

Fifty Years, Five Crossings, More to Come

The Kirad Bedouins of Galilee and the Israeli-Syrian Border, 1948

Dan Rabinowitz

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The post 1948 history of the Kirad Bedouins of the Hula valley in Northern Israel is a series of forced mass border-crossings between Israel, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. These migrations came concurrently with a staggered process of dispossession, in which the Kirad lost ownership of their ancestral lands, and ended up as a diaspora scattered over four states. The upheavals experienced by the Kirad are historicized and analyzed as a 'small scale diasporic situation'. This, I argue, is an exceedingly widespread situation in a world characterized as 'glocalized', in which powerful globalizing trends combine with ethno-national fervor that accentuates territoriality and state borders. The Kirad's own perception of their world, fragmented and disturbed beyond recognition by impermeable and often hostile state borders since 1948, is contextualized in terms of the analogy between the recent, vivid past, and ancient history, only vaguely remembered and invoked. Wolfe's (1982) notion that world systems are by no means new phenomena, the place of diachronic reckoning and subjective historical perceptions, and the place of fate and repetition in the Kirad's identity inform the theoretical trajectory of the analysis.

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Fragmented Kin Groups

Abu-Uthman, born ca. 1935, currently a resident of the Palestinian village Sha'ab in West Galilee, spent most of his adult life separated from his older sister. She has lived in Syria since the family's forced migration from the Hula valley during the 1948 hostilities. While acutely aware of the traumatic significance of family disunion, he is nevertheless convinced that blood ties do and will prevail. The illustration he recently chose to stress this point was somewhat unexpected. In his words:

"A mountain can never meet a mountain. But people can come together. There was this Jewish guy I knew, a Russian Jew. We worked together for seventeen years in construction, all over Israel. They say that people who live together and are close have salt and bread together.

Well in our case you could say that over the years we had between us a whole sack of flour.

Anyway, he had come here from the Soviet Union at the age of thirteen, before the Second World War. Then the war broke out, and he lost contact with his family in Russia. Time went by, and fifty years later he suddenly had contact with them again. A letter from his sister arrived one morning, and by evening he was in Italy to meet her. They met in a street, amongst many strangers, but immediately recognized each other. He says their identical foreheads gave them away."

"The same happened between my sister and me. In 1948 we were chased by the Israelis into Syria. She stayed while I later returned to Israel. I never saw or talked to her for more than forty years. Then a few years back we re-estab-

lished contact, and made an appointment to meet in Mecca, during the Haj. She was with her son, whom I recognized before I even saw her. That's the way it is with *dam*."

