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TRIP REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural studies of food intake patterns are known to be problematic. But, in Egypt the cultural barriers further complicate issues related to individual food consumption, and food quantifications. Fear of the evil-eye, and a strong sense of household privacy about food influence peoples' reports about food consumption. On the one hand a person fears to mention that there is abundance of food at home or that a child eats well, and on the other hand, to publically reveal that one eats inexpensive food items like legumes, Duka (salt and cumin) causes social embarrassment. These two dicotomous perceptions about food strongly shape respondents' answers to questions about food intake.

The CRSP Egypt study has relied heavily on the twenty-four hours recall method for gathering data from Kalama. Knowing the problems of under-reporting to ward off the evil-eye, and the over-reporting to avoid personal embarrassment, one questions the validity of data gathered exclusively through the twenty-four hours recall methodology. Hence this paper is written with the purpose of exploring various field methodologies suitable for rural Egypt. The methodologies suggested in this paper were the results of several brain-storming sessions that took place at the Nutrition Institute in Cairo as well as consultations with members of the Egyptian-American CRSP team. Fieldwork at Kalama for fifteen days guided my judgements about cultural suitability of methodologies. Intensive interviews were conducted with Kalama residents. Thirty households were visited, and intensive interviews were conducted with members of the four target groups.

Moreover, the lack of accurate nutritional data on rural toddlers in Egypt necessitates the use of dual methodologies. Cross-checking information reported by respondents is crucial in order to establish a higher level of data validity. Many of the nutritional studies written about childrens' nutrition were not written with toddlers in mind, e.g. Hanafy (1972), Ragheb (1947), and Burkhat (1980). Studies of infants and school children in Egypt are not scarce; however, toddlers have not been well represented in the Egyptian literature.

II. The Cultural Context of Food at Kalama

At Kalama, there are underlying cultural beliefs that impinge on individuals' food choices, food habits, and food distribution. The following are some of the main beliefs influencing food consumption dynamics:

- A. Secrecy: At Kalama food is perceived as ?awra, an act that causes embarrassment and should be done in secrecy from strangers. The mouth is covered when eating in public. Also, eating in public is to be avoided particularly by women. Household storage areas are to be guarded and access is limited only to family members.

Women might eat secretly, and claim loss of appetite to attract sympathy from husbands. Food is sometimes eaten before meals, during cooking, or at times others are not watching them.

Food items are often hidden from strangers that are believed to have the evil-eye. Chickens, ducks, goats, sheep, water buffaloes, cows, etc. are not to be counted for fear of losing one's blessings. Thus, people use religious phrases like "In the name of Allah", or "May God increase His blessings", etc. whenever food is shown to them. Foods are covered and hidden in the house from outsiders. Foods that have been "looked at", or seen by strangers that are suspected of having the evil-eye, have no nutritional value from the point of view of Kalama residents.

It is interesting that people of Kalama freely talk about sex. They share some of the most intimate information with strangers, but they do not talk about food. Food belongs to the domain of the private. One is constrained to reveal their inability to eat well because it is a reflection on the head of the household's bread earning ability by admitting food shortages at home. Individuals are trained to say "Thank God, Xair is plenty" even if they do not have enough resources. So, under conditions of shortages, secrecy is preferred; also under conditions of abundance secrecy is used to keep away the evil-eye.

- B. Contentment: Children are trained not to look at other siblings' food, or compare their share with others. To be satisfied with one's lot and "Thank God for the blessings" is the norm. However, one hears toddlers saying "How come my brother has more?" Mothers scold these children saying "You have an 'empty eye'." A greedy person is described as having a "Good Sprit", Ruhu Hilwa, if he or she is content with their food and do not compare their share with others.

- C. Respect: One respects Ni?ma, God's food which is seen as a blessing. Food is picked from the floor or ground and put aside, never to be stepped on. One kisses the food before moving it to an area where it would not be stepped on. Rejecting a particular kind of food by a child is corrected by his elders as Butr-Alla-Ni?ma Haram, rejection of the blessing is sinful.

People show their respect for food by saying a blessing before eating. Bread is kissed to show appreciation for food in an environment where food shortages are not uncommon.

