to speak. They smoke cigarettes, make fun of the men, gossip, tell jokes and share stories, occasionally sing songs and dance, and exchange information about food, such as where to buy chickens with the best flavour for the cheapest price. Although in the West, Middle Eastern gender segregation is often viewed negatively, the women of this region enjoy their space and profit from the rich social life it provides (Abu Lughod 1989:291; 1985:43, Abu Rabia Queder 2007:167; Ahmed 1982:528-529). They are, because of this segregation, far wealthier socially than their Western counterparts whom they view (and I agree) as socially isolated and often disconnected from other women (Abu Lughod 2002:788).

Lila Abu Lughod, discussing the gendered division of space among the Awlad ‘Ali Bedouin community in Egypt, has described their system as “relatively informal and flexible, segregation depending on mutual avoidance and the separation of activities that results from the sexual division of labour” (1985:640). For the Mawasi, this is also true. During the wedding, men sat at the front of the house where they were served coffee, juice, water and sweets by the young men of the family; women sat at the back, in the shade of the garden and were served refreshments by the women of the family. Younger men of the family occasionally sat with the women briefly but the older men sent children with messages for their wives when necessary as did the women for their husbands. Little boys mingled freely with both groups but the girls generally remained with the women.

I found it most interesting to watch the children in this interplay as adults unconsciously revealed gender norms in their interactions with them. Little boys roamed around in raucous packs, sporadically teasing the women to the point of distraction until shouts of “you dogs!” and other epithets, and the occasional shoe being removed for a threatened beating chased them off.

The boys were into everything and were never prevented from participating in what the women were doing. They came to have their hands hennaed when the women were preparing it for the bride's party and one young man was smacked by his annoyed mother when he put pieces of raw meat into an already cooked pot of meat in yogurt when he was 'helping' with lunch preparation. Young girls in contrast, tended to be shy and reserved with the older women but were boisterous and engaged in one manner of hilarity or another when in groups of their peers. When sitting with the women they were encouraged to sit politely or to serve juice and water to their elders.

Also as Abu Lughod (1985) reported concerning the Awlad 'Ali, social control and women's morality is in the hands of the other women and is effected through gossip, teasing, or other indirect means; young girls learn the boundaries of this morality and the social consequences of crossing them at the knees of the elder women (p.646). For the Mawasi, as for the Awad 'Ali, because women's sexuality is denied, women are focused on their relationships with other women and do not, as Abu Lughod succinctly states, "orient themselves toward men or try to please them. Instead they value competence, self-sufficiency, and respectful distance" (1985:657). Men stayed clear of women's issues unless it concerned a matter of honour or a serious infraction. Conversation that was relaxed and flowing changed in content and nature when men entered the group and topics became superficial and light, the women allowing the men to direct the subject. After the men departed, cigarettes were lit and normal conversation resumed.

I suggest that, historically, the segregation and seclusion of Bedouin women was most likely in part for their protection. Men were, and are, responsible for the protection of the women and children who, in the time of tribal conflicts, were the most vulnerable. The tents were organized into two parts, one side being public for the men where guests were welcomed and

hosted. This space was decorated with artistically woven textiles, beautiful carpets, a set of coffee pots, and other displays to please the eye of the guest (Nippa 2006:556). On the other side for the women and children, was gold and jewellery, household goods, all separated by a dividing curtain. In this way, women, children, and wealth were protected from the view of any strangers and, if what appeared to be guests coming to call turned out to be a raiding party, the men were there to defend them. Bedouin folktales are rife with stories of women being kidnapped after a man happens to see her beauty while she is out collecting water or firewood (Patai 1998), and Ashkenazi (1938), reports in his ethnography of the Northern Bedouin tribes, a story of a 15 year old girl being taken by a man from a neighbouring tribe leading to a serious conflict (204).

I believe that also tied up in the seclusion of women are Bedouin cultural beliefs surrounding the evil eye or '*ayn*.' The evil eye for the Bedouin, "is constantly present in people's lives, alongside beliefs about spirits, *jinn*s and other demons, and it has serious implications for how individuals perceive the world and their place in it" (Abu Rabia 2005:241). The evil eye can be conveyed by a strange look or open admiration not followed by a blessing, and can be cast on purpose or by accident by people (*insiya*) or jinns (*jinniyah*)¹⁰ (p. 241-242). It can cause all manner of sexual malfunctions in men and reproductive problems in women; it can bring bad luck; misfortune and the destruction of material goods; and even death to households, individuals and animals. It is generally associated with jealousy and envy and the most vulnerable are the wealthy, the young, and the beautiful (p. 241-243). Considering this belief, it seems logical that women and children and the family's wealth would be kept out of view of the stranger and out of the view of the *jinn* as a protection.