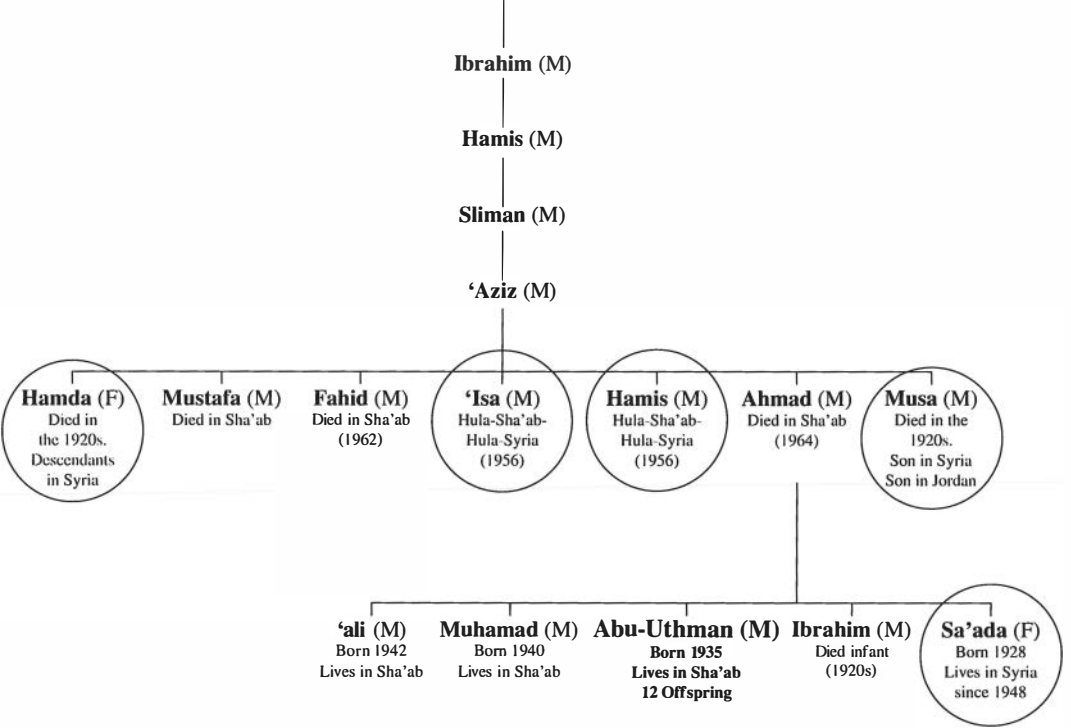
Dam, literally meaning blood, also denotes physical appearance. In Abu-Uthman's view, it is blood – both the person's external looks and their inner essence – which binds him to members of his family despite forced separation across impermeable political frontiers. The Syrian-Israeli border, an immensely powerful border structuring the lives of all Kirad Bedouins, thus becomes a yard-stick against which strengths of kinship, group solidarity and endurance can be measured.

Abu-Uthman is the third of five siblings. His eldest sister, who lives in Syria with her many offspring, is some seven years older than he. She was born in or around 1928. Two younger broth-

ers live like Abu-Uthman in Sha'ab, while a fifth sibling died as an infant in the 1920s. Roughly a quarter of Abu-Uthman's immediate agnatic relations are thus in forced exile as refugees in Syria. The remaining three-quarters of the agnatic group – himself, his two siblings and their offspring in Sha'ab – are in a different predicament. While displaced from their ancestral home like their sister, they live within the state of Israel, only a few hours' travel from the village. They can visit the ruins relatively easily. Their status as citizens of a state purporting to be a democracy, where the rule of law prevails, gives them a semblance of political leverage and a faint hope of return – a vision their cousins in Syria cannot dream of.

The picture is even more fragmented in the generation of Abu-Uthman's father, Ahmad. Born around 1900 in the Hula as one of seven siblings, Ahmad died in 1964 in Sha'ab, near his

Abu-Uthman's Geneaology



Encircled: branches of the family living in Syria

three sons. Four of his six siblings, however, had become refugees in Syria – some in 1948, others later. Sixty per cent of Ahmad's agnates are thus refugees in Syria.

A second case is that of Um-Nader¹, who was separated from her agnatic kin in 1951. Her agnates, having managed to return like other Kirads from an initial period of exile in Syria, were displaced for the second time (below). Like Abu-Uthman and others, Um-Nader and her husband moved to Sha'ab too. Her six siblings, on the other hand, moved to Syria, where they and their descendants have been living since. Her husband's agnatic family did more or less the same, and by the mid-1950s the couple found themselves with no immediate kin near them in Sha'ab or, for that matter, anywhere else in Israel.

Um-Nader's husband died young, leaving her with a son – Nader – and a daughter, Hamida. Hamida soon married 'adnan, a member of a large family most of which now live in Galilee. Hamida's union became a lifeline for herself, her mother and her brother. It provided them with alternative kin and a new social focus. Hamida and her brother, for example, took to calling 'adnan's elder brother Muhammad 'father', although he is no member of their agnatic kin. Curiously, Muhammad is not even the senior sibling in his own family: he and 'Adnan have an elder brother, Sa'id, a refugee in Syria.