- D. Sharing: Food is to be shared with whomever needs it. Guests are treated generously by the hostess who cooks extra foods and then piles food on the guests' plates. Only expensive foods are to be offered to guests. Poultry, ducks, turkey, and lambs are slaughtered for distinguished guests. Beef is always served to guests. People might borrow food ingredients to treat their guests well. If a person appears at meal time without prior notification, the host and the hostess are offended because they were not given the opportunity to treat their guests nicely.

Inexpensive foods like legumes, ful, Ta?mia, Kushari and bread with cheese are not to be offered to a guest unless they are the only foods available in the house. Beef, or zafir (chickens, ducks, turkey, etc.) have to be part of the meal served to guests.

The above mentioned norms represent constraints on individual choices about what to eat, when to eat it, with whom to share food information, and how to eat. There is the push to let people know that you "eat well" by village standards. There is the tendency to show that there is plenty of Xair at home. To reveal to outsiders that there is no Xair because one has empty pots and pans and no food is stored, causes shame and embarrassment. This tendency causes people to over-report food intake within the household. To counteract this belief, there is the pull caused by the belief in the evil-eye.

The most important belief influencing peoples' behavior regarding food is their fear of losing the blessing of having food through the evil effect of the eyes of others. The evil-eye is seen as a force that poisons one's food, stunts one's growth, causes one the loss of appetite and loss of weight. This belief is especially important in relationship to reporting about childrens' food consumption. Children, especially male children, are vulnerable to the evil-eye. When asking about the foods eaten by a toddler, mothers protect their children by under-reporting foods consumed by their children. Upon further probing and questioning, the mother opens up and shares the information with the researcher, as she is assured that the researcher does not have the evil-eye. CRSP researchers were sometimes accused of "looking

at the bread" and causing it to lose its freshness. Pregnancies were concealed to avoid arr, evil-eye. Toddlers were observed to eat or nibble on food continuously during interviews, yet mothers complained that toddlers did not eat well in Ramadan because of lack of Tabix at the house. The inconsistency between the verbal statements and the observations could be explained by understanding the dynamics of keeping away the evil-eye. Toddlers were observed to snack on cucumbers, raw eggplants, pasha sandwiches, Kunafa, dates, peanuts, fūl Nabit, etc. Mothers do not seem to classify Ramrama, (snacking) as an act of eating worthy to mention.

The two beliefs about the fear of the evil-eye and the desire to show that the family "eats well" by village standards are dicotomous and present strong contradictory forces that shape information to be released about food eaten by toddlers. These forces come into play most noticeably when people are questioned about food by outsiders or strangers. Normatively, one should not reveal "the secrets of the house", meaning what one eats, and the types of food present in the household. Food is private; it is a blessing, and it could be "looked at", envied. Once food is "looked at", it would not benefit the one who eats it. In other words, it ceases to be a source of energy.

Villagers at Kalama are keen on cooperating with researchers as long as they do not have to reveal the "secrets of their household." Intrusions in households to weigh food, and look at stored goods are offensive when they are done by strangers.

With this brief normative background, one has to explore fieldwork methodologies that would achieve the two of the main objectives of the study. Namely, to collect valid and accurate data on food intake. Fieldwork observations support the idea that in order to maximize validity and accuracy, one has to minimize the intrusive element in the research methodology. Consultations with many members of the research team confirmed the idea that a workable methodology should include researchers from the village and preferably from the household.

A major concern in working out the details of alternate methodologies is the high rate of illiteracy among lead females. Ideally, the lead female is the best person to report on food intake as she knows all the details of food consumption. Weighing foods, simple calculations and recording data is beyond the capabilities of uneducated village women. With all these constraints, the following methodology was experimented on at Kalama in order to guarantee that the suggested method can be implemented in the village.

