

Since blocks were subdivided into long and narrow strips (mawaris), access to one's parcel was frequently only through other fallah's lots. Foot paths cut across the different holdings. This entailed extensive criss-crossing by the tiller over neighbouring plots. No one could forbid others from passing through his "property". In fact there was never "public" foot paths as such, nor was there distinct demarcations or clear boundaries where one's property started or ended. The demarcations were usually one or two stones, or often trees.

Cooperation in times of ploughing, planting and harvesting was expected under such a pattern of land distribution, even though unlike other villages Deir Ghassaneh did not have fixed dates for planting and harvesting set by the village council of elders (Antoun, 1972: 21).

Cropping Arrangements

The prevailing land tenure pattern which entailed the proximity of land holdings and the "elbow-brushing" in the course of carrying out day-to-day activities, were not the only factors which resulted in the villagers cooperation and extensive interaction. Complex cropping arrangements also cut across family and clan lines.

Private plots (or more accurately, plots to which the peasants had inherited rights) were normally worked by the extended family. However, the differential status of land holdings in Deir Ghassaneh was quite distinct. Hence the poorer families contracted themselves through share-tenancy or wage labour to richer clans. Almost all wealthy families such as the Saleh and 'Ashweh owned or had access to land which was in excess of their ability to crop directly (through their own family labour, or through supervised hired hands), and that they leased or farmed out.

Share-tenancy and wage labour were a prevalent system by which landless or poor peasants with small plots sold their family's labour to crop the land of rich peasants with access to surplus lands. The share contract usually stipulated the provision by the landlord of