A third example is Salim, now in his seventies. Salim named some of his children after pivotal events in his life. His eldest daughter, born in 1948, carries a name that means in Arabic 'predicament' or 'hardship', commemorating the family's forced departure from the Hula valley in 1948. Another daughter, born in late 1951, carries a name that means 'migration', after the second forced migration of the same year. Over the years Salim had pictures of his sisters and of their descendants, all of whom now live in Syria, passed on to him through Europe or Jordan. He keeps the pictures in a special case, presents them proudly, and knows the names of most of those who feature in them, none of whom he ever met. Having retired from work, in the mid-1990's he spent much time and energy obtaining permission for two of his sis-

ters to come and visit him in Sha'ab. The month or so long visits eventually took place in 1994 and 1995.

Historicizing Removal and Return

Prior to the war of 1948, the Kirad Bedouin had found themselves along with 20 other Palestinian, Bedouin and Arab Villages in the Hula valley at the forefront of a tough contest against Zionism over settlement and territory. Their immediate *dira* (assigned tribal territory) and its environs at the southern tip of the valley, had a number of Zionist settlements established in it, including Mishmar Hayarden (founded 1890), Yisud Hama'ala (founded 1883), Ayelet Hashahar (founded 1918) and Hulata (founded 1936).

The Kirad were forced out of their two villages for the first time on April 22nd 1948, two days after the flight of the inhabitants of adjacent al-'Ulmaniya and al-Husaniya (Morris 1991:172). Morris, who does not record direct expulsion or even occupation on the part of the Jewish forces against the Kirad villages, suggests that the Kirad's departure resulted from the fear of impending Jewish attack and of being caught in the crossfire of an approaching Syrian offensive (ibid.).

Most Kirad members fled eastwards, taking temporary refuge in and around Arab villages in the southern section of the Golan Heights, particularly al-Sanabir, some 10 km from their villages of origin. The circumstances of the flight were probably not extreme, since many managed to transport their herds – their major source of livelihood – with them. Some returned later for their livestock and removable belongings, while other items were stored in and around the villages in the hope of future return. By the time a Syrian ground attack into the Hula valley began in early June 1948, the twin Kirad villages, like other Arab villages in the valley, were empty. At cease-fire, the villages were part of 19 km² west of the Jordan river controlled by Syrian troops.

The General Armistice Agreement signed between Israel and Syria on July 20th 1949 (the last one to be signed by Israel and an Arab state as part of the Rhodes Armistice Accord), gave Israel control over most areas where Israeli

army (I.D.F.) troops were present. This included parts that had not been designated in the UN Partition Plan of 1947 as part of Israel, but were nevertheless conquered by the I.D.F. during the hostilities. This was a bitter blow to all displaced and dislocated Palestinians. Having fled to neighboring Arab states, the refugees remained in waiting, hoping to return to their communities and properties and to restore the lives they once had there.

The disappointment was naturally harsher for those whose homes and properties had been in areas not designated by the 1947 Partition Plan as part of the Zionist state. Had the General Armistice Agreement disregarded the military situation on the ground at cease-fire, and turned the wheel back so that only territories assigned to Israel in the Partition Plan were in fact included within it, the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees would have been facilitated.

Most Hula refugees who fled to Syria or the Lebanon were hoping to return to their old homes in spite of the fact that the Hula had been designated by the UN Partition Plan as part of Israel. However, the General Armistice Agreement, which consolidated Israeli sovereignty over the Hula, was soon followed by Israeli actions to effectively seal-off the border, thus preventing Palestinian refugees from returning. Hope of restoration of the pre-1948 situation quickly eroded.

The General Armistice Agreement designated a number of tracts on either side of the Israeli-Syrian border as Demilitarized Zones (DMZ's). One such area was the 19 km² west of the Jordan, where Syrian troops were present at cease fire, in which the old Kirad villages are located. In return for the Syrian agreement to withdraw from this tract, Israel agreed to keep it demilitarized.²

The General Armistice Agreement included an important provision, which soon proved fateful to many of the Kirad. It empowered the Chairman of the Joint Israeli—Syrian Armistice Committee, a UN official, to authorize the return of civilians to villages and settlements within the DMZ.³ This pertained to seven villages (Morris 1991:323), two of which were Kirad Bakkara and Kirad Ghannama. In the

following months the Kirad, along with residents of al-Samara, Nuqib and al-Hamma (villages located in other DMZ's on either side of the border) were in fact allowed to return. This move was obviously part of a Syrian attempt to maintain some presence in the Hula after the evacuation. The Syrians equipped the Kirad with official travel documents which allowed them to travel between Syria, the Hula valley and Lebanon, and hoped to maintain them as loyal representatives of Syrian interests in the Hula DMZ.