When moving from the tents to village life, stone houses originally built by the Bedouin reflected the space allocation of the tents with their standard two rooms. As time passed, families added more kitchens (women's space) at the back of the house and salons (men's space for hosting guests) at the front of the house. When entering older houses in Shefar'am and I'blin, I noted that the original two rooms are still there with one large room at the back of the house (originally women's quarters) and one smaller at the front (originally men's quarters). The rooms for the women are for sleeping and are filled with mattresses and pillows; the rooms for the men are highly decorated with elegant furniture as formal living rooms for hosting guests.

In newer houses in Tamra, those built in the last 10 or 15 years, the front door leads into a foyer and to the left is the kitchen and dining area (public space) and to the right is the salon for guests (public space). A narrow hallway leads off from the kitchen to bedrooms, bathrooms and laundry areas (private space). On the lower level of the main house (son's build their houses on top of the main house as explained above), there is a covered outdoor area and a less formal kitchen surrounded by the garden. This kitchen is used for cooking when there is a large event with many guests such as a wedding, and for making bread. This, I was told, is called the 'dirty' kitchen or the kitchen for 'dirty' work. It is interesting to note that although the older houses I saw still reflect the gendered organization of space used in the tents, the newer houses have placed public kitchens and eating areas (women's space) at the front of the house with the salon directly opposite (men's space), with a hidden, private kitchen in another area at the back on a lower level.

The public kitchens are used for cooking when those who will be dining are close family and friends while the lower kitchens are used when there will be male guests present who are not kin. In this way, space is still organized around traditional patterns that separate women from

men who are not related when necessary, but in the main house women's space has been placed in the same area as the men's. If men are using the salon to entertain guests who are not kin, the women can avoid being seen behind dividing walls when cooking or through avoidance by remaining in the private area of the house. Placing the family kitchen and dining area in the same space as the men's salon is a new development. In my opinion, this reflects how Bedouin women have gained a higher status in recent years within the family through their education and economic activities, and the shifting attitudes among Bedouin men towards women. The second kitchen, despite other social changes, indicates that men and women are still concerned about honour and the protection of women of the family from the eyes of unrelated men.

Food as a Means of Resistance

If men are the head of the Bedouin family, women are the heart. Food belongs to Bedouin women. It is a seat of power and identity and this gendered space is preserved by cultural norms. Men ordinarily do not cook, unless it is the barbequing of meat, which, according to Counihan (1999:2), is a symbol of men's power and domination. Men occasionally engage in cooking for weddings, a well-paid and highly prestigious role if the cook is very good and if their abilities are well renowned. Men do, however, today, as in the past, command the making of coffee for hosting and for special occasions or events (Nippa 2006:557). Mawasi women make coffee for friends and relatives who visit but for public hosting it is the men who make and serve coffee.

In Arab folktales it is often told how a woman who had been separated from her family was recognized when she returned, not by her physical appearance, but by the taste of her cooking (Patai 1998:176). A woman who cooks well is respected for her skills. Her husband

depends on her for his and their children's sustenance, to supply meals for the hosting of guests, and to organize and prepare food for social events such as weddings, circumcisions, and funerals. If a woman is very unhappy due to maltreatment by her husband she might absent herself by returning to her natal family for a period of time (Lewando-Hundt 1984:88,116). By going to her agnates, she denies him her services for meals, childcare, and sex, and her family has the right to mediate the problem between them (p. 93). This puts him in a difficult situation. When guests come to call, there is no one to host them; if he must go to work, there is no one to care for the children; if he wants to eat, there are no meals being prepared. He cannot cook for himself and the children and he is sleeping alone. As a result, it becomes apparent to the whole community that his wife is discontented with his treatment of her. Now he is obligated to call on his female family members for help and, if he wants his wife to come home, he must go to her family to collect her and face their combined disapproval (p. 92). This is one reason Bedouin women prefer to marry endogenously. Marrying within their agnatic group means they will be surrounded by their agnates and when their husbands are infringing on their rights (normal sexual life, accommodation and clothing, and fair treatment) they can easily return to their family.

