

was engaged in seasonal grain farming (wheat and barley) and animal husbandry. As a result of the 1948 war the people of Zbeidat were dispossessed of their land and found refuge in Ghor el-Far'a, in the Western Valley, where climatic conditions were similar to those of southern Palestine. The majority of Zbeidat farmers became sharetenants and croppers in the lands of absentee landlords from Tubas, Tammoun and Nablus. They cropped potatoes, cereals and vegetables in the winter and moved to Irbid (in the Trans-jordanian highlands) during the hot summer months, where a section of their clan had re-settled. The formation of both Zbeidat and Marj Na'je was tied with the agricultural re-settlement schemes carried jointly by the Jordanian government and UNRWA during the early 1950's.¹ Marj Na'je was the first, and later proved to be the most successful of 5 re-settlement schemes for Palestinian refugees carried between 1951 and 1953 at Jisr el-Majameh, Beit Qad, Hebeileh and Kolonia -- in addition to Marj Na'je (UNRWA, 1956:190).

However, several re-settlement schemes had to be attempted, with three of them failing between 1951 and 1955, before the present inhabitants of the village gained their tenure. The original plan seems to have been based on the creation of "viable lots" of 25 irrigated dunums for each of the 31 peasant families recruited from Lydda area refugees. Houses were constructed by refugee workers (some becoming later their resident farmers) and paid for by UNRWA at the cost of JD 335 each. The houses, made from stone and mud bricks, adapted to Jordan Valley climate were designed by renowned architects, including the Egyptian Hasan Fathy.² Each farming household was equipped with working animals, seeds, farming utensils and manure as follows: