To share or not to share: Hierarchy in the distribution of family meals in urban Burkina Faso

Liza Debevec
Scientific Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana and Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, liza.debevec@zrc-sazu.si

Abstract
Popular images of African family meals often present happy families who, despite great hardship, always share the little food they have among all family members. Through detailed ethnographic description of the various stages of the preparation and consumption of everyday meals of one extended urban family in Burkina Faso, this article discusses the complexities of the everyday food distribution of family meals. It shows that in urban Burkina Faso food is a both a means of bringing people together and of making clear distinctions between them, in terms of gender, age and economic hierarchy.

KEYWORDS: Burkina Faso, family meals, hierarchy, antropology of food, West Africa

Introduction
While anthropologists and other Africanists have attempted to expose the myth of African solidarity for what it really is, i.e. a myth (Vidal 1994; Roth 2005), images of Africa as continent of continent of "generosity" and "celebration" and place of "traditional solidarity," a place where people, despite possessing very little money and means, have the "traditional" tendency to share the little they have with everyone around them, still persist in non-scientific publications and in much of the public imagination. Communal meals, where everyone gets their share, are an example of such an idealistic image that many people, both those observing African practices and Africans themselves, would like to hold on to. During fieldwork in Burkina Faso, I have always been told that sharing what you have, including food, with people around, is the most basic value and as such needs to be respected.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTEBOOKS 17 (3): 29–49.
ISSN 1408-032X

However, anthropologists and other students of food-related practices have pointed out that food is no less about separation and difference, than it is about closeness and sameness. Sharing food does not necessarily mean sharing food in equal portions. 'As a basis for life, food attracts attention and is highly divisible, making the distributor or the host the centre of attention for food sharing. Commensal occasions create, affirm or reproduce a wide variety of social relationships' (Wiessner 1996: 6). Following from this premise, this article uses ethnographic examples of food and eating practices from urban Burkina Faso to show how intrinsic hierarchy is to everyday existence in this part of the world and that 'African solidarity' is a very selective practice.

This article, based on a chapter from my PhD thesis (Debevec 2005), is an account and discussion of relationships and interaction between family members, analysed through food preparation, distribution and consumption. It is describes everyday practices in a family compound and the difficulties of maintaining the ideal situation, the ideal way of life of an egalitarian sharing. It is about how large families in urban Burkina Faso cope with the number of family members that they need to feed and how they explain the fact that there is an unequal distribution of food and other goods among the people living in the same family compound. I also explore the role that hierarchy plays in the feeding process of a large family and what values related to food sharing and hierarchy are passed on to the children through food-related situations.

It is important to acknowledge that in practice hierarchy is the normative state of things in most African societies. As Saskia Brand writes about Burkina Faso's closest neighbour, Mali: 'Every relation is hierarchical: total equality is not only inconceivable, it is undesirable' (2001: 21). Age hierarchy is the most important of all and respect is due to anyone older, and the older person can demand a service from anyone younger (Roth 1996: 104; also Lunaček 2011: 19, 30).

While I agree that hierarchy represents the core of African society, I wish to direct attention to the fact that people also bring ideas of equality into everyday discourse; therefore, I am interested in the disparity between what people say to be proper behaviour when it comes to food sharing and what their actions tell us.

Food is inextricably linked with material and financial resources, and poor people who do not possess them are left at the mercy of those around them, who have enough food for themselves and others. In Muslim societies *zakāh* is one of the five pillars of Islam and, as such, is a requirement for every good Muslim. However, Burkina Faso, a largely Muslim country, is full of malnourished and undernourished people, while there are people who have plenty of food to eat and share.

One problem that arises when one wants to speak about normal everyday interaction is the fact that as a foreign visitor one is not automatically privy to it. In the first months of my fieldwork, when I rented a private room in an expatriate compound, I visited the compounds of people whose everyday practices I intended to study. Whenever I arrived, people would welcome me with a big smile on their faces and offer me food and drink. People were being friendly with me and among themselves. It always seemed that I was visiting one happy family after another. It was only through time, when I moved in with a local family and my presence there became less conspicuous, that I had a chance

to observe the great disparity in the treatment that people receive. During the first month of fieldwork, a French Canadian couple told me about their experience of life in a local compound, where the young girls were being yelled at and criticised almost constantly, by anyone who was older than them and, as such, higher up the hierarchical ladder. Yet whenever I visited the same compound, people came across as being polite with one another, so it was difficult to believe that there could be any truth in what the Canadians were telling me. Once "the honeymoon period" of fieldwork was over, I had a chance to observe, what seemed from my Western, biased perspective, as mistreatment of certain groups of people within several families that I worked with.

Background and methodology

The material presented in this article is mostly based on 18 months of fieldwork carried out over a period of three years, from 2000 to 2003. In my research, I focused on Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest city in Burkina Faso situated in the south-west of the country. Bobo, as most people refer to it, has a population of almost half a million people and rising. It is a thriving city with an ethnically diverse population and also a substantial expatriate community, both African and European. Bobo is a predominantly Muslim city, with about 72% of the people following Islam. Most of my informants were Muslim; therefore, this article mostly refers to the eating practices among Bobolese Muslims. I worked mostly among lower and middle-class families of various ethnic groups, with occasional visits and interaction with upper middle-class families.

The major part of the ethnographic material presented in this article is based on my participant observation in the Bationo[1] family compound in Bobo-Dioulasso. The Bationo compound is inhabited by about twenty people (the number may occasionally change due to various circumstances), who consist of a retired primary headmaster's widow, Mama, and most of her unmarried adult children, some of them living there with their wives, other with their out-of-wedlock children. Four generations of Bationo live in the compound, which is situated in one of the oldest parts of Bobo-Dioulasso. When I first got to know the Bationo's in December 2000, only three adults in the compound held jobs, Mama was the one who provided most of the food for the family, which she bought with the money from her pension and the rent she got for her plot she had in another part of Bobo. Because the plot belonged to the father of the family, the children saw it as their birthright[2] to benefit from the rent money. Mama's two unmarried daughters who live in the compound often criticised her for being away at funerals and leaving them with the responsibility of feeding the family. In recent years, since 2006, three more adult members of the family started earning money, which improved the family's financial situation; however, the ingredients for the everyday common meals are still provided for by Mama.

[1] All names have been changed to protect the identity of my informants.

[2] A widow is entitled to a pension (if she married before the husband retired) and a place in the family, but it is the children who inherit their father's property.

A day in the life of the Bationo family (and their white woman)

'Aw ni sogoma'[3]

I first wake up before the crack of dawn, if only to get a rock and throw it at a rooster whose body clock is running ahead and has made it his life mission to wake me up at an ungodly hour. Everyone else is still asleep, blissfully unaware of the mad woman throwing rocks at Mama's prize rooster.

Soon after, at about 4.30 am the muezzin calls to prayer. 'Allaaaahu akbar, allaaaahu akbar.' A few more times and then it is quiet again. Twenty minutes later another mosque calls: 'Allaaaahu akbar, Allaaaahu akbar.' There are still no noises from the other rooms.

It is at about quarter to six; the maid comes out and starts sweeping the compound floor. Swish, swish, swish. Sweeping away all the leaves that have dared to fall on the ground at night, and all the rubbish that people threw away. If I get up and look through my window-blinds, I can see the doors to people's houses opening. Fati F. walks towards the toilet with her night pot in her left hand. She re-emerges soon after, and walks to the kitchen checking the stove for the hot water. She tests the temperature with her hand and realises it is not hot enough. 'Madina,' she yells, 'Madina.' No one answers. She yells again. Madina emerges from her room 'Tantie?' 'Why is the water not hot? How do you expect me to shower with this?'

Madina tries to say something in her defense, but there is already a new demand coming in her direction. This time it is from Mamou, who wants her to go and buy some *Nescafe* and bread for breakfast. Madina takes the money and slowly walks to the corner shop. Her steps seem to be saying 'I may have to serve you, but I'll do it in my own time.'

As she passes my room I greet her 'I ni sogoma, Madina [Good morning].'

'Heere sirawa? [Did you have a peaceful night?],' she replies as she walks past. She smiles mischievously. I take it as a smile acknowledging Fati F.'s less than cheerful mood and I smile back. I pick up my *selidaga* (prayer bowl, also used for washing and toilet) and shake it to check for water. Just enough left to wash my face. Then I take my red plastic mug and walk to Mamou's and Fati F.s lounge. Mamou is just about to pour the boiled water into the thermos. I greet her and she replies while she gestures for me to bring my mug closer so that she can pour some hot water into it. I look for a tea bag on the table, but there are none. I take my mug and put it on the table in my room and run over to the corner shop to get a bag of Lipton tea. I am not as graceful and proud as Madina. I run. Burkinabe women do not run.

As I step outside the compound I see Madina walking slowly back with her purchase. 'Hurry,' I tease her, 'Tantie is already yelling for you.'

In the corner shop Moussa, the shopkeeper's apprentice, is sleeping on the counter, 'Aw ni sogoma,' I say loudly, but he does not move. I try again. Now he lifts his head and says 'A somogodow, tubabu muso? [How are the people of your family, white woman?].'

[3] Good morning (Jula).

I buy my bag of Lipton and a quarter of a baguette with a little margarine spread in it.

Walking back I greet Djata, our neighbour and Madina's best friend, who is sitting on the street in front of her family compound selling millet gruel. 'Liza, I ti baga min bi? [You're not drinking gruel today?]' she asks me. I point to my bread and shake my head. 'Tomorrow,' I say and walk on. She makes delicious millet gruel and always sells out. When I come to get my 25 FCFA worth of *baga*, she always gives me one extra serving. On the days when her sister replaces her, I get my money's worth: no more, no less.

When I come back to the compound most people have emerged. Ahmed walks past me holding his selidaga. He does not greet me, which means he has not done his morning toilet yet. I can remember how Fati F. refused to say 'Good morning' to me, until I washed my face. Now, I always try to make sure I do so, before greeting people, though I still forget sometimes. Most people do not mind my mistake, but Fati F. scolds me if I do so.

I am sitting on the steps in front of my room, eating my baguette, and waiting for my tea to cool down. Fati Koroba emerges from her house, wearing her prayer shawl and holding her prayer beads in her hand. She greets me. The women in the compound pray after they have woken up, but not as early as the muezzin's calls suggest. Mama is the only one to pray regularly at the mosque around the corner. Her three old friends come and get her every morning just before seven and they walk to prayer together. A couple of the older women are a generation older than Mama, which puts them in a joking relationship with Mamou and her siblings. Mamou takes every opportunity to teasingly insult 'the grandmothers.' And they get back at her every chance they get.

Then the telephone in Mamou and Fati F.'s lounge rings. It is my mother checking up on me from Slovenia. As I sit there and speak to her, Fati and Mamou are sitting by the table, eating their breakfast: fried eggs, bread and avocado. On a good day, the eggs are replaced by a tin of sardines. They drink Nescafe with their meal.

As my phone call ends, I get up and greet Fati F. I also extend my mother's regards to both of them. Fati is already dressed for work and after breakfast she gets on the *mobylette* and drives off to work. She does not greet any of the younger people as she drives past them. The only people she greets in the morning are her mother, her sister Mamou and her sister-in-law Fati Koroba. If the youngsters greet her, she might reply, depending on her mood. Even I, her friend, do not always get a hello back, let alone a greeting as such. I never thought one could exercise such authority with a simple withdrawal of greeting.

Once Fati has left, Mamou calls Madina and gives her a plate with bread, avocado and fried eggs and a cup of coffee. As this interaction takes place no words are exchanged, since Madina knows well that is Mama's breakfast. She takes it to Mama's side of the compound and puts it on a little stool next to Mama's chair. Madina's services do not get a "thank you". The only reaction she gets is when she accidentally drops the bread or spills some coffee.

In the meantime, Fati Koroba had finished her prayers, and she calls for Madina to come and fry some eggs for her.[4] She is explaining to me how she cannot eat rice in the morning any longer as it makes her constipated and leaves her feeling sick with what she

[4] Fati K. is of the age when she can demand services from anyone younger, both men and women.

describes a 'heavy stomach' all day. Today she is eating light, she tells me. Light in this case is three eggs, fried in a large quantity of oil, accompanied with sliced onion.

She asks me: 'Tu connais ça? [Do you know this?]' I tell her that people often have eggs for breakfast in Europe. 'I know,' she tells me, 'but you don't do it with onions. You eat it plain. But, moi je veux que ça fait beaucoup [I want there to be a lot] and that is why I add onions.' So she eats her eggs accompanied with a whole baguette. She has eaten two eggs and offers the third one to Madina who has not eaten yet. Madina says she does not like eggs with onions. She likes them plain. So Fati K. tells her to fry the eggs the way she wants them, but only after she (Madina) finishes frying Bakary's eggs. Both Bakary and Madina prefer their eggs without onion.

Discussion of breakfast and early morning practices

The above passage is based on an excerpt from my field notes. It is an account of more or less typical morning events in the Bationo family. While lunch is provided for everyone in the compound, at breakfast and dinner people are left to their own devices and financial means. The only people who regularly eat breakfast are Mama, Fati F. and Mamou, Fati K. and her husband Amadou. Fati K. will usually also feed her children, although they might sometimes leave for school without eating. Madina may be given some leftover bread and coffee by Fati K, but never from the unmarried aunts. While the unmarried aunts have a breakfast that consists at least of buttered bread and coffee, on occasion accompanied by fried eggs, sardines or avocado and they serve the same to Mama, they never share it with any of the orphaned children, who cannot afford to buy their own breakfast.

After I had moved out of the compound at the end of the main period of fieldwork, Fanta, their widowed elder sister, came to live in the compound with her three children. Mamou and Fati F. did not offer any food to their nephews and niece, whose mother was too poor to buy breakfast for them.

