



Crossing and constructing borders within daily contacts

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NOTES DE RECHERCHE DU CER

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WITHIN DAILY CONTACTS:
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS
BETWEEN THE BEDOUIN IN THE NEGEV
AND THEIR NETWORKS IN GAZA,
THE WEST BANK AND JORDAN**

N° 287 - 2004/10

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will analyze the cross-border exchanges that have been occurring over the last fifty years between the Bedouin in the Negev and their kin and network members who became refugees in the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan after 1948. I examine how such encounters have linked cross border populations through an intricate web of relations, while still fostering feelings of difference, power relations and even antagonism between the groups.

The Bedouin in Israel are normally considered as separate and even isolated from their fellow Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. People dissociate them from other Palestinians by evoking their supposedly widespread enrolment in the Israeli army or by referring to their unique cultural nomadic background, as opposed to that of sedentary Palestinians (Parizot, 2001 a: 94-98). This image of uniqueness is encouraged by academic research. Scholars have traditionally approached the Bedouin within the limit of their legal and territorial inscription and within the framework of their binary relations with the State of Israel¹. While many scholars have noticed cross border relations, this approach has tended to overlook their significance. Further, it has reinforced the idea of the Bedouin's isolation from their Palestinian neighbors. In this respect, research in the south of Israel and Palestine follows a similar pattern as that done in the north of the country, showing little interest in contacts across the Green Line (Tamari, 1997). Even new research, such as that of Avram Bornstein (2002) about Palestinian workers crossing the Green Line in search of work in the central region of

¹ This is the case for local anthropologists, such as Kressel, G.M., 1975, *Prativot le'umat shivtiyut* (Individual versus Tribalism) Hakibutz Hameuhad; or foreign anthropologists such as Jakubowska, L., 1985, *Urban Bedouin: Social Change in a Settled Environment*. Ph.D Thesis, The State University of New York at Stony Brook; for more recent works, see Dinero, S. 1997: Female Role Change and Male Response in Post Nomadic Urban Environments: The Case of the Israeli Negev Bedouin. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, vol. XXVIII (3): 248-261. Works by the geographer Avinoam Meir should also be cited: 1996, *As Nomadism Ends: The Israeli Bedouin of the Negev*. Boulder Westview Press. On the issue of political ties between the Bedouin and the State, see Basson, L., 1995. Les Bédouins du Néguev et l'Etat d'Israël, *Monde arabe, Maghreb Machrek*, 147 (janvier-mars): 149-165; Parizot, C. 1999, Enjeux tribaux et élections nationales, *REMMM*, 85-86 : 237-258.

Israel (Bornstein 2002), plays down the deep relationships that can emerge from such exchanges.

In the south, it is actually difficult to establish a sharp distinction between the Bedouin and their Palestinian neighbors. First, many Palestinian refugees are Bedouin, originally from the Negev². Second, the Bedouin have engaged in regular, intensive exchanges with local populations in the West Bank, Gaza and even in the Sinai and Jordan as I discovered while carrying out my fieldwork in the Negev, between 1998 and 2001. These exchanges stretch the social, economic and political spaces of the Negev Bedouin beyond the limit of their territorial and administrative statuses. It thus makes it difficult to dissociate them socially and culturally as a discrete society or culture from their Palestinian neighbors.

Nevertheless, it appears that cross border exchanges do not erase boundaries completely. While people continue to meet across borders, despite all the obstacles they encounter, they still nourish strong perceptions of difference and even social distance from each other. Many factors can explain these perceptions. It is not my aim to review them all in this article, but rather to evaluate whether cross-border encounters can foster such differentiation. Stressing the impact of border crossings should not lead to the extreme noted by Pablo Vila in contemporary borders studies. He explains (Vila 2003: 317-322) that contemporary studies and theories about borders have been dominated by the “cross-border” metaphor, so much so that the idea that such encounters can also “reinforce” borders is totally overlooked. As Ulf Hannerz (1997, 545) reminds us, crossing borders often helps in reinforcing structures of power and inequality. We should thus analyze how such encounters can foster distrust, unease and conflict, as well as new structures of power.

This research is based on field data I collected at the end of the Oslo period while I followed my hosts, in the North Eastern Negev, in an unrecognized village located 17 km from Beer Sheva and 15 km from the city of Dhahriyya (southern West Bank). It is thus mostly their experience that I give voice to here, even if I also try to express that of their Palestinian kin and networks.

In order to better understand the population we are dealing with, I will first present briefly the situation of the Bedouin in the Negev and what has fostered the idea of their unquestioned isolation. This idea is called into question by the extent of their cross border exchanges. Accordingly, in the second part of this argument, I analyze the capacity of trans-border links to generate trans-border groups of solidarity and interests whose dynamic impacts on local processes at work among the population in their home environments. In the third part of this paper, I show that cross-border exchanges should not be analyzed from the sole perspective of their extent or their capacity to reunite scattered groups. Careful examination shows that they can also produce difference and distance, strengthening the power of existing State borders.

² Between fifty to eighty thousand people fled or were expelled from the Negev between 1947 until 1951. Thus they amount to almost 10% of the number of estimated refugees between 1947 and 1949 (Morris 1997, 297-298).

1. ISOLATION

The view of the Negev Bedouin as an isolated community finds its roots in the local discourses of actors. In recent history, the Bedouin have been through a process of differentiation and community building that they express in the public sphere.

1.1. Process of community building

During the first half of the 20th century, the Bedouin in the Negev, or as they used to call themselves, the '*arab as-saba*' (Arabs of Beer Sheva), were virtually sedentarized in the north of the Negev, living off agriculture and pastoralism. At that time, they maintained regular social and economic exchanges with the people living in the Sinai, in Gaza and the south Hebron mountains (Marx 1967, chap. 1; Kressel 1993). This situation changed radically during the 1948 war. From an estimated population of 60,000 to 95,000 in 1947, only 12,000 Bedouin remained in the Negev in 1951. The others found themselves in the West Bank, the Gaza strip, the Sinai and Jordan where they subsequently settled. Included in different geopolitical spaces, each group underwent distinct social, economic and political processes that fostered specific identities and political-economic interests.