The following steps were taken to test the new method:

- 1) Three female students were identified by village researchers
- 2) Dr. Wafaa made an appointment for the following day with the three girls after interviewing them. The three girls stated that they could carry out the experiment of collecting food data from their households, as well as the homes of friends and relatives, but not strangers. A list of eighteen households was compiled with the help of the girls.
- 3) Dr. Wafaa and I met with the three girls and explained the research goals, the tasks involved in collecting data, and identified the target groups for each girl. Weighing was explained to them briefly.
- 4) The girls were given an assignment to write a detailed account of food eaten by the target group members of their own families upon their return to their homes. Each girl was handed blank papers and a pen. The girls were enthusiastic and asked many questions about the overall objectives of the research and the details of recording recipes.
- 5) The following day each girl brought her descriptive account for discussion with Dr. Wafaa. This is a translation of the girls' data:

RESEARCHER'S NAME: Nahid, 19 years old, attends Teachers College

Father: An employee at Research Administration at Kaliub
Owns land (corn, cotton, eggplants, peppers, onions,
carrots, zucchini, cucumbers
Owns a water buffalo

Mohammed, 8 years old, brother
Not fasting - Observation started at 4:30 p.m. upon
Mohammed's return from the field. Morning meal reported
to interviewer (sister)

Meal - 1 fried egg
full-fat cheese
½ loaf of Merahrah bread

A 4:30 p.m. Meal - ¼ of a plate of zucchini
a loaf of Merahrah bread

Fitur Meal - zucchini
fried rice
¾ chicken divided into 8 pieces, give
equal pieces to 8 children

After Fitur snack - Mango juice

Batta, 2½ years old

First minor meal - zucchini, one plate
½ loaf bread

Fitur major meal - zucchini, ¼ plate
rice, 5 spoons
½ loaf bread

After Fitur - Mango juice, 1 cup (60 grams)

Slept at 9:30 p.m.

Mother: Fasting

Fitur - Mango juice, one large cup (120 grams)
2 plates zucchini
1 plate rice
Bread - a piece of a loaf of Merahrah bread
(3 loaves divided between 8 family members -
not sure of all shares)

After Fitur meal - 1 cup of milk (120 grams)

Sihur (dawn meal) - Meal divided equally between three
people, father, mother, and a daughter who is fasting

3 fried eggs
3 spoons of butter
250 grams of cheese
1 cup of tea
1 loaf of bread each

Father - arrived late after the Fitur hour, so he ate alone.

1½ cup mango juice (120 grams per cup)
½ plate zucchini
½ plate fried rice
½ chicken
2 cups of tea (120 grams)

Sihur

shared in the 3 fried eggs with cheese, one loaf of
bread and 2 cups of tea (divided between three
fasting family members.)

Family Two

Resarcher: Gamila Taha Hussein

Father's Occupation: shop owner (groceries), Bakal

Schooler, 9 years old

Name: Ragab

Fasting in Ramadan: Fitur

Drank a cup of dates (syrup sugary)
1 cup of mango juice
 $\frac{1}{4}$ medium sized plate of rice with noodles
 $\frac{1}{3}$ plate of salad (tomatoes & pickled cucumbers)
small piece of beef (no fat) parsely and salt
1 apple (green, small in size)

Sihur

1 boiled egg
3 cucumbers (medium sized ones)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ loaf of merahrah bread
piece of full-fat cheese

Father:

1 cup of date syrup
 $\frac{1}{4}$ of a plate of fried rice with noodles
3 spoons of stewed zucchini
1 cup of tea and $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of sugar
2 pieces of boiled beef (no fat)
1 tomato
1 pickled cucumber
1 pickled pepper
fresh parsely

Sihur

$\frac{3}{4}$ loaf of bread
2 boiled eggs
50 grams of full-fat cheese
2 cucumbers
1 cup of tea

Mother: Fitur

1 cup date syrup
1 cup mango juice
1 apple
 $\frac{1}{4}$ loaf of bread
5 spoons of salad (cucumbers & peppers, pickled, tomatoes & parsely)
1 stuffed white eggplant

Sihur

1/3 of a loaf of bread (Mirahrah)
 a piece of full-fat cheese
 2 cucumbers
 1 boiled egg