It was at that stage that Abu-Uthman lost contact with his sister. While he and his two brothers seized the opportunity to return to their old homeland, his sister and her husband went the other way. They lingered in the Golan, eventually finding their way to a Palestinian refugee camp near Damascus, where they and their descendants have been living since.

The presence in the Hula DMZ of Kirad returnees officially equipped with Syrian documents became significant again in 1951, when Israel began to execute a long standing plan to drain the Hula wetlands.

The drainage of the Hula was the major development and economic project undertaken by the state of Israel during the first decade since statehood. A major engineering feat by any standards, it was managed by a joint ministerial committee, fuelled by Jewish National Fund money, boosted by international know-how and executed by state of the art machinery chartered in Western Europe and the USA. In early 1951 earth began to move, signaling a multi-staged operation that was carried out at various locations over almost seven years.

Ground could have been broken almost anywhere in the valley. However in February 1951 Israel decided to start digging only a stone's throw away from the twin Kirad villages, inside the Demilitarized Zone. The first bulldozers were deployed in early March 1951 in two adjoining spots. One was west of the Jordan River, on private land that had belonged to Arab refugees. Israel was fully aware that Syria regarded the owners as Syrian citizens, and purported to represent them. The other spot was east of the Jordan River, near the Bridge of Banat Yaacub. It was within the 100 m wide

strip assigned as part of Israel in the original UN Partition Plan of 1947, only a few hundred yards away from Syrian frontier posts overlooking the river.

The choice of both spots was anything but accidental. The drainage project itself was designed to attain political objectives, including an assertion of sovereignty inside the Hula DMZ (Shalev 1993:51–52). The significance did not escape the Syrians. In March 1951, soon after Israeli bulldozers began work, plain-clothed Syrians began shooting at them. Heroic attempts by UN officials to contain the tension and prevent an outbreak were to no avail, and the tension spilt over to other DMZ's along the Israeli-Syrian frontier east and south of the Sea of Galilee. The border crisis threatened to catapult the two states into a war neither of them wanted.

All this proved fateful for the Kirad Bedouins. On March 30th, following the breakdown of UN mediation on the drainage project, a meeting took place in Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's office, yielding a resolution to 'carry out actions whose purpose is to maintain our sovereignty in that zone' (Shalev 1993:70). These measures were to include distribution of Israeli ID cards to all residents of the zone so as to sever their attachment to Syria, the transfer of as many Arab civilians from the zone to other parts of Israel outside the DMZ, and tighter control of the border in an attempt to prevent movement between the DMZ and Syria (ibid.).

Israeli security forces moved swiftly. On the 30th and the 31st of March, they chased the residents of al-Samara and Nuqayb, two villages east of Lake Tiberias, from their homes and into Syria (Shalev 1993:71). Then, on the night of March 31st, 785 residents of Kirad Bakara and Kirad Ghannama were forced to embark on trucks and buses assembled by the government and were transferred westwards. Their destination Sha'ab is a Palestinian village whose original inhabitants had been dispossessed during the 1948 hostilities, and whose empty houses were used by Israel to resettle various groups of displaced Palestinians.