The Bedouin who remained in the Negev underwent a process of spatial, social and economic marginalization. Following the policies of forced resettlement and urbanization, they emerged as a semi-urban *lumpenproletariat* at the periphery of Beer Sheva (Parizot 2001a: chap. 1). Half of the 140,000 Bedouin presently living in the Negev inhabit seven planned towns exclusively reserved for them, and the other half reside in unrecognized villages along the main road axes of the valley of Beer Sheva. These localities are the poorest in the region and their populations rely on employment in the Jewish cities in the Negev (Abu Rabia 2000; Marx 2000).

Alongside these upheavals, the Negev Bedouin have been involved in a process of ethnic- and community building. At first this was fostered by the Israeli authorities who intended to dissociate them from the rest of the Palestinian Israelis. This was motivated by a divide and rule policy (Lustick 1980) and because the authorities wanted to be more efficient when dealing with a society already considered "unique". Thus, they developed specific bodies and specific policies that created among the Bedouin a sense of common destiny. For instance, while the Bedouin hold the same status as Israeli Muslims, they were progressively distinguished from them. The category of "Bedouin" appeared fairly rapidly on official forms, next to Muslims, Druze, Christians, and Circassians. Herein lies the strength of the categorizations imposed by the Israeli legal system. Reiterated in formal and informal discourse and on administrative forms, these categorizations ended up shaping discourses and representations of Jews and Arabs in the country (Parizot 2001b).

The process of community-building was also enhanced by the Bedouin themselves. Like all category ascription,³ it took place through a dialectical process in which they played a primary role. The reality of Otherness created by the drastic upheavals that affected this group facilitated the process of reconstruction of tradition, a process that took place within the framework of terms imposed by the dominant discourse and which was often enriched by scholarly and folkloristic works. Since the 1950's, the Bedouin became the objects of much academic research by anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists. These works legitimate their portrayal as a distinct society separated from their kin at the periphery of the Negev. Even if such scholars noticed the existing links across borders they never analyzed them in any depth. More significantly, a body of folkloristic research⁴, written in Hebrew by local administrators and sometimes the Bedouin themselves came to be taken as written history by the Bedouin. They found in these works the keys and the yardsticks to reconstruct the lost "traditions" of their "unique society". As a result, in numerous contexts, the Bedouin no longer use the ethnic label '*arab*' (literally, Arab) to describe themselves, and contrasted themselves with the term *fellahîn* to designate the neighboring Arab populations, as was still the case in the 1950s. Today they use the term *bedû*.

The internalization of this ethnic label has been strengthened by its recurrent manipulation in the political discourse of Bedouin leaders. In the late 1970's an "Association for the Defense of Bedouin Rights" was founded. In the early 1980's, few groups were daring enough to formulate their demands as "Arabs" or "Palestinians", fearing that this would draw criticism from the authorities. As Lonia Jakubowska⁵ shows, the local actors preferred to express their demands as "Negev Bedouin citizens" to dissociate their claims and their conflicts with the State from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was only after 1993, when the implementation of the Oslo agreement began, that the Negev Bedouin formulated their demands as "Palestinians" (Parizot, 2001 a: 135-143). This change happened at a time when the use of national Palestinian symbols had become tolerated by the authorities and when the Oslo agreement sanctioned a separation of the fates of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and those with Israeli citizenship. At the end of the 1990s, when local leaders and members of non-governmental bodies expressed their demands as "Palestinians," they meant "Palestinian citizens of Israel". They stressed their need to be recognized as a national minority inside Israel. Still, in the Negev, people prefer the term "Negev Arabs" that highlight both the priority given by the Bedouin to the defense of the interests of their own community and the territorialization of their identity.

³ Barth, F. 1995, Les groupes ethniques et leurs frontières. In: Poutignat, Ph. & J. Streiff-Fenart, *Théories de l'ethnicité*. Paris: PUF: 203-249.

⁴ See among others the works of Sasson Bar-Zvi, 1991, *Masoret hashiput shel bedui hanegev*, Ministry of Defence, Tel-Aviv; Faraj Sliman al-Hamâmde, 1996, *Turâth waqadâ' `ashâ'ir `arab an-naqab*. Or the book published by Moshe Shohat and Yosif Ben David earmarked for Jewish and Arab school children in Israel, 2000, *At-turâth al-hadâri libedu fî an-naqab*, Education Administration for the Bedouin in the Negev, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Research, Jerusalem

⁵ Jakubowska, L. 1992, Resisting Ethnicity: The Israeli State and Bedouin Ethnicity. In: Nordstrom, C. & Martin J. *The Paths to Domination and Terror*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press: 85-105

1.2. Gaza, Beer Sheva, Dhahriyya, Jordan

The Bedouin, while separated from their kin and network by borders, nevertheless maintained contacts with them. In part they were assisted by the fact that these borders were not always stable or recognized: In the last fifty years, the borders of the State of Israel have been constantly reshaped.

In 1949, the Rhodes Treaty fixed the Armistice Line, also called the Green Line, as the international border of Israel. The Bedouin who remained in the Negev often illegally crossed the new borders to visit their kin and neighbors in territories under Egyptian or Jordanian rule (Burns, 1962). Others engaged in the smuggling of livestock and other goods from Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen (Abu Rabia 1994) with the informal consent of Israeli officials (Parizot 2001b). It is difficult to evaluate the extent and the intensity of these flows of goods and people as there is little available data. According to Emanuel Marx (1974: 20-21) these exchanges were quite intense. Today, some people in the region of Tel `Arad argue that during that period, their families used to maintain close and regular contacts with the people of the Palestinian villages of Sammu` and Yatta`. All in all, these exchanges, together with the hospitality offered to infiltrators, allowed an important flow of information to occur within separated families and networks.

After the 1967 War, the Green Line stopped being an obstacle to movement. While it was maintained in certain ways as a political border, the Israeli authorities allowed people to cross from both sides. According to the Allon plan, the political border was to remain the Green Line while the security border was to be extended all the way to the Jordan River. Moshe Dayan encouraged the flow of people and goods between Israel proper and the occupied territories (Bornstein 2002). The policy of the “open bridges” led to the linkage of Israeli electricity, water, and road networks with those of the newly conquered lands. Moreover, while Israel chose not to annex the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Sinai, it tightened its hold on them by launching a settlement policy that allowed the development of important centers of Israeli Jewish population beyond the Green Line. Thus, from being a *de facto* international border, the Green Line progressively became a statutory border (Yiftachel, 1999). On the one hand, Jews were able to enjoy full political and citizen rights on both sides of the border, while, Palestinians conquered in 1967 were refused citizenship.

