

V. Transformation and Persistence in the Building Process; The Commoditisation of the Building Process

As far as the building process is concerned, the transformation of the village community meant the end of the spontaneous process of building and the beginning of the "self-conscious process", to use Alexander's terminology (1964: 33).

The "spontaneous" process of building in the village of Deir Ghassaneh depended on reciprocity between members of the community. Both the construction process, the actual building of the house, as well as the gathering of materials, were carried out by the participation of all members of the extended family. The whole community participated in building the roof (el-a'qdeh) (chapter 4). Reciprocity was expected. Those who helped today expect to be helped tomorrow. However the transformation of reciprocity to a money economy resulted in the commoditisation of both labour and building materials. The transformation in the village occupational structure, and in kinship-based relations, obviously led to the disintegration of the traditional team. Hired labour, as opposed to exchange of labour became the prevailing pattern. People who were members of the traditional team, also were employed hired in other jobs. At the same time, certain individuals such as Abu Najeeb and Abu Kamal became "specialists" for whom house building was their only occupation. The Master-builder (el m'allen) was no longer paid in kind (chapter 4), but was hired with his team of paid labourers to execute the "job". In the 1930s the master-builder Abu Amin, who came from Nablus, was paid half a Palestinian pound a day (the equivalent of one pound sterling). Labourers that accompanied him were paid ten piasters a day. The market economy also marked the end of the traditional role of the master-builder, as a participant in the construction of forms rooted and accepted by the community. He became the specialist, delegated and authorized to create new forms (ibid. 59-63). Building materials which were previously extracted from the immediate environment are now brought from the market.

This new status of building production has left the community