Abu-Uthman, who was 18 years old at the time, remembers: 'The army came, and encircled the whole village with barbed wire. Then

they summoned the elders to the *bayadir* (thrashing ring) and told them: 'there are problems between us and the Syrians, so we want you out'. The elders asked: 'Is it only us you want out of the zone, or the Jews (from newly established Kibbutz Gadot within the DMZ, D.R.) too?' They asked that because Kibbutz Gadot was still in tents, and they were afraid that it would take over Kirad land and property. The officers replied that this was none of the Kirad's business, and the elders understood that only us, the Kirad, are about to go. So they told the officers: 'We are not going. Either you transfer everybody out, including the Kibbutzniks, or we stay'. At that stage one of the officers suggested to the others, in Hebrew, to shoot some of the elders and thus scare us all into fleeing. Some of the younger people, who knew Hebrew from having worked in Kibbutz Ayelet Hashahar as kids, heard and understood him. They warned the elders, and the decision was made to consent and go in peace. Also, one guy – he was married to my cousin – went out of the barbed zone, and was shot dead on the spot. So we were scared."

The trucks came that night, and the officers and policemen gave the Kirad only minutes to pack and board. The Kirad had very few possessions, having migrated thrice in as many years. They boarded the trucks, traveled all night and got to Sha'ab in the morning. The herds were brought on foot, escorted by armed police, and took two more days to arrive.

Upon arrival in Sha'ab, the Kirad were offered a choice between relocation in the village and exile in Syria. Most elected Sha'ab, where a substantial number of them still live to date. Others went to Syria. A few families were allowed to return to their homes in the Hula valley DMZ.

The ultimate migration from the valley came five and a half years later. On October 30th 1956, the second day of the Suez crisis, in which Israel collaborated with France and Britain against Egypt, General Yitzhak Rabin, then CO of Israel's Northern Command, made a move. Using emergency regulations many believed were in force due to the war against Egypt⁴, Rabin assumed the authority of Military Governor and issued an order forcing the last remaining

Kirad to leave their homes and cross the Syrian border into the Golan⁶. The Bedouins, displaced for the third time, sought their relatives – those who having been chased from their village in 1948 declined to return in 1950. They found them in refugee camps near Damascus, and settled in with them.

The two forced evacuations from the old Kirad villages, that of 1951 and that of 1956, sealed the fate of many Kirad families, including those of Um-Nader and of Salim. The Kirad, who currently number approximately 5,400, are now scattered across Israel, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.⁶ Their twin villages have been empty and ruined since.

Deep Chronology: Kurdish Origins

The prefix 'Kirad' rings of distant lands. Most writers on the region agree it is the plural form of the singular Kurdi, denoting origins in Kurdistan (Dabagh 1988:168, Zakariya 1923:654). The earliest evidence of the presence of Islamic peoples in the Hula is that of the 10th century chronicler Mukaddassi, who mentions agriculture and artificial irrigation in the valley (Le Strange 1896). Al-Jubir, who wrote in 1185, describes the valley as a prosperous area, where Muslims and Franks share pastures and cultivation (cited in Bakhit 1990:104). Le Strange (1890) likewise cites Yakut's 1220 description of the valley as 'one with many villages'. There are references to early presence of Kurdish groups in Hula, but none conclusive. Bakhit (1990) cites primary sources which indicate that in the 15th century some Kurdish Arabs paid waqf (religious endowment) property taxes to the Ottoman region of Safad. Cohen and Lewis (1978:155) indicate that in the 16th century some Kurdish individuals lived in Safad, a town some 12 km west of the Hula valley⁷, as do other sources. Hutteroth and Abdulfatah (1977:27) likewise suggest that 16th century Eastern Galilee had groups, which claimed Turkish, and Kurdish roots. A book published in 1572 by the Safadi qabalist Hayim Vital, entitled *Gate of the Incarnations* cites the existence of a Kurdish quarter in the town (*Ariel Encyclopaedia of the Land of Israel*). Vital also cites a 1865 piece in the Jewish periodical *Hamevaser*, featuring a

'Kurdish' group in Galilee strong enough to have successfully engaged in armed conflict with local Arabs (ibid.).