In this new context, the Bedouin were able to further develop and strengthen links with their kin and Palestinian networks. People went shopping on a daily basis in the markets of Gaza and the South Hebron Mountains. Palestinians, in turn, became more and more dependant on the Israeli labor market. By the 1980's, 30% of their labor force was engaged there (Rupert, 2003). Among Palestinians in the south, many were employed by the Bedouin in the building industry, as shepherds or as salesmen in Israeli markets. In the same period, the Bedouin also developed matrimonial alliances with members of their families from whom they had been separated in 1948. Later, they even sought their brides among peasant families. Moreover, the low dowry asked by Palestinians offered

men the possibility to get married to more than one wife (Lewando-Hundt 1978). These exchanges developed until the end of the 1980s.

The outbreak of the 1st Intifada (December 1987) and later the Oslo process (1994) introduced dramatic changes. The Bedouin and the Palestinians encountered more difficulties in maintaining such exchanges as Israel imposed increasing security measures (Bornstein 2003). In fact, after 1994, while the Israeli army withdrew progressively from the main urban and rural centers designated as areas A and B, it tightened its control over these newly created enclaves, leading to a situation called by some scholars a “*Bantustanization*” of the Occupied Territories (Legrain 1997, 85-90). These rearrangements rendered movement more difficult between the new enclaves inside the Occupied Territories as well as between the Occupied Territories and Israel proper. Gazans could not anymore move out of the newly fenced-in Strip without obtaining a permit from the Israeli authorities resettled at the Erez checkpoint. Although West Bankers could move without a permit by avoiding Israeli checkpoints and taking bypass dirt roads, they risked being caught. Conversely, it became harder for the Bedouin to enter Gaza. Consequently, people started visiting the West Bank more often where they could more easily avoid checkpoints, even during time of closures. Further, people invested more effort into visiting kin and relations in the newly accessible Jordan whose border opened as early as 1993, following the signature of the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel. Thus while, the readjustments following the Oslo period did not sever the exchanges between the Bedouin and their kin and networks in the Occupied Territories, they did reorient both their direction and intensity.

The situation worsened after the outburst of the second Intifada. Israel raised more obstacles to movement, among them the requirement for Israeli citizens to have a permit to enter Palestinian areas. Additionally, in July 31, 2003, the Knesset voted in favor of the Nationality and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order), which prevents Palestinian spouses of Israeli citizens from getting a right to Israeli residency (UN Right Committee, 2003)⁶. Again, these new measures did not sever the cross-border exchanges, but they reduced them considerably and, more importantly, they defined them once more as illegal.

In brief, over 50 years, the different modes of administration imposed on the Bedouin by the Israeli authorities have contributed to the marginalization of this group as compared with their Jewish and Arab neighbors in the region. This marginalization has fuelled a process of sharpening ethnicity and the emergence of a feeling of community that is expressed in public and political areas. Of course, these processes are not over, and they do not account for the complexity of the situation of the Bedouin. They are constantly being challenged by practices across borders that the local actors continue to conduct out of the public sphere, in the non-event. These practices broaden their social, economic and political spaces of relations beyond such perceived boundaries.

⁶ In November 2003, the constitutionality of this law was contested by local NGOs who petitioned the Supreme Court. For more details on this law, see www.adalah.org/eng/famunif.php

2. BORDER CROSSINGS AND DETERRITORIALIZATION

I would like to illustrate this tendency through the case study of the lineage of the Rashâyde (sing. Abu Rashîd). I lived among them between January and July 1996, January 1998 and July 1999, and I visited the village regularly until summer 2003. The cross-border practices of this group show to what extent such exchanges widen the scope of relations of people and foster the emergence of trans-border groups of solidarity and interests.

2.1. Trans-border kinship groups

Before 1948, this *`â'ila* (lineage)⁷ was relatively important and prestigious to the extent that its leader was the sheikh of an *`ashîra* (tribe) named after his own lineage. The *`ashîra* of the Rashâyde was divided into two settlements. The first was located in north-east of Gaza City where they cultivated their lands. The second lived a few kilometers south of the town of Rahat on different land. In winter 1948, the Israeli army launched the Yoav operation to conquer the Negev (Morris 1997, 220). The Rashâyde settled west of Beer Sheva were expelled to the Gaza Strip, together with the other lineages attached to their *`ashîra*. The second group, located north of Beer Sheva was scattered. Some of its members fled to Jordanian territory to settle in the region of Dhahriyya or close to the capital Amman. A minority stayed in Israel where they were relocated, like many other groups, east of Beer Sheva on the land of other exiled tribes. This region was designated as an enclosed area (*muntagat as-siyâj* [Arabic]/*ezor ha sayig* [Hebrew]) and put under military administration until 1966 (Marx 1967).

While only two brothers stayed in Israel, *`Awâd* and *`Awude*, they managed to maintain their former social status. *`Awâd*, the youngest, became the sheikh of the newly reconstituted tribe. It included groups of the pre-1948 *`ashîra* that claimed a common descent with the Abu Rashîd through a patrilineal ancestor and others allied to them through matrimonial exchanges. Other groups were of noble Bedouin lineage or clients who were the remaining parts of displaced tribes outside the border of Israel. They needed to be affiliated to a tribe in order to stay in Israel and to obtain Israeli citizenship. Thus, *`Awâd* and *`Awude* fell into a similar situation to other members of displaced people of noble Bedouin lineages. Separated from their agnates after the conflict, they kept their status despite being in a minority in the newly recomposed *`ashîra*. The young sheikh was ruling other former clients of non-noble lineages whose number was greater than that of the noble groups⁸.

After 1967, the opening of the Green Line offered an opportunity to the two brothers to renew strong ties with members of their family from whom they had been separated in

⁷ The term I often translate as “lineage”, refers to a group of people claiming a common patrilineal descent. Actually, a *`â'ila* is rather a group of cognates than agnates (Parizot 2003, 51-53). Its members hold themselves mutually responsible for any action susceptible to affect the symbolic capital of the group.