In 2002, the two sisters started providing breakfast for their youngest nephew, who then was one-and-half years old. Despite their constant arguments with Assetou, the boy's mother, and their brother's fiancée, they treat the boy with much tenderness. They sometimes give some bread and milk to their favourite niece, Kadi and nephew, Souleymane. These two also receive snacks during the day, while the children of their widowed sister, who are of the same age group and play with their two cousins, are ignored.

The reason behind this is the fact that there has been an on-going dispute between the two unmarried sisters and the widow, and because they are not on speaking terms, the spinsters use the children as a tool in their dispute. They give food treats to the son and daughter of their oldest and youngest brother respectively, but not to the children of their oldest sister, who are the same age and frequently playing and hanging around with their two cousins.

While such behaviour is often the case among co-wives in polygamous marriages, when the man fails to treat the wives equally, it is much rarer among the siblings. It is quite possible that the two spinsters resent the fact that since their widowed sister moved back into the compound, the family budget has been stretched further and this may mean

fewer extras for the two of them, but in conversation they would never admit to that. They would also never admit to having preferences among their nieces and nephews and will argue that they treat everyone equally. They say that their sister is a mean person, always looking for trouble and that her children are badly behaved and do not deserve to be treated favourably.

Another possible explanation is that the children who are treated nicely are the children of the male siblings, who according to the tradition of virilocality are meant to live in their father's compound. The disfavoured sister's children are the ones, who, in an ideal world, would be living in a compound belonging to their father and his family, and would not present a financial burden on their maternal family.

The adolescents and other young people in the compound will mostly skip breakfast. The teenage children who attend high-school have to walk about 20 minutes to get to the school. As classes start at 7 a.m., they need to leave early if they wish to be on time. As the only person who gives money to the youngsters for breakfast is occasionally Fati Koroba, who often gets up after they have left for school, so they cannot really count on breakfast. Ahmed, who is Mamou's favourite nephew, will sometimes get a piece of bread from her, but at other times he will go to work at the flour mill without having breakfast.

Assetou used to buy millet gruel for breakfast, which she shared with her baby, but since the aunts have started feeding her son in the mornings, she might have some bread, which her husband brings from the bakery where he has been working of late.

Among the people of Bobo-Dioulasso, in general, breakfast is not considered to be a main meal. In the hierarchy of daily meals, it takes a third place, after lunch and dinner. A 1963 comparative report on the eating practices of one urban and one rural family suggested that in the urban family's breakfast consisted of leftover *tô* from the day before, whereas the village family may have skipped breakfast altogether or prepared a proper meals in the morning, before going to the fields and skipping lunch (ALI 1.737 1963:1,5). Even today many of my informants will have leftovers for breakfast; the type of breakfast that Mamou and Fati F. eat is not typical. It can be understood both as a sign of affluence and modernity, since it includes types of food that are often referred to as *tubabu dumuni,* meaning white man's food (see Debevec 2007). These food items, such as sardines, Nescafe and powdered milk, margarine and *Laughing Cow* cheese are substantially more expensive than buying a bowl of millet gruel or diluting leftover *tô*. A Lipton tea bag costs 25 FCFA for the original and 15 FCFA for a cheaper version. A tin of sardines costs between 500 and 700 FCFA, which is equivalent to the amount of money that will be spent on the meat for the daily meal of the whole Bationo family. At the same time, 25 FCFA buys enough millet gruel to feed one person in the morning. The minimum monthly salary of a person who is in official employment is 25,000 FCFA, but the average Burkinabe is not employed. In the Bationo compound, the only two people with more or less steady jobs and regular income are Fati Fitinin and Fati Koroba. Mama gets a pension of approximately 30,000 FCFA per month, but that is not enough to feed the family. She also gets money from a plot that the family lets to a car mechanic and that adds to the monthly income. While most of Mama's pension goes to feed the family, the other earners (Fati F. and Fati K.) claim to help with family expenses, but I could never confirm that fact.

Eating *tubabu dumuni* in the morning is therefore not simply a sign of Western taste, but a statement of one's social standing within the family and of one's affluence (Debevec 2007). This affluence is particularly conspicuous when people buy a whole tin of Nescafe, or a box of Lipton tea bags, instead of buying individual tea bags or single servings of coffee powder every morning. In a society where people buy many things on credit and where most food items are bought in small quantity on the day of the preparation, buying ahead is again a sign of one's good financial position.

Mamou has been a particularly conspicuous consumer since she started working for the NGO run by her Dutch sister-in-law. While her work was initially on a volunteer basis, she is now paid for it and has bought an up-market motorbike from her savings. Apart from a flashy means of transport, expensive food is another way of making a statement about her new achieved status.

Aw ni tile[5]

It is 8.30 am and most people have left for work or school, Madina is waiting in the compound to be told what she will be cooking today. I am sitting next to her, keeping her company. I told her I was going to help her prepare the meal today and promised to give her a lift with my *mobylette* to the market to buy the necessary ingredients. It is either Mama or the girl who is cooking that day who goes to the market. While Mama might take a taxi and go to the central market, referred to as *logobaa*, the girls will walk to one of the two small markets, referred to by the French term *cinq heures*.[6]

Today Madina and I are going to the cinq heures east of our compound. Mamou tells Madina what to buy and gives her the money. Madina suggests that the amount of money will not be sufficient for all the ingredients, because the price of onions is steep at the moment. Mamou says: 'It's all Mama's left me with, so it will have to do.'

I start pushing my moped when Bakary runs over and says 'I'll do it.' I tell him he is not big enough, but he insists. 'Anyway, why are you not in school?' I ask him. He tells me the teachers have a meeting and classes are off today. I tell him to go and revise for his exam, but he laughs at me and says 'I know everything already.' He starts the engine for me, and Madina and I get on the bike and drive off to the market.

I ask her what we are cooking today. 'Jabajii' she tells me. *Jabajii* was my favourite sauce when I first moved in with the Bationo. It is a thick sauce made with grated onions and courgettes and is eaten with rice. But we ate it every day for a month when onions were in season and afterwards I could not stand it anymore.

Madina asks 'Do you like jabajii?' 'It's fine,' I say, 'but I prefer tigedigenaan.' 'What is your favourite food,' I ask her. 'Gwanaan,' she tells me. Unlike Madina, whose favourite sauce is *gwaanaan*, the slimy okra sauce, which is always eaten with *tô*, I like the sauces that accompany rice. Both jabajii and *tigedigenaan*, a peanut paste sauce, are served with rice.

[5] Good day (from 12 pm on).

[6] These are markets found in every quarter of Bobo-Dioulasso, and their name, meaning 'five o'clock', refers to the fact that they were originally opened at that time of the afternoon, when the market sellers from the central market came around with what was left over.

After about five minutes, we arrive at the nearby cinq heures market and park the moped. The place is swarming with people who are selling things and calling out to the customers who are inquiring about the price and checking the merchandise. Unlike with non-food items, vegetables, fruits and other food items at the small market have a non-negotiable price[7] that is based on the particular season. Things are sold in groupings, e.g. five tomatoes for 100 FCFA, three limes for 50 FCFA, three balls of *sumbala* for 25 FCFA. At the very beginning of the rainy season, when tomatoes are scarce and the only ones available are small and semi-rotten, the price for five may double, or even triple.

