

Standards of living in the Palestinian village today -- measured by food consumption levels, housing density, household items, and health standards -- have definitely improved over standards during the forties, fifties, and sixties.¹² That is, they have improved for those Palestinians who remained in the West Bank, since the improvement, in part, has affected only a portion of the original population a majority of whom were transferred out of the country. But the village economy, in terms of local investment, has remained as stagnant as ever and the conditions of the rural population are even more integrated with and dependent on - an urban sector which has ceased to develop meaningfully after 1948. Today, in Ras el-Tin, as in most West Bank villages, one of the highest ambitions for the better-off peasants is to own a block of flats or commercial space in the regional town and to lease it out, living off its returns for the rest of his life.

In Ras el-Tin there are between eight to twelve peasants who are seen by their fellow-villagers as "wealthy." Those include the two mukhtars (one for the Fallahin, the other for the Barghutis); owners of the three olive presses; owners of electric generators; one owner of a commercial shop in Ramallah; and one owner of an apartment building also in Ramallah. In addition, there are four shop owners in the village who extend credit to villagers, both in commodities purchased and in cash. The rest of the village resident population displays substantial occupational homogeneity. Aside from two proprietors of small chicken farms (one of them a widow), four school teachers, one civil servant, and one employee of the religious endowments (awqaf), the rest are peasant-workers. Almost every household has at least one member who commutes to work in Israel or the West Bank.

Significantly, none of the "wealthy" peasants is a big landowner -- even by West Bank standards. Moreover, land is no longer a criterion of