Shim'oni (1947:108), who does not cite his primary source, suggests that Kurds came into Palestine in trickles rather than in a specific wave. He assumes that some came in the 12th century with the conquest of Palestine by Salah al-Din al-Ayubi, himself an issue to a dynasty of Kurdish origin. Shim'oni identify three communities in northern Palestine, which claim Kurdish descent: residents of a Kurdish neighborhood in Safad; the Krad of the Hula valley; and the Bashatwa near Beisan. Dabagh (1988:168) summarily states that the Kurds of Krad Al-Khait in Hula arrived in Palestine 'in the Middle Ages'.

These bits of evidence regarding the Kirad must be seen within the wider context of Bedouin migration into Galilee at large. Fallah (1990:402) puts forward the plausible argument that the Kurds, like other nomadic and semi-nomadic groups in the periphery of Palestine, arrived in Galilee as the result of forced migration. He suggests, after Lewis (1955:52), that strong tribes such as the 'Anizeh from Arabia, who since the 17th century periodically invaded Syria, continuously dispossessed weaker groups, pushing them off their lands, forcing them to relocate and seek new Dirah (tribal territory) in more marginal areas. Tyler (1994) likewise describes the population of the Hula valley as an amalgam of tribes and splinter groups originating in and associated with groups in Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle-East, largely dominated by and dependent on local and regional powers outside the valley.

The Hula valley – a hot, humid, uncomfortable and inhospitable depression lying at an altitude of 100 m below sea level, is precisely such a region – at least in recent centuries.⁸ Tribal elders of the Kirad in fact cite a battle between their ancestors and the Bedouin tribe of 'Arab al-Fadel of the Golan Heights which, they claim, took place '200 years ago or more'.

Whatever the population influx that may have taken place in Hula in the earlier Ottoman period, a number of sources indicate that by the turn of the 19th century the valley had very little in the way of permanent settlement. Karmon

(1956:60) cites a number of British and German sources attesting to this – mostly travelers who visited the area between 1806 and 1850. This may well be the basis for Sawa'id's (1995) claim that the Kurds of Eastern Galilee first settled in the north of Palestine as late as the 1850s. Sawa'id goes on to assert that the Kirad came at the invitation of the Ottomans, who imported them to curb the influence and power of the local big-man turned peace-keeper Akili Aga.

Registration of land, which began in Palestine following the 1858 Ottoman land reforms and the establishment therein of a real-estate market, encouraged villagers and other tenure holders across Palestine to issue titles to land and settle. Khawalde (1995) indicates that members of the Kirad began registering parcels to their names as early as the 1870s. Within the next five decades the Hula Bedouins – Kirad and others – had founded a few dozen villages in the valley, many consisting of permanent stone houses or wooden huts. This had been the situation on the eve of the 1948 war.

The personal and familial post-1948 history of the current members of the Kirad is thus a sinister, ironic analogy to the mythologized collective chronology of the tribe as a whole. Uprooted, displaced, forced to migrate and then resettled according to the priorities and interests of political powers beyond their control, the living Kirad recreate with their persons, property and heritage a movement similar to that which dominates their group identity.

Two precautionary remarks are in line here. One is that the political predicament that has literally sent the Kirad packing three times within as many years must not be obfuscated in anyway by the stereotypical image of Bedouins as nomadic pastoralists. Elsewhere (Rabinowitz 1985) I show how the essentialist image of the Bedouins as 'children of the desert' – herders leading a nomadic lifestyle that suits their 'nature', 'identity' and 'social structure' – collapses in the face of properly historicized diachronic evidence. In Sinai, herding and other livelihoods connected to natural desert resources transpire as options selected only once other economic opportunities are not available. Nomadism, even cyclical transhumance movement, is not the option of choice on the part of 'sons of

the desert'. Rather, it is the default choice taken by impoverished and marginal peasants, a last resort involving hardship and poverty, turned to at specific moments in their economic histories. In a similar vein, the Kirad, who have been settled since the late 19th century, should not be presumed in any way to be 'accustomed' to migrations such as those their recent history brought upon them.

The deep sense shared by the Kirad of being a people who have survived forced migration from Kurdistan to Palestine some centuries ago is quite a different matter here. In fact Abu-Uthman's deep-seated conviction that *dam* (blood) is sometimes stronger than the indeterminacy and hardship brought by displacement and separation is a much more relevant sentiment here than is the propensity towards nomadic life so fondly imagined by European observers.

