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Nafissa Naguib

Palestinian Women Between The Spring And The Faucet

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The Lower Jordan River Basin Programme Publications

by
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Palestine women Between The Spring And The Faucet

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Foreword

This publication belongs in a series of planned books on Palestine emerging from the Lower Jordan River Basin Project, a collaborative effort between the universities of Birzeit and Bergen. This project has a resource management profile, in which human resources management is seen within the context of economic, political and ecological perimeters. The main objective is to build up research and competence among Palestinians and Norwegians with regard to the culture, history and human ecology of the lower Jordan River Basin of Palestine and Jordan. Research activities and competence building in the program have been defined within three sub-thematics: 1) land, 2) water, and3) cultural Heritage. The project was stated in 1998 and is currently into its second phase. This second phase of the project involves education and training of researchers, field projects and research in connection to the thematics of the project, and also includes support towards establishments of graduate programmes and a Resources management Centre at Birzeit. The project's aim is to assist Birzeit University to continue to produce a more integrated view of the development processes in this region. Earlier research has generally been of more specialized nature, focusing on either the basin as a physical unit, its agro-economic potential, its archaeological history and antiquities, and of course its political complexities. The project will continue systematic attempts at studying the human Ecology and long-term cultural history of this basin as a foundation on which to develop planned interventions in the valley.

The publications in this series are attempts at contributing to this process. Many of the books are based on Master or Ph.D-theses carried out within the context of the project. Others are based on reports commissioned to address specific fields and problem areas relating to the overall themes of the project. In addition to the monograph series the project also has a "working Paper-series" in which reports, papers and surveys containing valuable empirical information are published.

The First seven planned publications in this monograph series are the following:

No.1: Jann Bøe, " " Farming Will Aways Remain the Best Job, it Was the First Love " "

No.2: Abdul-halim Ali Mohammad Tmeizeh, "water Rights and Uses in Midland Palestine"

No.3: Nefissa Naguib,"Knowing Water: Palestinian Women Between the Spring and the Faucet"

No.4: Abdullah S.Abdallah,"An Approach towards the Development of National Geographic Information Strategy in Palestine"

No.5: Bård Kårtviet," "In the US I'm an Arab Terrorist; Here I'm an American Punk ". A Study of Palestinian Return Migration and Identity Management on the West Bank"

No.6: Abdul Rahman Al Mugrabi, Historical, Geography of Central Palestine in the Middle Islamic era (1099-1516 A.D.).

No.7:Ayman Abu Mustafa, The Trade Routes in Palestine During the Mamluk Period (1260-1516 A.D.).A Historical, Geographical and Economic Studies"

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Fetching Water

In the village of Musharafah the female elders still speak of the ancient olive tree below ***al balad al qadima*** *– the old village. It is a short distance from the new Musharafah, and the path to the main spring is still behind the large Ganzuri family home, the way down is still uneven. But the women are much older, the homes are now on the same level as the Ganzuri home, and their household water is piped in. Today, they only go down to the olive orchard, surrounding the spring, during harvest time. One afternoon during the* ***mausem al zeitoun*** *(harvesting of olives) I walked down the same path with two elders Um Husein and Um Fathi. Half way down the path and just below the house of the richest farmer begins what remains of the houses in the old Musharafah. The women leaned on the wall of the rich farmers house and looked across at the remains of what is left of their* ***dar*** *- home.*

Um Husein: "You remember you or I used to go down and keep a place for the other".

Um Fathi: "Yes, they were days filled with goodness".

U.H: "Also our little girls went to fetch water".

U.F: "Yes, they fetched water; they did not have anything else to do. Today they just want to go to school, and afterwards they want more".

U.H: "We were happy. Always together, talking and singing. We never complained".

U.F: "The mind was happy. Today the mind is worried. Before there was a lot of work, fetching water, waiting for every drop. But it was good for the mind. We were out and smelling the air. Our bodies were tired, but our minds were easy. And everything is destiny".

U.H: "Yes, you said it right. Everything is in the destiny".

U.F: "After the jarra was filled we knew we were going to the home or to the taboun, to wash and to the field to pick olives. Now we do not know what happens to our children in Ramallah".

U.H.: "It was safer before the intifadah".

U.F: "Everything is destiny".

U.H: "You speak the truth".

INTRODUCTION

Hast thou not seen how Allah hath sent down water from the sky and hath caused it to penetrate the earth as water-springs… Sura 39:21

The Big Story – seen from below

Palestine has many 'Big Stories', ranging from the political field, to the area of development, to understanding women, to grasping Palestine itself. A 'Big Story' is a macro-inspired perspective that begins 'from above', with a generalised view of the state of affairs, and then assumes 'downwards', so that at a more local level the processes under discussion are a reflection of the overall and general dynamics. This thesis relates in particular to one such Big Story, and it is concerned with water. To be more exact, it is a critique of the Big Story of water.

Water is a principal social organiser, and in the peasant and village communities we see clearly the connection between peoples and their water. In the great majority of cases water has been the main source of unequal power sharing, involving disagreements between neighbours, demands of rural vs. urban populations, and conflicts involving peoples and nations. Much has been written on the question of Palestine -'the Palestinian question'- and the question of access and rights to water resources. There are studies, documents and reports devoted to this topic, and these have been put forward and discussed at workshops, seminars and conferences. Funding has been given to specific research institutes to encourage research within the fields of water management and conflict resolutions.

Certainly, water interests many social scientists, economists, lawyers, engineers and policymakers. Obviously the perceptions diverge; they publish and speak of conflicting arguments and seek to convince us. Basically, within these larger issues, the Big Story of water is considered a factor of production in utilitarian terms. In Palestine water shortages are not new, and throughout history various solutions have been implemented to overcome scarcities, avoid conflicts and further development. These water discourses have, in general, one thing in common: they promote

images of coherence which mask the everyday lives of ordinary people and their water.

Water is also the mainspring for village settlements and communities which for millennia have lived and co-evolved collectively. Indeed, there are many who have argued that the rise and fall of settlements and civilisations can be traced to their social organisation and the ability of those communities to manage and control their water. Palestinian village communities are ancient and rich with experiences of sharing water, as they have shared soil. Contrary to the Big Scenarios of water wars, in villages water scarcity has also promoted co-existence.

For a village community to build a foundation with homes, schools, and places of worship there is a need for predictability: that enough water is going to be available to sustain the survival of the households. Village communities in Palestine have devised ingenious methods to harvest, fetch and store rainwater, spring water, and groundwater. Despite poor soil and lack of water, different types of village settlements were built along the fringes of the desert or in the barren hills. In these arid environments water is not only a scarce resource, it is also ***N`emat Allah*** *– a gift from God.*

It is this level of experience and belief that is my concern. In my dissertation, I favour the many-faceted everyday, the personal, and the ordinary. I am interested in the tension, in the space between micro-interactions that personalises, relativises, and individualises the larger story of water. I do not discard the Big Story discourse. On the contrary, there are obviously several levels of discourse, which inform the themes in the study. For instance, we must include the Big Story of Palestine as a contested site, as we also have to deal with the issue of the donors and development of water resources. But then we also have the marginal tales of village women and their experiences with fetching water. This is the story I am more concerned with.

The Big Story promotes generalisations of images of peasants who are bounded, enduring and timeless, with few traces of peasant's agency, and certainly fewer mentions of female peasant's details of village life. My dissertation shall revolve around those issues that seem to be lacking in the Big Story –

peasant agency and women and water, embedded in the realities of local village life. My story is based on women's narratives, collected during chats, during more formal interviews and through observations of the women and the few men going about their daily chores in the village. And my aim here is clear. I want to move beyond the generalised story about women in Palestine as specific 'types' that can be reduced to more or less essentialised characteristics such as 'oppressed' and 'domesticated', 'living in a Muslim male dominated world' or 'being carriers of a national Palestinian heritage' etc. I want to let my women act and speak for themselves and about water which triggered their 'life world'.

This does not mean that I shall argue against interpretations, that I am simply recording what I saw and heard, or (to agree with Geertz) that I believe 'facts speak for themselves'. Certainly I shall interpret, and certainly I shall make use of theory both within and without the field of anthropology, engaging in debates that inform the field of contemporary social sciences. I shall relate to theories: about history and anthropology; about the understanding of the concept of culture; about systems of knowledge; about development and underdevelopment. In all these discussions I shall draw on arguments that are well known in contemporary anthropological debates.

My starting point is to understand the lives of women in the village of Musharafah in Palestine; these are women who, by engaging the world around them, create a reality for themselves that can not be understood 'from above': by way of generalising arguments about Palestine, about women in the Middle East, about Islam, or from other perspectives. Knowing Water contains women's reflections about water, which I have the ambition to capture through their narratives. Water is at the core, yet other themes come up in their stories of happenings and doings. While talking about fetching water they speak about what they know about life.[1]

[1] See the work of Abdul Hamid el-Zein.(El-Zein 1966) His work represents one of the few anthropological works on the significance of chores attached to water in everyday life. I do not refer to his work in my thesis, but his idea of placing an activity at the centre of understanding cultural reproduction was an inspiration. He was concerned with the traditional Nubian water wheel in peoples everyday life.

From the spring to the faucet

In one way, the starting point for my story was in 1985 when the village of Musharafah got its much longed for piped water. The initial reaction in the village was that finally, after years of stagnation, the village market would grow, children would get an education, men would find "good jobs" and life would be prosperous for all. The mothers and grandmothers in the village were tired of fetching water. They said they no longer got the help they needed from their daughters and daughters-in-law. The younger women were attempting to get higher education or to enter the job market, and they were not always available to help the older women. In short, people were waiting for "development" to reach their place.

Preceding the piped water system, or what the health consultants in Ramallah call potable water, daily household lives were dependent on the younger women, who were given the task of fetching water for cooking and washing. They had also to make sure that some of that water was left for the small gardens which were kept in the backyard of each house. The general irrigation of trees and other crops was dependent on the rain during the winter months. The advent of piped water was identified among the women and the men in the village as a good that was going to be available for them to use. It was assumed that the resource would be evenly distributed and that not only household chores would be easy, but also irrigation. The women supposed that infant mortality would decline, because sanitation would be easier. With piped water the older generation saw, finally, the possibility of enjoying the blessings of old age, rest, respect and authority.

Piped water did not come alone. It was accompanied by connection to the electricity network, and in the two first years following the piped water and the installation of electrical services, televisions, and refrigerators and washing machines were also introduced in Musharafah. Sons, some daughters and husbands working abroad came home with electric appliances. Everything seemed to go according to expectations; children went to school; men had jobs, and more young women joined the labour market. There was water inside the households and the TV was constantly switched on. But then, what the women refer

to as the ***zaman****, which means here circumstances, changed. First the political landscape changed.*

The first Palestinian intifadah started in 1987, and soon men in the village were involved in political activities that brought years of economic sanctions and an increase in men migrating from the village to find work elsewhere: many never returned to the village. More and more women were left alone to keep up the household and the expenses tied to running the household. The initial relief tied to the centralisation of water turned to anxiety, loneliness and deprivation; these were unexpected and unintended consequences.

But there were also more basic issues involved. At the start of my own work in 1995 I soon realised, that in spite of the seemingly clear advantages of running water, there was another side of the story. In spite of the advantages of a modernised water system, the women I met gave the impression that spring water was not so bad after all. For one thing, the women told me that the spring water tasted better and had more colour. I also found out that the rigid and seemingly antiquated framework of fetching water for the household was a tradition serving all sorts of unexpected practical purposes in the lives of the women. At the spring women socialised and awaited their turn, while engaging in interaction and conversations that helped reproduce universes of meaning. The spring was thus a centre around which not only female activities revolved, but also village negotiations concerning life in the village; it was the main place in which to look for a bride and a legitimate place for boys to observe girls.

The water spring was a physical place where women spent much of their time: walking towards it, waiting in line, filling water and walking back with full jars or cans. During these occasions they exchanged news, gossip, discussed marriage arrangements and assisted each other with information relevant to so many female activities. Some women I met were born in the village; others came from the surrounding villages. Some were materially comfortable, while others were poor. Some were in their eighties and some were in their sixties. But to all of them water, and the activities related to fetching and managing water, was above all about their 'being in the world' or, to put it in their own language,

like ***hagar al tahoun****, stones that grind the corn. These are stones that never stop turning and pounding.*

My aim then is to show that the change from spring water to piped water involves much more than a technological change. It involves touching situated knowledges: people's 'lives as lived'[2]. Water, and the way it is organised thus opens up a world of interrelated activities, of systems of meanings, and of social and cultural identities. The understanding of water and water use requires recognition of local events, relationships and networks in the village, and also of narratives and self-presentations through which people use water as a metaphor for different aspects of their lives. Water is thus a starting point for approaching the diversity, fluidity, and transformations of village life itself.

It is in this sense that water is the substance which ties the lives in this thesis together. It is not only as a physical resource; obviously this is a village in a region where water is scarce. But water is also a medium and metaphor for the diversity of the real world. I am writing about old rural women in a Palestinian village and I shall dwell on the complexities which are tied to their traditional everyday chore of fetching water from the springs close to the village. By presenting such a picture the aim is to get behind what I call "The Big Story" discourse: the statistics, policy agreements, regulations, declarations and assessments. Rather, I will attempt to write the old women in the village of Musharafah into the discourse of water development. This exercise will show us that one of the central arguments in 'the Big Story' - that the effect of modern, piped water is the empowerment of rural women - might not be realistic at all.

The village and its women

The women I write about live in Musharafah, which is a small village close to Ramallah. They live in homes, which vary in size from small one room to larger, three-room white/grey brick or stone houses. These houses make up thirty-six household units in the village. They are a blend of traditional rural homes, with an extended family structure, yet most of these families are not necessarily made up of both grandparents, children and

[2] *Lila Abu-Lughod has written extensively on this subject, and my methodology is largely influenced by her writings.*

grandchildren. Households are referred to as **dar**[3], which the women use when they speak of their home. It is a physical and emotional location and bond. A place where individuals share struggles, achievements, bereavements and contentment - whatever everyday life gives them.

In the village most of the extended homes were headed by an old woman. These homes included unmarried daughters, grandchildren or married children with their families. So there are largely female-headed[4] households and a minority of mixed households. There were also small nuclear families, but they are not necessarily the conventional type with a father, mother and children. As we will discover later, most of the nuclear homes are also mostly female-headed. Then there are the old women living alone.

Thirteen households are owned by returnees who have built their homes at the village entrance but never moved in, and young families who have left their village home in search of a better labour market elsewhere. For different reasons eight young families have moved into the village. They come from Nablus, Ramallah and El Bireh. A couple have moved to avoid the pressure from their hostile family, other have moved because they felt their earlier home was in a town with no recreation for the children, and they felt that in a village they were more in touch with different aspects of nature, and there was less of a risk of pollution. Another small family bought a small home in Musharafah because the husband after years of serving a prison sentence in Israel, wanted to live somewhere quiet. However most moved to Musharafah because of the living expenses; housing in Musharafah is cheaper than in the larger villages or towns in that part of the West Bank.

One major characteristic feature of the village is that there is a majority of old women, either heading a household or living alone.

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[3] Sometimes they used **beet** when they explained in 'Egyptian' Arabic.

[4] With female-headed households I am referring to a household where there are no older males living in the families. See Chant (Chant 1996), who is concerned with the ambiguities surrounding the definition of female-headed households and the difficulties generated when we compare different communities. Sylvia Chant's project is a politically oriented one: she is demanding a more urgent method where we engage (globally) with the issue without marginalising these households.

Unlike the general representations of visibly manifested patriarchy in the Palestinian villages, Musharafah is today a village dominated by these older women, with some young women and children also living there. Most of the older women are widows, or have been abandoned by husbands who have been gone for most of their married lives. Some women 'know' that the men will come back to their family, and they still receive the occasional money order; others 'know' they are abandoned. Sons, brothers, and young husbands are abroad: some studying, some working (also in Israel), and some are serving time in Israeli prison cells. Several young families have moved to larger villages, to regional towns or abroad. People from Musharafah make up a large community in Amman, Jordan and the village is also known for having close ties with the former Soviet Union.

It should be stated at the outset that to live alone like most of the women do in the village is against the values of which the Palestinians speak highly. The Palestinian "ideal" is the large extended family, with people sharing the same home or living next door to each other, sharing the same resources, reputation, sorrows and gratification. I was told more than once by old and young, in and outside the village that emotional and physical nearness and confidence is the construction on which the *"typical way of life in Palestine"* is built. To live alone, it was argued, signals a chaotic life form, where "normality" is in crisis and families are tormented. Yet women I talked to expected to be left alone in old age, a fact that brought about much angst. They say that being alone is contrary to Muslim values and village norms. There is thus a clear contradiction between the real life of the old women in the village and what the same women would hope old age would bring. But let me introduce the individual women that my writing concerns.