Madina has bought most of the goods and I am carrying them in a bag, which, to great disappointment of all the small boys selling plastic bags of all shapes and sizes, we had brought with us from the house. The vendors of bags also double as porters and are offering their services to me. Madina shoos them away.

Now that we have what we need, we go back to the moped, give a 25 FCFA coin to the beggar who was minding it, and drive off. When we arrive back to the house, we put the purchases into a straw basket and sit on little stools under the mango tree outside the kitchen. I go to wash two knives and we start peeling the onions and the courgettes. I suggest to Madina that I grate the onions, but then remember that I cannot bear my eyes burning, so instead I peel the garlic and start pounding it in the mortar. Mamou comes over, checking the onions we bought and comments on how small they are. She asks Madina if she got the tomato concentrate, and Madina tells her there was some left from yesterday, and shows the remnants of the thick red paste in the rusty tin. Mamou hands us the meat that was kept from the day before, when someone offered the family a large piece of beef, and tells Madina to make sure she cleans it well as there may have been some ants.

In the meantime, Madina has set the hearth. I can smell the rubber strip that she used to light the fire.[8] She puts the pot on the hearthstone and continues washing the rice. In the meantime, I have grated the courgettes and the remaining onions. My eyes sting a little, but I try not to let it show. When the pot is hot enough, Madina pours in the oil and then leaves it to heat up properly. Then she adds the meat. Drops of hot oil splash out, as the meat falls in. After a few minutes,[9] we add the onions and then the courgettes. We keep the ingredients sizzling for a while. We then add a few very ripe tomatoes that Madina crushed with her hand. When all of this seems to be cooking properly we add water and when the water has been boiling for about 10 or 15 minutes we add four or five stock cubes, tomato concentrate, crushed garlic and salt. This has to boil for about an hour, until it reaches a semi-thick consistency.

[7] The prices are fixed for regular customers, however if a man who is not familiar with grocery prices were to come and buy vegetables, the vendors may try to cheat him. The same thing may happen to a white person enquiring about vegetable prices.

[8] In Burkina people use a thin strip of black rubber, which is sold in bunches at the market, to start the fire, as it is the fastest way to do it, but the result is a thick and possibly toxic smoke that emanates from the burning rubber.

[9] If the meat had been fresh and not already cooked and saved from the day before, it would be cooked for at least ten minutes, until golden brown, before other ingredients would be added.

As it is boiling away, Mamou comes to check on our work. She points to the metal spoon that is in the basket and I hand it to her. She then stirs the sauce and uses the spoon to drop a bit of sauce on the palm of her right hand, so that she can taste the sauce. One should never lick a spoon, nor should one dip one's finger into the sauce. I wonder what they would say if they knew how I lick the spoon with which I am stirring the food when I cook.

'Kogo tara [There's no salt],' says Mamou. 'Kogo bara [There is salt],' replies Madina. 'Dooni farakan [Add a little],' says Mamou and Madina adds some salt to the sauce. Mamou gestures her to add some more. Then she stirs the sauce with her large spoon and says 'A ka nyi [That's fine].' And she walks away.

Just before noon, both the sauce and rice are ready and Madina collects the pots in which the food will be served. She needs to divide the food into several servings, according to the eating groups. This requires special skills and can be a delicate issue, as one has to respect the family hierarchy. Madina knows how to do this well, but sometimes Fati K., if she is not away at work, will oversee the task and advise Madina on whose portion is too generous and whose too small.

Today, however, Madina is doing the job herself. I cannot help in this task since I have no appreciation for meat and cannot tell which chunks are the best. The most generous serving goes to Mamou, Fati F., Mama and me.[10] Our food is served in two pots, a large one for rice or *tô*, and a smaller one for the sauce. The second serving goes to Fati F., Amadou and their two sons. They also get a generous serving of rice and a selection of good cuts of meat. Their pots, like the ones for our serving, are of better quality than those of the rest of the family. The serving that is given to widow Fanta and her three children is smaller than the first two. I try to ask Madina why, but she suggests that there is enough for them. Assetou, Yacouba and their baby son get a separate serving as well. And so do Madina and Celestine. The rest of the people get individual food bowls. I note that Hadama's and Youssouf's plastic bowls are getting a bit worn and have some cracks.

Once the food has been divided into bowls and pots, I take each serving, Madina reminds me who it is for, and I carry it to the room of that person. In the case of Mamou and Fati F., I know well what to do. I ask Mamou if we are eating outside and as she confirms that, I get a stool, put it next to her chair and I set the food on the stool. Then I get three plastic plates and two spoons, one for serving the rice and one for the sauce and I put them next to the food. Mamou says 'I ni gwa [Thank you for cooking].'[11] 'Nse,' I reply.

I also take food to the other people, I put Fati K.'s servings on to the table in her lounge, I leave Assetou and Yacouba's servings on their doorstep. And so on, until I've distributed all the food.

[10] During my fieldwork, I was part of this eating group, but I had not noticed any difference in the size of the serving in the event Mama or one of the two sisters being absent. I also cannot say whether the serving was smaller when I was away. When I had a guest staying with me for a day or two, we would get a separate serving.

[11] This can be said after the meal has been served, but it is more commonly used to greet a person who is sitting by the hearth cooking.

Now that the food is ready, I sit next to Mamou, waiting for Fati F. to come back from work so we can eat. As the youngest person in the eating group, I am not allowed to serve myself until the oldest one has done so, or had at least instructed me to serve myself. An exception to this is Mama, whose food is in the same serving. She eats on her side of the compound and often serves herself after Mamou and Fati F., since she may be in the mosque or at the market at the time of serving, she eats when she gets back. Mamou and Fati F. always make sure that there is enough food left for her.

While I am sitting and waiting for Fati F. to arrive, I am watching the young people gathering together to keep each other company, while they eat from their individual bowls. I wonder if they wish they all ate from the same dish…

Discussion about the acquisition, preparation and distribution of the main daily meal

Unlike in an "ideal family" in which a man would be responsible for providing the money for the food, in the Bationo compound it is Mama, who has the responsibility of feeding people. She buys most[12] of the sacks of rice and corn flour and she allocates the daily food allowance, referred to as *naan songo* or the price of sauce. In an average family, it is the man who gives the naan songo to the wife on daily basis. Mama's age and social status prevents her from cooking for the family and the preparation of the daily meal is entrusted into the hands of one of the younger unmarried women in the family.[13] The only thing that Mama does cooking-wise is cutting up large pieces of meat if they slaughter an animal. Otherwise, she will only oversee the preparation and give advice. She never stirs the pot herself, unless there is no one around to do so.

