

villages like Natufa and Ras el-Tin have contributed significantly towards bridging internal cleavages in peasant society that, until the recent past, were generated in large part by differences based on the size of the land holdings. This occurred through the reallocation of family labour within and outside the agrarian economy to the optimum benefit of the peasant household under conditions of agricultural decline. But the same homogenizing trends engendered by migration and wage labour also created the conditions for a set of new and unforeseen conflicts. The prolonged absence of young men from the village - whether in commuting to Israel or for work abroad - has had a dramatic impact on village social fabric, whose dimensions we are only beginning to comprehend. Men are increasingly being divorced not only from performing agricultural work on their farms, but also from cultural patterns that go along with it. The assumption of women and elder kinsmen to greater roles in the (reduced) agricultural cycle has challenged and sometimes shattered the traditional sexual division of labour in the village.

The result is not a trend towards greater homogeneity in the worlds of men and women, but its opposite. Men bring in the outlook of the city, of the alien ideas of foreign lands, and Israeli-Jewish society; women become the sole bearers of the remnants of traditional culture and the preservers of peasant lores. To speculate about the consequences of this new schism is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Several questions bearing on the future process of de-peasantisation and new stabilization of the peasant economy, and which call for further research, should be raised here, however. Do the conditions of labour recruitment among peasant-workers, observed in the construction sector, have any parallels in other sectors, such as industry? Through what type of changes in the composition of the rural household and the family farm are we likely to witness a substantial entry of rural women into