The two oldest women among them, and therefore the most wise, are Um Awad and Sett Um Muhammed, both well into their eighties. They are considered wise because both share the skill of healing. Um Awad has been a widow for most of her life, and today she lives alone. Sett Um Muhammed is a widow and used to be the village midwife before "those people from the University" *took over her position in the village. She is different from all the other women, because she is of Bedouin origin. She is respected*

for her skills as a mid-wife and her healing knowledge which have been passed on to her by one her father's many wives. Then there is Um Omar who is also in her eighties, but according to Um Awad and Um Muhammed she is much younger than they are. She was a young child during The Mandate years, living in a pious home, just like Um Awad.

Um Qays does not hesitate when asked about her age. Her father was an educated man who wrote down the events in his life. He was exceptional in that he not only wrote down the event surrounding the birth of his sons, but he also recorded the birth of his daughters. She was born in 1920 in the beginning of **mausem al zeitoun,** harvesting of olives. Um Qays started her story by saying that "One gives birth to a country"; she believes women bear the responsibility of reproducing the Palestinian heritage in all its forms, and, as we shall see, her story is influenced by that point of departure. She was relatively old when her husband died and therefore nobody could insist on her remarrying. Um Qays lives with a son, without "any other man bothering me", as she said. Her children are living in the United States of America, England and in other Arab countries. They visit and send money whenever they can. Um Hashim is about sixty-five years old and she is living alone in a one-room home. Her husband went to work in Kuwait, and he never came back, and her children are all away; "They have forgotten me. But never mind, I pray for them everyday so that God may protect them", Um Hashim said sadly.

Um Kamal is just a little older than Um Hashim, and they are both from the same neighbouring village. Her husband also left the village to work abroad and never came back. He went to work in Lebanon, to work as a sweeper of streets, but that was a long time ago. She lives with her son and his family, and he has, according to her done all that is expected of a good Palestinian son. Um Fathi is about seventy years old and is a widow living alone. Her youngest son and one of her grandsons are politically active and have served time in the Israeli prisons. Um Khaled is also a widow in her seventies living in a one-room home with her mentally ill, unmarried daughter. Her son just got remarried to a girl from Ramallah. "The new bride refuses to move up to live in the middle of nowhere," laughed Um Khaled. So, her son and the new bride moved to Ramallah where both have good jobs.

Samia, her former daughter-in-law, is today Um Khaled's closest neighbour.

When I asked why the grandchild was not in Samia's care, Um Khaled was shocked and scolded me back "I am his mother. This is the way we do it here". Samia works in a Christian school in Jerusalem and supports her mother: Um Sherif is Samia's mother and a widow in her late sixties. Um Hasan is in her late 60s and lives alone in a relatively large home financed by one of her sons, who is living in America. Her youngest daughter is finishing her PhD in London, and an older daughter is working in Australia. Um Jihad is in her seventies and lives in an extended household with her husband, son and his family and two unmarried younger daughters in a house surrounded by a large garden.

Um Husein is a close friend of Um Fathi. She is also in her seventies. She lives with her two sons and their families. One of her grandsons is politically active and had served a prison sentence. Um Ali is in her early seventies and is a widow living with her 'professor' son and his Russian born daughter in a large home at the entrance of the village. Um Ibrahim is the widow of the largest landowner in the village. She is also in her early seventies and known in the village as "the wife of the feudal". Samiha is Um Ali's younger sister, and her father sent her to school in the 1950s. Today in her fifties, she runs her own embroidery atelier from her home in the village, and she co-owns another one in Ramallah. But, following a scandalous marriage, she moved to live in Ramallah.

Samiha wears only black trousers and blouses, which is uncommon in the village. Yet the most striking feature about her during my fieldwork was her insistence on living alone in her own home. However, on my last visit to the village I heard that she was married and had moved to a big modern apartment in Ramallah with her husband. Dalal is young woman from Ramallah who got engaged and married to Um Kamal's grandson during my fieldwork and later visits in Musharafah. Basma Abu Sway is a social scientist who has worked on the centralisation of water in the villages and introduced the idea of my subject to the women. Discussions between her and the women have inspired the discussions on development and empowerment. Faida Abu

Ghazzaleh is a Palestinian archaeologist who visited the village with me several times and helped me sort out the landscape and the ruins of the old village. She walked about the up and down water springs and tried to find its their source.

The women and their stories

Together, the above fifteen elders and their stories about their lives constitute the basis of this work. I believe the words spoken to me by the women capture the essence of what writing about others is all about. The women who gave me their words to write with represent all kinds of variations in age and marital status. But, as indicated in the section above, there is a majority of older women, who are also alone in their houses, trying to manage on whatever possibilities there may be in the village. I have tried to listen and to write down what they said, and I feel that parts of their enchanted world (Barth 1993) are unfolding.

But the picture that emerges is not one of homogeneity. Through descriptions and analyses of the everyday and the ordinary we are able to see how ordinary people live their lives in different ways. The women are individuals with distinctive personal histories which they link to fetching water from the spring, and these stories convey a lively sense of variety and often inconsistency, in their views on the benefits of spring water and the disadvantages of piped water. Poorer women often live alone, and they feel the pressures and anxieties of being left alone. The meeting point represented by the traditional water point is no longer there, and the shared chores are no longer part of the daily life of women.

Hence these women are more exposed to the culturally defined limitations on their movements in public spaces, and they are, as a consequence, feeling marginalised and isolated. Women surrounded by their families may not experience a feeling of isolation in the same way, but they certainly express feeling of loss of the joy and comfort experienced in the company of other women around the water point. The wife of the richest peasant experiences yet another sense of loss. She refers back to the days when other women were fetching water for her, and laments the day when the development of a new political consciousness made this impossible. The paradox here is that her sons were

involved, at times, in leading the communist movement in the village.

Samiha, the youngest woman in the group and the one with primary education, takes the opposite view and claims to be happy that younger women do not have to forsake their education for heavy household chores. But the two last women mentioned, also share the other women's sense of loss and agree that both the taste, colour and texture of spring water are better than those of piped water, and that there were specific emotional and social attachments to the traditional sources of water. They agreed that "winter water" is what can substitute for the goodness that was in spring water.

In the village of Musharafah, like many other villages in the Middle East, it seemed that the toughest rules and most burdensome roles are for women, and the women certainly talked much about sufferance. They also spoke of tenacity. Many times in the village the women explained events in their life by answering simply that "This is the way we do things here", "This is our custom" or argued that "This is how we live". In other words they do not find the need for a justification for the burdens and constraints. Nevertheless, this does not mean that women are completely paralysed by the sorrows they experience everyday and thus do not manage to act or react. On the contrary, the narratives show us that their reality is complicated and that they are opinionated.

We will hear stories like the one where the women talked about their own strength and beauty, or about the woman who married a man whose ugly face made her sick. While one woman married the man "she cared for", another one was relieved that her husband died when she was too old to be forced to remarry. We are here not met with passive women, but with active emotions. They are women who still complained about their hopeless daughters-in-law, who insisted on taking grandchildren away from ex-daughters-in-law; others who disapprove of the immoral Egyptian soap operas watched by the young – still, the older women also watch them. One woman has a son working in the United States, a daughter in Australia, and another daughter

finishing her PhD in England – the old women are aware of a world outside Musharafah.

We will hear many different stories: of an old midwife who dislikes the interference from official health workers; of two grandmothers who insisted that a young Ramallah bride perform the ritual of going to the water spring to honour the spirit of the spring and village heritage; of the joy they all show each time they dance at a wedding or the delight when they hear of a birth; of the pleasure one of the women showed when she smoked her cigarette; of the loyalty and shared despair towards families with members in prison, and of the tears of sorrow with each death. And we shall see that their stories tell of a group of women who discuss political happenings: they speak of the Turks, British, the Jews, the hero Nasser and the 'traitor' Sadat; they honour the martyrs of the intifadah although some tie it to the added misery of their old age, and one woman scolded a young man when he rejoiced at the illness of Abu 'Ammar.

The old women in Musharafah are upset about the deteriorating traditional roles in their community. During a meeting held by the electoral board of the Palestinian Authority they linked expensive piped water - which they explained is full of chemicals - to the overall state of collapse of food and health. They criticised the Authorities for letting 'returnees' ruin the entrance of the village with American houses and they spoke of rich 'so-called Palestinians' and poverty among the 'the people of the land of Palestine'. We will find a group of women who struggle and suffer, but they also survive loss and reflect on its outcome. These disappointments, contrasts and tensions inject the fears, regrets, pains and joys which are humanity.

By firmly drawing attention to the women and realities in their lives, we see that fetching water does not only involve cooking, washing and quenching thirst. It is embedded in life histories, which makes water the core of the narratives. My focus on the narratives shows that when women talk about fetching water they in fact talk about their 'life as lived', about the problems related to being a responsible daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, mother and mother-in-law. The narratives thus bring out many of the inconsistencies that the women feel in carrying out their various

roles, torn as they are between tradition and a modern world, between female companionship and patriarchal demands, between youthful unease and adult responsibility.

Thus we see how they may remember younger days, - when, in their memories, things were unproblematic - and contrast it to a contemporary Palestine full of political and economic turmoil. They remember the joy, pride and nervousness of marriage, the point at which part of their complete womanhood was supposed to be reached; the utmost fulfilment was with the birth of the first son. They talk about the apprehensions and ambiguity about marriage partners selected by the male kin who did not always consider looks or age differences. And they reflect on how the marriages of their daughters were occasions that brought such tensions back to life; after all, if the groom is fine the mother-in-law seldom is.

The women have several stories about their treasured embroideries in which they put so much attention and emotion, and which were often designed and done by the water spring, with models inspired by the landscape around the spring. We see how such activities as embroidering are lifted up from their female sphere to a national sphere in which women, embroidery and other crafts become central symbols for a Palestinian state in the making. Which brings up history's role in their lives. They have obvious pride in their role in the national struggle to uphold the Palestinian heritage, but at the same time there is the pain of a lived history of foreign occupation and aggression.

*The narratives also bring to life a 'poetics of water' in which women not only talk about water, but evoke images of a total landscape in which their lives are carried out. Fetching water and filling water - **malli**[5], implies a specific approach to being a female Palestinian peasant, and the knowledge of the female Palestinian peasants is situated in a physical and a social world as well as in specific time periods. This situatedness is constantly referred to by women by using words or concepts such as **zaman**, which means both the past or circumstances of life, **jebel** and **khala**, connoting mountains and open landscape.*

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[5] ***Malli*** *strictly means filling the water into a jar or tin. But the women in Musharafah also used the term to talk about going to fetch water.*

Khala *is a rich cultural concept that vividly portrays the poetics of water in the lives of the women, placed in a particular landscape, and which often is the backdrop for the stories. It is a word they taught me early on in my fieldwork, saying that water has to be in the* ***khala****, that is where life is lived.* ***Khala*** *thus is the manifestation of several things. It is a physical landscape in which they have happy memories tied to specific points in that landscape. But it is also a manifestation of God's presence in the world, and how He through his Grace has blessed them with both land and water.* ***Khala*** *also signifies the site of struggle. The Palestinians have been blessed with land, but they have had to fight for it against numerous intruders. Hence controlling the* ***khala*** *is controlling their own destiny against the constant threats by outside powers.*

Threats were talked about. The women speak about cultural threats when they refer to the out-migrations of village people to the cities and abroad. There is also in-migration of families from outside. And since ***khala*** *is supposed to be untamed space, it is defined as outside the village and outside the town. These movements are troubling. Today new houses are being built there at the entrance to the village, with roads and shops, and many are speaking of building more schools and even a clinic. Hence the* ***khala*** *is transforming, and some transformations are necessary, the women say, but other changes alienate the landscape from the village* - "cut it up". *If change continues the village will represent the vanishing Palestine, and the women worry because they want nature to remain in its place. They speak of homes built of stones that blend into the* ***khala****, of air that is pure because it is close to heaven, healing herbs that grow in-between groves. And then there is the water that flows freely in the valley from the mountains. When there is an excess of water it flows back and is collected in the rocks, to be searched for later and fetched at times of extreme dryness.*

The village landscape might be starting to represent a vanishing Palestine, yet inside the village it is different. Here space is socially defined, meaning that it is a space that is divided according to gender rules, kinship rules, economic ownership rule, and so on. And women also find their place within such

socially defined spaces. But it is necessary to remember that many old women live alone, and several households are just made up of women, so there are contradictions to the village rules on social organisation. Take ***hamulah,*** *for instance, the paradigmatic anthropological concept for the Middle Eastern version of a lineage or clan.*

There are three ***hamayel*** *(sing.****hamulah****) in the village; some are more influential than others. The three* ***hamayel*** *in Musharafah are* ***hamulat*** *'Ali, Abu Maryam, and Abu Flayyan, and the women were all related through these three* ***hamayel****. But the existence of such units was not conceptualised by the women in the same way as we are told by the anthropological literature on the region. First of all there was a difference in age when it came to how people understood family relations. The younger generation in the village always referred me to their elders when the question of* ***hamulah*** *came up.*

However, even more interesting, is the fact that women did not put much emphasis on the concept of ***hamulah*** *at all. Women did not talk about* ***hamulah*** *unless I asked about it, and most of them were not sure of its place in their lives today. Most of them said it was relevant to the choice of their marriage partner, or when land was being divided, olives picked and oil distributed. But more common than* ***hamulah*** *was the women's use of the term* ***dar****. In practice, they said, these issues were solved among the* ***dar****, household, and the* ***nasab*** *or* ***asabiyya****, blood relatives. Women, then, were much more concerned and interested in the achievements of the* ***dar*** *and the relationship towards the* ***nasab*** *than the* ***hamulah****. They talked about which* ***dar*** *they come from and into which* ***dar*** *they married, where their* ***nasab*** *live, that is whether they lived close by or far away. These were the networks which were also relevant in their situation today. Thus as we shall see, while much research on Palestine has been concerned with the construction of* ***hamulah****, the women use other concepts when they speak of the concept of* ***dar****. It is an important point that when they talked of life before the installation of water pipes they spoke of women from different* ***dar****, or the same* ***dar****, going together to fetch water. They did not mention* ***hamulah*** *within this women's network or reality.*

Dar presents a view of the women's world as they presented it themselves. Implicit in all the stories about ***dar*** *and* ***nasab*** *is the theme of power and agency. The general literature on Palestine and the Middle East shows examples of how women are subject to male dominance - through a patriarchal culture or through a male dominated religion - and also of how women suffer from modern market relationships and the introduction of modern technologies; these examples are about* ***dar*** *transformed. In the women's stories many of these factors are acknowledged, but they are embedded in a self-understanding that is not characterised by victimisation, but rather by positive agency and self-esteem. This is exactly what I want to convey in this work. The women I met in the field, and who came to mean so much to me, are not puppets in a male dominated world, or outcasts in the world of modernisation and globalisation. They experienced 'globalisation' long before it became a concept. I am not saying that their lives are easy, far from it. Nor am I saying that they do not suffer. The thoughts that I am attempting to convey are that, in the midst of difficulties and suffering, there is the tremendous strength of the women's pride: pride of who they are and what they have achieved; pride of their history and pride of their village. Thus they appear as people with agency, and it is this agency I want to make visible in my work.*

A focus on issues

In my discussion of the women's world I have condensed the stories, conversations, and my observations. The editing is done in order to arrive at a clearer concept of narrative and the various ways narratives can be an instrument in basic anthropological inquiry. Moreover I have simplified to make them more accessible to 'my' readers. I believe my use of the concept of narrative and of narratives can open up to discussions of basic anthropological problem areas such as the role of culture and the role of history in an analysis such as this one. This type of exposition is necessary in order to understand on what basis I claim that the women's stories can be generalised and used to understand the wider universe of women's worlds. But this is only a beginning. I have also indicated that a starting point for my thesis is to understand the way women have reacted to and conceptualised the change

in water supplies in Musharafah: From the spring water spring in the ***khala*** *to the faucet.*

Hence I must not only look at the women's stories in isolation, but also play them out against a particular development project, that of modernising the village water supply and 'empowering' the women. Part of this can be reached through the women's stories, and relates to what I have argued in earlier sections of the introduction. But I also want to contrast the women's way of understanding and experiencing the new water source, and the old, with the understanding of the development experts who are behind projects such as the one we are discussing in Musharafah.

Consequently the stories are not only used to open up to an understanding of how women live in a Palestinian village. The narratives also inform about the type of knowledge they represent and how such knowledge fares with respect to a type of knowledge characterised by the technocratic, bureaucratic and economists. The developers' viewpoint on development is as improvement and progress, believing it leads to empowerment; this they know by the label of 'modernisation'. Here again we are also faced with the issue of power colliding with agency. Yet this time it is not a power embedded in a traditional way of life, but rather it is the dramatic difference in power between a traditional world and the power of development agencies assisted by capital, know how and the policies of nation states.

My attempt at placing the Musharafah women into this larger story is thus also an attempt to make a statement of relevance to development anthropology. The statement is that there are voices and discourses that are overlooked in the process of creating development. And that unless such voices are heard and the messages taken into consideration, we shall only reproduce development schemes and create development processes that are already discredited by their biased bases of foreign ideas, foreign technology and foreign experts. This leads directly to the question of how our case here is relevant for understanding knowledge in general.

An understanding of the women in Musharafah is at the same time an understanding of how knowledge systems are local, yet non-local; how they are individual, yet shared; how they are muted, yet can be heard. This brings us back into basic anthropological discussions about the role of the culture concept in anthropology, and how it is attempted modified by the use of concepts such as traditions of knowledge, and various forms of discourse analysis. These are different analytical styles for talking about basic human affairs, about our being in the world. And this is of course what anthropologists have claimed to be doing all the time.

It has been a trademark for our discipline to say that we have been concerned with the lives lived by people in different places, partly in order to understand the variation of human existence around the world, but also through comparison to make use of such insights in order to better understand our own society. Both efforts are said to contribute to the understanding of the human condition, and we should appreciate that it is a job that never ends. Our descriptions of other societies and those of our own can be improved. Our analytical framework can always be criticised and improved as well. Which brings me to yet another dimension of the thesis. Through my work in Musharafah, and through my analysis of the women's world there, I also claim that it is a contribution to the rewriting of the anthropology of the Middle East.

Traditional anthropological descriptions of that region have been criticised from different angles: for only looking at men, or only lineages, or only pastoralists, or only Islam, and for making such biased foci a platform for generalisations about the region as a whole. Much of this criticism is true, and I want to add to it here. By placing my case within the anthropology of the Middle East I also want to show how my focus on women in their everyday lives can be an alternative to an Orientalist understanding of the Middle East in which women are domesticated, dominated over, and mute. I do argue that we need to re-write and articulate some of the anthropological truths about the Middle East. My contribution here, based on my presentation and discussion of the women from Musharafah, is to the field of gender studies in the Middle East.

Zones of inspiration

In trying to achieve what I have outlined above I have been greatly inpired by two scholars who belong to different generations but who have formulated things about Middle Eastern women that I feel inspired by, and on which I draw. The two persons are Hilma Granqvist, a Finnish researcher working in Palestine in the 1930s, and Lila Abu Lughod, a contemporary anthropologist well known for her writings on the Bedouin women in Egypt. Both present women in the Middle East with a focus on the women themselves, Hilma Granqvist's project was women's ways of looking at things *(Granqvist 1931, p.2), and Lila Abu-Lughod is presenting us with* women's lives as lived. *Both are concerned with themes which Western academia tends to elaborate about in the Arab Muslim woman's life, such as reproduction, polygamy and arranged patrilineal marriages. Both focus on native categories, with a focus on women, and thereby are able to show how traditional topics dealt with in the anthropology of the Middle East are seen as experienced and negotiated through the lives of women. By telling the stories as they were told to them, both Hilma Granqvist and Lila Abu Lughod avoid constructing an ideal, general, homogenous and timeless culture in which people live. Rather, they show what I want to show, women's agency and self-reflection.*

Hilma Granqvist was an extraordinary woman working in the village of Artas from 1925 to 1931, writing several books, and also working through the medium of photography, actually presenting a series of photographs that at the time revolutionised the notion of field documentation of women's lives. Together with the long fieldwork periods, clearly inspired by her contemporaries Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski, she has left us with a rich ethnographic material that is of great use for contemporary anthropologists.

When consulting this material I find many parallels to stories in 'my village'. A main theme is the analysis Granqvist makes of the social context of the everyday life of the village, and what women told her about their lives. She did not present women as all equal, living identical types of lives; instead she carefully listed situated speech-acts, and demonstrated variation and even conflicting

stories and reasoning, thus giving priority to indigenous speakers and the variations and adaptability that existed in the village.

Some of Granqvist's stories relate directly to my own focus on women and water. She used her camera and her text to illustrate how young girls and women walked to the spring to draw water several times a day, and she elaborates on this specific chore as an important part of the village organisation. I also find descriptions which are in their specific details similar to my material. One example of a story which I can also link to 'my village' is when Granqvist in her text gives three reasons why a mother-in-law welcomes a daughter-in-law. Two reasons refer to her strength as worker, and only one reason for having children. I remember smiling to myself when I read her accounts. Granqvist's women were expressing the same arguments that are reflected in the stories 'my women' told me about their experiences as young, hard-working brides, trying not only to please their husband but also making sure that the mother-in-law was satisfied. Several of my women speak frankly about their concern towards the mother-in-law, and the importance of making an impression on her and keeping her happy. The two groups of women also 'agree' that the choice of a husband is not always personal. Getting married is not based on individual feelings, but rather on the notion of chosing the 'ideal wife', that is, a woman who gets the work done and takes care of all the needs in the husband's household.

A household needed women to carry out the tasks that could not be done by a man. Once a young bride came into a household, the mother-in-law's work became lighter and her authority heavier. As young brides, they were given all the heavy duties of grinding the corn, fetching the fuel for the bread oven and water for the household. When a woman was lucky enough to have a son, or preferably many sons, she knew that her oldest son would marry and that she was then responsible for supervising the bride's work. The girl would be one the mother has picked after having observed how she did her chores and the ways she helped her mother fetch water: "She had to be strong with a good neck to carry water". *Again I see a clear parallel to Granqvist's writing about the power of the mother-in-law,* that ... the wives of her son also fetch water, gather wood and manure, etc., so that a

woman with daughters-in-law is said to be a 'lady' *(Granqvist 1935, p. 150). Granqvist even writes about a woman without a son who had secured her position by demanding that her husband takes another wife.*

Another important concern of Hilma Granqvist was the relationship between customs and traditions and processes of change. In this context her use of the concept 'folklore' is interesting. Due to her background in theology, Granqvist was obviously concerned with the problem that some values vanish, which I believe is one reason for Granqvist's focus on folklore as a basis for studying the culture of Artas. She maintained that we need to document customs and traditions thoroughly, indicating that she believed the culture of the village of Artas was not going to survive. Her documentation work was to prevent the village and its people from becoming mere myths or tales of an undocumented past. With documentation of the realities of everyday life, whether through the medium of her writing or her camera, we are made to see change and contradictions as they happened in a village in Palestine in the 1930s, By reports of actual cases, *Granqvist wrote,* one obtains an interesting insight into how the different ways of looking at things clash, how by changes and complications one rule is substituted for another or how compromises are made when necessity arises. *(Granqvist 1931, p. 17-18)*

Her documentation work was also inspired by her view of the contemporary writings on Palestinian women. Already in her introduction to marriage conditions she was concerned with the approaches scholars had when they wrote about women in the Middle East and in Palestine. In a passage that also refers to the general writings about the 'Oriental women' she says:.....as soon as the position of the Palestinian, or as one has preferred to call her, the Oriental woman, is under discussion, one has been too easily content to make judgements of a purely subjective kind instead of inquiring into the facts, the special conditions and laws which regulate the life of women in a Palestinian society. Those who have women as informants are in a specially favourable position; the women are very much interested in their conditions which linger with pleasure over things which the men glide over lightly *(Granqvist 1931, p. 22). The quotation here alludes to that*

which several anthropologist today are striving to achieve, namely writing with the individuals, and not 'against them'. That means giving them not only their names and faces, but also their words, providing the space needed to tell their stories in order to produce more credible data. By doing that we can do away with creating 'the other' through exotic, non-including descriptions of meanings.

Granqvist never believed in easy generalisations about people, and her detailed statistics on Artas that she collected in order to present real life in the village, were unmatched until the first village census made in the 1990s (Ulla Vuorela p.c). She is also quite explicit in her criticism of the general research on Palestine: The other danger to which Palestine research has been subject in what concerns folklore has been that, quite inconsistently with the great differences in country and people which are always being put forward, generalisations have been made as to local habits and customs, and earlier writers, having collected or picked up information here and there, have quite unconcernedly given it out as Palestinian in general.*(Granqvist 1931, p.10) The quotation is an example of the fact that many contributors to debates on gender in the Middle East today raise issues which Granqvist wrote about in the 1930s. In a review in Man in 1937 of her pioneering volume on marriage we can read the following:* It is not easy to praise too highly Miss Granqvist's book. Her descriptive powers and use of texts are excellent. Her statistical material is well arranged. Her fieldwork methods have not been bettered by any anthropologist. *Following a brief summary of her method and theme, the reviewer goes on*: The author is to be congratulated on an excellent piece of work. *The review was signed by Edward E. Evans-Pritchard (Evans-Pritchard 1937, p.20).*

My second inspiration is Lila Abu-Lughod. Lila Abu-Lughod is of course a contemporary writer in anthropology, associated with 'The New Ethnography'. This is a line of thinking promoting an ethnography which is conscious of post-modern criticism and feminist theory and which attempts to overcome the 'othering' implicit in the scientific and omniscient voice of the ethnographer. Lila Abu-Lughod calls this writing against culture. *Her concern is with a type of ethnographic writing that portrays the dynamism*

and variations of everyday life. Her theoretical arguments point to the pitfalls of using the culture concept, and she warns that by using this concept we end up creating the 'other'. Her alternative writing is meant to bring out actors, individuals and real lives.

Abu-Lughod is motivated by Clifford's doctrine of writing against culture, and in Writing women's worlds, she does indeed portray the Bedouin women's lives just as she said she would: lives as lived. She uses narrative as way of giving vivid descriptions of lives of women, making them talk about their own experiences and thereby trying to show how the lives of the Bedouin women may not be all that different from our own. Reifying a distinct separate culture promotes dichotomies such as Western/non-Western, self/other, and the hierarchies, power distinctions, and boundaries that such dichotomies encode. This, Abu-Lughod tells us, is done through a professional academic language, a discourse of power. Anthropologists in their typifications of cultures use authoritative discourse to construct differences. Instead, telling stories is her medium to avoid creating 'the other'.

In her work Lila Abu-Lughod builds on a critique of 'culture' undertaken by authors like Johannes Fabian for anthropology and Edward Said for Orientalist scholarship, who in different ways have shown how the use of the 'culture' concept has rhetorically supported extant political hierarchies by reifying differences between Western and non-Western societies. The result is that 'others' appear internally consistent, self-contained, less complex than the West. And she also builds on feminist insights into the subtleties of domination and the partiality and situatedness of knowledge. Her ethnography is a critical work positioned against generalised notions of culture and in opposition to the general Western view of Arab Muslim women, and she uses narratives.

Abu-Lughod argues that the major advantage of narrative storytelling is that it is bound not only to be situated but also contextualised. In Writing women's worlds she has a preface which she uses to direct us, in it she says that the book is written in the more conventional form of an academic essay that locates the work in its appropriate theoretical and political contexts (Abu-Lughod 1993, p. xvii). In the introduction she reviews her own thoughts about creating Writing women's worlds and the role its

creation has played in the development of her ideas about feminist anthropology, culture, and ethnography.

Lila Abu-Lughod openly discusses the nature of her particular standpoint and the power relations it implies. She has a direct approach to her readers, purposefully saying that I expect the audience – which I assume will be mostly Western or Western-educated, coming to the text informed by anthropology (and its current critics), Feminism (and its internal dissenters, including Third World feminists), and Middle East studies (with its awareness of the problems of orientalism) – to approach the book critically, keeping in mind questions about the politics of ethnographic representation and sociological description,, problems of feminist aspiration and method, and assumptions about the Muslim Middle East *(Abu-Lughod 1993, ibid). The book does not have a concluding chapter to sum up what has been said in the narratives. The reason for this being that a conclusion may give the reader a predefined understanding. Instead she wants us to be left with the stories* and their potential to overflow our analytical categories. *(Abu-Lughod 1993, p. xviii)*

Although greatly inspired by Lila Abu-Lughod's work I also see problems with her arguments. In her monograph Writing women's worlds *I feel she is not herself able to escape the notion of culture. On the contrary, it might be said that in the introductory chapter of the book, in which she argues against the holistic representations of cultures, she is actually taking advantage of the methods and terminology she discards. Actually, part of the appeal of this book is precisely the way the reader is brought into not only the lives of certain individuals but rather how those individual lives are presented in ways that illustrate cultural contexts.*

I follow Abu-Lughod's affirmation that to imagine one can understand an individual's lived experience based on a set of extrapolated categories would be an act of distortion and 'othering'. I also share her ambivalence towards the term 'culture' and the danger that an uncritical use of this concept may render the agency of actors into an object, rather than a life. At the same time I would argue

that it is precisely the accessibility of cultural categories which makes it possible to build bridges to the experiences of other people. And it is precisely the understanding of the accessibility to other realities, which Abu-Lughod promotes in her writing.

Hence, Lila Abu-Lughod's contribution also brings me back to Hilma Granqvist's writings. Granqvist tried very explicitly to contextualise women's worlds within cultural categories. Her photographs and writing clearly indicates this and her focus on 'culture' as well as on 'folklore' was much more direct and explicit than what is found in Abu-Lughod's writings. But both women have written about women in the Middle East in ways that relates directly to my own attempt at 'writing women's worlds'. Focussing on individual women and their stories is important to me. But I also believe that the situated voices in my material cannot be heard unless there is a foundation of language concerning basic cultural categories in more traditional ethnographic form.

Theoretical positioning

The reader will have understood by now that my aim is to combine a focus on women's narratives, in a narrow sense, with broader reflections on issues to which those narratives relate. I have indicated already that those broader issues relate to the relationship between narratives, history and culture, blended into the field of development anthropology, then moved to a broader canvass on which to understand knowledge systems in general, and finally, to the anthropology of the Middle East. Let me first turn to narratives, in their various contexts.

On narratives

There are several reasons for my preference for use of life stories in this thesis. I have come to realise that not only the cultural but to an even larger extent the historical constructions about the area known as Palestine and its peoples are fairly static and conventional. In the quest for more authenticity, and in order to contest existing prototypical accounts, I believe it is crucial to include 'native' stories or statements, including even the marginal voices of rural elderly women. But let me clarify one point. I am not including these voices because they are disappearing, because I feel an urgency to "save Palestinian culture for posterity", so to speak. Actually, it is part of my argument that we

cannot "capture culture" in this way, and leave it for others 'to see'.

Rather, my aim is to understand the women I met in Musharafah by contextualising their lives and stories in a contemporary world, not to idealise their lives as prototypical of Palestinian culture. I say this because there has always been a tendency in social anthropology to treat the marginal as an emergency, which means that some lives need to be documented, described, and analysed before their disappearance. We get this feeling from reading both Granqvist from Artas and Abu-Lughod's work from Awlad Ali's world. The idea of urgency has also troubled the Norwegian anthropologist Gunnvor Berge in her work among the Tuareg in Mali. Berge found much literature from the 1800s, mostly in French, on the vanishing culture and people of the Tuareg. In the late 1990s the Tuareg were still practising the same habits and fighting similar wars to those described two hundred years before. We find the same tendencies in perspectives on the cultures of the Palestinian people, especially relating to the themes of women and crafts in villages. The question of Palestine is, of course, different in many ways from the development of Mali.

Yet urgency remains an open ended question: whether the elders in the villages of Palestine will take what is left of rural Palestinian Highland values with them when "God remembers them"? *I don't know. I don't know because although we do know that cultural patterns are in flux, and that they change, we do not know the directions in which they may change. What is clear to me, however, is that if we treat them as vanishing we will present them as rarities, and by that we may contribute to the reproduction of their marginality. My alternative is to take seriously the past of which they speak and give it authenticity and authority in the general theoretical deliberations on narratives.*

We know from several intellectual sources and disciplines that there are different labels for telling a story, and within each discipline there are again different labels, and so on. There is biography, autobiography, ethno-history, oral history, life history, life stories, living history, and then, narratives. Historians and anthropologists have their ongoing discussions about which

discourses matter, and according to Clifford Geertz very often Anthropology gets the tableau, history gets the drama *(Geertz 2000, p. 124). By this, Geertz means that there is a distinction between history as the past clarified, and history as part of the story the anthropologist is telling. This is precisely what I experience in my own work. Obviously Palestine is a highly politicised region, and the question 'whose quest for authenticity is it?' is essential. There is a tension between 'truth' and 'legitimacy' in historical writing. What Palestinian women tell in retrospect is the constructed past, and the present is interactive - the interaction between their history as the conveyer of legitimacy and the present realities has thus to be documented as part of the ethnographic presentation.*

Thus the product is 'two-voiced', (Knudsen 1990), never the story in isolation, but the story as people choose to tell it. Stories then, like recorded histories, have their own internal logic, in the sense that stories illustrate people's reflexive engagements with their own lives. To us as anthropologists it is important not to confuse history with the story, a point of particular importance when we are dealing with life histories. Life histories represent a point at which history and ethnography can mingle and interact. Hence, it is difficult to know what is 'history' and what is 'interpretation'. One way out is to combine people's interpretations with information from historical archives or secondary sources, but even in such cases a life story moves beyond the recorded and depends on a person's memory and feelings at the time of telling the story. Life stories, then, bring forth the personal life dramas and set them in a more dynamic context.

It follows from this that narratives obviously constitute 'incomplete evidence'. After all, the stories are based on biographical style, on what people remember, wish to remember and also what the writer of narratives is recording, or striving to remember about how and what people said. The writer also affects the narratives by choosing what to record in writing and what to leave out. Clearly the procedure of retelling the story is affected by movements at both ends – that of the actor and that of the writer. The Norwegian development geographer Berit Helen Vandsemb captures this dilemma inherent in the nature of story telling: A narrative is a sequence of events told in words, and the events

are ordered chronologically. *She goes on to compare words told during fieldwork with the most familiar form of narrative in the West, namely the novel and concludes*, but the novel is only one of a number of narrative possibilities *(Vandsemb 1995, p.413). Referring to the works of Scholes and Kellogg (Scholes & Kellogg 1968; Vandsemb 1995, ibid), Vandsemb argues that the narrative involves not only the story but also retelling the story.*

One obvious constraint in the use of narratives is thus that life stories create and invent traditions, that there is blur around the 'truth', and that the truth is not altogether clear or coherent. The reasons are obvious. Those whose memory on which we base our story may find the events recorded or remembered both emotionally and physically challenging. Yet, I agree with Gottschalk that narratives' main trait of significance is that those who communicate them believe that the stories depict actual events of their past *(Gottschalk 2000, p.71). The same point has also been indicated in Vandsembs' work from Sri Lanka (Vandsemb 1995). And this point shall be a guiding principle in my own analysis of stories as narratives. The focus shall not be on what is true and what is false in a historical sense, but on the ways in which the content of narratives create real lives for the people who tell them. The focus then, is on the interlinkages between the narratives and 'history' and 'culture' in the sense that history and culture provide one type of material on which narratives are drawn, the other being everyday events and developments in the individual lives of the storyteller.*

Narratives, culture and history

We may turn the problem around. Instead of asking what history does to narratives, we may ask what narratives do to history that is in what way narratives can be combined with history, and what type of history emerges from this combination. Borgström defines this type of oral history as ethnohistory (Borgström 1997), and argues that such histories live by the strength of being transmitted or told. Ethno-histories create a feeling of continuity which makes it possible to redefine the past to fit the present. Borgstrøm's argument is particularly pertinent in the case of Palestine, which is a place in which past events play an important role in the contemporary life of Palestinians, particularly the

Palestinian peasants. And it leads to a second problem area, that of understanding 'memory'.

By eliciting what people remember we are led towards what they consider important in their lives. If we ask a question like 'why do women in Musharafah miss fetching water from the spring?' we might hear them answer both that life was hard in the past and that they suffered, but also that they speak of survivals and achievements. The memory of fetching water then, is one of those memories that constitutes a metaphor for how various aspects of women's lives were tied together. But the focus on such connections also provides important avenues to understand the cultural systems of which the women were a part, and how such a cultural system might be said to have a history. In this I see two types of analytical challenges: first, how to relate culture and history; second, how to deal with the structure-agency problem. There are different ways of answering challenges such as these, and I shall present two paradigmatic ways that have provided solutions to me. The two ways are related to the contributions of Marshall Sahlins and Fredrik Barth.

Since I am concerned with the people and the stories 'from below' that mimic reflections of choices and actions, I found that drawing on Barth's modes of knowing helps me find a method of exploring individuals 'engagement with the world'. Fredrik Barth says that to get to grips with Balinese life he did not question their world as it is, instead he observed the processes by which Balinese endow it with meaning. By doing so the inconsistencies and variations become apparent. Barth emphasised that instead of representing culture in terms of theoretical classifications of social structure or consistent sets of cultural values, anthropological research should focus on collective concerns, which bring out the variations in the lives of the people. He discusses the relation between collective values and individual practices, and concludes that while values and institutions make up the structures under which the Balinese live, they do not explain how people act. In order to understand why people act the way they do, we will need to do more in the way of understanding their intentions and interpretations.

Barth's model is based on the question of how an event is made accessible, and he believes that although the reality of people's lives is complex it's still possible to reach: with a reasonable amount of patience and genuine interest in the lives of particular individuals we encounter.... *(Barth 1993, p. 160) To do so is obviously dependent on taking their knowledge seriously and not regarding it as an exotic variation of the scientific. It is enough to say that both the scientific and the traditional are rational, which obviously they are for those who apply them. We need to also reflect on the totality of what knowledge encompasses.*

The individuals in Fredrik Barth's monographs are people who live in the midst of change, and the complexities of flux are part of their personal lives. He is concerned with the engagement with which people connect in the world, and, in order to engage, individuals have their repertoires. These are of course varied, because people are complex and lead unique lives, which will not be focal if we put those lives within the constrictions of such a term as 'culture'. Barth is clear in his ambivalence towards the term 'culture' with which the actor's agency is frozen and individuals are bounded, hence loosing sight of the relational grounds expressed in fields of interactions on different levels. He wants us to look carefully into the processes rather than the 'really real' (Barth 1993), when we do so we write with the actor's view of those topics with which they are concerned with and they label as fundamental. In recognising which reality people choose to mould and produce in giving meaning to their world, it is as Barth puts it: in conformity with an embracing construct of balance and harmony between cosmos, society, and morally excellent souls. *(Barth 1994, p. 355)*

This means that if I follow Barth I will find that the descriptions and stories I hear from the old women in the village are about how they pass on to me the process of their engagement in their village, and when they do so they talk about their customs and traditions within a framework of everyday events. Barth writes about the experiences of individuals, and uses lives of the people he encounters in the field to reveal that systems of knowledge are always in flux; that is where the concept of culture might have its weaknesses, because it is too rigid and compromising. Here is where I break with Barth: I accept that to inform the agency we

need to draw on the process with all its contradictions and variations. And I also agree that we need to be wary of the confinements of 'culture' and look into the possibilities which 'systems of knowledge' provide. Yet I will argue that, in my case, I believe in the continuing usefulness of formulating the grammars of what I see as cultural categories which are embedded in history, as, for example the role of Islam in the peasant's realities.

To write about cultural categories and history I draw on Sahlins. In his recent article "Two or Three Things I Know about Culture", he is shielding culture against what he perceives as either an abrasive treatment or a total dismissal of the term 'culture'. Sahlins writes very pointedly about people's reception of or reluctance to accept new ideas that have followed in the footsteps of the emerging globalisation. When he argues that the people are not usually resisting the technologies and conveniences of modernization, nor are they particularly shy of the capitalist relations needed to acquire them. Rather, what they are after is the indigenization of modernity, their won cultural space in the global scheme of things (Sahlins 1999:407). I want to take that back to what the elders say when they are demonstrating their scepticism about their yearning for the old village water springs and their attachment to 'winter water'.

Sahlins confrontational statement that without cultural order their is neither history nor agency is watered down by his later explanation that that people act in the world in terms of the social beings they are, and it should not be forgotten that from their quotidian point of view it is the global system that is peripheral, not them (Sahlins 1999:409). Culture as a conceptualisation losses its inflexibility in Sahlins' positioning of historical happenings within the framework of people situating their lives and defining others who are not part of their events; thus this is also a process of bringing out the agencies of each person.

In all his works Sahlins has addressed the relationship between the individual and culture, and he has treated culture as the product of a people's responses to environmental circumstances and their particular historical happenings. Hence, when Sahlins treats culture as a product of historical and social forces, he is criticising determinism. For him culture is not primordial or

analytically separable from the social world; human action is partly determined, purposive and coherent, partly determinate, haphazard and fragmentary, and daily practices and cultural forms continually produce each other. Unlike the method which I will attempt, Sahlins makes no attempt to speak for the subjects he studies, nor does he let them speak in their own words; but in the tradition of cultural anthropology Sahlins is interested in their notions and practices. Reflexive anthropology deconstructs the notion that culture is a defined and distinct social whole. Yet, the narratives show that the women often claim precisely such a notion of 'typical' culture.

The old women's form of telling us history which we register is the oldest form of history. Heritage is when they are using the past to explain to me the reasons behind the ways of life and its link to the significant common past. Their heritage is about values which they believe are about to be lost if they are not here to preserve them. The old women in the village are still alive and they each have a life story attached to their village. They are the keepers of the Palestinian legacy, they said in their stories, which is the heritage. Now, what is 'true' in their story? And is the 'truth' relevant? Burke (Burke 1994) speaks of narratives as a method; he maintains that it is ...no more innocent in histography than it is in fiction *(Burke 1994, p. 235). If we tune in to the narratives, they unfold a life, because they are valid sources concerning people still living in that same place. What people did was and is unique, and they have their stories to prove it. As to the authenticity of their stories - I believe the main issue should be the complication and diversity they add to already recorded, documented and written down history.*

Hence, I am inspired both by Barth and Sahlins. Barth with his sensitivity to the acting and reflecting person attempting to deal with the challenges of his or her life. I draw on Sahlins with his concern for history and continuities. Furthermore, I seek to provide a bridge between the two perspectives, which is provided by my focus on narratives. It is through narratives that we will grasp both the women as active individuals and as carriers of culture and heritage.

Doing fieldwork across checkpoints

My first trip to Palestine was in 1992 when with Palestinian friends I crossed the borders between Rafah and Gaza. They invited me to their home in Gaza to celebrate their mother's return from Mecca, where she had performed the rituals of the ***haj****. In the centre of Gaza and along the beach the locals were still enjoying what felt as hope for a life with self-determination. Families were grilling, boys were playing football, and little girls were sitting in circles clapping their hands and singing. Gazans, refugees and 'locals' were optimistic and looking forward to the West investing in their narrow Strip, to businesses flourishing and to education expanding. Several of the older 'local' Gazans that is the families who are not refugees but have their roots in Gaza, were uneasy about the constructions of massive apartment and office buildings. There was a plan to build along the coastline and this, I was told, is breaking with traditions* "People here are not used to live on top of each other". *They were worried that the* "old families of Gaza" *would sell their traditional* ***dar*** *with its unique arrangements of space to construction developers, and the prices at the time were very attractive.*

Whilst the 'local' establishment were upset about the constructions on the strip, in the Refugee Camp of Deir El Balah young men were painting slogans against the Oslo agreement on the walls of the broken down homes. Women, however, young and old were looking forward to changes in their life, and they spoke of Western investments opening up new jobs, better education, and easier living conditions. A couple of the older women mentioned the possibility of going back home to their village of origin. They were well aware of the fact that the place has been destroyed by the Israelis, but still they wanted to build a home on the grounds of their old home; "but newer", *they added.*

Now when I moved to the ***Daffa***[6] *in the spring of 1993, new homes and buildings were either in the process of construction or finished. These were either high rises with large entrances or two to three floor villas in yellowish brick, with elegant entrances. A couple of houses had fountains in their front yards. Driving from Ramallah and El Bireh to 'my' village there are several returnee*

[6] *Daffa is the colloquial reference made to the West Bank.*

homes; the Jewish settlements are placed on top of most surrounding hills. During the first years of my stays and visits in the West Bank, the people, as I have indicated above, were generally optimistic in the sense that they were looking forward to an independent Palestinian state and to the final exit of the Israeli army from their neighbourhoods.

A number of young couples were investing in modernising their homes and adding 'trendy' furniture and luxury goods. This, however, changed. During one of my last visits I was staying in the home of Um Khalid, and enjoying the sounds, scenes and food which had become familiar to me. Then one morning we woke up to an Israeli raid on the village, and I stood watching, with other women, as the army uprooted olive trees, bulldozed part of the old spring, a couple of graves and the ruins of an old watch tower. A little girl came and held her arms around me, saying "Is this the first time you see this yah khaliti (auntie)"?

Fieldwork under 'other' conditions

In his book Argonauts of The Western Pacific *Malinowski writes about rules to carry out fieldwork, and he advises us to take our scientific outlines with us on fieldwork, but he also asks us to be willing to change direction if the place demands it* If a man sets out on an expedition, determined to prove certain hypotheses, if he is incapable of changing his views constantly and casting them off ungrudgingly under the pressure of evidence, needless to say that his work will be worthless *(Malinowski 1984, p. 9). With this quotation Malinowski is saying that the region and the empirical material must influence our theoretical standpoint so that we either re-evaluate our theories or we develop new ones.*

This was what Hilma Granqvist did in Palestine. Initially she was going to write about 'Women in the Old Testament', then 'the living' stared back at her and smiled. Granqvist changed the focus of her research I needed to live among the people, hear them talk about themselves, make records while they spoke of their life, customs and ways of looking at things *(Granqvist 1931, p.2). At the time of her fieldwork Palestine was a British mandate and the Zionist State was not yet established, the conditions were, it seems, more open and favourable for various research questions.*

It is clear that Malinowski's and Granqvist's advice belongs to another time and was probably directed towards those anthropologists who were and have been able to carry out fieldwork under 'normal' conditions. My fieldwork, like that of many other anthropologists in turbulent regions, was carried out during a period of great political and civil turbulence. In my case this was in Palestine. Due to the violent unrest there and in Israel it has not been possible to carry out my last visit as planned, because I was not permitted into Israel. I have therefore used part of my funding to engage a Palestinian research assistant living in neighbouring town. Shifa Malek has a peasant background and was able to understand the women. She visited the village several times, but unfortunately her visits were stopped by the Israeli checkpoints.

I have not been fortunate enough to conduct fieldwork under 'text book' conditions. Yet, I believe that ideal conditions do not give us the same potential for understanding the vulnerability, and intricacy of, and emotions absorbing, people's lives. Palestine has gone through overwhelming crises since I started my fieldwork. Anthropologists working in the Middle East, and especially with the Palestinian peoples, observe stressed lives on a face-to-face and daily basis, Rosemary Sayigh has often reflected on the dilemmas involved with using ethnography, case study or participant observation techniques. In her article "Researching Gender in a Palestinian Camp", *she writes about the researchers fear, doubts and questions in an articulate discussion. Her research agenda of studying women's life in the refugee camp of Shateela, in southern Lebanon, tackles manifold layers of repression and urgencies.*

How does a researcher conduct her search for information, in a state of emergency experienced by people living on the margins, and still under siege? She has interwoven the history of her field research with the history of the camp and the women in the camp in an honest manner, raising important questions about the ethics of intrusion and the perception of pending results on the part of the researched. Unlike the rules learned in graduate school teachings, there is a need for more flexibility; she discovers that she alters her research questions and her methodology as the life

of the researched is transformed and new emergencies replace old crises. The interrelated stories of the research study, the researcher and the informants pose significant questions about fieldwork methodology and raises interesting openings for urgent - the ground - epistemologies. Researchers should seriously consider their responsibility to the researched and to their expectations in return for co-operation and should not take the expectation of advocacy lightly. In the context of my study it has been at times difficult to handle the field situation which is violent: both physically and emotionally.

Gunnvor Berge writes in her doctoral dissertation that she does not see any a priori reason why circumstantial biases should make the text too fictional to be accepted as anthropology. A commonly used synonym for ethnographic research is participant observation. The researcher is to strive for balance: if there is too much observation and emotional involvement, emic views become difficult to grasp. If there is too much participation, one goes bush. Empathy and involvement are advisable, but if the field situation creates very deep or disturbing emotions, the capacity to observe and analyse is perceived to diminish. Does it have to be? (Berge 2000, p.41) I certainly agree with Berge's questions. Do we have to be balanced in our emotional involvement during fieldwork? Ought our phrasing to be politically neutral and thus methodically lifeless? Towards the end of my work on this dissertation I became immersed in these questions, doing fieldwork under stress conditions which involved witnessing sufferings of the peoples I was writing about. They are in danger of being killed; their village, homes and olive orchards are damaged and ruined by the Israeli bulldozers.