During my fieldwork, I observed this practice. The woman's children were grown, which removed the husband's need to call on relatives for his meals, but it was during Ramadan and his unmarried daughter (whom I refer to as Fatimah) who lives with them stepped in to cook for the family. Fatimah chose to make *mjdara* for the first time, which is a very complicated dish of onions and lentils, difficult to make well, referred to as 'poor man's food' and not generally liked by most people. Due to a series of events I found myself eating the left-overs of this meal the next day for lunch and could not help but wonder if this was her way of chastising her father and

encouraging him to make peace with her mother (whom I refer to as Alima) quickly. The next day, Alima's husband came to reclaim his wife at her sister's house and was not permitted to enter the house (private space) but was greeted at the front of the house (public space) where the dispute was mediated by Alima's sister and she eventually agreed to return home with him.

During Ramadan food becomes even more emphasised and longing for a wife's cooking after a day of fasting is a strong incentive to resolve a dispute, not to mention that in the evening many people visit with their neighbours and take tea or snacks together. Not finding Alima at home would have been a cause for conversation in the community and would have caused her husband some embarrassment. The women of Alima's family (sister, nieces and daughter) supported her claim of maltreatment and food played a central role in negotiating the conflict with her husband.

Although much of the literature concerning Bedouin women describes them at a disadvantage in gendered power relations (Abu-Rabia 2001:139; Abu-Rabia-Queder 2006; Elbedour et al. 2006:217; Huss and Cwikel 2005:49; Pessate-Schubert 2003, 2005), they do have certain rights and methods of agency and resistance that are exercised when necessary (Abu-Rabia-Queder 2007; Abu Lughod 1990; Lewando-Hundt 1984). Control over the domestic sphere, which includes food, provides women with the power to bring the domestic realm to a grinding halt. Other than breathing, eating is humanity's greatest compulsion. Though Bedouin men may control resources and politics in the public sphere, they are dependent on their women to ensure things run smoothly in the domestic/private sphere (Nippa 2006:564). In this regard, Bedouin gender relations work in a complementary fashion when relations are harmonious.

The women I interviewed, while conceding to their men when it was clear they were firmly fixed on their decisions, were strong, opinionated, and vocal. They expressed their views with other women and with the men of their families in private when they felt strongly about a subject¹¹. Protesting the maltreatment of her aunt, Alima's niece related to me a conversation she had had with her uncle. She said to him, "What? Do you want to kill her? I'll kill *you* before I let you kill her." To which he responded, "You are speaking like a man!" and she replied, "I am a man! My mother gave birth to boys." He was shocked by her manner and said, "You don't have a penis". She said, "A penis is not what makes you a man. It is in what you do and what you say." Her strong expression of feeling was outside the gender norm for women, but she took on the role of protector for the sake of her aunt and adopted and claimed 'masculine' traits as a means of advancing her case. Although Bedouin women will ordinarily concede to men in most contested matters, if there is an issue that they feel intensely passionate about, if they feel justified based on established social norms, they will fight with all their force to achieve their desired ends (Abu-Lughod, 2008:46-48; Abu-Rabia 1994; Lewando Hunt 1984:88).

Food and Body

Women's bodies in feminist social science literature, following in the line of Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, have been described as inscribed by culture and history and as embodying gender through repeated performative acts (de Beauvoir 1989:49, Butler 1988:520). Women's bodies and women's concepts of their bodies are thus constructed by culture and history. In North America, women are bombarded by media representations of what it means to be a woman, usually the image is of a thin, beautiful, and sexually assertive nymph with no breasts and narrow hips. Very little room is left for variation and any woman who falls outside

the 'standard' is portrayed by popular culture as somehow 'less than'. Margaret Mead (1961) made the famous argument that Samoan adolescent girls were free from the insecurities of their American counterparts due to differing cultural constructions of sexuality, adulthood and parenthood (in di Leonardo 1991:9). As Moore has stated, "gender is everywhere experienced through the specific mediations of history, class, race, colonialism and neo-imperialism" (1988:189) and gender is felt nowhere more profoundly than in the body, as the sexual differences that distinguish women as female and men as male are the first identified and assessed by others when a person goes out into the world. Food forms a part of this pattern. Women's relationship to food and their own bodies is historically and culturally constructed and whether that relationship is denigrating or empowering depends on cultural frameworks surrounding concepts of food and body (Counihan 1998:2).