⁸ For details concerning the reconstitutions of the tribal system under the Israeli administration, cf. Parizot, 2001, pp. 45-52.

1948 to eventually reconstitute the powerful lineage it had been before 1948. These new relations were sanctioned by matrimonial exchanges between 1967 and the end of the 1970s. The first marriage took place as early as spring 1968. It was followed by four others which joined female Rashâyde refugees in Gaza with sons of both `Awâd and `Awude. During this period, these alliances constituted almost half of the marriages of the Rashâyde, and more than 90% of the weddings inside the group. In the 1980s, the number of such matrimonial exchanges between Israel and the Occupied Territories remained stable with six weddings between the Rashâyde living in Gaza (three women and one man), and Dhahriyya (two girls), though the proportion compared to the total number of marriages started to dwindle, as these alliances represented only 30% of the total number of marriages (6/20). As a result, in the 1990s, these matrimonial exchanges created a very intricate network stretching between Beer Sheva, Gaza and the West Bank.

Relations between kin remained rather dynamic in this period, despite the continuous rearrangements of borders and the stronger limitations of movements that were imposed during the Oslo period. At the end of the 1990s, I was living at `Iyâd's house, the son of `Awâd who had died in the early 1980s. I would go to Gaza with `Iyâd and his wife to visit his mother in law and brothers-in law. As an elder among the Rashâyde, he often took part in the economic or social affairs of his cousins. But, while `Iyâd used to pay them regular visits in the 1980s, the difficulty in passing the Erez checkpoint prevented him from keeping up the same pace of visits in the 1990s. Hence, he and his wife began to limit their visits to holidays and important events. In Hûra, his agnates also married to Gazan women from their lineage would follow a similar pattern. The outbreak of the second Intifada, in September 2000, further reduced such exchanges. `Iyâd and his wife, `Am `Awâd, would seldom go to the Gaza Strip. They preferred bringing `Am `Awâd's mother and sisters to Hûra. Thanks to his connections in the Israeli administration, `Iyâd easily obtained permits for them.

In the 1990s, the cross-border exchanges of the Israeli Rashâyde were more intense with their agnates in the south of the West Bank and had just begun to develop with Jordanian kin. While it was easy for the Israeli army to control the newly fenced-in Gaza Strip, it was rather more difficult to do the same in the large open areas of the Southern Hebron Mountains. Like many neighboring groups in the Negev, most of the Rashâyde would shop in the local market of Dhahriyya. Throughout the 1990s, this little town of less than 30,000 people saw its market grow beyond the needs of its hinterland and become a center of exchanges. The market offered an extreme diversity of services and goods adapted to the demand of the Bedouin customers; from car repair to jewelry shops, hairdresser studios for brides, to shops for building materials and housing needs, etc. The stolen-car and car-part markets also developed according to the demands of the Bedouin, influencing in turn the choice of cars targeted by thieves inside Israel. During this period, the region of Dhahriyya also became a center for labor recruitment.

Palestinians went there in search of jobs inside Israel and more specifically with the Bedouin who would hire them with or without permits, mainly in the building industry⁹.

By the mid-1990s, the region had become such a center for exchange that young Bedouin invested in creating a well-organized system of taxis and minibuses between Dahriyya and the Beer Sheva area. The youth of neighboring groups of the Rashâyde living in the region of Hûra took an active part in this transportation network.

`Iyâd and the member of his family would pay frequent and spontaneous visits to their agnates in the town of Dhahriyya. The sons of Hamdân had a few houses there. Some of the Israeli Rashâyde even had residence in the town. One of `Iyâd's brothers, Hishâm, who was married to one of Muthgal's sisters, often went to meet his second wife and her children who chose to settle close to her brother in Dhahriyya. He thus resided between his three wives in Beer Sheva, Hûra and Dhahriyya.

Such visits would also be part of leisure. `Iyâd would work in Beer Sheva as a car salesman. After a meeting he would come to have a lunch with his patrilineal cousin Muthgal, before going back to Beer Sheva for a second meeting. One evening in summer 1998, while we were watching France play Saudi Arabia in the Football World Cup Muthgal phoned a few times, teasing us that the Saudis would defeat the French. `Iyâd decided to watch the rest of the match at his cousin's house, as he found this interaction exciting. We waited until half time and went to see the second half of the match in Dhahriyya.

Throughout this period, `Iyâd also went to Jordan five to six times a year, in order to attend the main events in the life of his Jordanian family, such as marriages or holidays, as well as to take vacations. The Rashâyde from Jordan used to pay regular visits to their agnates in Israel. Jaffâl, the eldest son of Hamdân, living in Zarqa, close to Amman, often came to Israel for periods of one to three weeks. He was a central figure in the Jordanian branch of the lineage. His visits would be celebrated by successive dinners among his awlâd `am in the village of the Rashâyde, and he used to take an active part in local family affairs. He was invited to meetings of the local elders when crucial decisions had to be made, and he intervened many times in arbitration between local rivals of the Israeli branch. Between 1998 and 2001, `Abd al-Karîm, Jaffâl's brother from Zarqa, also came regularly, but for longer periods of time, from two to six months. He entered Israel to work in menial jobs that provided him with a better income than his official work in Jordan as a teacher of mathematics. His son, Samîr, came for even longer period of time. He stayed in the `Arab ar-Rashâyde for a year and a half between 1998 and 1999, and subsequently settled there in 2001. He worked in an Israeli food factory, learned Hebrew and even got engaged for a short while with a girl from a

⁹ At the beginning of the 1990s the number of Bedouin building firms increased parallel to the growing demand in construction following the massive arrival of Russian immigrants. At the end of the 1990s, Bedouin employers increased as the Bedouin were promised by Barak during the 1999 Knesset election that building demolitions would cease in the unrecognized villages. Consequently, people who used to live in light constructions began to build concrete structures. White block houses thus started to appear outside of planned towns.

neighboring lineage of the Rashâyde in the town of Hûra. This failed engagement was originally intended for him to obtain an Israeli citizenship. Women also came to Israel: Jaffâl's and `Abd al-Karîm's wives visited a few times. These reciprocal visits helped strengthen family ties. Already, in 1996, one of Jaffâl's daughters got married to `Awude's youngest son. Later, in summer 2003, `Ayayde, one of `Iyâd's brothers, married his son to another of Jaffâl's daughter.