Those Kirad who remained in Israel after the 1948, 1951 and 1956 events, reestablished themselves as best they could as culturally and economically marginal communities within Palestinian towns and villages in Galilee, predominantly Sha'ab and Shafa'Amer. The elders still dream of return or remuneration, and visit the old ruined villages whenever possible.

Peace negotiations between Israel and Syria since 1995 brought all DMZ's – not least the Hula DMZ – into focus once again, as both Syria and Israel would like to include them in their territories. The Kirad, for their part, realize that reconciliation between Syria and Israel may bring the status of their homeland and its future prospects to the negotiation table, and may start a process that could eventually facilitate their return.

The hopes of possible recuperation of their rights and property triggered new sensitivities amongst the Kirad regarding genealogy and kinship (Rabinowitz and Khawalde, forthcoming). While prior to 1948 the Kirad community tended to be hierarchical and dichotomized between the core 'Kurdish' segments on the one hand and those believed to be descendants of client families, serfs, outcasts and other recent additions to the Kirad on the other, dispossession and exile bred a more egalitarian Kirad identity⁹, including a higher frequency of mar-

riage unions between original Kurdish sub-groups and other, more inferior sub-groups (ibid.).

Social and familial reckoning is naturally linked to land tenure, hence also to the prospect of return. Land ownership in the old homeland was restricted to the 'Kurdish' Kirad alone, largely excluding other groups within the Kirad. If return – or, for that matter, remuneration for lost property – transpires as a realistic option, the 'Kurdish' Kirad will have to make a choice: either stand by the more recent inclusive Kirad identity forged in exile and find a way to share whatever yield the process brings with all other Kirads. Or revert to re-inventing the old exclusive cleavages, safeguarding property rights for the 'authentic' Kirad alone, thus ensuring a non-egalitarian spread of revenue (ibid.).

The issue becomes even more complex once we incorporate the exiled members of the tribe – both 'Kurdish' Kirad and members of more peripheral sub-groups – who now reside across the border, mainly in Syria, into the reckoning picture. The current political and social horizons of both communities seem wide apart. Moreover, for members of the tribe now residing in Syria the issue of rights in the ancestral territory is vague and hardly relevant. This, however, may be altered once a real breakthrough in Israeli-Syrian relations actually happens. It is at such junctures that the power of blood ties is likely to be invoked again, perhaps to form an automatic, 'natural' parity between relatives across the border. And it is in such situations that the specific histories of various sections of the tribe, including the histories of those who became refugees, become significant in ways not easily overseen.

The Palestinian citizens of Israel can be defined as a 'trapped minority', an individual case of a national minority (Rabinowitz and Khawalde forthcoming). Trapped minorities stretch across territorial borders in ways traditional concepts of states and nations fail to acknowledge, let alone theorize. Citizens in states which are hegemonized by groups they are excluded from, members of trapped minorities are alienated from political power and cannot influence the definition of public goods or determine who enjoys them. Having no part

in their mother nation's national project, which takes place in other territories, they are marginal twice over: once in their state of residence and citizenship; and a second time within their mother nation.

Entrapment is a dramatic development. A space initially perceived to be safe is subject to sudden external interference leading to confinement: a door is closed, a fence erected, a wall cemented. The space becomes a dangerous enclosure, the subject is suddenly incarcerated. Most homeland minorities are trapped in two distinct but complimentary dimensions. The first one is historical, pertaining to the sequence of undesirable events that brought about their current predicament as a minority within an alien state. The other denotes entrapment between contemporary entities, and in particular between their host state and their mother nation.

The Kirad are not a national minority to themselves. The history they share with the majority of Palestinian communities has ironed out most of the differences and distance that may have existed between them and mainstream Palestinians before 1948. Many Kirad in fact identify themselves as Palestinians, feeling a shared fate. But when it comes to an analysis of the group by itself, the Kirad, like other Bedouins, can be subsumed under the definition of 'Fourth world' (Manuel and Posulns 1974). They are a small scale, marginal group whose territory and other vital resources were overtaken by an alien state.