To date, an extensive literature search on complex emergencies and anthropology has established that anthropologists have contributed little to growing body of literature in the field of "complex emergency". We are always met with an assurance that research acknowledges the complexity of occupation and upheaval, while not losing sight of the local questions from sight. Fredrik Barth questioned the extent of anthropological concern for the Third World: A highly intellectual and internal critique has set priorities and focused interests so that we have lost much of our engagement in the real world and urgent issues... Anthropology

has had pitifully little to say on the phenomenon of poverty as it affects increasing hundreds of millions of people in all major cities of the world. We have not been able to articulate a position, or even a noticeable interest, in the fact that human activity seems to be destroying humanity's own global habitat *(Barth 1994,p.350). So far it seems that analyses of crises are based on prefabricated typologies that make all crises look much too much alike.*

Local contexts, variations between types of conflict, and particular issues are seen as irrelevant or, if at all acknowledged, they are downplayed. To understand why people act the way they do, and hence how they will react upon different initiatives, is not a trivial issue of interest only for anthropologists. Such a contribution is essential to the understanding of developmental cycle of complex emergencies, of which the 'development discourse' is part, and a task for which the grounded approach of fundamental anthropology is particularly well suited (Berge 2000).

Warned against the pitfalls of emotional involvement, we are trained during our first years in anthropology to constantly attempt to reproduce a steady and well-adjusted account of 'our people'. The dissertation is the result of affection for Palestine which started with my first visit in 1992. My fieldwork was carried out from March 1993 to November 1993, followed with brief follow-ups every year until 1999. In 2000 I was refused entry into Israel.

During these ten years that passed since my first visit in Palestine, I have been fortunate to take part in many aspects of Palestinian life - both in the village of Musharafah, in neighbouring villages and in other Palestinian towns. Young couples who married during my first visit in 1992 have children today going to school. Girls and boys who were attending primary school are today studying or working. And my friends who had children studying are today grandparents. I am writing about 'old' women, so death was a recurrent theme; two of 'my' women died. I am sad I did not attend their funerals or have the possibility to visit their families to pay my condolences, a custom that they, the old women are very particular about.

The ethnography which follows builds not only on my fieldwork with its specific aim to investigate adaptation to piped water. Rather, this dissertation draws on my acquired and cumulated knowledge of the Middle East in general, gained genetically and over many years through contact with the people of the region. Not only women, but also men have spoken in confidence with me, and in return I am going to be as honest as possible in my descriptions and interpretations. There is also the complication of using data that can bring about harm to the women and their families or the village as such. Today the village is not only surrounded by the Israeli military but also a predominantly violent Israeli settlement.

I give a general description of the village, and in this I did not feel I needed to conceal too much. Because of the ongoing battles, the village scenarios in Palestine are changing: that is trees, bushes, houses are vanishing, village 'specialities' are more difficult to recognise after the Israeli destruction of homes, graveyards, ancient buildings and trees. Yet, when it comes to the specifics about individuals I believe I have a responsibility to protect and bend the evidences surrounding their persons in the village context, and the lives of those still living there. Specific information that might be used by the Israeli police, military or settlers against the villagers is left out, but I have not altered or mingled personal names and family history. At the same time there are things I will not write about, not only because I was told not to do so - "do not scandalise us" *they reminded me, but I have also not written about things which I believe should remain personal. This is a delicate balance, and in which I know I will only partly succeed.*

When I write about what they have told me I have kept in mind what they conveyed many times "tell them how we struggled and survived". *I have said earlier on that although my presentations of women's narratives is as truthful as I possibly can make them, my way of handling the narratives is not without theory. They are not simply recorded from a tape recorder, nor read directly from fieldnotes. The stories are not structured plots, with a beginning, middle and end. They are not told in one day, but over a long period of time. Although their stories, belong to the women, and I*

have certainly wanted to bring out the resonance of the voices in the village, the outcome is also "constructed" by me.

After consulting the women and some of their children I refrained from using pseudonyms, instead they asked me to change the name of the village. Hence Professor Kamal Abdulfattah, who is a great source of Palestinian history and geography, and knows all the Palestinian village names, suggested the name of Musharafah. This ficitive name indicates a welcoming and highly located village, which 'my' village certainly was. Following Professor Abdulfattah's advice I also changed the name of the 'feudal' family. I have instead chosen to write about things which are known to the peoples in Musharafah and close to the village; the public knowledges are edited and exposed to anthropological ethnography.

'My' women will not read this ethnography, but their children or grandchildren might, and I hope they will not be let down by what they come across. My endeavour is to bring forward how the many aspects of water in the lives of women are constructed. It is multifaceted; still it is what I saw and heard them talk about and, to a degree, could understand and interpret. The turn of events and the emotionally distressing experiences during my fieldwork and on later trips have definitely infused and affected the final version of the study, which I will outline in the following section.

Outline of the study

In Part One, Village and nation: some baselines, I have two chapters. They both serve as necessary backgrounds to the following discussion in the dissertation. In Chapter One, I focus on Musharafah, the village where I carried out my fieldwork. In the first chapter I present the old village, the new village and its biography as the villagers know it. Underlying the ideals of what women stand for in the Palestinian reproduction of heritage are tensions which I attempt to capture in Chapter One: between returnees building new homes in the vacant space between villages, and the poorer villagers referring to richer peasants as ***iqta'i****, feudal. While, Palestinians often say that they are peasants and that the village is the Palestinian heart, Musharafah represents the growing trend of a village inhabited by old female-headed households. Old women who have to deal with a reality*

that must be studies and which needs to be reflected in studies on the gender discourse in the Middle East.

Chapter Two shifts the focus from the village to that of the Palestinian nation. The historical understanding of the villagers presented in Chapter One is now put in the context of 'the Big Story – conceptualisations'. One typical example of an essentialisation of Palestine through these discourses is represented by the case of ***Al Qadiyya Al Filistinyya****, i.e. the 'Palestinian cause'. It was Yasir Arafat who brought back* ***Al Qadiyya Al Filistinyya*** *to where it belonged, namely Palestine. Following Nasser's use of the concept, the discourse became embedded in the Pan Arabic design and post colonial rhetoric for a liberation and a unified Arab world in control of its lands. The core of the phrase* ***Al Qadiya Al Filistinya*** *is the right of the Palestinian peoples to their land and it the significant element in the Palestinian national narrative. It is an emotional as well a political discourse, which was first defined in the early 1920s following the British mandatory procedures in Palestine, and the notorious Jewish project of* land without people for a people without land *was already home to 700,000 Palestinians in 1919. Moreover, it is a discourse that constantly creates realities that affect people in the region. The chapter presents these discourses in greater detail, and also show how various positions appear, depending on who the interpreters are, both among the Palestinian writers themselves, and also between Palestinian and Jewish historians.*

In Part Two: Women, wives and water, I concentrate on the women and their stories. The reader has already heard about the women involved in my dissertation. Although my understanding is derived from my interaction with all fifteen of them, as well as with others, I have chosen the stories of eight women as a basis for my analysis, and the stories are detailed in Chapter Three. These stories represent the multiplicity and variability in the village, and also show a shared cultural framework. We shall see through the narratives the complexity in each life, making us more able to appreciate the complications of village life today. In their narratives, the women talk of the villages as being part of the ***jebel****, and their place was clearly within the framework of the private domain which included all the chores expected to be done*

by women. **Jebel** is literally the mountain, but it can also mean the hinterland, a location far from the urban centres.

The **jebel** is above the **wadi**, and the **wadi** is a water catchment, where women could go to the spring and fetch water. Looking down at the **wadi** the women pointed to the fruit and olive trees, which they told me give shade and shelter, and the spring that is close by was a good place to rest and talk. The women use the water springs and the stretches of olive trees in their narratives to connect to their village life, that is 'life as lived', to 'their' sites and to retrieve their place in the landscape. With the advent of the water network, women's work and responsibilities changed. With the transformation, the sites and places that were familiar in their narratives diminished. Their space that was tied to goodness, to the fertility of the earth and the solidarity with other women was altered. Instead, many will tell us that all the virtues, which were integral in their rural landscape, the **khala**, are 'cut up'; today a network of pipes cuts into that space, and sterility has taken over, violating their place.

We shall hear the women in Musharafah reflect on how life was and is affected by significant people and circumstances around them. These culturally mediated experiences impart what they did or do and what other persons or powers put in place in their world. We are concretely introduced to the unintended consequences that were the outcome of piped water. The women speak of what life was like when water was still in the spring and they 'knew' it and fetched it. 'My' women talk of marriage and their relation to their mothers-in-law, having sons, choosing a bride for the sons, healing people and fighting the feudal home.

I continue in Chapter Four and Five with the women's stories, but now I will also attempt to contextualise what they told me in a more explicit way. Chapters Four and Five thus may be said to sociologise the narratives, putting the stories in contexts, further emphasising that various ways narratives may be taken to represent broader universes of social and cultural realities. Chapter Four takes up the ways the narratives tell a story of what it means to be a woman in the village, showing how the narratives must be understood on the background of the women's understanding of what it means to be a girl and a woman in the

village, but also on the background of social realities like marriage, family life and religion. Chapter Five puts the narratives in the context of water and landscape and shows how the way women talk about water is embedded in an understanding of their village landscape, but also of the village landscape as being part of the Palestinian nation, and, again, how water basically is related to God and is seen as a gift from God to the people.

The relationship between narratives and social and cultural universes is not automatic, nor is there an evenly balanced type of relationship between them. The way we understand the interlinkages is clearly affected by our theoretical positioning. Given the importance of this to my overall argument in this thesis I use Chapter Six to explore the analytical dimensions of using narratives the way I do and place myself within relevant literature. The notion of culture is examined within the framework of cultural categories that the women are concerned with. I reflect on the narratives and on role the past has in understanding the stories.

I address the narratives as the notions the women have about testimonials, heritage, and landscape. I draw here on several academic works, but I profit from some studies more than others. I draw on Burke's perspectives on the 'history from below' and the advantages of narrative as a viable method. I also use Maurice Halbwachs's and Lowenthal's works to elaborate theoretically on memory, relics and testimonials, as I do with Tilley's theories on landscape, I suggest that his writings bring out the muted past of the rural women.

Part Three of the thesis is called: Water development and women's knowledge. In Chapter Seven I go back to the 'Big Story' and the politics of water. Here I discuss questions of relevance to development. I address the various strategies represented by central donor agencies involved in water development, and I explore the type of knowledges they represent. It will come as no surprise the type of knowledge represented by agencies is dominated by a technocratic perspective, solving practical problems in distributing water to people, and assuming that this is a positive thing to do. Chapter Eight, on the other hand, starts with exploring what type of knowledge the village women represent, and how this type of

knowledge fare in meeting the knowledge of development experts. In order to carry out the discussion in Part Three I also discuss theoretical contributions both on general development as well as on types of knowledges involved in the development processes, again positioning myself in this type of literature.

Part Four: "Orientalism and patriarchy: women in the anthropology of the Middle East includes Chapters Nine and Ten. I start in Chapter Nine Timothy Mitchell'a work on Egypt. I will suggest that his book Colonising Egypt, positions the 'Orientalist' project. Mitchell examines the relationship between Western imperialist visions of the orient and the subalterity of the colonised peoples. I move on to discuss the 'othering' of the meek Arab woman who is a pitiful creature liberated with Western help. Yet, I will also point to scholarship which illustrates that patriarchalisation seems also to have arrived from the West. The chapter is concluded with a discussion of how I try to overcome the inherent Orientalism of a study such as mine. I return to my starting point for the thesis, which is to let my informants speak for themselves, in order to move beyond Orientalist assumptions and get closer to real lives. I return to a discussion of Hilma Granquist and Lila Abu-Lughod that I started in the introduction, and return to my point that both contributions help me get closer to my women, thus also representing avenues by which we can de-Orientalise our discussion. I also return to Sahlins and Barth, attending to 'culture' and 'knowledge systems' as dynamic tools in my approach to the analysis of the material.

Chapter Ten continues this discussion but now with a clearer focus on the anthropological discourse on the area. The anthropological history shows that both Orientalism and patriarchy have been basic contexts within which women in the Middle East have been understood. Again, my aim is both to look backwards and forward. And I argue, and hope, that an analysis as the one presented in this thesis, Knowing Water, might offer some avenues for further studies and future research.

Finally, I end the thesis with a concluding chapter called "Major Points and Further Reflections" in which I try to raise the major issues again, one last time.

PART ONE:

Village and Nation: Some Baselines

Palestine is central to the cultures of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism; Orient and Occident have turned it into a legend.
Edward Said, After the Last Sky.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE VILLAGE OF MUSHARAFAH

The original name of the village where I did my fieldwork is khirbet Magda (also a fictive name). Archaeologists have identified it as one of the Byzantine villages, generally referred to as a Crusader village. A French archaeologist, Victor Guérin, (Guérin 1868) visited this village around the mid 1860s, and described the tomb of the village ***wali*** *and compared it to other ancient relics in the village. The oldest visible relics referred to by the villagers are those of* ***al-Keniseh****, that is the church dating back to Byzantine time.*

Today Musharafah derives its name from the village ***wali****, Ahmad Al Mushrif. People say that Al Mushrif came with the Arabs when they conquered Palestine, and that he was so taken by the beauty of the mountains around Musharafah that he decided to move there and build a mosque. This mosque of his is located on a hilltop overlooking the valley and the terraced orchards of olive trees; and there are some fig trees along the side of the mosque An extraordinary feature in Musharafah is that the only mosque in the village has no minaret. The* ***wali*** *Ahmad al Mushrif's* ***maqam****, shrine, is cut from the rock and is located in by the right hand entrance of the mosque; it is sheltered by a* ***riwaq****, built against the north and covered with a black fabric with golden scriptures from the* ***Koran****. The mosque is basically from Ottoman times, but it incorporates earlier relics. For the 'communists' in the village the lack of minaret was a point of departure when they suggested that Musharafah was different from other Muslim villages in their politicisation of the peoples.*

Whilst the 'radicals' were concerned with the absence of the minaret, a group of archaeology students were interested in the fact that there are two mihrab in the south wall and two doors in the north. The village story is that the wali Ahmad Al Mushrif, came to Palestine five hundred years ago from the Gizireh - the Arab Peninsula. The villagers like to link Al Mushrif to the Arab conquest of the Levant, when the Muslim Arabs came from the south, towards Jerusalem. It took time before the Arabs reached

*them, because the village is away in the wilderness or mountains – **al Jebel**.*

*Musharafah is a relatively small rural Palestinian village that still in many ways conforms to the exterior images of a traditional village community. Musharafah, khirbet Musharafah[7] as some outsiders refer to it, or **al -balad** as the old women call it, is located in the Ramallah hills, it overlooks other mountain tops on all sides. The village has a population of close to 250 inhabitants and is situated on the top of an elevated ridge approximately 720 meters above sea level. Ramallah is the closest large city, and it is the easiest route to take to the village.*

To get to Ramallah there is the possibility of driving from the east, but there is first the crossing of the Allenby Bridge over the Jordan River that separates the Kingdom of Jordan from the Israeli occupied West Bank. Jericho is the nearest town to the crossing, and leaving the flat lands of Jericho the road meanders upwards from 270 meters below sea-level through approximately thirty kilometres of desert landscape to Jerusalem, which lies at 730 meters above sea level. Several Jewish settlements are built and being built along this acutely arid stretch.

The alternative access route is from the Mediterranean coast. Here the road rises gradually towards Jerusalem and then Ramallah. On that stretch, and just before reaching Jerusalem, there are several drives off to small "Arab villages", "mixed villages" and "Jewish artists' villages" built with stones from nearby quarries. Ramallah itself is about fourteen kilometres north of Jerusalem, and with El-Bireh it includes the commercial and administrative centre of the Palestinian areas. Both towns, Ramallah and El Bireh are 800-900 meters (Kamal Abulfattah p.c.2002) above sea level and have cold, wet winters. Average annual rainfall ranges from 600 - 700 millimetres. (ibid)

*The summer is hot and dry, with the **khamasin** winds coming during spring and early summer. This part of the West Bank has been under cultivation for several millennia, with the characteristic terracing that is still evident in the Ramallah hills.*

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[7] *Kherbet literally means a ruin. These are places usually near wells or springs where peasants stayed during harvest time. Eventually, some families would move into these settlements and establish homes.*

Today, as in ancient times, olive trees and fruit trees are still grown on the terraces. Most of the fruit trees are found in the **wadis,** which, as I have seen covered with wild flowers are in spring. Fruits such as figs, almonds, plums, peaches, and apricots are picked in spring and summer. Chickpeas and lentils are gathered during the months of early summer; barley, tomatoes and cucumbers are harvested in summer. Yet it is the olive trees that dominate physically and emotionally the Ramallah hills landscape. The olives are harvested from November to late January.

In the Ramallah hills olive orchards are a feature of the landscape, common to most of villages in the area and the West Bank in general. Many of these villages were established at the ridge of a hill for strategic purposes: to facilitate defence against possible hostility from the Bedouin tribes and other villages. Also, the location made it less inviting for official tax collectors. The villages have their agricultural lands on the slopes of the hills and in the **wadi**. The general impression is of an arid and barren environment. The rocky hillsides are occasionally dotted with olive trees, virtually the only visible vegetation. Between the hills and in the wadis there are patches of green bushes.

The closest village to Musharafah is the ancient village of Bir Zeit located south-east of the village. There is a dusty road that links Musharafah with the village of Kobar to the south-west. To the south and on a higher ridge than Musharafah is the Israeli settlement of Atteret. The village of Musharafah has warm summers and cool winters. During the long hot summer months, the terraces around the village seem barren, scorched by the sun. Only the olive groves appear to break the desolate effect of the heat on the landscape. In Winter the nights are especially icy, and on several of my stays I experienced a few days with snowstorms.

Precipitation, in the form of rain, and sometimes even snow, is moderate, causing a dry climate. Lack of water is a major complication. The village is part of what is referred to as the mountainous spine that runs north and south through Palestine. The highland descends gradually to the west toward the Mediterranean, and to the east it descends steeply toward the

Lower Jordan Rift Valley at the Jordan River. On clear nights and from the highest points in the Ramallah hills the lights of Tel Aviv and the Mediterranean Sea are visible.

The only road to Musharafah is three kilometres north-west from Bir Zeit, but transportation to and from the village is difficult. The village has no regular passenger bus service, so the only transports are taxis or kind offers by people leaving the village. To reach the village from Ramallah, public transportation is available as far as Bir Zeit. There are no shops in the village; the nearest grocery store is closer to the village of Bir Zeit, and the store does not have as extensive a market as does Ramallah-Bireh. The Ramallah-Bireh district is in many ways a major locality in Musharafah' life, and it is the administrative centre for the whole district, which means it should serve most of the villagers' material and medical needs. It is also in Ramallah and El-Bireh some women try to sell herbs or olives and crafts, such as embroidery. They also try to buy whatever they can afford, which is today very little. Children must walk to Ramallah and El Bireh to go to secondary school.

Musharafah is, as I have already indicated, a Muslim village and, resembling several other West Bank villages, it is also without the sufficient local economic opportunities.[8] Also in this village there has been a substantial male migration and an increasing number of female headed households. The village does not have the expected bustling atmosphere, filled with events and people, which is supposed to be a characteristic of Middle Eastern villages. There is no market anymore; the only meeting place for the villagers is outside the new ***taboun****, the shared stone oven. Here women still meet sometimes, yet because of the customary restrictions on women's movements the* ***taboun*** *is considered as too close to the men's domain, which is the main street through the village.*

The slope on which the village is located faces south west, overlooking a valley called ***Wadi al Balat****, just below. It is fascinating to see how the village blends naturally into the*

[8] *See (Giacaman 1988; Giacaman 1997). Following the Al Aksa intifadah Rita Giacaman has been regularly sending out information about the material and health situation in the villages surrounding the Ramallah area.*

surrounding rocky landscape; it is hardly visible unless one is looking for it. The houses in the old part of the village are very like other Mediterranean mountain homes. Basically stones are used in their foundations and walls, and mud is an important element used as an basicallyadhesive substance to hold the stones of the wall together. The mud used was obtained from chalky rocks, and the women of Musharafah explained that, when they were young brides, they were given the job of using this substance to smooth the roofs at the beginning of the winter season.[9]

The present village of Musharafah is situated above the old ruins of what is generally called **al balad al qadima**: the old village. The physical arrangement of today's Musharafah is remarkably different from the pattern of the old village. The homes are scattered in the landscape and are on top of the hill; which means that the village today is without a defined centre. In Palestine such villages are often referred to as newer types of villages: a street village with a main street that cuts through it. The ancient village has the typical features of a settlement established in a mountainous and difficult environment. Suad Amiry and Vera Tamari describe the old villages as soft-coloured, traditional houses, their gentle domes blending naturally with the rolling hills surrounding them (Amiry & Tamari 1989, p.7) I will presently describe the old village of Musharafah. It does not have access to the fertility of the coastal plains, which distinguishes those villages from the cultivable land of the villages around Ramallah. Nor does Musharafah suggest the same historic importance as the neighbouring richer village of Bir Zeit.

On entering the village of Musharafah one is struck by the well kept gardens around the first small stone homes and the neat rows of pine trees along one side of the street. On the opposite side of the road the landscape stretches towards terraces and olive orchards, and along that same side of the road there are several fig trees. Musharafah was especially known for its olives and figs. There is still a small revenue from the olives, but years ago, when military decrees put an end to the trading of figs, the leaves of the trees turned black, which is sign of lack of maintenance.

[9] Maintenance of the houses in the village is still assigned to women.

*Behind the mosque is a path that leads down to the remains of the old village - **balad al ajima,** which today is abandoned and mostly used as a garbage dump. Although wild shrubs and grass cover most of the village site, the structure itself remains easily traceable. The facades of the homes with their arched doorways and entrances are still traceable in most cases, and the roofs have layers of thick grass. Several carob trees shelter the ancient village, and there are still remains of vineyards, cactuses, and fig trees. Most of the remaining wall surrounding the old village is broken down. The wall was meant to protect the privacy of women from passers-by. Still, most of the chores were done outside the courtyard.*

*Unlike the homes in the Musharafah of today, the ancient village homes have an obvious structure; they are built very close to one another, and they give a first impression of crowding. The compact group of houses provided security against intruders and closeness between family members. There was a visible attachment between some peasant homes, and a narrow path that separated them from the largest landowner's home that was built on much higher ground, accentuated the social class differences inside the village and the 'learned' in the village said the **hamulah** (clan) divisions were also significant. The village's sectarian boundary was also obvious in the building material: the house of the richest family is built from harder stone, which was (and still is) more expensive to prepare than limestone or the stones which are gathered in the neighbouring valleys and hills.*

*I was fortunate enough to have the help of the Palestinian archaeologist Faida Abu Ghazalah, who read and interpreted for me the past in the stones of the ruins of the old village. She explained that the tight cluster of small broken homes we saw were separated by small gardens - **hawakir**. The stones used as building material she traced back to Ottoman rule; this was especially visible in the method they used to lock the homes. Inside the homes, Abu Ghazalah pointed to the lower area where the family livestock were kept at night. The main gate has two entrances: one to allow the animals to pass, and another, a much smaller door, for the people.*

The animals slept in the house; the place allocated to this purpose was called the stable or the "bottom of the home". This is the space that is immediately visible when entering the home. The family lived in space allocated above the stable, known as the ***mastabah****. Several had obviously tried to enlarge the living space by building with newer material, and the enlargement was done towards the back of the house. Most of the chores were done outside the home; also the meals were prepared outside in the courtyard, and the villagers shared cooking utensils and the* ***taboun*** *- oven. The* ***taboun****, is small, jar-shaped oven, sunk into the ground and open on top.*

The old village character illustrated the placing of cultivated lands, the peasants' social structure and the conditions for their social organisation: the obvious olive orchards and traces of figs and grape vines show which crops were vital for the livelihood of peasants. The crops and homes were placed close to the main water spring. From the watchtower at the outer end of the village all the area could be supervised, with the exception of the wealthiest family home. This household stood above all the others. From their homes in the ancient village women walked to the spring, which was about half a kilometre from the old village. The chores then continued by the women going to the ***taboun****, shepherding in the pasture with the animals, or fetching fuel. Thus the women spent most of the day doing chores for the household which were done outside the home.*

In 1959, eleven years after the creation of the State of Israel, a respected peasant, Abu Ali, moved out of the old village and built a home for his family on the same level as the Ganzuri home, but further away. He left early to work in Israel, and made money which he invested in building a home on the same level as the rich land owner, yet the location of his home was much closer to the entrance of the village. Even by today's standards of 'returnee' homes his home is perceived as large. His sons were the first to leave the country to study in the Soviet Union and return to start the communist network in the village and other villages. I will say more about this further on. Abu Ali's wife and daughters had a longer way to walk to the spring, because they had to walk back to the old village and walk with the other women. It was also less secure for these women to walk that

distance from their new home to the ***balad al*** *ajima alone. By 1980 all the peasants had moved from the old village and built new homes on the level above, giving it the street-village character.*

When the peasants moved away from the cluster of the old village, and away from the communal water point, those who could afford it dug wells to collect winter water by their new homes. Approximately half the population dug their own well; the women counted that there were about thirty households and eighteen wells. Families that could not dig a well because it was too expensive depended on rainwater, the spring and the generosity of neighbours. As time passed and families had male kin in the labour market, some invested in a pump, and later a motor on the pump. Abu Ali was the first to do so, and when he died his son who was then teaching at the University of Bir Zeit, bought a motor for the pump. The facilities, latrines and kitchens were all built inside the home, and the water was heated by sun-roofs. Because the water in the bathrooms is heated by the sun-roofs, the women refer to the bathroom as hammam shams, sun bath.

In 1985 the network system reached the village, and by the end of the 1980s all the homes had piped water, but this water was not always available, and it was definitely not reliable during the summer months. At the start of the village inclusion in the water network system, the women were delighted, happy not to have walk in search of water. As a result of centralisation of water they did not continue to maintain of the old spring, and it did not take long before it was forgotten and the villagers depended only on the 'government's water'.

Eventually, the water expenses were introduced, and the 'company' water became more and more unreliable. Several villagers tie the installation of water to changes in the lives of girls and younger women: getting more education, going into the labour market, and contributing economically in the home. There were now bills to pay.

The biography of the village

The road from the neighbouring village of Jifna to the village goes back to the Roman period in Palestine when the village had access routes to the suburbs of Jerusalem and the coastal plain. This new road encouraged new markets and this in turn encouraged villages to develop village products. Musharafah is in the highlands, and the nature is rugged. The people in this village did not have the same possibilities of trading as those in the coastal villages. Still the village was renowned for its olives and figs, and these were traded with the people of Gaza and the people from the Jerusalem areas. The market thus had a major role in the life of the women in the village. With the women from Gaza the trade would take place every month. Otherwise, there was a weekly market with the women from the Jerusalem area and occasionally with the coastal people.

These markets were not only a place for the distribution and transfer of local products, but a place for the exchange of locally manufactured items: such as wooden shovels and stone hand mills for olive grinding made by the men; rugs, mats pottery and embroidered cloth made by the women. The women especially enjoyed the goods "from other lands"*, like henna, tea and spices. The trading done in the highlands took place in the crossroads on the borders of the village and it was done mostly by the women of Musharafah and the surrounding villages with other women who came from Gaza and villages in the plains. There is a blend of Christian/Muslim villages, and just Christian or Muslim villages scattered in the highlands around Ramallah, which is essentially a Christian town. But today many Christian families have emigrated; the majority say they fear a strong, Muslim Palestinian Authority, while their Muslim neighbours maintain that their Christian* "brothers and sisters" *have always been respected and loved, and that it is they, the Christians who have always felt more affinity with the West than with their* "Arab brothers and sisters".

Musharafah is a place where behaviour is described by 'my' women as being grounded and defined in the past events and experiences. Furthermore, they believe that their village is in principal a place where the customary behaviour of the elder inhabitants of the village is the principal bearer of ***'adat*** *and*

taqalid. *While the intellectuals are attached to a communist political village past, the much large community of older women in Musharafah have their identity linked to the village through their very own blend of* ***'adat*** *and* ***taqalid***. *I draw on these two concepts in three dimensions: when the women gave me answers like:* "This is the way we do things here", *then I write about their culture - the religious and the social. I also apply the concepts as knowledge when when they speak about what they know and experience about water and landscape. We also have another dimension where they use* ***'adat*** *and* ***taqalid***, *and that is when they speak of their history.* ***Tarich al balad*** *is* "old women's history", *they said, because they feel it is the past that has shaped the happenings which have defined events in their lives.*

I also use and blend the concepts of 'historic' and 'past', because I am referring to remembered experiences that the women have learned from their parents. This past has to do with specific occupations and is linked to particular chores in the household and village. But then there is also the customary past: that is the past that has to do with experiences shared with others in the village. This past is where the women speak of the concrete happenings of everyday life and why they believe life was and should still be lived as it is. They speak of experiences in the past also as personal achievements.

Now, both the customary and the historic past function in their own ways for the old women in Musharafah, who, when they tell their stories, define and give reasons for their ideas, maintaining or changing them, all depending on what the subject is and who is listening. Both the historic and the customary pasts are attached to the women's network that was mostly available at the water spring; there they collectively maintained, exchanged and negotiated a way of life. 'My' women relate and identify land and water with a vital chore – to sustain a household.

The biography of the village of Musharafah, like all other locations people live in, can be traced by several histories, all depending on who is telling the story. The 'learned ones' in the village go back to Roman times, when Pompeii came to Palestine with his army in 63 BCE. This period is also documented by pointing to ***al-kanisa***, *the church. Several in the village speak of the village as*

a Crusader village. Yet the Ottoman period, The Mandate Times and the Jewish Colonisation have all been part of what the peasants relate to as being the **Tarich al balad** (history of the village).

During the Ottoman time, the 'sultan' ruled, and for the women in my dissertation this is not considered a harsh colonial period. Basically, they told me this is because they knew from their parents that the peasant identity, religion, and the family affiliations in the village were undisturbed by this rule; the village was up in the mountains and difficult for the sultan's men to reach. Those who ruled were urban by nature and did not know much about the "fellaheen in the mountains". This was even the case after the **tanzimat** reforms and the incorporation of Europeans to help in the organisation of the Ottoman lands. The oldest women in the village were little girls during the last days of the Ottoman rule, and they were young brides during The Mandate Times. Yet they know that with the Ottomans and The Mandate the Palestinian Arab feudals increased and got more power.

The Ottomans divided their empire into provinces. Each province was ruled by a **wazir**, who never visited the remote villages like Musharafah. The villagers speak of how such villages in the Highlands of Palestine used to be isolated in the past, and they say that their particular village was blessed because it is located up in the hills and with difficult routes to it, and it is cold in winter. Hence it was protected in many ways from the direct miseries of the Ottomans. Contrary to the people of Jerusalem, the villagers did not have to communicate with the Sultan's men: "We were miserable" they would say, "but we were hidden." The fact that the empire's **wazir** did not visit Musharafah was considered a blessing.

In reality the control by the Ottomans was in general weak all over Palestine's petty chiefdoms, which were established to control revenues. And the richest peasants were left to exploit the poorer peasants and collect for the sultan. There was military conscription, as the women remember from their parents' time, and some families with several sons sent sons to the Ottoman army. This gave a poor peasant the possibility of keeping the

land. It was a way of avoiding the growing power of the rich peasants for those who did not have the resources to pay the taxes required. (Graham-Brown 1990; Tamari 1990)

The ruler in 1831, Ibrahim Pasha, divided Palestine and tried to suppress the chiefdoms, which seemed to him to have too much power, but he was met by a revolt. Nevertheless, during his rule he encouraged the opening up of the empire to foreign trade, and he imported ideas and scholars from Europe. An increasing number of European men seeking adventure, (missionaries, intellectuals and artists) visited Palestine, and the point here is that villagers, although relatively isolated, experienced the foreigners' ways of life, by watching those near the village. It is obvious from what the peasants tell about their experienced village history that they were aware of new ideas that arrived with "those strangers"*; they were also curious about* "other ways" *of doing chores. They did not necessarily agree that "other ways" were better, more beautiful, moral or more efficient, but it is especially the women who liked to watch* "foreign women's" *dress, embroidery, ways of accomplishing household chores, and their frequent visits to the market.*

We see in the literature from about that same period that peasants are mostly described as being filthy, unaware and having a primitive culture; they were said to lack openness to new ideas of progress. While women in such literature are hardly mentioned (and if they are mentioned it is to describe an oppressed and subdued group), the women in the villages on the contrary did in fact move in the landscape more than the men. They moved when they were fetching water, going to the market with their harvest, collecting fuel for the bread oven, herding the goats, baking in the ***taboun*** *and harvesting. This is itself interesting in that the women themselves speak of how much more attentive they are compared to men; they are much more trained in observing the details in other people's daily lives, and, because they worked more than the men, they had to cope with a larger variety of chores and were more curious about comparing other people's methods of coping with their lives with their own.*

With reference to the Ottoman land law, several peasants in Musharafah talk of having transferred their land to richer

members of their family, **hamulah** or richer peasants to avoid taxation. Very little remained in individual ownership, and about 1/3 was in joint tenure as **musha**. In **musha** tenure, specified quantities of land were jointly owned by **hamayel** (sing.**hamulah**), but the actual land cultivated was periodically redistributed. This according to 'the learned' in the village, discouraged investment and development. The women disagreed and said that under such a system their livelihood was more secure.

The system of **musha** was a system where a family was made up of father, mother, children, and married sons and their wives and children. Although they were united and helped each other, the majority in the village could not afford the taxes. For them this was the reason behind their poverty, their political concerns, and the still present strained relationship between the Ganzuri family and the rest of the villagers. According to the women it was a good thing that land was collective, as this encouraged them to work together and share harvests. It was for these women a natural part of the 'peasant generosity'. For the peasants in Musharafah, the change imposed by the Sultan introduced great social inequalities by expanding the landless class; and by replacing a relatively egalitarian joint tenure, by individual ownership of parcels of variably appointed land.

When the Sultan passed his new law, the peasants were forced to register their lands. This was complicated on many levels: the land was owned by a clan; the peasants with no sons or few sons knew that when they registered they or their sons would be available for conscription in the Ottoman army, and that by refusing conscription there was a higher risk of taxes. Some families registered their parcel of land in the name of a dead or fabricated peasants' name; others registered in the name of the richest family in Musharafah. With a promise of using the land as if it were still their own, in reality the peasants in Musharafah became tenants working for the Ganzuri family. The economic dominance of the Ganzuri family meant that the 'Ganzuri peasants' could send their sons and daughters to school, dress, their women well and keep them at home. Economic wealth meant also political power in the village, and the position of **mukhtar**, village headman. Accordingly, the livelihood and

relative independence of the tenants weakened. This became particularly obvious at the end of the Ottoman period and the beginning of The Mandate period.

World War I and the fall of the Ottoman rule was for the peasants more significant than the Ottoman rule, because the 'English' were not so lazy as the Turks, and they soon found their way up to the hidden villages. During The Mandate period the villagers of Musharafah depended only on agriculture for their livelihood. Family alliances and patterns of living were the main features, but a growing number of young men started to seek a living in the urban areas. During the years that followed this rule the villagers looked for wage labour outside the village and therefore sought every possibility of improving their livelihood. The richer villagers repaired their houses using cement or sandstone, and arches were built at the entrances.

But what the women speak of most is the improvement of the roads and transportation by other than donkey. Yet, security also improved, because villages were not so remote, and the women travelled to the Ghor and to Jerusalem to sell in the market. Those who had the means remember travelling to the Shrine of **Nabi Rubin** in the south and **Nabi Musa**[10] not far from Jeriko. However, as I will show later on, the village is known for its political radicalism, and communist tendencies grew and influenced the village consciousness and the way people outside the village perceived the village and its peasants. In Musharafah it was especially the educated who felt strongly about the British as rulers and who usually started the discussion about the British rule in Palestine. They claimed that the British only made these improvements in the village because they were "planning to give our land to the Jews" as one of them put it.

When the old women talked about the British, several added the phrase "these cursed British years". The Commission's report from 1937 shows awareness of the tension that immigration of Jews could create between the Jews and the Arabs, pointing to the obvious financial superiority of the Jews. The obvious 'reactions' the Commission was concerned with were those of a

[10] **Nabi** means prophet in Arabic.

'race' on a much lower intellectual level, yet all the same indigenous. The disregard for Arab Palestinian intellect still affects villagers' regard for the British.

A young man in the village who was writing his thesis in history explained to me in his grandmother's home, that his professor told the class that the French, when they came with Napoleon, had committed atrocities, like building hills with the skulls of Palestinian peasants. In spite of that, he said, it was really the British who broke down the Palestinian spirit. His grandmother, Um Ali agreed and said that she heard stories about the French, but that the "Engelis" were even worse. After all, she told her grandson, Um Ali had experienced the period of the British rule and had seen them walk through their village "and stare at us".

Um Ali knew of other West Bank villages where the villagers were encouraged to leave the villages so that the British could improve them. They told the peasants, the old woman said, that they would build roads or improve the wall around the springs, "like here in this village. They told us that they will improve the spring up on the other side of the hill and that the women should use another one. The next thing we heard, was that a Jewish settlement had moved by the spring and it was now theirs", she explained. They were luckier than other villagers were, because others moved out of their village, leaving their things behind and intending to come back after the British had finished the work. In the mean time the Jews moved into their homes and defended themselves with arms from Europe.

The ill treatment of peasants continued during the whole Mandate Time. The period is remembered by the older women "as if it were yesterday", that is when emigration from the village started, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, when two relatively large groups left for Jordan. Then again, during the years following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and again following the war and occupation in 1967, villagers (mostly men) left once more to Jordan; most of them settled in Amman. Today, there are only 35% of the original people from the village left.

During Mandate Time the villagers were divided between the **moardin** and the **maglsya**. The **maglsya** supported the British by sitting with them in the council. Rumours in the village said

that the **dar** El Ganzuri were supporters of the British rule, and were according to the villagers attracted by the promise of even more power than they had under the Ottomans. The "true face" of the British appeared when they established the Israeli State.

It was also during The Mandate period that a group of young men who were more educated than the others developed Marxist interests. They were communists - "the Moscow line", that is with strong allegiance to the Soviet Union. After getting a stipend from Moscow to study in the USSR, four young men left the village for the Soviet Union. The paradox was that among them was one of Ganzuris sons. They all received a university education and then settled down with in Moscow with Russian spouses. Then again in the 1960s the other sons of Ganzuri left for Moscow and later for England. The stream of young men studying in Soviet universities continued until the early 1980s.

One of the sisters explained to me that when the boys returned, many years after, they were obviously influenced by what they learned in Moscow. Such political consciousness spread in the village, and they spent time speaking to the peasants about their rights and about the exploitation of the rich. This encouraged young men to join in the fight against the Jews, because "after the British came the Jews". British occupation was exchanged for Jewish occupation, the situation for the peasants continued to deteriorate under the new rule and the feudals continued to be powerful.

The concept of **iqta'i** or 'feudal' is connected to **zulm**, injustice and a turning away from God's path. 'Feudal' is used a great deal in the stories, it is a contested and problematic concept; and in working with my thesis I have met certain negative responses from Palestinian intellectuals towards my employing of the concept. But, I will maintain here that however we try to theorise, analyse and contextualise feudalism, we need to accept that for the peasants in this particular village the concept of **iqta'i** is an integral part of what they refer to and describe as suffering and triumph in their battle of managing everyday life. We should be careful of criticising or disapproving the use of the native concepts. There lies in such disapproval a misconception that the older generations of Palestinian women, who are formally

uneducated, are unaware of their own cultures' political dimension.

The discourse on feudalism has been debated like so many other discourses based on western ideology. Critics of applying the concept in a Palestinian context maintain that feudalism is a phase in history that has occurred in other societies and, therefore, should be studied within the context of the creation of the taxonomy. Palestine has another history, different from that in Europe, and therefore feudalism did not have similar foundations from which to develop. Nevertheless feudalism is spoken about by peasants within a context of grasping their lives and being subjugated to the authority of the rich, who had power based on their land ownership; the poorer peasants were dependent on them. Feudalism is often their point of departure, of how generations before them suffered conditions close to slavery.

Payment of taxes by crops was followed by payment in cash; because of their inability to meet the demands made by the landlords, the fellaheen were forced to work the land as payment to landlords. The land was in the name of the sultan's revenue collector who lived in the city. Peasants refer and define this period in their experienced history as a 'feudal period' in their lives. The feudalism was, they believe, a creation of the Ottoman period, and Ganzuri, who came from a village north of Musharafah became powerful during that rule, and still owns 85% of the cultivated land in the village.

The Palestine Royal Commission Report alleges that: It is the condition of the fellaheen, still the great majority of the Arabic population, that must be regarded as the dominant factor in any estimate of the economic progress of Arab Palestine. It cannot, unhappily, be questioned that the standards of living among the fellaheen are still low (1937, p.126-127). This quotation illustrates that The Mandate believed that the Palestinian villages and their peasants were oppressed. The report refers to several other documents describing peasants losing land due to competition for agricultural land.

However, the Commission Report also indicates that the British mandate partly sustained a policy similar to that of the Ottomans, believing they were helping the fellaheen. In the light of the

foregoing consideration we have come to the conclusion that despite the disproportion between their numbers and the amount of cultivable land they occupy, the fellaheen are on the whole better off than they were in 1920 *(1937 p.128). But, the British, like the Ottomans, recruited officials from wealthy and powerful families, using them to pressure the already battered fellaheen to pay their dues.*

Unable to meet their demands, the fellaheen continued working for the landlord. Consequently, the landlord owned the peasants; women had to also do the chores for the landlord's household before they could start coping with their own households. Pointing to the largest house above the old villages they remember back to when the landlords disregarded the suffering the women had to endure in the managing of all that was considered their responsibility: how, before sunrise, they had to fill his ***jarra*** *with water, to clean his family home, bake his bread and wash the family laundry - always referring to the head of the family as* "the feudal one".

Many times the women reminded me that they do not like ***al-solta****, authorities. One way of fighting* ***al-solta,*** *that is the authority of the landlord was to wait until his sons had moved out of the village to study abroad, and then they stopped carrying as much water to his house. This was critical, because without water* "they die". *Women talk about how they were supported in their efforts against feudalism by the small communities of foreigners living around the highlands. Similar to other villages in the highlands of the eastern Mediterranean, these villages apparently have been isolated from the cities and towns. It is* a world apart from civilisation, which is an urban and lowland achievement. *(Braudel 1973, p.11) To some degree this is true. Villages in the highlands were seldom main crossroads.*

Nevertheless, such characteristics tend also to be prescribing definitive, latent and immovable boundaries. Even though the peasants of Musharafah have lived far from the urban centres, their accounts of the fight against feudalism imply that the villagers did not live rigid and non-changing lives in total remoteness and isolation from other cultural impulses. The women speak of missionaries, armies, tax collectors and

scholars, who crossed the borders into the highlands. Whether they were sent out by the church, the sultan, the commissioner's office, or universities these foreigners did not always value the villages, they also introduced alternative systems. The issue of help from the foreigners is one of the examples I indicated earlier. The women's positioned discourse is concerned with the assistance at hand which they did not experience from their 'own people' who are more privileged and better situated Palestinians.

The contemporary generation starts with the Jordanian rule, and that is when the scarcity of work sites starts and the size of land begins shrinking. The abandonment of a great number of buildings in the old village of Musharafah and remittances to the ones staying behind in the village caused a relative revival in the buildings that were originally built outside the old surface area of the village. With the rise of the idea of Pan Arabism, and especially under the spell of Nasser's vision of a free Palestine, national aspirations grew. The old women in the village kept their sons' cassettes with the speeches of Gamal Abdel Nasser. These are speeches asking the people to revolt, fight and destroy the Zionists' State, but what the old women talked about to me about was Nasser's fight against feudalism. Nasser, in their view, was a man who worked for the rights of the oppressed, and he was good to the peasants in Egypt. Because of him, Egypt did not have feudal regimes any more. The women believed that what happened in Egypt influenced the development in the village. Egypt was also close to the Soviet Union, and this also encouraged the young to go to Moscow for their higher education.

Hence, there developed a change in dependency between the feudal landlords and the peasants, the obvious reason being that, as indicated above, one of Ganzuri's sons left for Moscow and was (and still is) an active communist. The feudal landlord was faced with a group of peasants who were more aware of the injustice and no longer wanted to work for him and his family. The young men were the first to take an education, and today also young women are getting a higher education and travelling abroad. During the season of olives, I was told that the olives in Ganzuri's land were just left, "Nobody in the family is there to help the old woman". So a couple of women sent their grandchildren

to pick olives in the ***iqta'i****'s land: they help to* "be kind with her; she is alone now". *Still, the women take 2/3 each and* "1/3 for her".

However much the peasants wanted to make the feudal family suffer for all the misery they had caused them, they were, like them, linked under the new rule that made no difference between the feudal and the peasant. It was during the increased brutality of the Israeli occupation that the villagers say that "concern is what binds us Palestinians, we all suffer at the end". *The first year I was there, there was an uprising in the neighbouring refugee camp of Jalazon. Several young men joined from neighbouring villages, and the youngest son of the Ganzuris was taken prisoner with a son of a poorer peasant who had lost his land to the Ganzuri family.*

The intifadah is a sensitive matter among the generations in the village: the young during discussions with the elder women reacted to the latter negative attitude toward the intifadah. For them the outcome has just brought along more misery, and they are not sure they can trust ***al solta****, referring to the Palestinian Authority, because they do not know anything about village life and the peasants are forgotten. Before the intifadah the women could take the little they grew to the market places, and some Jews even came to buy from them.*

The day of Rabin's burial ceremony on November 6th 1995 a fierce discussion broke out between two young men and one of the elders from Musharafah. We were sharing a taxi going back to the village when one of the young men said that he wished it had been Arafat who had been killed, not Rabin, "Rabin is a democrat, but Abu 'Amar is not". *This upset the old woman who spoke in a low and steady voice about the atrocities which she had witnessed done by Rabin. She experienced the* ***nakbah*** *in 1948 and insisted that Abu Amar, Arafat's 'nom de guerre', is trying to bring peace back to the Palestinians so that they can make a living again. She was opposed to the intifadah and the Hamas activists for upsetting a plan to bring peace again to their country.*

Today, outsiders refer to the village as the 'red village'. Palestinian friends have often joked with me about doing fieldwork in a communist village. Others living outside the village explain that in Musharafah girls and boys dance together at a wedding, something still not done in most Muslim villages in the West Bank. Also during Ramadan young people are seen smoking openly in the village, and it is one of the very few Muslim villages where during my fieldtrips there were no veiled girls and women. Obviously, the size of the only mosque (that is has no minaret) is also commented on by the leftist learned families in the village and by outsiders. Yet, the old women believe that the village (meaning them) is aware of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong', and that peasants always follow Palestinian traditions, "they know God" *and believe that* "all is written".

CHAPTER TWO:

PALESTINE - A CONTESTED SITE

When the Ottoman Empire was apportioned between the four European powers France, Britain, Italy and Germany, the Levant was divided between the French and the British. Palestine was awarded Britain as a Mandate. And it was during that time that the international discourse became "the question of Palestine". The Mandate divisions between the French and the British were based on an agreement approved by the League of Nations where all the territories put under Mandate government would with time and help became fully independent. Palestine is here the only exception, falling under the implementation of the Balfour declaration issued by the British Government in 1917, expressing support for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. *The establishment of a Jewish State became an increasingly pressing issue during the large-scale Jewish immigration from Europe during The Mandate period, particularly from 1922-1947. It was particularly pressing during the 1930s with the start of the campaign that led to and extermination of more than four million Jews.*

The Mandate was supposed to function as an interim administration, assisting the local society in building their unique governmental system. When the Palestinians demanded their independence, they were met with a negative response from the British. At the time the peoples of Palestine, addressed in documents as the Arabs, were organised according to clans rather than as a nation, and in Palestine it was the British high commissioner who held the highest seat of authority. This was basically different from their other Arab neighbours who had a king through whom The Mandate administration ruled.

Rashid Khalidi recognises the lack of political authority given to the Palestinian people; nevertheless, he also questions the absence of an effective effort and political involvement from the notables *(Khalidi 2001, p. 21) and the Palestinian tendency towards* amnesiac historiography *(Khalidi 2001, p. 23). The highest seats awarded Palestinians were 'created' by the British to serve their interest: one was the office of Grand Mufti of*

Palestine, the other creation was the Supreme Muslim Shari'a Council (Khalidi 2001, p. 22). In historic terms, both positions have been treated as part of the Palestinian tradition; here is where the 'amnesia' comes in; with reference to Hobsbawm and Ranger, Rashid Khalidi affirms that both were 'invented traditions', dominated and exploited by British and later by Zionist intelligence to encourage an internal split within the Arab population.

While the Grand Mufti did resist the growing Jewish migration and settlement in Palestine, and he sympathised with the growing rebellion in 1936, some groups felt he was too complacent. This encouraged formation of Palestinian political factions; one of them was Al-Hizb al-'Arabi al-Filistini, the Palestinian Arab Party, where Jamal al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti's cousin, was leader ...the internal divisions among the elite eventually surfaced, ably exploited by the British, with their vast experience of dividing colonized societies in order to rule them more effectively. *(Khalidi 2001, p. 24)*

At the same time as Arab factions in urban Palestine were squabbling, a growing number of peasants in the villages were suffering. There was a growing hardship in the villages, which resulted in the migration of peasants to the cities. Zionist immigrants, richer Arab peasants and Arab urban notables bought the land or took over the debt the peasants had and turned land into more profitable businesses (Khalidi 2001). The British implemented the British Land Settlement Ordinance in 1930; the ***musha*** *land was divided between individual males and this stimulated agricultural investment. To maintain control over the peasants in these barren territories, regulations regarding land and water were introduced.*

Evidently, such rules were very discriminatory to the peasants. Both men and women were used as labour force, but in instances where peasants were rewarded with payment for their labour, it was only the men who received payment. The increase in wage labour launched by the British, was to ensure that money gained should be spent on improving living conditions in the villages of Palestine. The British wanted to improve what they perceived as

the appalling conditions left behind by the Ottoman Sultan and his rule.