Family Three

Researcher: Ahlam
 Father's Occupation: Employee

Mohamed: Toddler, 2½ years old

4:00 p.m.: 1 plate of zucchini with rice
 small pasha cheese sandwich
 1 tomatoe

Husam, 13 years old

4:00 p.m.: 2 cucumbers
 1 plate of macaroni
 1 spoon of mish
 2 tomatoes

7:00 p.m.: ½ plate of zucchini
 (Fitur) Rice
 A cup of dates with the syrup

Sihur: 1 boiled egg
 2 cucumbers
 1/3 loaf of bread
 7 olives
 2 green apples

10:00 p.m.: 1 boiled egg

Father: ½ plate rice
 ½ plate zucchini
 4 spoons salad with tomatoes and cucumbers
 ¼ loaf of bread

Sihur: 3 cucumbers
 2 boiled eggs
 ½ loaf of Merahrah bread
 11 black olives

Mother: $\frac{1}{2}$ plate of rice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ plate of zucchini
 $\frac{1}{4}$ loaf of bread
 1 cup dates
 1 cucumber

Sihur: 2 cucumbers
 1 boiled egg
 $\frac{1}{4}$ loaf of Tamween
 11 olives

Yasir: 18 years old

Fitur: $\frac{1}{2}$ zucchini plate
 $\frac{1}{2}$ rice plate
 2 cucumbers
 2 cups of dates

Sihur: 2 boiled eggs
 3 cucumbers
 1 loaf Tamween bread
 1 cup of water

The girls were asked to be accurate and observe without worrying about weighing food. Hence, the descriptive accounts lack the quantities in the first step of training. The main goal is to sharpen their perception about food consumption, and train them to observe food distribution within their own households.

An analysis of the girls descriptive accounts reveals the following:

1. At mealtime, the men's share is usually larger than any other member in the household.
2. All family members regardless of their fasting status, eat at Fitur (breaking the fast meal at dusk)
3. Sihur (dawn meal) is usually eaten only by fasting members of the family.
4. Beef and poultry consumption of mothers is low in spite of the availability of these items at home.

After discussions of the assignments, Dr. Wafaa and I went to visit one of the girl's homes to teach them the methods of using the scales and to calculate weight of food and beverages in grams. All three girls and a nine year old brother of one of the girls took turns in calculating weights of potatoes, plates, cups, pots, etc.

The girls asked questions about the different ways to calculate the weight of bread, broth, vegetables, etc. They were given a new assignment to observe, weigh and record foods consumed by the four target groups present in their own households over a period of 24 hours.

The following day, I visited one of the girls at home to check on the use of the scales. The girl's record of the food intake for her target members was as follows:

Meal	Type of Food	Weight	Ingredients	
(Mother)	<u>Fitur</u>	French Fries	150 grams	Oil & thin slices of potatoes & salt
		Salad	40 grams	Tomatoes, salt, parsley, green peppers
		Fried Zucchini	20 grams	Zucchini slices, oil, and salt
		Pickled Eggplant	50 grams	White eggplant, salt, garlic
		Garger	10 grams	Finely chopped green peppers
		Green Pepper	10 grams	
		Date Compote	135 grams	Dates, sugar, water
		½ loaf Merahrah bread	110 grams	Corn and wheat
		Kunafa	250 grams	Raisins, coconut, oil, dough and butter
		<u>Sihur</u>	2 cucumbers	44 grams
			cheese (full-fat)	50 grams
			Merahrah bread	115 grams
	(Ragab, 9½)	<u>Fitur</u>	French Fries	200 grams
		Salad	50 grams	
		Eggplants	25 grams	
		Green Peppers	20 grams	
		Date Compote	120 grams	
		Merahrah bread	100 grams	
		<u>Snack</u>	Kunafa	150 grams
			French Fries	50 grams
			Salad	20 grams
			¼ Eggplant, pickled	15 grams
		<u>Sihur</u>	Cheese	50 grams
			Merahrah	110 grams
			4 cucumbers	216 grams

Meal	Type of Food	Weight	Ingredients	
(Father)	<u>Fitur</u>	French Fries	200 grams	SAME AS FOR MOTHER & RAGAB
		Salad	50	
		Boiled White Eggplant	20	
		Garger	15	
		Green Pepper	15	
		Date Compote	135	
		Tea	110	
		Sugar	10	
		Uerahrah Bread	120	

Gamila's family consists of 7 people. They live in house number 7. The family owns a modest home that indicates intermediate socio-economic status. A T.V., radio, fan, stove, tiled floors, and washer are indicative of rising mobility. Gamila has completed a secondary school degree in accounting and has been waiting for a job assignment by the government for a year. She is engaged to a preparatory school teacher and expects to be married in a year.