After the second Intifada started, while the exchanges with the Dhahriyyan Rashâyde became more sporadic, those with the Jordanians went on at the same pace, and their presence in Hûra became almost permanent, with only short periods of absence.

2.2. Trans-border configurations of power

At the end of the 1990s, these networks were all the more dynamic as members of the lineage used their connections with each other to enhance their own social status. For instance, `Iyâd and his cousin Muthgal, the eldest son of Hamdân living in Dhahriyya, developed their reciprocal ties in order to reassert their position against their rivals among the Rashâyde as well as to readjust their respective positions in their local surroundings. Muthgal was older than `Iyâd. Enrolled in the Fateh movement since the 1970s, in the 1990s he obtained a respectable position as an official when the Palestinian National Authority was created. Working in Hebron, he was in daily contact with high-ranking Palestinian officers. This allowed him to position himself as a useful intermediary. He displayed this potential to his cousin `Iyâd as well as to his other Israeli agnates.

Strong efforts were exerted by these members of the Rashâyde to construct a wide network of connections. Between January and March, Muthgal invited his cousins almost twice a month to generous lunches or dinners, to which he invited high-ranking officers of the Palestinian security services or local and regional figures. `Iyad was more keen on building connections with such Palestinian personalities than his other Israeli kin, so he attended these gatherings regularly. Through repeated meetings he engaged in close and sometimes intimate relations with some members of the establishment of the region of Dhahriyya. At the end of 1998, he even invited these Palestinian officers to family events in Hûra. His contacts became so close that he sometimes took them on trips inside the Green Line, spending leisure time together as far as Tel-Aviv.

Within two years, `Iyâd and his patrilineal cousin built an important and effective network, which significantly improved their respective positions on the local and regional level. `Iyâd managed to position himself as an indispensable intermediary for some of his neighbors and family members, especially those who often paid visits to the West Bank, as he could provide them with protection. One day, in the spring of 1999, he was asked by one of his acquaintances, an elder from a lineage in Ksîfa, to help him free his brother from jail in Hebron where he had just been arrested by the Palestinian police. A few hours later, `Iyâd made a phone call to an officer in the Palestinian police in Hebron. The man was freed. `Iyâd also started to play the role of intermediary with

higher figures in the Negev who would search for privileged contacts with Palestinian officials.

Such trans-border networking strategies became a common trend in the Negev at the end of the Oslo period. Ambitious Bedouin personalities intended to raise their power from the local to the regional level by cultivating such relations with the Palestinian Authority. Throughout this period, Bedouin notables sent symbolic funding to the PNA, they went on personal visits to Yasser Arafat, or organized delegations for the celebrations of the *ʿĪd al-Adha*. This attitude was driven both by ambition and by a need for acknowledgment. In this sense, the trend corresponds to that of other Israeli Arabs noticed by Eli Rekhess (1996), who sent delegations to the newly opened countries of the Arab world such as to Jordan, as a way to compensate for a long standing marginality. *ʿIyâd* took part in many such delegations. At this period, some Bedouin even planned to send a delegation with Talab as-Sâna`, the Bedouin Parliament member, to visit President Saddam Huseyn in Iraq.

Such cross-border or international networks were often exhibited to clients. In November 1998, during the municipal election in the Negev Bedouin town of Rahat, the candidates for the municipality disseminated brochures showing their pictures in company of Israeli officials as well as with Yasser Arafat. They intended to explain their voters they could still count on them while visiting the Palestinian territories. An acquaintance of *ʿIyâd* even tried to smuggle in a high-ranking officer of the Palestinian Intelligence Services in order to bring him to a meeting of one of the candidates in Rahat, but the officer was arrested by the Israeli police and sent back to Dhahriyya.

In short, cross-border relations of the Rashâyde pertain to a general trend in the Negev which, over the last fifty years, gave rise to cross-border groups of solidarity and interest, in other words, to trans-border configurations of power. This trend impacted on local social, economic and political processes at work among the Bedouin as well as among their Palestinian neighbors. Likewise, social, economic and political ties ensured a flow of goods, people and values that eventually fostered the dissemination of cultural practices and representations. It is not my aim to elaborate on this last point, but many examples can be drawn from the literature on the Bedouin. The dissemination of practices and representations was noticed as early the 1970s on modes of celebrations of marriages (Lewando-Hundt 1978), religious beliefs (Jakubowska 1985), genealogical techniques (Parizot 2001a, 80-81), models of authorities (*ibid.*, 135-143), etc. In sum, cross-border relations extended the social, economic and political spaces of the Bedouin and their Palestinian neighbors along a line stretching from Gaza, Beer Sheva, Dhahriyya and Jordan.

3. AN UNEQUAL FRAME OF RELATIONS

Nonetheless, it is insufficient to understand these cross-border exchanges only from the point of view of their capacity to extend networks of connections, or their context as a sharing of culture. These Cross-border exchanges are taking place in a highly unstable political and spatial context, where borders are constantly redrawn and the statuses of

people are redefined, in ways that have often broadened the gap between cross-border “partners”. Thus, while cross-border relations bring people closer, they also appear to be channels where differences are experienced and reconstructed, sometimes leading to conflict. Such processes take place even among trans-border kin and even while people are maintaining close and intimate relations.

3.1. Growing inequalities

Before the beginning of the first Intifada, the Bedouin and their fellow Palestinians already experienced their inequalities on a few levels, such as their distinct legal status and standards of living. At the beginning of the 1990s, these differences became sharper. The creation of the Palestinian National Authority did not lead to an improvement in the situation of Palestinian citizens. On the contrary, the tightening control by Israel over the new Palestinian areas, its new system of permits, and its closure policy considerably reduced their capacity of movement in comparison to that of their Bedouin kin and networks. The unfolding of the Oslo process revealed the weak and limited power of the PNA compare to Israel. In the end, the new regime did not give more freedom of expression or social advantages to the Palestinian citizens. Kin and network of the Rashâyde would often complain to their Israeli kin of their situation and of their discontent with the obvious corruption inside the PNA, the injustice and the lack of freedom of expression. In this context, the Bedouin had nothing to envy them. While they would themselves often complain about the discrimination inside Israel, they still felt better off than their relatives.

