

years (1916- 1986). In this part, I argue that changes in the traditional architectural forms and spatial organisation reflected changes that took place in the socio-economic structure first and were then reflected in the partial continuity or complete disruption of traditional patterns, which included traditional architectural processes.

METHODOLOGY AND PRIMARY SOURCES

The study is based on fieldwork undertaken in the village of Deir Ghassaneh and its hinterland from March to August 1982 and from July 1984 to September 1986. For most of the period I was commuting to the village from the district centre of Ramallah, except for the winter of 1985 and spring 1986 when I established residence in the village and spent considerable time there. My field work was based on two types of investigation: First, photographic documentation and physical surveying and measurements of buildings (which have survived, mostly in delapidated form, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, i.e., from the early to the late Ottoman periods); and second, in-depth interviews with elderly residents of the village. In my interviews, I was racing with the death or approaching senility of several interviewees since my main informants were those few who could still remember the end of the Ottoman era (1917). One of my most important informants, Abu Zuhair, the son of the last sheikh of Deir Ghassaneh, passed away in early 1986 at the age of ninety three just before I was able to conclude my interviews with him.

The reconstruction of daily life as it existed seventy years ago in a village like Deir Ghassaneh suffers from the multitude of problems which face most oral historians of rural communities (Swedenburg, 1985). In general, I was faced with fading memories, projections backward from the present, intentional distortion motivated by the search for social prestige and the disguise of what were seen as unbecoming backward traditions. Above all, I had immense difficulties with the periodisation of patterns and events, as well as with the dating of buildings and other environmental