COMMENTS:

1. Gamila's method of weighing is sound, however, she failed to weigh the ingredients in the meal. She mentioned that many of the foods eaten on the day she observed food intake were left-over foods and she did not know the exact amounts of the ingredients. Obviously, this represents a problem and has to be addressed in training the villagers.
2. She said that weighing foods eaten by the target family members was hard because she is in charge of cooking. She ran back and forth from the livingroom where she placed the scales to the kitchen many times before the fitur. She said that the ideal situation is for the person doing the weighing not to be in charge of the cooking.

NAME: Nahid Sheherter Harb
 House No: 2/68
 Toddler: 2½ years old, girl

Meal	Type of Food	Weight	Ingredients
1. Minor	Pasha Cheese Sandwich	32 grams	cheese
		34 grams	bread
2. Minor	Raw Tomatoe	50 grams	
3. Minor	Stewed Potatoes	312 grams	potatoes, salt, tomatoes, black pep- per
	Bread	60 grams	
<u>Fitur</u>	Jews Mellow	42.5 grams	Jews mellow, onion, garlic broth, salt, fat
	Rice	124 grams	Rice, butter, broth
	Potatoes	54 grams	Tomatoes, oil, salt and potatoes
	Salad	85 grams	Tomatoes, cucumbers, and salt
	Merahrah Bread	107 grams	Wheat, corn, & salt
	Chickens	154 grams	Chicken and fat

Schooler: Boy, 8½ years old

1. Minor	Pasha Cheese Sandwich	150 grams	Cheese
		180 grams	Merahrah Bread
2. Minor	Tomato	60 grams	
3. Minor	Stewed Potatoes	312 grams	SAME AS ABOVE FOR TODDLER
	Merahrah	60 grams	
<u>Fitur</u>	Jews Mellow	42.5 grams	
	Rice	124 grams	
	Potatoes	54 grams	
	Salad	85 grams	
	Merahrah Bread	107 grams	
	Chickens	154 grams	

Father: 43 years old, Fasting

<u>Fitur</u>	Jews Mellow	42.5 grams
	Rice	124 grams
	Potatoes	54 grams
	Salad	85 grams
	Bread	107 grams
	Chickens	154 grams

Meal	Type of Food	Weight	Ingredients
Mother: 40 years old, fasting			
<u>Fitur</u>	Jews Mellow	42.5 grams	
	Rice	124 grams	
	Potatoes	54 grams	
	Salad	85 grams	
	Merahrah Bread	107 grams	
	Chickens	154 grams	
No <u>Sihur</u> for the family			

Nahid stated that her family eats communally from large bowls. So she divided equally the meal between all those who ate together. The only variation was the size of the piece of chicken for the father, which is slightly larger than other family members.

If this methodology is to be generalized and used on core households, the following program is suggested for the larger implementation process.

Identification of Reporters within Household

Identify members of the household that can read, write and are willing to participate in the research by visiting and interviewing literate individuals in core households. An interview with the candidate should precede final recruitment into the data gathering team. An interview card should include the following:

Candidate Name: _____		Block and House No.: _____
Candidate Age: _____		
Candidate Education: _____		
Family size: _____		
Names of Family Members	Relationship to Candidate	Age
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Willingness to observe family members: _____		
Ability to understand directions: _____		

Suggested selection criteria for recruitment is as follows:

1. Ability to read, write and record information,
2. Ability to follow instructions and record simple calculations
3. Ability and willingness to procure needed data. Female candidates should be given preference as they stay home, cook, distribute food, and watch over younger siblings more than boys. Enough assurances should be given about the secrecy of the data.

II. Training in Observation/Weighing Techniques

A three day course should be designed to teach prospective reporters the objectives of the study, explain various techniques of observation and the weighing of food. The use of the plastic bags, scales, and simple calculations should be explained and illustrated procedure to the village interviewers/reporters.