Furthermore, this new context created new dependencies of the Palestinians upon their Bedouin Israeli networks. On the one hand, procedures to obtain work or visit permits required the mediation of an Israeli citizen who had to apply to the authorities on behalf of his Palestinian acquaintance. The Israeli intermediary would need to invest a lot of effort as well as a significant amount of his time in order to succeed with the complicated bureaucratic apparatus. On the other hand, Palestinians who were ready to take the risk of entering Israel illegally would also be dependent on the good will of their Israeli Bedouin counterpart, whether to find a way of transportation or to find a place to hide once inside the Green Line. Such exchanges potentially compromised Bedouin who could be discovered by the authorities. In brief, whether on legal or illegal grounds, the invitation of kin and network, which used to be a benevolent act before the 1990s, began to appear as a favor. After the eruption of the second Intifada, the situation worsened because every illegal entry into Israel was punished more harshly by the Israeli authorities. While before the second Intifada, Israel had rarely prevented illegal entries in the south of the West Bank, after 2000 the army tightened its control and made it more difficult to cross the Green Line. The Bedouin would thus have to take greater risks while helping their Palestinian kin or networks. During the 1990s my host expressed his anxieties. Even before the start of the second Intifada, `Iyâd complained many times that his cousin Muthgal regularly asked him to come to Dhahriyya to pick him and high-ranking officers of the Palestinian Authority up in order to enter Israel illegally and visit local personalities. While `Iyâd was indeed benefiting from his

participation in these visits, he was still frightened of being caught with his guests by the Israeli army or police.

On the economic level, the gap between the Bedouin and their Palestinian kin and network also widened tremendously as the Palestinian economy entered a crisis during the Oslo period (Arnon *et al.* 1997). The feeling of inequality increased as Palestinian became more dependent on the dwindling work opportunities in Israel. Moreover, providers of services and market traders inside the West Bank more than ever needed the Bedouin to come to the Occupied Territories to purchase the cheap goods and services they were offering. The domestic Palestinian market could not ensure the same level of prosperity for their businesses. Among the Rashâyde, people were asked for loans by their kin and networks on the other side of the Green Line. This gave some the opportunity to get a stronger hold on their kin's economic affairs. It is through such help that `Iyâd ar-Rashâyde managed to become the owner of a building in the refugee camp of al-Brej (Gaza Strip). In the mid-1980s, the husband of his wife's sister, Ahmed, had borrowed a large sum of money in order to construct his four-story house. As the economic situation worsened, Ahmed could not reimburse the sum he borrowed from `Iyâd. As a consequence, he made him the owner of half of the building.

Since 1993, the date of the opening of the Jordanian border, `Iyâd and his Israeli kin were also able to measure the gap separating them from their Jordanian kin. While Jaffâl, Hamdân's eldest son was a well-off businessman; his brothers and other cousins from Amman were much poorer. The latter would come to find working opportunities or to marry one of the Israeli women of their lineage in order to settle in the Negev and have a better standard of living. For instance, when `Abd al-Karîm, Hamdan's second son, came on regular visits to the village of the Rashâyde in Israel, he would be taken care of completely by his cousin `Iyâd. `Iyâd would not only offer him hospitality on his long stays, but would also find him job opportunities, negotiate his salary and be responsible for him in case of conflict with his employers. When `Abd al-Karîm tried to find a bride for his son, he had to rely on `Iyâd who introduced to him the daughter of one of his acquaintance in a neighboring unrecognized village. Later, when the engagement failed, `Iyâd took charge of solving the litigation while preventing his cousin from interfering. In sum, while in public, `Iyâd would present his Jordanian cousin as an equal, within the family, the latter would appear as his follower.

All in all, during the 1990s these widening gaps created situations in which the Bedouin became potential helpers or patrons. While people kept crossing borders, the content of their relations evolved significantly as the redrawing of borders and the changing status of partners, structurally opened a margin for stronger power relations and conflicts of interests.

3.2. Power relationships and conflicts of interest

As the new security measures forced more and more Palestinians to enter Israel illegally in search of work, they became more vulnerable vis-à-vis their employers. It would be difficult or even impossible for Palestinian workers to complain to the Israeli authorities

for being badly treated or not remunerated according to what they were promised by their Israeli employers. Avraham Bornstein (2002, chap. 3) gives a few examples showing how Israeli Arabs and Jews profited from this situation during the Oslo period in the central region of Israel. Similar cases happened in the Negev. In 2002-2003, following the tightening of control in the southern West Bank and the drastic reduction in work permits issued, Bedouin taxis reinvented themselves as “workers’ smugglers” (*muharribîn `ummâl*). To cover their risk, they raised their fee for a one-way trip from Green Line to the surrounding of Beer Sheva (Rotem 2003). In 2002, in Rahat, a Bedouin town north of Beer Sheva, a West Bank worker would earn 100 NIS a day. The fare from Rahat to the Green Line was 50 NIS. Another van would pick the workers up from the other side of the Green Line and take them to their villages (most were from al-Dûra) for 5 NIS. It was not economical to travel both directions for one day’s work. There were no taxis that did both sides of this journey¹⁰.

Even in legal situations, the framework that emerged during the Oslo period and later opened a greater margin for exploitation. At the Erez Crossing, the Israelis and the Palestinians created a free zone where Israeli industries hired Gazan Palestinians. Little attention was paid to the working conditions in this zone.

Some of the Israeli Palestinians who invested in the Erez Zone included a few Bedouin from the Negev. One of them, Sâlim a Bedouin living East of Beer Sheva, ran a sewing factory. He would purchase pieces of clothes from the Far East, assemble them at Erez and sell them to Europe or the United States. He employed more than fifty Palestinian workers, both men and women. His business was not successful, and he could not pay the workers on time, but the workers did not complain as they had no other job opportunities. It was not until the summer of 1998 when some kin and close relations of the workers came to Sâlim’s factory and tried to break some machinery. Salim was not there, and his subordinates, who supervised the factory in his absence, stopped the angry relatives. The relatives threatened they would return if the wages were not paid the same day.