As there are usually three young women living in the compound, they take turns in cooking the daily meal. The three young women are treated equally, despite their rather different origin and position in the family. Celestine, who at 21 is the youngest of three, is Mama's adopted granddaughter, one of the illegitimate daughters of Mama's adopted son. Celestine lives in the compound in order to attend the local high school and hence she only cooks on Sundays and sometimes prepares food in the evenings. Madina, who is a few years older, is a daughter of one of Mama's brothers-in-law and was brought from Abidjan in her early teens. The third one is Assetou, who is the mother of Mama's youngest grandson, Moussa. Assetou is the only rebellious one, the only one who tries to stand up against the authority of Mamou and Fati Fitinin and rebel against the numerous chores that they assign her. She often packs her bags and leaves the compound to go and stay with her parents, if she feels she is not being treated correctly, but she soon comes back to her "husband", who always takes her side, whatever the cause of the argument. This is why Yacouba and Fati F. are not speaking to each other.

[12] Sometimes the family may be given a sack of rice or flour from a wealthy relative or family friend.

[13] Cf. Stoller, who writes: 'When they became elders, Nigerien women happily relinquished their domestic duties to their younger in-laws. In their view, years of hard work give them the right and privilege to be waited on' (1999: 47).

Madina and Celestine share a room and a bed and are closer to each other than to Assetou. Assetou, who as their "uncle's" partner could technically be their superior, sometimes tries to demand certain respect from the two of them, but because of her uncertain future in the family, she usually ends up pulling the shortest straw in an argument. Because of Assetou's constant departures and Celestine's school hours, it is Madina who does most of the cooking.

While, within a married couple, it is the woman who decides what meal shall be cooked that day, in this case, the girls (Madina, Assetou or Celestine) have only a partial say in the final decision. The choice of the dish depends on what vegetable is in season and what ingredients are already available in the compound. Because of the hot climate, this will probably be limited to the type of food items that can be conserved without refridgeration for at least a day or two, such as onions, perhaps beans, a bell pepper or two and some dried or smoked fish. Meat is sometimes deep-fried and kept in a basket or a pot overnight, but that can attract ants or flies, of which the first are considered to be more of a nuisance. Rice and maize or other flour are kept in big sacks and are usually stored for months.[14]

Heat and insects are not the only reasons for not storing many ingredients in the house. The main reason behind the everyday visit to the market is financial. Especially in the households where the man hands out the money, the women cannot afford to buy more than what is needed each day. While some of the men I have interviewed had mentioned that they would prefer to give a lump sum to their wives once a month, they all agreed that it was impossible as the woman may be tempted or in need of spending the money on something else, which would result in the naan songo running out before the end of the month. Because of this, most ingredients are bought on the day they are needed, except in the cases of families where the man is working in a different town and only comes home on fortnightly or monthly basis, in which case the man gives money for the whole time he will be absent.

There is not a great variety in the dishes being prepared every day. The staple food is rice or a maize porridge, both of which are accompanied by a sauce. The sauce may vary from one season to another according to the vegetables that are being harvested, but every family will have a repertoire of about six or fewer different dishes that will appear on the menu over the year, sometimes the same dish being eating a week in a row. In my host family, the four most common dishes were rice with jabajii, rice with tigedigenaan, tô with sauce made of various greens, referred to by a generic name furaburunaan, or tô with okra[15] or baobab leave sauce accompanied by a gravy-like meat sauce, known locally as *la soupe* or *naanjii*.

As the meal has to be ready by noon, a traditional lunch hour, the girl will start cooking between 9 and 10 a.m. She will light the fire and put the water to boil in a large

[14] It is only the very poor families that are obliged to buy flour on a daily basis, because they cannot afford to buy a large sack in advance.

[15] Fresh okra is called *gwan* and dried okra powder *gwanmugu*, while baobab leaves are referred to as *sirafurabu-ru*.

pot, in which she will later cook either rice or porridge. Despite the fact that the number of people eating the meal may vary,[16] the quantity of rice and sauce does not. In her study of the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia, Audrey Richards notes that the woman will not increase or reduce the amount of food she prepares according to the number of people she is cooking for, as she is used to having the numbers vary on daily basis, she prepares a set amount and then divides the food into the common dishes. She goes on to say that 'the Bemba woman does not appear to calculate her supplies, consciously at any rate, on the basis of a fixed amount per person per day' (Richards 1961:152). The same holds true for most households in Bobo-Dioulasso. The woman who is cooking does not measure the ingredients, but has an idea of how much food, more or less, should be enough for the number of people in the compound, give or take a few. Quite often the quantity of ingredients depends on the price at the time of purchase, an onion sauce is much thicker when onions are in season, and more liquid when they become scarce just before the start of the rainy season.

Once the meal had been cooked, it is time to divide it between the different eating groups. This seems to be the most delicate part of the feeding process as there are many rules and elements that need to be considered if one wishes to do it correctly so as not to offend any of the people who are above one in the family hierarchy.

My host family could be considered as similar to more Westernized families when it comes to food and eating, as they no longer eat in the traditional way which consisted of women and children eating together from one dish and men eating from a different one.

According to Amadou, the eldest son of the family, it was their father, a primary school headmaster, who encouraged them to eat from separate dishes and sitting at a table. Because of that, food is divided in several dishes, according to eating groups. The distribution of sauce and meat into serving bowls is considered to be the most difficult and most important part of the cooking process, and Fati K. will supervise it, if she is not working at the time. She takes great pride in making sure that everyone gets the share they deserve.

Family hierarchy and inequality in food distribution and general treatment

While it is clear that every person living in the compound will get a meal at lunch time and that they were probably given enough to have a small amount left over for their evening meal, it is also obvious that the amount and the quality varies from person to person, mostly according to age. Older people get a better choice of food than the younger ones, which is a common practice in many African societies (Brand 2001; Roth 1996). Age stratification is evident in everyday interaction and it does not seem to be questioned by anyone, although sometimes if prodded in conversation, younger people would say they wished that this was not the case. Adults sometimes explain the great amount of housework that children have to do as something quite acceptable, something they have all been through and now they can enjoy adulthood, which means that they can ask anyone who is younger to do their housework for them. Yet, most of the women I interviewed spoke of how difficult it

[16] There may be people visiting or some of the people from the compound may be travelling.

was being an adolescent girl and having to do all the housework and being treated with no respect. While there is a clear gender division of labour and adult men will never do any the household duties, the age hierarchy allows women to assign household chores, such as fetching the firewood and water, to adolescent boys.

Audrey Richards noted that there was no such thing as equality in food distribution with the family or larger community.[17] While she observed that 'nobody eats alone' she also noted that not every eating group is catered for in the same way (Richards 1961: 122–3). And the group that was probably least catered for were adolescent boys. She writes that '[b]oys of 9 or 10 are considered too old to eat with the women and are expected to forage for themselves. They trap birds and moles, sit hungrily around the young men's *nsaka*[18] waiting for remains, and only occasionally are lucky enough to get a special dish cooked for themselves' (ibid.: 123).

