

mu'alleem (in this case, meaning the sub-contractor) works the same hours, at the same site with his mates. He eats, drinks, sleeps, and plays cards with them. Two village workers explain how they became mu'allemeen:

(Husam): In the beginning (1968) I worked on a daily basis for my brother -- always in construction sites, I never worked in a factory. He used to give me 20 pounds daily but it was never enough. One day a Jewish boss came and gave me 40 pounds, so I left my brother to work for him. Since then I changed many bosses, and with each increasing my knowledge of the craft (san'a), and familiarity with the paints. Now I am a mu'alleem.

(Mustafa; as told by his cousin Samih): When Mustafa worked with me in his first year, he didn't know a thing. He worked with me for a month and a half until I handed him over (sic) to a Jewish contractor. He assigned him a job without supervision, so I used to leave my work and teach him. Often he would mess up the work and I had to fix things up after him. To the boss he would claim that it was his own work. The Jewish contractor would give him 400 pounds from which I deducted 150 pounds for myself. Thus I made Mustafa become a mu'alleem in spite of himself.

Although the degree of skills involved in becoming a mu'alleem today require little training beyond that of an unskilled worker (which is due in the main to the technological transformation of the building sector), the label of mu'alleem is not used indiscriminately. In the above case, for example, Husam explained that Mustafa is still an unskilled worker (shagheel) despite his new designation. His problem, apparently, is that he cannot assess in advance what an assignment will cost and therefore, is liable to end up losing money for the work done. This in fact is a crucial difference between a mu'alleem and shagheel (using them as designations of status) in the work process. In most projects the Jewish contractor provides the equipment, the materials, and -- where necessary -- the police permit for sleeping on the site. The Arab mu'alleem (in this case the sub-contractor) has to calculate beforehand, the aggregate sum