

(Abu Hilal, 1980:int.), and when UNRWA agreed to establish the peasants' title deeds to the land did the Marj Na'je agricultural project become successful.

This third batch of refugees, which proved to be more stable than previous ones, was surprisingly more heterogeneous in character. In addition to few original recruits hailing from the Lydda villages it included refugees from Ar'ara, Um al-Zeinat, and Bast al-Falidg -- all from the Galilee, the last two villages were subsequently destroyed by the state of Israel.

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The evolution of Zbeidat, only 3 km. to the south of Marj Na'je took a different direction. Until the end of the 1950's when Marj Na'je was already an established community the Zbeidatis were still share-cropping absentee lands by the Zor (river basin) of the Jordan. In 1961 Zbeidat farmers were given 500 dunums of fertile land in the southern tip of the Marj Na'je plains with the promise that title deeds will be transferred to them upon proof of continued cultivation for 5 years. The people of Zbeidat were to become the legal owners of their land in the summer of 1967, the eve of Israeli occupation!

Initially, each of the four sub-clans from whom the Zbeidat clan was composed (Shahabat, Mahamid, Salaymeh, and Ebeidat -- also known as Abu Sabbah), received an equal fourth of the 500 dunums, their number at the time being approximately equal. Each of the sub-clans then divided their portion into parcels whose size was determined by the number of able bodied males within the sub-clan. In addition, the farmers of Zbeidat continued to share-crop the lands they leased from absentee landlords in the Marj Na'je area. By 1965 their homes, built from mud bricks and straw began to take the form of a permanent village settlement. An artesian