In the case of my host family, the children who are the worst off are the orphans who have been entrusted into the care of the family after their parents had passed away. These are Hadama, Ismael and Celestine. Their father, who was not Mama's biological child, but was entrusted to her as a child, died of AIDS a few years ago and left behind several children. Mamou and Fati F. have been treating them as second-rate relatives during the time of my stay in the compound. Another daughter arrived from her village during my stay and Fati F. reacted rather strongly to her arrival. In a conversation with Mamou, she suggested that there were enough mouths to feed as it was and the family did need any more refugees. The girl was finally sent off to look after an elderly great-aunt, who lived in a compound nearby.

Adults, particularly Mamou and Fati F., but also their brother Tonton, insulted these youngsters, especially the two boys, on a daily basis, calling them stupid, dirty and greedy. Myriam Roger-Petitjean noted that in urban Burkina Faso children who are entrusted in the care of relatives are usually less well nourished and often neglected. According to some of her informants, it depends on who is entrusted with the child. If it is a grandmother, the child should, in their view, be better off than if it is a more distant relative, but most importantly children suffer most if they are in the hands of their stepmother (Roger-Petitjean 1999: passim). This of course is an obvious concern in view of the fact that there are many polygamous marriages in Burkina Faso, and that rivalry between co-wives is a source of many domestic problems. Children often become the ammunition in the fights between co-wives and in case of a death or divorce of one of the co-wives, the children who stay in the family may become the innocent victims of the resentment of their stepmothers. In these cases, feeding or more precisely non-feeding may be the way the person exercises their control.

Despite the fact that the number of families headed by a woman are growing in Burkina and elsewhere in Africa (Bop 1996; Roth 2007), the Bationo family case is still

[17] For more on unequal food distribution in African and other non-European households, see Carloni 1981, Hartog 1972, McIntosh and Zey 1989.
[18] Men's club houses (original italics).

quite particular, even in the eyes of some of my other Bobolese informants.[19] With Amadou, the oldest son being unemployed and his wife working full time, there is some role reversal not only in his marriage, but some imbalance also in the sibling roles. His sisters Mamou and Fati F. are the ones who seem to be ruling the compound. Mamou, who stays at home most of the time, is a sort of surrogate mother of the family, when Mama is away at funerals and religious ceremonies. Whenever I suggested to Mamou that she was being too tough on the adolescents, she argued that she had done all the hard work, and that she deserved to be waited on now that she was an adult.

Her sister Fati F., who is about five years younger, did not go through the same style of upbringing. She never had to do the house chores that her sister did, yet she demands the same treatment from her nieces and nephews. She particularly likes to demand things of Madina, and she also keeps a very close eye on her, when it comes to Madina's outings with friends. When I asked her why Madina was been brought to the compound, she claimed it was because she had always wanted a younger sister to keep her company. In my initial lack of understanding of local custom relating to hierarchy, I thought that a little sister was someone who was to be spoiled by her older siblings, but it is just the opposite. You need a younger sibling, so that she/he can perform services for you. And this is what Madina does. She brings water to her "older sister", she washes her clothes, runs to the store for her and sends messages to her "sister's" friends and acquaintances. However as a younger sister she does not have any rights. If she dresses in a way that Fati F. finds inappropriate, then she risks being punished by her aunt.

Fati F. cannot be considered as the behavioural norm for an "older sister". In other compounds, an older sister may demand a certain level respect from their younger sisters, but not to the extent that Fati F. does with Madina. Another thing that is particular with Fati F. is her unmarried status. At 36, she has not been married does not have any children. She remains in her birth family and maintains a position of power, which she would lose if she were to marry into a new compound. As a new wife, she would have to submit herself to all the people residing in the compound she was to move into. Her husband's mother, brother, sisters, sisters-in-law, they all would have a superior position, because of the fact that she "found them in the compound".[20] By staying in her parents' compound, she continues to live an artificially privileged position, since in the outside world, the fact that she is unmarried suggests that she is not a full woman (cf. Brand 2001).

[19] Female-headed households are on the rise in West Africa. While this phenomenon is most striking in urban environment, due to the higher level of divorce, it is also present in the rural areas of Burkina Faso and other West African countries. However, women are often the heads of households only de facto and not also de jure, which causes some problems in the statistical assessment of the situation (Ouédraogo 1996; Rondeau 1996; Bop 1996).

[20] This local expression suggests that a new wife has to obey all the people who arrived (by way of birth or marriage) to her husband's compound before her.

Learning (not) to share

While the Bationo do not practice equality in feeding on daily basis, they try to teach the youngest children to do so. From a very early age, children are told that they must share food, and if a child is eating on his/her own s/he will be told off by being asked a simple question 'I tina mogo son? [Aren't you going to invite anyone?].' This is a way for a child to learn to share food, as a person is not supposed to eat on one's own, but has to invite others around him/her. Richards notes the same for the Bemba, whose children are being trained to share food from their first year on (1961: 197)

Yet while it is polite to invite people to eat with you if you are caught with a full plate, it is considered impolite to come round to someone's house at mealtime, because you put people in a difficult position. In 2001, there was a period of around two months when Mamou's first cousin, a son of Mama's older sister, came round to the compound almost every day. He arrived at around 11 am and sat and chatted with Mamou. They often laughed at the latest gossip and they seemed to get on really well. The cousin always stayed for lunch and Mamou made sure he got a generous serving. After about a month of these rather frequent visits, one day he visited the compound again. Mamou was in her room and as I came to tell her that her favourite cousin[21] had come to call, she said to me, 'Tell him I'm sleeping. I am not feeling well.' I went out and broke the news. He sat down, saying 'Ala ka nogoyake [May God give her health],' and added he would wait a while. I went to see Mamou after a while and told her that he was still there. She said 'He's really starting to get on my nerves.' After a while, the cousin left and Mamou came out of her room. I asked her how come she was unhappy to see him, when she had always been so welcoming to him in the past. She started telling me how he was an impolite, lazy man, who only came round to eat and how he did not do any work and always lived off his hard-working parents and siblings and now even cousins. Despite the fact that she did not like him, she had to be nice to him, as he was her first cousin. She was bound by the rules of proper behaviour and of keeping up appearances. If she were free to do what she wanted, she would have asked him to stop coming over long ago.[22]

In this case, Mamou was respecting the tradition of feeding the relative who had arrived at mealtime, but he was not respecting the unwritten rule of avoiding visits during meal times.

It seems however that the sharing rules apply only to the main daily meal and not to breakfast or dinner. In the evenings, when Mamou and Fati F. prepare their dinner, which consists of warming up the leftovers from lunch and often also an additional dish, the young people, who sit around the TV, eat their leftovers from lunch. When the women's food is ready, they will offer it to their sister-in-law, send a plate over to the mother, who sits in the other side of the compound and, depending on the quantity of the food that was prepared, they may give some to their oldest and youngest brothers. I may also receive a

[21] In the past, she had referred this way to him in his presence.

[22] There is no exact period of time that is designated in this case, but clearly showing up every day, for several weeks in a row was considered bad manners.

share, the size of which depends on the quantity of the food prepared and also on whether I had managed to put myself in their good books that particular day.

