

extremely vulnerable and hence exposed to the inducement of new building material and techniques.

Although, as we have seen above, the traditional building process seems to have collapsed, and a new process with a radically new direction to have emerged, one can still see that certain aspects of the old process have persisted. One is the persistence of kinship relations in the new building process. Data gathered from the field show that the execution of new houses is often carried out by a relative. This seems to be true even when more complex and hierarchical organisation is set up to complete the work.

Building rituals also seem to have been more resistant to change. Up until today, both the completion of the foundation, but more important the completion of the roof (el-aqdeh), are celebrated more or less in the same traditional patterns. A big festive meal is served once the concrete mixture that poured the roof leaves the construction site. The usage of symbolic objects which are believed to bring prosperity and good luck such as green branches (particularly olive tree branches), bones, blue beads etc. (chapter 4) is still the same. Inscriptions from the Koran, the name of Allah, the name of prophet Mohammad, in addition to the name of the owner and year of construction, are still carved or painted on a prominent stone (no longer the keystone) usually placed at the front elevation (Fig. II.16).

Today unlike the past, the rituals that have persisted seem to be disembodied from their organic content. They have become little more than mere superstitions whereas in the past they were a meaningful part of a comprehensive ^{total} complex of beliefs and an important element of the sacred environment. The almost ^{total} loss of the sacred environment is best exemplified in the the physical dilapidation of the saints tombs, the holy shrines, and the old mosque as well as in the disappearance of rituals and ceremonies such as the season of the Khawwas saint, i.e., the season of girls (mawsim el-banat). The remaining "fragments" of traditional Palestinian rural architecture no longer belong to a whole.