For Mawasi women, as for women everywhere, cultural concepts of food and body are constructed by specific historical, political and social factors. Historically, Bedouin women in the Galilee have, as mentioned above, inhabited and controlled the private social realm reserved for them. Clothing, such as the *abaya* and the *hijab*, is used by Mawasi and Muslim women in general as a means of carrying this private space with them when they leave the protection of the home, symbolically maintaining the moral requirement of the separation of men and women (Abu Lughod 2002: 785). Concepts of morality in Mawasi, and Arab culture in general, based in Islamic traditions, demand the respect for women's bodies by men. A man is prohibited from touching a woman who is unrelated to him and, out of respect, some men will even abstain from shaking a woman's hand when offered (personal communication, Bayoumi 2007, 2009).

Bedouin women's bodies are associated with reproduction, family, homemaking (Abu Rabia-Queder 2007a:164), and food. In classical Arabic literature, food, drink, love and sex are

intimately entwined and good food in many stories is the precursor to lovemaking, while denying oneself food is considered a means of divorcing the mind from thoughts of love and sex, a heroic Bedouin ideal of abstemiousness to purify the soul from lust (van Gelder 2000:109-111). During my fieldwork I noted that women who were engaged to be married were always the person who served their fiancée when they arrived at the house to visit. If the family was sitting down to eat a meal, she would sit beside him and serve food onto his plate; if he arrived when no meal was being served, she fixed him a plate and companioned him while he ate. Symbolically this announced to all present that the couple were intended for one another, and for the young women, serving their fiancée was a means of demonstrating affection and concern for them in a manner that is socially accepted and a precursor to the sexual relationship that would follow after marriage.

Food and body for Mawasi women is tied up with concepts of honour, tradition, love and family. Women's fasting (other than Ramadan) and obsession with body image, as seen in the West (Counihan 1999:99) is not apparent among Mawasi Bedouin women. Food is connection, family, friendship, love and relationship. Refusal to eat (unless one is sick), can be insulting or a proclamation of malcontent and resistance. One evening, due to stressful personal matters, I could not generate much enthusiasm for eating, though it was one of my favourite dishes (*mahashi*, stuffed vegetables cooked in tomato sauce). I took a little food and tried to eat to be polite, then the mother of the family began to put food on my plate encouraging me to eat and I could not refuse her (in fact I never witnessed anyone successfully refuse her when she determined they needed to eat). The warmth of her affection for me melted the anxiety in my stomach but unfortunately generated a rather large lump in my throat. It struck me at this moment that I had not seen many Bedouin girls in the villages who were particularly thin

(though neither were they ever obese) and registered that all the women I had eaten with ate with gusto. Western cultural ideals that women should eat sparingly or in private (Counihan 1999:124) seemed completely absent. The urban women I observed in the city of Haifa were more concerned about remaining thin and were careful to exercise regularly. They sometimes stopped their mother from replenishing their plate a second or third time as she did mine, but they too enjoyed their food and ate with pleasure. In this regard I found Mawasi Bedouin women to be much healthier psychologically and emotionally about food than their Western counterparts who are oftentimes literally dying to be thin or eating as a means of coping with stress.

The fasting of Western women, even until death, according to Counihan, is a demonstration of poor self-image and a desire for control in a patriarchal environment that devalues and disempowers them (1999:111). As mentioned above, the phenomenon of women's extreme fasting in the West, she contends, is culturally unique and does not occur in non-Western societies. She attributes this to the Western concept of the mind/body dichotomy that is not present in other cultures where women and their bodies are associated with food, feeding, and fertility. The Mawasi women with whom I came in contact, were generally more emotionally secure and had a sense of self that was not altered by or founded on a thin or sexualized body image. Rather than being prodigious fasters, they were prodigious and joyful eaters.

From what I observed in Mawasi families, food is love, life, family, and friendship; to deprive oneself would be to deny life and connection to the people who are closest to you. Food acts as a symbolic language within these relationships and serves as a potent communication tool in a culture where emotional or political disputes are often confronted indirectly to avoid open conflict and embarrassment or loss of face. I will discuss the topic of food as a language of symbols and metaphors further in the next chapter, Talking with Your Mouth Full.