When informed of the incident at home, Sâlim reported the story to his brothers. They mobilized ten youths from the family that went immediately to the Erez Industrial Zone. Ready to protect the family business, they brought sticks and knives. They reached Erez and hour later and entered without being questioned by the Israeli soldiers. Their arrival at the factory was a real *mise en scène* of power. The youths rustled up by Sâlim and his two brothers entered the factory by force threatening to beat the frightened workers gathered behind Sâlim’s subordinate, Ahmed, who was trying to explain to them that they were not in danger as the Gazans had left earlier in the afternoon. The tension remained high for over an hour. The young Bedouin provoked the workers who intended to protest at their overdue pay. Later Sâlim informed them that he would not allow them to threaten him this way. Stressing his “Bedouin background”, he said he would not be afraid to use force against force. In the end, the workers were paid a few

¹⁰ Discussion with Richard Ratcliffe June 2004

months' of unpaid wages and were promised that the remaining sum of money owed them would be paid as soon as the factory began to make new profits.

Needless to say, this situation is extreme. Moreover, the action did not gain unanimous support from within the lineage. Back in Israel, Sâlim, his brothers and the youths who chose to accompany them were strongly criticized by the other members of his lineage. First, the *kbâr* argued that in conflicts each part should try to solve it by negotiation before sending the youths (*shebâb*). In addition, Sâlim was accused of exploiting people who did not have any other means to provide food for their families. Still, the situation shows to what extent the widening gap created by the border situation between the Bedouin and their fellow Palestinians opened cross-border relations to potentially extreme and violent relationships of power.

In the 1990's, border changes and their outcomes deepened power relationships inside trans-border kinship groups. The cross-border ties that developed between separated branches of the Rashâyde were already unbalanced between the end of the 1960s and the end of the 1980's. For instance, Israeli Rashâyde married mainly women from their agnates in the Occupied Territory while refusing to give them their own daughters and sisters to wed. At the end of the 1990s, only two grooms born in the Gaza Strip were married to Israeli women, and their marriages were explicitly conducted in order to organize their settlement in Israel. Of course, the marriage of Gazan or West Bank daughters in Israel enabled the Rashâyde living in Gaza and in the region of Dhahriyya to avoid having to marry them outside the lineage¹¹. In fact, this pattern reveals the perception of status of the different people on both sides of the border. On the one hand, the Rashâyde of the Occupied Territories and Jordan would consider the marrying of their daughters in Israel as an opportunity to marry her closely and eventually to provide her with a better standard of living. Israeli members, on the other hand, perceived the marriage of their daughters to Gaza, Dhahriyya and Jordan as similar to a marriage with a stranger and as synonymous with downward mobility. For the latter, a close marriage would mean to marry their daughter either inside the Israeli branch, or to a groom from a neighboring group in Israel with whom they maintain close links. This distinct perception of closeness expresses the fragmented perceptions of space as well as cross-border encounters within the Rashâyde.

This distinct fragmented experience and the conflicts of interests it gave rise to grew in the late 1990s. The stronger limitations on freedom of movement and the emergence of a permit system to work in Israel gave a new pragmatic dimension to cross-border matrimonial exchanges. Giving Palestinian or Jordanian spouses the right of residency in Israel and even the citizenship, meant that cross-border matrimonial alliances became

¹¹ Seemingly, this strategy was shared between all the scattered branches outside of Israel. Among the descendant of `Awâd brother, Ibrâhîm, all the daughters were married in Israel or in Egypt with agnates. The only daughter who was married outside the family was engaged to a Bedouin refugee in Gaza. Similarly, among the Dhahriyya descendants of `Awâd's second brother, Hamdân, all daughters were engaged with grooms from the Israeli branch. Furthermore, during this period, the members of the lineage exiled in Jordan married all their daughters to Israeli sons of their brother or patrilineal cousin, while they engaged their sons to local brides, whether Bedouin, peasants or town dwellers.

an opportunity to get rid of the entire procedure linked with obtaining work permits and thus synonymous with prosperity. At the end of the 1990s, many Palestinian and Jordanian kin of Bedouin remained in Israel to initiate negotiations in order marry Israeli Bedouin relatives. According to the Ministry of Interior, since 1993, the number of applications for family unifications following weddings amounted between 22,000 to 23,000 in all of Israel. According to the population registry in the Interior Ministry, every request of this kind brings in addition an average of six more people. In all, the number of Palestinians who have begun proceedings to get citizenship stood at 140,000 in 2002 (Muallem 2002, Badil 2002).

The authorities claimed that the growth of non-Jewish population in Israel was a threat to the Jewish character of the State (Badil 2002) as well as a danger for security. It is on this basis that the Israeli government decided to freeze such procedures in 2002. In 2003, the Knesset voted for a resolution to forbid Palestinian spouses the right to obtain residency or citizenship. Interior Minister Avraham Poraz argued that it was necessary as “during the Intifada there has been growing involvement in terrorism of Palestinians who are residents of the territories and have Israeli ID cards as a result of family reunification or marriage, exploiting their status as Israelis to move freely between Israel and the territories” (Alon 2003)...

In addition, such alliances became a problematic issue among the Bedouin. In a few cases, Palestinian spouses divorced their Israeli wives as soon as they obtained the right of residency or citizenship. However rare, these few cases were enough to spread the rumor and frighten the Israeli Bedouin. To prevent such a risk, Bedouin fathers raised the second part of the *mâhir*, the *muta'ajjal*,¹² thus obligating the spouse would have to give a significant sum of money in case of divorce. In some cases, I witnessed people asking for a *muta'ajjal* of up to \$50,000. Among the Israeli Rashâyde some people even refused to give the hand of their daughters to their Jordanian kin.

Recently, the harsher limitations on movement and the worsening political situation has impeded Palestinians and Jordanian from marrying their daughters to Israeli kin. The policy of closure made such alliances more threatening to Palestinians as it meant that parents would be cut off from their daughters. Not only would they have difficulties in visiting her, but they would also have no possibility to protect her from potential abuse by her husband or his kin. Another motivation for this new tendency may have come from the fact that during the 1960s and 1970s, many Palestinian and Jordanian Bedouin men married local women, whose mothers would be less interested in marrying their daughters into the family of their husbands across the border. Like the Israeli Bedouin, they preferred to marry their daughters within physical proximity rather than within the lineage.