They are spread, since 1948, over four states, that suggests analogies between their situation and that of larger national minorities in a similar predicament. Like trapped minorities, the Kirad have to negotiate between their state of citizenship and their mother group. But in addition to the scattered mother Palestinian nation, the Kirad have an additional entity – the bifurcated tribe, historicized as an important focus of identity and essence, to reckon with.

The result is what I wish to call 'small scale diasporic situation': a diaspora created by a hostile frontier running through the middle of a small scale. Like other diasporas, that of the Kirad too has a cradle territory – the Hula valley – and those who have been forced away and now live elsewhere. Unlike normal diaspor-

ic situations, however, small scale diasporas are personal, immediate and concrete. The central idiom is the border, not the world at large, and the imagination is of a linear trajectory – a line between the homeland and the place of exile – rather than a sphericone in which the world at large serves as the alternative to home.

It is no wonder that in such a predicament kinship transpires as a central unifying symbol. More than the nation, citizenship or other types of generalized affiliation, kinship is, for Bedouins, an idiom that unites the most important elements that form the sense of home and of belonging. The ever important blood ties dictate solidarity (Abu Lughod 1986), rights in land (Marx 1977), allegiance (Evans-Pritchard 1940, Peters 1965) and the place and legitimacy of individuals in a significant social web.

Notes

1. Um-Nader and all other names specified in connection with her are not the actors' real names.
2. See Shalev 1993 for a detailed account of the central DMZ in the Armistice Regime, 1949–1955.
3. Security Council (UN) (1949) *Communication dated 20 July 1949 from the UN Acting Mediator on Palestine to the Acting Secretary-General transmitting the text of the General Armistice Agreement Between Israel and Syria. Documents / 1353 / Rev.1, Official Records, Fourth Year.* (Article 5, paragraph 5 sub-paragraph e).
4. In the event, a state of emergency was never officially declared during that conflict.
5. Rabin, Yitzhak (1979) *Service Record*. Tel-Aviv: Maariv (in Hebrew).
6. Khawalde's field survey of the Kirad in Northern Israel in 1997 has found 1,859 members: 877 in the village of Sha'ab in western Galilee, the rest in the town of Shafa'amar and the villages of Tuba, Kufr-Yasif, Jdaidah and Abu-Snan in lower Galilee. A further 3,500 Kirad are estimated to live as refugees abroad – mostly in Syria, some in Jordan, a handful in Lebanon. An earlier survey conducted by Khawalde in 1990 indicates that at the time the total number of the Kirad in Galilee was 1,599. Sha'ab had 737, Shafa'amar 579, and the rest resided in smaller numbers in other villages (Khawalde 1994:133).
7. Turkman tribes inhabiting the Valley of Esdralon are mentioned by a number of writers, some of whom cite the name 'Theishat. See Ashkenazi (1938:240), Shimoni (1947:100–103).
8. Since irrigation is a major limiting factor, ancient irrigation schemes may have had the valley more fertile and productive in earlier times.

9. A similar process is known amongst the 25 or so Bedouin tribes and splinter groups of the Negev, which Israel systematically dispossessed and relocated in the early 1950s in an attempt to gain full control of their ancestral land. Uprooted and forcefully transferred to a triangular zone located between Beer-Sheva, Dimona and Arad and pushed by powers beyond their control into becoming tenants on land historically belonging to another Bedouin coalition, the 'Dulam, the newly arrived Bedouin were – and still are – in a dubious position. The military government under which they found themselves in the 1950s dictated total dependency on recognition by the government for purposes of work and travel permits, social security and grazing rights. Such recognition would only be extended through an intricate system of patronage, carried out by co-opted Bedouin Sheikhs. The newcomers thus had to find protection and official representation with their reluctant Bedouin hosts, or suffer the dire consequences of nonrecognition by the state.

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