Chapter 9 —Talking with Your Mouth Full- Food as Language, Symbol, and Metaphor

Food is inexhaustible in its symbolic meaning. It taps into our emotions, imaginations, and memory with great force. Imagine a piece of chocolate mousse pie with a dark chocolate cookie crust, drizzled artistically with chocolate syrup and raspberry sauce making an appealing pattern on the pure white plate it is served on, a delicate sprig of fresh mint resting beside it. Or, what about your last birthday cake, or the last time you ate something that you truly detested (maybe because your mom made you), or a meal served at a funeral. If you are like most people, each example evokes a different response. If you are like me, the chocolate pie made you salivate with longing, the birthday cake was depressing, the boiled Swiss chard drowning in vinegar (a nightmare from childhood) made me nauseous just from the remembered smell, and the funeral meal brought up vague echoes of sadness and loss. How does food do that? Food captures us so unequivocally because it is with us from birth to death and impacts every one of our senses, hardwiring itself into our minds and emotions. Or, in the more eloquent words of Farb and Armelagos (1980), “from the moment we are born, the family food preferences ‘imprint’ themselves upon the child, creating emotional and cognitive associations that extend into our adult life” (p. 220).

Based on the preceding quote, I would argue what we learn in childhood is a language of food. Each smell, taste, and texture, each emotional connotation associated with the circumstances of particular meals, every cultural connection linked to particular foods, how we eat with manners, social relationships implicated in meal times all create a food lexicon that we can access intuitively and without effort. We know the ‘language’ of our family or cultural foodways and the symbols it incorporates. Everyone is an expert on food because we practice a

lot. Every day. Sometimes four times a day. We don't think about it because it is predictable, ubiquitous and quotidian. What brings it into focus is when we are put into another cultural environment where we don't know the food language and we find ourselves at a loss. What are the correct manners? How do I eat with these things? Do I really *want* to eat *that*?

Another example of how food speaks for us symbolically is food rituals or ceremonies. A Japanese tea ceremony. A Bedouin coffee ritual. A myriad of unspoken messages are conveyed from start to finish; communication occurs. As Barthes has stated, "Substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens we have communication by way of food" (Barthes 2008:30).

Bedouin people communicate prolifically with food in multiple ways. Food is used symbolically, and it appears repeatedly in folk tales, analogies, proverbs and metaphors. Following Ortner's description of key symbols (1973:1340), food for the Bedouin is an elaborating symbol and manifests frequently in conversation and in action when women wish to explain a concept, to express pleasure or displeasure with a family member or impose sanctions for behaviour that is not in line with social norms. I learned that among the Mawasi Bedouin, when a woman expresses anger or sadness forcefully and publically it is considered 'nasty' behaviour. Women sometimes resort to strategies with food to avoid directly addressing a problem verbally, or, if they have already expressed their views verbally and received no relief. For example, women will occasionally demonstrate their discontent with a family member by offering food during a meal to everyone but the person they are angry with, behaviour taken as a serious rejection within a family. I observed a woman who was unhappy with her adult child and who placed food on everyone's plate saying "*Coule habibi/habibti, coule*" ('eat my darling, eat').

She deliberately avoided putting food on the plate of the child she was displeased with. Though the girl was free to serve herself, she was visibly distressed and left the table with great sadness.

Food is also often used in metaphors in Bedouin conversation to explain and illustrate a point. Lakoff and Johnson(1981) have asserted that “The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture” because metaphors reflect cultural value systems and shape how we think about experiences (p. 22). When describing marriage to me a woman remarked that , “Marriage is like a watermelon. You never know what it will be like until you are inside it. Perhaps it will be dry, white and tasteless or perhaps it will be red and juicy and sweet.” A man who is generous is described as “making coffee all day long.” One young man described his mother as ‘an olive tree’ to explain the autochthonous connection she felt with the land and the unlikelihood that she would ever leave her country¹². In Bedouin culture and Arab culture in general, families encourage their daughters to marry at a young age (sometimes as young as 16) because if a woman reaches her late twenties without marrying, people begin to talk and speculate as to what is wrong with the girl that she has not yet married. A mother when encouraging her daughter to marry who she felt was reaching this age said to her, “A woman is like a fruit tree, she has a season and when the season has passed there will not be any more fruit.” The daughter feeling stressed by the pressure to marry, turned to me after translating and said, “Great, now I’m a tomato.” These are just a few examples of how food is used as a metaphor in Bedouin conversation.