All the other people who are present are being ignored and no food is offered to them. The adolescent children and the young women who prepare the main meal, all of whom are used to such behaviour, sometimes comment on the meanness of the two aunts and say that there is no point in worrying about it, because they will never change. They try and avoid dealing with them as much as possible and try and find ways of getting a few pennies from Mama or an older sibling in order to buy some breakfast or dinner foods that keep them going in the hours before or after lunch.

Mama's side of the yard

The one person whose role I have not explored so far, but who is essential for understanding the dynamics of the compound, is Mama. She is the one that provides the money for the daily meal and she is the one who decides how many people should be living in the compound. She was the one who invited her widowed daughter back into the compound, she was the one who brought home the orphaned children, and she is the one who has the final say in everything. While she does not expose herself or argue with her opinionated daughters, it is clear that she will have the final say such decisions and will only put up with her daughters' bossy behaviour to a certain point. Yet when it comes to sharing morning or evening meals, which are considered as individual meals, Mama is almost as strict and mean as her two daughters.

Because she is a respected elderly woman in the local community, she often receives food gifts from the people in Bobo-Dioulasso and surrounding villages. As these are most often cooked meals or fresh fruit and cannot be conserved, she shares them among the people of the compound. She usually reserves the largest part of the offering for herself and gives a nice share to her two single daughters and also to her first son and his wife. The rest is divided among her children and grandchildren.

The way in which she divides the food is influenced by many things. The oldest ones get a larger share then the adolescent ones, while the youngest ones get a share that is bigger than that of the teenagers. Grandchildren will stand around her and teasingly plead with her to give them a larger share, to which she usually replies with a comment that they should be happy they got anything at all and that they are being greedy. But this is not a harsh criticism of their behaviour and the grandchildren are grateful for what they receive. They would also never dare to ask for more if they were given food by their aunts, which is a proof of a more relaxed relationship with the grandmother.

The origin of this rather special relationship can be found in the practice of the joking relationship. This practice is spread widely around Sub-Saharan Africa and in the case of Burkina it includes the relationship between cross cousins, grandparents and grandchildren, sisters and brothers in-law. People involved in such a relationship may tease and even insult each other, without any repercussions. The grandmother may refer to her grandson as her husband and the grandson may refer to his grandfather as his rival (Alber 2004; Drucker-Brown 1982). Caplan, writing about this practice in Tanzania, notes

that 'this may be one reason why grandparents welcome their children to bring up – they do not need to maintain as formal a relationship with them as they did with their own children' (1975: 49).

Discussion and concluding remarks

The division between people of different ages in the Bationo family is seen on many occasions. Children are not allowed to sit on a proper chair when an adult is present (Debevec 2011: in press), they have to get up and give the adult a chair and then go and either find a small stool for themselves or sit on the floor.

In front of the TV set, which is always located in front or inside of Mamou's and Fati's part of the compound, children may sit on the big chairs whenever no adult is present. But as soon as an adult appears, the children and the adolescents move even if the adult is not necessarily going to sit down there. It is seen as bad manners to sit on a good chair, when you are child in the presence of adults. Hadama, Celestine and Madina, who are usually the scapegoats for Fati F.'s or Mamou's bad moods, never sit on the nice chairs in front of the TV, while Bakary and Souleymane often do and will only get up when told to do so by an adult who wants to sit there.

When an adult buys snacks outside the compound, for example, if Mamou sends someone to buy her *farniw*, donut-type fritters, she will not necessarily share it with the people present. Bakary and Souleymane may stand around and ask for it, not with words, but with the faces they make. And she will usually give them a small taste of it. But if Hadama is sitting there, or Ismael, they would never get the farniw. They only get the food that is provided by Mama.

There is also a clear hierarchy of space in the compound.[23] While it is alright for the children to hang about on the terrace in front of Mama's house, the other terraces (Mamou and Fati F.'s and Fati K.'s) are off-limits unless the TV has been put out for everyone to watch. The adolescents and children will only sit in a group and chat in front of Mama's porch. Mama goes to evening prayer and her praying/lying mat is spread out on the porch; when she is not there, children lie on it and take a nap or just laze around. They talk about the things that interest them, such as their friend who has acquired a new pair of flashy trainers, they fantasise about what they are going to become when they grow up, about things they want to buy but are completely out of reach for them. They also make up entertaining stories for one another and laugh at who can tell the most incredible lies. This kind of conversation can only take place outside the presence of their aunts and uncles, who tell them off for being greedy or lying. If Mama is sitting there they usually speak freely, as she usually ignores them and is reading the Koran or dozing off.

Sitting on Mama's side of the porch, I would sometimes try to find what the children thought of Mamou and Fati F.; they said that they were mean and jealous. The most important thing that they taught me was that there was no point in getting upset about the insults. Celestine, who was repeatedly told by her aunts that she was stupid, said to

[23] This is not just the case in African societies. For an example from Albania see Gregorič Bon 2008: 95).

me, 'They are like this. Don't get upset, it goes in one ear and out the other, don't let it get to you.'

I always took all the women's comments to my heart, when they were directed at me. Although Mamou and Fati F. never insulted me, I often got told off for staying out too late or was questioned about my whereabouts or about pieces of cutlery that went missing. While I was technically in a position to leave and did not have to take the bad treatment from them, in practice leaving the compound would not be an easy thing. As a stranger, I could not leave the compound without the whole family suffering the consequences of bad reputation (cf. Fortes 1975). When I once packed my bags wanting to leave, after Fati F.'s controlling behaviour became more then I could bear, the adult women, except for Fati F., came to apologize and pleaded with me to stay. They were worried about the bad reputation that the family would have if I left them after an argument with one of the family members. As Mama was away at the time, they were also extremely worried about her reaction if she discovered that I had left the compound.

The young adolescents do not have that power or independence. They have no money and nowhere to go. They depend on Mama for food, clothes and lodging. If they get sick, they need money to pay for medication, and it is Mama that provides that, or (in case of Mama's absence) Mamou.

The only person who left the compound was Ismael, Hadama's big brother, a sixteen-year-old boy, who worked as apprentice in a garage that was located in a plot owned by the family. Mama asked her tenant, the mechanic, to take Ismael on for a trail period. In spring 2002, while I was away in Europe, Ismael left the family after an argument about money. He was accused of stealing the garage rent, which he was supposedly given by the mechanic and should have brought to Mama. The family never saw that money, nor did Ismael return to the compound anymore. He was then staying with a friend in a nearby compound and when I saw him a few months after the incident, he was wearing a flashy Hawaii style shirt, jeans and a new pair of sandals. This made me suspicious, but he swore to me that he did not take the money. He said he just could not take the insults anymore and he decided to leave. He said to me: 'You know what they are like; you get a fair share, too.' I looked at him and I believed him. But I knew that for me, this was just a part of a job, that I needed to bear this bit and then I could go one being who I was, thousands of miles away, while he was always going to be the prisoner of their power; even if he moved to a different compound, the reputation of being a thief would follow him.

