

estimate is that the number is considerably higher than that.

The basic problem in Natufa is not only the small size of holdings per household, but the fragmentation of parcels common to all the West Bank highlands, and reinforced by partible inheritance. The registration of plots under individual title deeds, which took place over a four-year period between 1952 and 1956, had the further impact of establishing women's right to the inherited parcels. Until 1956, female inheritance in land was circumvented by peasant traditional custom which preempted the alienation of family property in cases where marriage occurs outside the patrilineal line. In 1974, 43 percent of heads of households in Natufa (123 cases) were married to non-relative spouses, and 12 percent (34 cases) were married to spouses related to them on the matrilineal side (NHS, 1974:6).

Since 1964 the fragmentation of individual plots has reached such a proportion that only a minority of holders continued to register the inherited deeds (Sa'ati, 1980:inter.). A typical landholding seen in table 9:7 below illustrates this fragmentation in Natufa today.

The immediate family holdings of landowner J.H.M. in this case (Table 9:7) is just over 61 dunums, of which he personally owns 32 dunums. His actual holding is distributed into 16 fragments spread over seven parcels. If we view these fragments visually (in Map 9:2) we observe that only six of those fragments are adjacent to each other; the rest are dispersed over an area of 5-1/2 kilometers of rugged hilly terrain. Thus, J.H.M. owns fragments of land ranging from 51 square meters to 13 dunums in size, with roughly two dunums on the average. In area his landholding is typical of 34 percent of village holdings (Table 9:6) placing him an inch above the smallest, and most numerous, holders. But since his property is mostly inferior dry farming land (Category 3B) it is not worth his while to consolidate his holdings into a single unit which can be farmed profitably.