Symbolic food use in Bedouin culture is best described by the coffee ritual. Coffee occupies a focal position in Bedouin society and is bound inextricably to hospitality, conversation, and oral traditions. In the past, when a guest arrived at the tent, coffee was prepared. Beans were roasted on the fire on a metal instrument that looks like a giant spoon made

for this purpose, then mixed with cardamom and ground in a large wooden mortar with a matching pestle, both elaborately decorated and collectively called a *mihbaj*. As Jihad Racy (1996) describes, “Consisting of a large wooden pestle and mortar, the *mihbaj* may be considered: a household tool; visually ornate object that has the pleasant, and perhaps symbolically significant, scent of coffee mixed with cardamom; a musical instrument; and last but not least, an emblem of generosity, honour and social status” (p. 408). Around the mouth of the mortar and in the midst of the pestle rests a metal ring and, while the beans are being ground, the sound of the pounding and grinding is augmented by rhythmically tapping the metal of the pestle on the metal ring of the mortar. In the hands of a talented performer this becomes a “sonic expression of the host’s distinguished status and entitlement to the provision of hospitality” (p.408). Nippa (2006) comments that for the Bedouin, “Rituals transform the given hierarchy between upper host and lower guest into the hierarchy of honoured guest and serving host,” thereby diffusing potential conflict (550).

There is an elaborate system of non-verbal communication surrounding coffee drinking among the Bedouin. For example, a man in Beer Sheva who was not Bedouin but lived closely with them, explained to me that only a small amount of coffee is placed in the cup to show that there is room in the host’s heart for his guest. If the cup is filled to the top, it would be implying that the guest was not welcome. (When I attended the wedding in Tamra I was given a cup of coffee filled with only a small taste like this and told to drink it in one gulp, though when I was served sweet coffee with the women my cup was nearly full and we drank slowly with our conversation). If a young suitor comes to ask for the hand of a daughter in marriage, her father will make coffee and pour it and listen to what the young man has to say. The suitor and his

family members who come with him will not drink until their host has accepted their suit. If he refuses, no one will drink (Ashkenazi 1938:60).

In the past, coffee making and serving was associated with the shaykhs and powerful men of the tribes as petitioners would come to them seeking assistance resolving political disputes, council, arbitration, or socialization and coffee was served as part of the conversation between these men (Jihad Racy 1996:407). With this in mind, the metaphor “he makes coffee all day long” takes on a more complex meaning. A man who is powerful politically attracts those less powerful to his hearth and will be making coffee all day for guests who arrive in waves to speak to him.

From my observations in my fieldwork, coffee has a dual nature. There is the coffee that is served by men to their guests at events such as weddings and funerals which is traditional coffee without sugar that takes a long time to make. It is served in small cups with no handles and only a small amount at a time that is expected to be drunk in one mouthful. Coffee’s other nature is that of common household use, served to guests and family in the same small cups but filled three quarters full and mixed with sugar. It is made in small amounts and boiled until it “has no face” or the coffee turns to mud at the bottom of the *raleigh* (coffee pot). Any family member can make this coffee and women make it regularly for guests who arrive to visit.

Coffee is served three times during a visit, once to welcome the guest, once during the conversation, and once just before the guest departs. It is considered rude to accept a fourth cup, even if offered. Some women “read” the mud that arrives in the bottom of the coffee cup for divination purposes. When the guest is finished drinking, they turn the cup over to let it drain and the pattern made by the grounds as it dries are reviewed by the reader for symbols and signs that

tell a story of the person who used the cup. Coffee was also mentioned as a tool for witchcraft. Women who want to bind a man to them will urinate in his coffee and when he drinks, he will remain faithful.

At the Tamra wedding I attended, coffee was not ground in the traditional manner but arrived in three large bags already mixed with cardamom. It was made in large batches in a giant pot and transferred to a traditional ornate set of coffee pots for serving that were kept hot on a hot plate in the kitchen and in hot coals on a tray made for the purpose (see Figure 32 and 33). The coffee set was prominently displayed at the front of the house where the men were greeted and where they sat together and was visible to any who arrived, an echo of times past when the front of the tent was where men were greeted and hosted, and highly decorative coffee sets were displayed for the visual pleasure of the guest (Nippa 2006:557).

These are some examples of how Mawasi Bedouin people use food as a means of symbolic communication. There are a myriad of examples to offer and one could likely write an entire thesis on this subject alone. For now, I will conclude the topic here and move on to the conclusion and final comments of this thesis.

Chapter 10 — Conclusion: Grab Your Napkin, Loosen Your Belt

Ahlan wa sahlán, welcome to the final cup of coffee before we depart.

Food spans the spectrum of human experience from the mundane to the supernatural, interwoven, sometimes in surprising ways into our societies. It is a practical need, an emotional comfort, a political statement and a means of cultural transmission. Food is embedded in historical, political and economic systems and its control is a sign of power. It is with us from birth to death and acts as a language in itself.