¹²The *mâhir* is often translated as the bridal price. It is the compensation given by the groom's family to the family of the bride. It is composed of two parts. First, there is the *muta'ajjal* or *mutagaddim* that is given immediately to the bride's family; second, there is the *muta'ajjal* or *muta'akhir*, that is an agreed sum that is given to the bride if she is repudiated by her husband.

Altogether, these new developments struck a sharp blow to cross-border alliances. Among the Rashâyde, they dwindled compared to the past. Between 1990 and 2003, seven marriages were concluded: two between with Gazan Rashâyde (one girl, and one boy), two with Jordanian Rashâyde (two girls) and three with West Banker Rashâyde (three girls). They amount to 20% of the total number of marriages in the Rashâyde lineage during this period, as compared to 30% in the 1980s.

Feelings of difference and inequalities, as well as conflicts of interest were deepened by the deterioration in the general political situation over the last fifteen years. During the two Intifadas, as well as during the Oslo period, loyalties were put to test more than ever. Like the other Palestinian Israelis, the Bedouin were victims of a double suspicion: their Jewish neighbors always considered them part of a fifth column (*gays khameshi* [Hebrew]), while their fellow Palestinians were similarly wary.

One day in spring 2001, `Iyâd was invited to Muthgal's house in Dhahriyya to meet with PNA officials. After less than half an hour, one of them started to ask `Iyâd why young Bedouin enrolled in the Israeli army. He also expressed his disappointment for the lack of mobilization of the Bedouin in September 2000, when the second Intifada began, while he was impressed by the mobilization of Palestinian Israelis in the Galilee. `Iyâd said the Bedouin were afraid, and that they depended on Jews more than the Arab population in Galilee did. An uprising in the Negev would have severed the links between Jews and the Bedouin, attracting the anger of the Israeli authorities. Regarding the military service, he said it concerned only a minority of people, mostly uneducated, and frightened by the authorities. He did not mention the fact that three years earlier, he had decided to send his own son to the army with the blessing of his Palestinian cousin Muthgal. After the two Palestinian officials left, `Iyâd complained to his cousins, Muthgal and his brother Sâmî. He argued that the attitude was unjust, especially from Palestinian officials whom he accused of using their powerful positions to get rich at the expense of their own people. His cousins made a point to agree with him, as they measured his frustration. Nevertheless, they could hardly hide their assent with their two Palestinians guests. Such encounters were bitter experiences that `Iyâd would discuss later with his Israeli kin, back inside the Green Line. Like many other Palestinian Israelis, he would feel held back by his difference.

CONCLUSION

Rather than challenging the borders, trans-border exchanges adjusted to them. During the last fifty years, exchanges between the Negev Bedouin and their kin and network in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jordan, evolved in accordance with border policies. From 1967 until 1994, exchanges were intense and regular as no obstacle stood in their way, but their intensity and their content changed significantly in the late 1990s, due to the imposition of new security measures.

Throughout this period, trans-border exchanges created an intricate web of relationships extending social, economic and political spaces of the population involved. In the case of the Rashâyde lineage such contacts gave rise to trans-border kinship groups that

constituted the basis for the emergence of trans-border groups of solidarity and interest as well as trans-border configurations of power. Together with economic partnerships, these exchanges fostered the passage of goods, people and values, leading to a sharing of culture. Further, these cross-borders encounters question sharp distinctions established by scholars between the Bedouin and their Palestinian kin and networks. Such a web of intricate relations makes difficult the dissociation of discrete cultures or societies separated by the Green Line or international borders.

However, even the broadening of the space of relations of local population does not constitute a challenge for such borders as they are not necessarily meant to separate people. Since 1967, the border policies of successive Israeli governments enabled flows of people on both sides of the Green Line. Even during the Oslo period and later, during the second Intifada, Israel only tightened its control over the movement of people rather than stopping it. From this perspective, the emergence of an intricate web of relationship across the Green Line follows the logic of such policies rather than challenging it.

Furthermore, cross-border relations do not erase boundaries between the populations involved. As we noticed, while people cross the Green Line or the international border with Jordan, they carry with them existing boundaries or create new ones. Occurring in an unequal framework of relationships, exchanges across borders are moments and places where people experience their differences and develop antagonism. This process has been all the more acute in the last fifteen years. Widening gaps on the legal and economic levels strengthened relationships of power and gave rise to conflicts. Border encounters are often marked by bitter or violent experiences, creating distrust and sometimes fear. They foster feelings of differences and fragmented experience between cross-border partners.

Practiced on a daily basis, and over a long period of time, these differences and antagonisms are internalized and often perceived as a given. This is all the more true as people use these experiences to reconstruct dominant narratives that stress distinctions between these very populations. Each experience is added to other stories that people heard or witnessed personally. Narratives about “us” and the “others” are often presented as facts; they are built upon a sedimentation of multiple stories about ourselves and others (Vila 2003, 107; van Dijk 1993, 126). These cross-border encounters and the experiences people draw from them validate categories like, “Bedouin” against “Palestinians”, whether “West Banker” (*dhaffâwi*) or “Gazan” (*Ghazzâzwe*). In brief, while trans-border encounters favor strong ties as well as a sharing of culture, they also foster processes of differentiation already at work among local populations. This is the case for the processes of ethnicity and community building underwent by the Bedouin who remained in the Negev. Instead of questioning their isolation from their Palestinian neighbors, border encounters nourish their feelings of difference towards the latter.

What I suggest, is that trans-border networks tie the Bedouin to their fellow Palestinian while re-adjusting their relations in the framework imposed by border policies. The

analysis of the matrimonial alliances developed by the Rashâyde over the last 35 years, shows to what extent such exchanges can define and sanction new hierarchies between the groups involved. Throughout this period the Israeli Rashâyde imposed themselves as women “takers” while their relatives on the other side of the Green Line and the international border with Jordan were forced into the role of women “givers.” This outcome is all the more significant once we take into consideration the hierarchical implications of such a pattern in the Arab marriage (Bonte & Conte 1991, Kressel 1992). In addition to this, we can witness the deepening of relationships of power that takes place on the economic level.

From this perspective, cross-border exchanges do not merely adjust to the power of borders, but also re-adjust their power on the ground. They sanction and deepen inequalities between cross-border partners, whether in terms of status or in terms of apprehending the space.

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