The trainer should go over thoroughly the food intake questionnaire and explain all items to interviewers. Enough time should be allowed to enable each interviewer to experiment with the two scales and ask questions.

It is important to discuss the overall objectives of the study, so interviewers are able to convince their family members to cooperate. A strong emphasis should be placed on honesty in reporting and accuracy of data gathering.

The coding list should be explained to interviewers, along with the importance of recording the correct code. If the coding list should prove confusing to the interviewers, it should be dropped and coding should be done by trained dieticians. From my fieldwork observations it is highly doubtful that interviewers would be able to use the codes correctly.

III. Duration of Observation

This method will follow the same guidelines stated in the CRSP protocol of collecting food intake data for two consecutive days every month.

IV. Reward System

Participating villages have to be compensated for their time and willingness to be part of the data gathering team. The Nutrition Institute might give participants a school bag, clothing, pens, pencils, erasers, rulers, a set of plastic pots, etc. Other items suggested by team members are welcomed. However, money and food should not be used as rewards to avoid increases in budget and food consumption.

It is important to design the reward system, and explain it to participants prior to the data gathering process. For months households at Kalama were visited by many researchers and people's tolerance to further intrusions is low. A reward system that individuals see as desirable will raise morale, and ensure enthusiastic participation in the research.

V. Timing of Training

As it is expected that many schoolers will be recruited in this program, training sessions should take place in the summer vacation time before students get busy with school work.

ADVANTAGES

1. A family member has access to storage rooms and kitchen facilities, two places difficult to be reached by an outside researcher.
2. All cultural sensitivities related to the availability of food, fear of the evil-eye from outsiders, etc. are minimized because the data gatherer is an insider.
3. This model has a high degree of community participation where household members are trained to weigh food, and discuss daily food intake.
4. Knowledge gained from the research might diffuse to other none-core households and hopefully impact peoples' perception of food.

LIMITS

1. The trained family members might over-report in order to impress others with their financial capabilities. Special care has to be paid to honesty in reporting and public discussions of food intake should be avoided.
2. The inability to identify a family member within the core families who can record the needed data.
3. The incentive system for individuals participating in data gathering has not been agreed upon. Thus, enthusiasm about participation might not be high.
4. Some core households might not have a schooler capable or willing to take part in the research. Thus, an alternative methodology has been designed to cover these households.

METHODOLOGY 2

Gathering data by trained researchers who would ask the lead female questions about food intake of the four target groups. Visits would last for two hours everyday. Using a rotation schedule of hours, e.g.,

DAY	HOURS	COMMENTS
Sat.	7:00- 9:00 a.m.	These hours are to be adjusted for each household circumstances. Hours could be increased if food is consumed beyond 8:00 p.m.
Sun.	9:00-10:00 a.m.	
Mon.	10:00-12:00 p.m.	
Tues.	12:00- 2:00 p.m.	
Wed.	2:00- 4:00 p.m.	
Thurs.	4:00- 6:00 p.m.	
Fri.	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	

Through observation researchers would be able to have more accurate data than total reliance on reporting by lead females.

ADVANTAGES

1. Core households that do not have a suitable person who can record needed data would be covered through this observation method.
2. Toddlers' eating habits would be clearer to the researcher as they tend to nibble on food all day long.

LIMITS

1. Intrusive element is at its maximum.
2. The researcher is an outsider, and all the principles of the evil-eye (shame of eating inexpensive foods) would tend to bias household activities.
3. Lead females might not be home which would further complicate the observation schedule.
4. Foods consumed outside the household would be collected on the basis of second hand information and not through observation.
5. Repetitive visits might bore household members.

Keys to the success of this method are to clarify individual reward systems prior to the research and to provide a continuity of the researcher. Rapport established between the researcher and the family members is important in gaining trust and confidence in the researcher. Hence, each household should have one researcher complete the household profile.

Households should be assured of confidentiality of data. Also, an agreement between the researcher and the lead female should be made about visitation times. Logistic questions about when and where to meet should be established for each day of the week.