Studying food in the Middle East with Bedouin women comes with political considerations. To be a feminist anthropologist who wishes to work in Arab communities means taking into account current theoretical, historical, and geopolitical discourses concerning Arab women, identifying those that are useful and separating them out from those that are based in racist and Western-centric political agendas. Methods of research used to collect data for this thesis have been chosen with this aim in mind in an effort to produce data that encompasses and accurately presents the complicated and complex world of Mawasi Bedouin women. Food mapping is one of these methods. The photos included in this thesis are meant to offer an image-based description of Mawasi Bedouin foodways that is, hopefully, more comprehensive and meaningful than words alone.

Mawasi Bedouin people living in the North of a country formerly known as Palestine, have traversed 92 years of sweeping social change (from the beginning of the British protectorate in 1919 until my field work in 2009). Their traditional semi-nomadic pastoralist economy and

tribal systems have been transmuted throughout the process of sedentarization and their food and foodways have reflected these changes. Where once Mawasi economy was diversified in herds, crops, raiding, tithing and wage labour, today only a wage economy remains. Though older generations still maintain gardens, informal economies, and occasionally goats, retaining the Bedouin habit of always having a plan B, younger generations are completely reliant on a wage economy. The advent of the Jewish colonization of Palestine has reduced the Bedouin, who were once the most powerful community in the region, to a minority within a minority, removed from the land and settled in villages, while in the South, sometimes living in conditions of extreme poverty and persecution.

Education is helping the Bedouin to reclaim their place as more and more youth are attending advanced postsecondary education. Unfortunately, traditional ecological knowledge held by elders is not being transmitted to the younger generations to any large degree. Women are still learning traditional recipes and how to process olives, pickle vegetables such as eggplant and cauliflower but with the influence of new forms of information through media and the internet and having less time to cook because of working outside the home, women are experimenting with new recipes from foreign locales. I find the younger Mawasi generation's disinterest in traditional food systems deeply concerning. I hope as they mature, have families of their own and, hopefully, access to land, that they will continue the work of their elders and leave a door open to food security for their families beyond the urban and village supermarkets, not only for themselves but as a means of preserving their unique traditional ecological knowledge.

Mawasi women's identity is variable depending on where and how they are situated by age, marital status, and urban or rural living. Fashion is a means by which Mawasi women express their identity and is variable across the generations and across urban or rural

environments. This is a topic of my research that I feel was not investigated as deeply as it could have been. Fashion, especially *hijab* fashion, is extremely varied and interesting and the cultural and political meanings it contains have only been lightly touched upon in these chapters. Mawasi identity is fluid in its present state and the gap between the generations is both being expanded and bridged in different ways. Some younger women reach across the divide, others not at all and still others seek ways to distance themselves from what they view as a backward past. It is my hope that younger generations of Mawasi women find ways to satisfy their desires for change and improve their futures through formal education and at the same time seek a means to carry on traditional systems that are supportive and enriching.

However, contemporary Mawasi Bedouin women are embedded in the socio-economic framework of the colonial State system and, more intimately, within the patriarchal and patrilineal Bedouin cultural framework, working to achieve educational and career goals and to marry and raise families. Primary responsibility is to their natal families before marriage and to their husbands after marriage, followed by a secondary responsibility to the larger Bedouin community they are born into, neither of which accepts easily the direct public expression of a woman's power and voice. This does not mean that women do not have power or voice, only that they exercise and express them indirectly through culturally accepted channels such as private consultation with male family members, personal networks with other women, control of food preparation and social controls such as gossip. At the same time, Bedouin women of the Galilee are not passive actors who mildly accept all that passes in the community and their families. They are strong, active participants, and work beside the men in complimentary ways to promote their own and their family's interests. Gender roles are transitioning at present as Mawasi women engage in employment and education and as cultural restrictions and boundaries that have

previously prevented women's participation in the external community become porous and are influenced through colonization, media, and the internet.

Food is a tool used by Mawasi women to express themselves through a language of symbols and metaphors. When they are unable to directly address an issue, or have achieved no resolution to problems through consultation, Mawasi women use food to make a point to family members. Mawasi language is filled with food metaphors and proverbs relating to food. Coffee and hospitality go hand-in-hand and though men use coffee symbolically in political relations with other men, women also make coffee for their guests. In my opinion, Mawasi women will always use food in these ways because it is so ingrained in their bodies and minds, and is as unconscious as speaking their mother tongue.

