

The Re-ordering of the Inner Space

The most prominent physical indication of breaking away from subsistence agriculture was the disappearance of the three well-integrated domains, i.e., the domains of the fallah, his animals and his agricultural produce (mastabeh, Qa' el beit, and the er-rawieh) from the fallah's house. As figure II.12 demonstrates, houses built in this period (1920-1950) were left only with the fallah's multi-purpose space (el mastabeh). This was normally elevated one or two steps above the entry area. Certain elements such as the fireplace, mud supply bins (khawabi) and mattress niches (kos) were gradually disappearing. This change was not only limited to the newly constructed houses; older houses were also reorganized to serve new functions; inner divisions were demolished; new windows were added and fire places were blocked (fig. II.13).

New houses are not only very different in their spatial organisation from traditional houses, but also have very different contents. The acquisition of modern household items has found its way into both the old and new houses. Modern furniture, iron and wooden beds, cupboards chairs and tables, are bought from the centre town of Ramallah. Most village houses today have acquired a range of modern equipment; radios, televisions, refrigerators, and gas ovens are found in most of the village houses. This acquisition of new items is accompanied by the disposal of all traditional household objects; water jars, old kitchen utensils, mud bins, oil lights, mud ovens (taboons) etc.

However, the break with tradition, and consequently with the traditional house, was made much more explicit in the houses constructed after the 1950s. The traditional single-space house is now replaced by a variety of house types and styles (fig. II.14). Houses constructed since the 1950s are very different in their layout and content. The main characteristic feature of the new houses is the differentiation of spaces within the house according to function; houses now have separate "specialized" spaces. Living room, dining room, bedrooms, verandahs, kitchens, bathrooms, and entry halls, all have made their appearance. Figure II.15 shows