As should be seen from the ethnographic data above, sharing food and living space with a Burkinabé family is not a straightforward matter. It involves much negotiation and the actors must follow many unwritten rules, especially concerning age stratification. It is also clear that while children are taught to become generous and sharing people, those rules do not apply to adults, who may choose to bend these requirements according to their own needs and desires. While no one is left to starve, there is great inequality present in terms of food distribution. While this inequality may originate in the above-mentioned importance of age hierarchy in the society, the inequality touches especially those children whose parents are not present, or cannot provide for their family. The children whose parents are present are well provided for (if the parents have the means to do so) until around the age

of twelve when they start secondary school. After that age, they are no longer the first in line when it comes to snacks and food treats, if there are younger siblings around.

The issue of morality comes into play a great deal when teaching children about sharing food. Sharing food is seen as the most basic value in Burkina Faso, and people who do not offer food to others are frowned upon. Children are expected to learn that they must offer food to people around them and since their earliest years they must offer food to all the adults around them. The adults, however, only need to offer food to their superiors and their equals. All the others are at the mercy of the state of their mood at the time. Small children will usually receive a share of a special out-of-mealtime snack, but only a really small portion, which will not deprive the adults of their "fair" share.

The need to share everything with the family is both appreciated and regretted by the adults. On the one hand, women would tell me that you could never go hungry in Africa, because the family would always share food with you; on the other hand, a woman like Fati F., who at 36 is still living in her mother's compound, and has a controlling interest in everyone else's affairs, expressed the wish to leave the compound and go and live on her own with her partner, so that they would not be burdened by the "duty" of sharing with those who have less. It seems that people only reluctantly continue "to share" with their less fortunate family members, and use different, divergent, moral norms to negotiate positions of action for themselves at particular times.

References

Alber, Erdmute. 2004. Grandparents as Foster-Parents: Transformations in Foster Relations between Grandparents and Grandchildren in Northern Benin. *Africa* 74(1): 28–46.

ALI 1.737. 1963. *Notes sur l'alimentation d'une famille de fonctionnaire à Bobo-Dioulasso.* Bobo-Dioulasso: CESAO.

Bop, Codou. 1996. Les femmes chef de famille à Dakar. In: Jeanne Bisilliat (ed.), *Femmes du Sud, chefs de famille*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 61–97.

Brand, Saskia. 2001. *Mediating Means and Fate: a Sociopolitical Analysis of Fertility and Demographic Change in Bamako, Mali.* Leiden: Brill.

Caplan, Ann Patricia. 1975. *Choice and Constraint in a Swahili community: Property, Hierarchy and Cognatic Descent on the East-African coast.* London: IAI by Oxford University Press.

Carloni, Alice S. 1981. Sex Disparities in the Distribution of Food within Rural Households. *FAO Food and Nutrition* 7(1): 3–12.

Debevec, Liza. 2005. *Through the food lense: the politics of everyday life in urban Burkina Faso.* Unpublished PhD Thesis. St Andews University, United Kingdom.

Debevec, Liza. 2007. The meaning of African and "White man's" food at Muslim and civil wedding celebrations in urban Burkina Faso. *Anthropology of food* [Online] S3(December 2007). http://aof.revues.org/index2572.html. Accessed on 21 March 2008.

Debevec, Liza. 2011. Vloga televizije v vsakdanjem družinskem življenju v urbanem Burkina Fasu [The role of television in everyday family life in urban Burkina Faso], *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 51(3–4): in press.

Drucker-Brown, Susan. 1982. Joking at Death. The Mamprusi Grandparent-Grandchild Joking Relationship. *Man, New Series* 17(4): 714–27.

Fortes, Meyer. 1975. Strangers. In: Meyer Fortes & Sheila Patterson (eds.), *Studies in African Social Anthropology*. London: Academic Press, pp. 229–53.

Gregorič Bon, Nataša. 2008. 'Where are we? Europe or Albania': Regionalism as Seen by the Local People of Dhërmi/Drimades in Southern Albania. *Dve domovini/Two Homelands* (27): 83–106.

Hartog, Adel P. 1972. Unequal Distribution of Food within the Household. *FAO Nutrition Newsletter* 10(4): 8–17.

Lunaček, Sarah. 2010. Potovanje pomenov tuareškega zagrinjala skozi različne kontekste [Travelling Meanings of the Tuareg Veil in Different Social Contexts]. *Dve domovini* (31): 13–35.
McIntosh, William Alex & Mary Zey. 1989. Women as Gatekeepers of Food Consumption: a Sociological Critique. *Food and Foodways* 3(4): 140–53.
Ouédraogo, Joséphine. 1996. Les femmes chefs de ménage en zone rurale du Burkina Faso. In: Jeanne Bisilliat (ed.), *Femmes du Sud, chefs de famille*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 99–107.
Richards, Audrey I. 1961. *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Roger-Petitjean, Myriam. 1999. *Soins et nutrition des enfants en mileu urbain africain.* Paris: L'Harmattan.
Rondeau, Chantal. 1996. Femmes chefs de famille a Bamako. In: Jeanne Bisilliat (ed.), *Femmes du Sud, chefs de famille*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 151–70.
Roth, Claudia. 1996. La separation des sexes chez les Zara de Burkina Faso. Paris: L'Harmattan.
Roth, Claudia. 2005. L'appauvrissement invisible des personnes âgées à Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso. In: Anne Mayor, Claudia Roth & Yvan Droz (eds.) *Sécurité sociale et développement.* Le forum suisse des africanistes Vol. 5. Münster: LIT Verlag, pp. 51–68.
Roth, Claudia. 2007. 'Tu ne peux pas rejeter ton enfant!' Contrat entre les générations, sécurité social et vieilless en mileu urbain burkinabé. *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 1(185): 93–116.
Stoller, Paul. 1999. *Jaguar: A Story of Africans in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Vidal, Claudine. 1994. La 'solidarité africaine', un mythe à reviser. *Cahiers d'Études africaines* (39)136: 687–91.
Wiessner, Polly. 1996. Introduction. Food, Status, Culture and Nature. In: Polly Wiessner & Wulf Schifenhövel (eds.), *Food and the Status Quest. An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Oxford: Berghan, pp. 1–18.

POVZETEK

Popularne podobe afriških družinskih obedov pogosto prikazujejo srečne družine, ki kljub velikim težavam tisto malo hrane, ki jo imajo, vedno delijo med vsemi družinskimi člani. Skozi natančno etnografsko deskripcijo različnih stopenj priprave in konzumpcije vsakdanjih obrokov razširjene družine iz Burkine Faso, članek obravnava zapletenost vsakdanje distribucije hrane družinskih obrokov. Članek kaže, da je v Burkini Faso hrana tako sredstvo združevanja kot tudi sredstvo vzpostavljanja jasne razlike med ljudmi glede na spol, starost in ekonomsko hierarhijo.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Burkina Faso, družinski obroki, hierarhija, antropologija prehrane, Zahodna Afrika

CORRESPONDENCE: LIZA DEBEVEC, Institute of Anthropology and Spatial Studies, Scientific Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Novi trg 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana. E-mail: liza.debevec@ zrc-sazu.si.