This thesis is by no means a comprehensive exploration or expression of Mawasi Bedouin culture. I was focused on the women's world and food related data and there remain vast possibilities for future research in a variety of topics such as the men's world and their experiences of the cultural transitions affecting their communities or, after a period of time, how Mawasi communities are faring without their traditional 'plan B' food strategies if traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) continues to be abandoned. For myself, I realize there were many questions left unanswered concerning Mawasi women's relationship to power as individuals and as community members and on a national and global scale. Although I was welcomed and included in every way, I was always, and will always be, a stranger to the Mawasi. What I think would be most beneficial, is for a Mawasi social scientist to conduct research in their own community as they would be optimally positioned to understand the subtle undercurrents and uses of language that I was unable to access.

For myself, I am unlikely to return to the Mawasi Bedouin community as an anthropologist doing research but most definitely as a friend. I am currently compiling the recipes related to me by Khazneh for the publication of the cookbook mentioned in *The Method to my Madness* (p.38) and hope to return to Haifa to publish the book in Israel. It is intended as a means of giving back to the Mawasi community. As an anthropologist I am committed to reciprocal research that benefits both the researcher and the research community; as an individual, because I am unable to help at weddings or reciprocate in Mawasi traditional ways, it offers me something I can do to voice my thanks. I have done, and will continue to maintain my friendships with women in the Mawasi community and remain in contact with the Bayoumi family especially.

In conclusion, Mawasi women are responding creatively and adaptively to global and local influences and cultural shifts within their own communities. Though food use is changing, women still use systems of food to establish boundaries and protect their rights. Foodways embedded in social systems, such as networks of reciprocity for marriages and births, are still maintained though undergoing transformative processes. Despite intensive social changes that have affected Mawasi women's roles and status within the family and larger community, they continue to follow and sustain traditional foodways in their relationships with other family members and with the community. In my experience, Mawasi women are strong, self-reliant, and courageous, and always keep a healthy sense of humour. They are supportive wives, loving mothers, protective sisters and generous friends. I know with certainty, that regardless of what changes or chance might bring to their door, they will continue to advance with intelligence and grace and to fill bellies and hearts with their food.

End Notes

1. See Foucault, *The Subject and Power* for his discussion of pastoral power and its historical relation to western forms of governance.
2. Though I encouraged and requested a private interview, she preferred to conduct the interview with family present. Because of a family member's comment after she responded to a question, she took offense, got up and left the room, effectively ending the interview. She refused an invitation to continue at a later time.
3. The Bedouin tribes found in the Middle East and North Africa have diverse origins. For example, just within Palestine the tribes trace their lineages back to countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Some of the tribes are not even Bedouin in origin but were originally composed of freed slaves or *fellahin* who chose to live as the Bedouin did (see Ashkenazi 1938: 40-43).
4. During an informal interview I was told that the Druze detested the Bedouin because the Bedouin were always taking Druze women who were famed for their beauty and their light (green or blue) eyes.
5. *Nafas* is the word used in Islam to describe any time a woman is bleeding either from menstruation or child birth but in the Mawasi community it was also used to describe the 40 days after a child was born when a mother was entitled to rest, relax and be taken care of by other women, usually family members.
6. A *tabon* looks like a giant inverted Chinese wok. A fire is built beneath it and bread dough is rolled out into a circle and placed on top of it where it bakes. It is very hot and difficult work to bake bread this way.
7. "The barren woman is the lowest of the family. She is resigned to her fate; she is made small, and gives way to the other wives of her husband, whom she serves as a servant."
8. *Haram* has different meanings depending on how it is used. It can mean unclean, shameful, or contrary to Islam.
9. The groom's family brought lunch for the bride's guests only because she was also from Tamra. Had she been from another village, they would not have been obligated.
10. The *jinn* are spirits that can be benevolent or evil and appear in human or animal form, sometimes possessing humans. They can influence humans to good or bad actions and in folklore they bring great wealth or grave trouble to people depending on the character of the human and the *jinn* (see Patai 1989).

11. A Bedouin woman would not shame her husband by arguing with him publicly. As a matter of respect, she would wait until they were in private to make her case.
12. The olive tree surfaces in Palestinian discourse about identity as the Palestinians have adopted the olive tree as a symbol of their ancient connection to the land and have initiated campaigns to plant groves of olive trees to prevent the confiscation of land by the Israeli government (Levine 2004:34). Conversely, Jews are identified with the pine tree as it was the habit of the Jews to plant pine forests on the ruins of Palestinian villages they had destroyed to prevent the Palestinians from returning because pine trees turn the soil acidic and make it impossible for anything to grow beneath them (p. 34).

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