RAMADAN AND TODDLERS AT KALAMA

Dr. Soheir Sukkary-Stolba

I. Introduction

CRSP defines toddlers as children between the ages of 18 to 30 months. It is interesting to note that there is no word in Arabic that refers to toddlers. A Radi is an infant, and a Tifl is a child. The toddler status is not recognized as a specific period of growth that is any different from the general category perceived by locals as childhood. This might be the reason behind the lack of nutritional literature that deals with toddlers in rural Egypt. Numerous nutritional studies were conducted in Egypt, e.g., Hanafy, 1972, Ragheb, 1974, Burkhat, 1980, etc. However, most studies focus on infant feeding or schoolers' feeding patterns. The recognition that the toddler stage is a unique period of growth that requires specific nutritional attention seems unclear from the Egyptian literature.

At Kalama, people count their children's age by years and not by months. So it is common to say a child is a year and a half old rather than eighteen months old. In Kalama terms, CRSP is interested in studying food consumption patterns of children between the ages of a year and a half and two years and a half. It is important to use the local terms as they reflect people's perception of the World, and clarify the categorization process.

One of the problems that occur as a result of defining toddlers as children between the ages of a year and a half, and two and a half years is that we are studying a group that fall in a transitional period. At Kalama, mothers try to prolong breastfeeding, and delay complete weaning until it becomes a must. There is tremendous variability in toddler feeding patterns that will be dealt with later on in the paper. So one cannot study toddlers food intake without studying breast-feeding patterns, beginning of Talhess, a local term that refers to the practice of dipping a figure in "heavy foods" and putting it in an infant's mouth (early weaning), and the completion of the process of "heavy foods" introduction. In other words the ages as specified by CRSP are most likely to reflect the history of infant feeding up to two and a half years of age. It is important to maintain a continuity of data from early infancy to the two and a half years of age. Probing questions should be used to relate breast-feeding/bottle feeding to the process of supplementation of "light" foods. A heavy emphasis should be placed on the dynamics of the transition from "light" foods" to "heavy foods" as these are the local categories of food given to toddlers.

Fieldwork at Kalama took place during the month of June, 1984. Fifteen days of fieldwork focused on collecting data on toddlers food consumption patterns, sanitation, and activities during the month of Ramadan. Thirty toddlers were visited, and intensive interviews with their mothers and sometimes their fathers and grandmothers took place using a free flow of information method that centered around food.

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II. The Cross-Cultural Context of Food at Kalama

At Kalama there are underlying cultural beliefs that impinge on individual's food choices, food habits, and food distribution within households. The following are some of the main beliefs that influence toddler's food intake.

A. "Light" and "Heavy" Foods

Mothers divide foods into "light" and "heavy". Infants should only be given "light" foods until "their stomachs are strong enough" for "heavy" foods. The light/heavy food categorization is prevalent in the Middle-East and is comparable to the hot/cold categories present in both the South East Asian and Latin American literature. A list of light vs heavy foods was compiled from Kalama mothers during my fifteen days of research in the village.

Light Foods For Infant/Toddlers

Mashed Potatoes	Water and Sugar
Mashed Rice	Tea with Sugar
Biscuits	Mint Tea
Bread	Caraway
Cheese	Cumin Tea
Mashed Zucchini	Mashed Fūl

Heavy Foods For Infant/Toddlers

Tabix in large quantities (vegetables cooked in tomatoe sauce with fat
 Beef, poultry, fish, ducks, etc.
 Pickles
 Stuffed Vegetables
 Eggs

These are partial lists to illustrate mothers' perceptions about foods fit for infants and toddlers. The foods mentioned in the above lists were cited as definitely "heavy" or "light". My interviews with thirty mothers indicate that there is tremendous variability in perceptions from one mother to another. Quantities, health history of the child, and mother's experience in raising children seem to influence their categorizations of food. A small quantity of "heavy" food makes it "light". Fruits are sometimes seen as water which falls in the "light" category. Experienced mothers draw upon their past experiences and are generally more cautious in feeding their toddlers.

The light/heavy categories reflect mothers' ideas about foods easy to digest vs foods difficult to digest. If a toddler becomes sick after eating a particular food a mother withholds the food saying that "Although this is 'light', it is 'heavy' on his/her stomach." So "light/heavy" are not absolute categories. They are subject to change through experience.

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B. Toddlers' Food Intake and the "Evil-Eye"

Kalama mothers, like many rural women in Egypt strongly believe in the negative impact of the evil-eye on children. Male infants/toddlers are more vulnerable than girls. So mothers are reluctant to state that their toddlers eat well to strangers or those who are suspects of possessing an evil-eye. My interviews with Kalama mothers reflect fear of the evil-eye. Initial answers are always vague, and non-committal. Only after the mother feels comfortable, and rules out suspicion of the evil-eye can a more honest level of communication be achieved.

This fear of the evil-eye might explain the cliché statements, e.g. "He does not eat at all," "He has a weak appetite," "The kids never eat in Ramadan." It is interesting to note that toddlers were observed to eat meals and snack on food all day long during Ramadan.

There are two levels of communication about foods. One level is used with strangers. Mothers use cliché statements, lie about foods consumed, and exaggerate toddlers' loss of appetite. At another level of communication, mothers become open, honest with friends or individuals that gain their trust. A good rapport with Kalama mothers is essential for data accuracy.

C. Snacking VS Eating "Tabix"

During Ramadan, toddlers were observed to eat the following foods:

cucumbers	bread	Katait
tomatoes	water & sugar	a piece of Kunafa
fūl	lick sugar	Pasha cheese and
ice cream	dates	bread
candy	<u>Tamia</u> patties	
biscuits	rice	
cheese	Karaté (twists with cheese)	

In spite of the fact that my observations support the idea that there is a continuous flow of foods given to toddlers, mothers persisted in stating that "toddlers fast during Ramadan, because food is not available". The inconsistency between my observations and these verbal statements could be explained in the fact that snack foods are not seen as food. Snack foods are often picked up by toddlers themselves. Relatives and siblings hand toddlers food when they request it. Snacking is called Yiramram, the process of snacking on non-tabix food. Tabix refers to complex meals that include stewing and frying.

Morning and afternoon consumption of foods purchased from outside the household during Ramadan seems low. The following is a list of foods I observed purchased from the market for toddler snacking.

<u>FOOD ITEM</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
Ice Cream	5 pts.
Peanuts (twist)	5 pts.
Sunflowers	5 pts.
Candy	1 pt.
Candy & a plastic car	5 pts.
Gum	5 pts.
Biscuits	5 pts.
Banana Sugar Candy	1 pt.
Green Apples ($\frac{1}{4}$ kil.)	25 pts.

Shopkeepers mentioned that toddlers buy less "goodies" during Ramadan than other times of the year. Snacking behavior has to be observed in order to arrive to an accurate count of caloric in-take. Toddlers were observed to snack all day long and to share the Fitur (breaking the fast meal) at 7:00 p.m. with their parents. Snacking continued after the Fitur until sleep. Snacks are seen as a minor eating event not worthy of mention.

D. Breast-Feeding and Supplementation

There is a strong belief in breastfeeding infants at Kalama. However, the duration of breastfeeding varied from one mother to another. A desired goal is to breastfeed until two years of age. However, decrease in mother's milk, pregnancies, and the use of birth control pills may hasten the mother's decision to wean her child.

It is not uncommon to find a toddler breastfeeding at two years of age. Supplementation often includes both "heavy" and "light" foods. Mothers might neglect to mention that a toddler is being breastfed, because they think breastfeeding is not "food" for toddlers.

The implications of the above mentioned cultural beliefs for any training program that aims at gathering data on toddler's food intake are as follows:

- Mothers' statements to "outsiders" are often misleading. Hence, through observations and utilization of household members one might overcome the fear of the evil-eye that biases mothers' reports on their toddlers' food habits.
- Snacks should be observed or specifically mentioned if a household member reports on toddlers food consumption patterns. The best approach is to request a list of all foods eaten.

- Data gatherers should not be "strangers" to the household. Preference should be given to household members or friends of the family.
- The overall goals of the study ought to be explained to Kalama women, so rumors and suspicion would not bias the data collection process.
- Data on toddlers ought to include infant feeding history, beginning of the process of weaning, and the time "heavy foods" were introduced. To integrate early infancy feeding patterns with toddler's food intake would increase our appreciation viables influencing food consumption patterns.