Let me just go back in time to the sultans' rule. The Ottoman land law of 1858 is considered the beginning of the transformation in the structure of the village life. The law was meant to regulate Palestine, which resulted in upsetting the livelihood of the poorest peasants in the villages. The law divided land into privately owned land, government owned land, ***Waqf****, abandoned land, and barren land. With the new law the Ottomans changed the structure of the economy of the peasants by introducing a systematic and complete registration of land ownership by individuals. Under the Ottoman rule the peasants had the right to have a home, to work the soil and enjoy its harvest, and they could transfer their right to use that same plot of land to their children. The peasants could own movable and non-movable property, but they could not sell it, because the Ottoman sultan was the supreme owner of nearly all the agricultural land.*

A consequence of this law was that the peasants could transfer their plot of land, but they did not own it. Hence they could not sell land as private property. Privately owned land was denoted as ***mülk****, and the sultan's land was known as* ***miri****. In practice the sultan was the owner of all the open farmlands and pastures; the peasants had the right to possess and work the farmland, but they were also required to pay taxes according to the land they used and the harvest it rendered.*

These were basically the structure and organisation The Mandate wished to change; their official policy was to renovate and restructure the old system. The report presented by the Palestinian Royal Commission of 1937 illustrates that The Mandate was well-informed about the exploited Palestinian villages: It is the conditions of the fellaheen, still the great majority of the Arabic population, that must be regarded as the dominant factor in any estimate of the economic progress of Arab Palestine. It cannot, unhappily, be questioned that the standards of living among the fellaheen are still low *(1937, p.126-127). The report refers to several other documents describing peasants losing land due to competition for agricultural land.*

Moreover, the above mentioned report also indicates that the British mandate partly continued a course of action similar to that of the Ottomans. The British did not introduce a policy which would make it possible for the landless peasants to acquire land. They recruited officials from wealthy and powerful families; and these were used in the same way: To pressure the already battered peasants to pay their dues. Unable to meet their demands, the peasants continued working for the landlords, and eventually in the village the landlord owned the peasants and their families.

Rashid Khalidi's approach to Palestinian history is, on one side, based on the deconstruction of the dominant narrative supported by the established historiography, in which Palestinian history is unrecorded and therefore not seriously documented; on the other hand, he maintains that Arab history remains uncritical of its own handling of facts. Yet, neither he nor Israeli 'new' historiographers can deconstruct without the aid of what other Arab scholars like Mustafa Murad Al-Dabagh and Walid Khalidi have documented. The Palestinian historians like Al-Dabagh believe that the Ottoman rulers did agree, or rather they compromised with the British without the consent or the knowledge of the representatives of the people of Palestine. He describes The Mandate period as a true disaster for the Palestinian people, always using derogative adjectives when he describes British rule, using terms such as 'a people to despise' and saying that their rule was a point in time when the Palestinians were living in the 'black years'.

In the extensive account All That Remains, Khalidi (Khalidi 1992a) bases much of his work on Al-Dabagh and illustrates, through photography and village records, the fate of 418 Palestinian villages, which today constitute a great portion of the Palestinian lost world (Khalidi 1992a, p. xv). It is a documentation of the location, the population in 1948, a brief history, the occupation and the present condition of the villages and hamlets, which were destroyed in 1948 (Khalidi 1992a). Also in his other works Walid Khalidi represents a tradition of Palestinian intellectuals for whom the core of Palestinian history is

documented in the records of towns, villages and hamlets which have been eradicated and buried by Zionist forces.[11]

There are certainly several ways of analysing, exploring, deconstructing and reconstructing what happened in 1948; it all depends on who is telling the story. Yet, I will suggest that Edward Said summarises it clearly when he writes that ...since 1948 the Palestinians have the victims, Israelis the victors (Said 2001, p. 212). There is, in fact, no other way of looking at it. For Israelis 1948 is the War of Independence; for the Palestinians it marks Al Nakba, the disaster, and the loss of land and water. Through the occupation of their land the Palestinians have seen a dramatic reversal in their landholdings and corresponding sources of livelihood over the last fifty years. The overview of landholdings illustrates the drastic effects of 1948. Just one year before the creation of the State of Israel, in 1947, the indigenous Palestinian Arab population owned - privately or publicly - 93% of the country which is today disputed; only 7% was owned by the Jewish community. Today Palestinian private land has decreased to around 15% of the total land area, of which about 10% are in the West Bank and Gaza.

What followed the disaster was not only the destruction of people's lives, homes and livelihood, but also an uprooting of people's bondage with their land as peasants - to become fedayeen: freedom-fighters, guerrilla warriors. It is in Rosemary Sayigh's classic book Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries where we see it most explicitly illustrated through the voices of those who were peasants before 1948 but were forced to flee into Diaspora, to refugees status, fighters or martyrs, Sayigh is describing the dominating force which pressures people to survive through battle rather than agriculture. Such a shift from tilling and harvesting the land to militant actions can only be transmitted through the memory of those who have experienced it. Re-creating Palestine through memory, argues Sayigh, was not only a natural reaction to forcible separation, it was also a way - the only way - of passing on to children the homes that were their inheritance ... (Sayigh 1979, p.11). The

[11] See also Raymond Hawa Tawil's My Home, My Prison (Tawil Raymonda 1983)

experience, being solely based on memory, is by its nature open to questions, yet still a living source.

With the above in mind, Edward Said not only challenges the approaches of the Jews towards the Arabs and their distortion of historical facts. He also demands more reflections, engagement and articulate political participation from the Arabs. There are, he insists, questions to be asked about the way the Arabs and the Jews deal with the aftermath of 1948. Until the late 1960s Israel was totally unfamiliar to the Arabs; it was referred to in catchphrases and rhetoric expressions; it seemed the Arabs were struck by this incredible power and did not grasp what they saw and heard. Eventually, after years of trying to deal with daily problems, the Arabs sought a military solution towards a people and a country they knew nothing about, and the outcome was a highly militarised mentality, with no democratic foundation (Sayigh 1979, p.208). The military solution, with its specific language and view of the world, has generally been the way Arabs have perceived the Jews.

Edward Said, Rashid Khalidi and others refer to the scandalously poor treatment (Sayigh 1979, p.209) of the approximately 50,000 refugees living in Egypt by Egyptian police. Rashid Khalidi questions Arab 'notables' handling of the peasant exodus from the villages in Palestine. They note that, during the heat of the battle and the open ill-treatment of peasants by Jewish immigrants and political leaders, the Arab notables did not help or support the peasants; instead they encouraged them to flee. Rashid's work can be read to mean that the refugee problem was also the making of the Arabs themselves, and concomitantly that they should shoulder the responsibility for resolving it. Poorer and less privileged Palestinians had left not only the villages and fields, but also towns, at the behest of their own leaders who ordered them to pack up and leave to facilitate their military actions against the emerging Jewish state.

I wish to return to Edward Said's reflections on 1948 and the Arab and Jewish academic consequences, which have with time developed towards a less stagnant orthodoxy on both sides of the camp. There is a language of the oppressed and the oppressor that developed, Said ties this language with Adorno's analysis of

the dominated and the dominating *(Sayigh 1979, p. 213), where language distorts reality rather than representing it. I believe that we can also argue that the discourse of the dominated and the dominating can be applied when we listen to village discourse, which is altogether based on another reality, and upon tension towards the feudal landowners whose treatment of the peasants led to easier recruitment of young men to the internal communist party, and the continuing political awareness in the village.*

Palestine is indeed a contested site, and hence the discourse has different stages with varied levels of positioned realities. The exploration of Palestine is certainly not at a standstill. Visions, other voices have developed over time, and they have been critical to the status quo of the Arab - Jewish discourse. The most apparent discourse is represented by the 'new historians'; they are Israeli academicians, writers and journalists reflecting on the narrative of their past. Ilan Pappe, Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, Baruch Kimmerling, and Joel Migdal are among the most engaged 'new historians, they come from different intellectual backgrounds. Moreover, they do not necessarily agree on the interpretations of history. But, basically they share the view on the following: that Israel can add up its various significant achievements and accomplishments, and that today the country has a relatively large population of approximately six million inhabitants, about ten times the number of residents in 1948.

A third of the world's Jews live in Israel, and they speak Hebrew, which was confined to liturgy when Zionism was born. The 'new historians' also agree that the main aim of the Zionist State has been to offer the Jews living in the Diaspora not only a home, but also a safe one. Zionism has, considering the background of the appalling tragedy of the Holocaust, been an exceptional triumph. However, new historians point that, in spite of its brilliant achievements, Israel is still in a state of battle with the Palestinian peoples, and with most of its Arab neighbours. These are facts which spread angst. Hostilities and an edgy peace have stained Israel's rapport with the Arabs. Israel's side of the story is relating to the War of Independence as a heroic fight: they, the Jews, were harassed and few; the Arabs were many; the Jews won. The new historians are demanding a story which is critical of what the creation of the state has caused of pain to the Arab

population of Palestine, especially the dreadful predicament of the refugees. The above Jewish historians are probing Zionism's grand narrative and their discourse is concerned with the Jews, and particularly the Israelis, surviving their past. This is all happening at a time when Israel is going through the process explaining Zionism to the younger Israeli generation who are, on their part, de-mystifying Zionism through questions.

There is also a coming out among Arab intellectuals in the quest for other academic and political practices in dealing with the results of 1948 and the Palestinian Diaspora. Yet, the Arab project is based on different reasons, there is the need to establish a history based on documents, records and life stories to counter Golda Meir's denial in 1969 of the existence of Palestinians. This particular Israeli mission was illustrated clearly by Sari Nasr: I am a Palestinian, I was born in Jerusalem, I started out to be a Palestinian, then they started calling me someone who does not have a country. They called me a refugee. After that I was stateless. Then I was called a Syrian, a Lebanese, a Jordanian, what have you. Then they started calling me a terrorist... (Bowman 1993). This is the voice of the subaltern. Evidently, there is no liberated Palestinian State, but there are a Palestinian people, and similar to the Indian writers, Nasr is conveying the story of himself, a representative of ordinary people in the larger picture. Arab intellectuals have had to write their history as events which took place within the framework of a people and their heritage.

Mustafa Mourad Al-Dabagh's ten volumes Biladuna Filistin, (Our Homeland Palestine), are exhaustive records on the Palestinian peoples and their territory. He writes against the assumption that Palestine has no indigenous population. His intention, as I see it, is to illustrate through detailed records just how closely intertwined the history and geography of Palestine is with its peoples cultural heritage. Dabbagh writes about those who have always lived on the land, those who through the years moved to Palestine and how the British pursued a tactic of depopulation of the villages, followed by taking them over for Jewish settlers. Albert Horani in his forward to Khalidi's book Palestine Reborn (Khalidi 1992b) affirms the existence of a people: The Palestinians have always existed in this area and were not

merely the descendants of the Muslim Arab conquerors of the seventh century, but the cumulative stock that included all the races that had entered and settled in Palestine since the dawn of history. They 'preceded' both Jew and Muslim Arab, in addition to 'incorporating' them. *(Khalidi 1992b)*

Following the Nakbah, Palestinian lives were transformed through turning half the Palestinian population into refugees outside the land and within their land. Being confronted by the expropriation of their land and water, people responded by countering the demolition of their patrimony. With that loss, the people started to create a national identity which would be based on the genuine sense of being a Palestinian. The issue of being embedded in the land is at the core of the conflict, and thus what is essential are artefacts articulating the land rooted in the Palestinian heritage. I agree with Swedenberg's argument where he says that the Palestinian people lacked the official state apparatus that is needed to validated the authenticity of their rights to the land (Swedenburg 1990). Throughout his article he reflects on his Palestinian friends insistence on being originally from a village, for him she represents a typical urban young Palestinian intellectual, yet as they drive through the Palestinian countryside she is more concerned with his perception of her origin.

Different to other histories of the Palestinians, Al-Dabbagh tells a chronicle of a people, urban and rural, who were active, aware, and conscious that they were being oppressed, but like all peasants they did not have the means, resources or the armaments to defend their land against the military superiority of the British and later the 'Jewish'. They did, and still do, have a position on what they believe happened to their particular village life and also other villagers' lives. For example, most Palestinian peasants were poor, but they saw the Jews living in the cities and in some villages as having a primitive life as compared to their more sophisticated and developed Palestinian culture. Ad-Dabbagh points to events in history and to peoples' traditions and cultures to explicate and undermine the claim that there were no people in Palestine. He maintains that the Palestinians have a natural and organic bond to the land thorough their attachment to the land.

The 'Jews' were seen as lacking in culture, education and, particularly, bodily hygiene. As a consequence, the Jews had to adopt standards from the 'people of the land' - that is the Palestinians. In the cities a 'characteristic' Jewish merchant had a small shop and lived with his family in that one room (Al-Dabbagh 1980, p.336). They had poor quality clothing and wiped their noses with their robes . *(Al-Dabbagh 1980, ibid)*

Although Jews and Arabs have lived together for millennia they obviously kept within their own group and maintained their own separate reality of history and events. The hostility between the two groups today stems from the conflicting claims to the same territory, during more recent times there has been several attempts and resolutions to reconcile tension between the two. These negotiations and efforts are still going on, with periodic cease-fires and with attempts and aid from the international community to forward trust and conciliation between these two ancient peoples.

As long as the ***Qadiya al Filistiniya*** *is not resolved, that is as long as Palestinians are not given the right to their land, to return to their land, there will be no reconciliation. There are at least five million Palestinian refugees who have experienced exile twice, in 1948 and 1967. The establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948 was accompanied by the destruction of Palestinian society, transforming eight hundred thousand people into refugees. These include generations of the same families who are still living in the Diaspora: many have been homeless for as long as Israel has enjoyed independence, that is fifty years.*

The main momentum of the above discourses is that the history of the Arab Palestinian and the Jewish Israeli fate is also loaded with myths and counter myths which have been created through time. Palestinian writings on the events surrounding the catastrophe have been, on the whole, polemical in their style, and they have been mostly concerned with establishing justice from the international community towards the future of the Palestinian cause. Israeli writings, while appearing in a more discursive guise are basically selective and give the winners' story of historical events, which remains couched in a national religious setting. However, there is an interesting intellectual change and

discourse among a group of scholars who are constantly revising Israel's history and are critical to the established big narrative version.

The New Historians are contemporaries and through their scholarships that debate Israel, are challenging the established Israeli history of Palestine. They are looking at a much broader history of the events surrounding the Ottoman and British rule. These New Historians do not only reconsider Zionism and events surrounding the war of 1948, but also the refugee tragedy and the Palestinian contemporary uprising of the intifadah. The Arab Palestinian scholars have carried out careful and systematic research to document the existence of a resourceful Arab population in Palestine. These Palestinian projects will be further elaborated on later, at the end of the dissertation and as part of my conclusion.

PART TWO:

Women, Wives and Water

We render special tribute to that brave Palestinian woman, guardian of sustenance and life, keeper of our people's perennial flame.

Declaration of Palestinian Independence II, November 15, 1988 Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE:

LIFE STORIES - LIFE WORLDS

Sett Um Muhammed

***Al zulm**, injustice, is part of a peasant's fate, particularly if the peasant is a woman. But there are especially two tragedies that can ruin a woman in the village. The first is infertility; the other is to give birth to only girls. Sett Um Muhammed is the old village mid wife, she believes she is much older than all the rest. Her daughter-in-law, Estehar calls her* "Sett Um el balad", *the mother of the village, yet she was not born in the village. She is so old, she says, that she knows all the inner secrets, the joys and sorrows of the village. A mid-wife and healer is a woman with **baraka**. Sett Um Mohammed told me that one of the shrines out in the **khala** was that of a woman who gained religious recognition because she was a healer and washer of the body, and it was said that she was close to the angels. Her shrine was often visited on the way to fetch the water, especially at the times of great distress. Today, it's difficult to visit the shrine because Israeli military or settlers control the area:* "They are afraid we kill them", *she laughed.*

She lived when beauty was tattooed on the face. Sett Um Muhammed has a tattoo on her forehead and chin, and this, she tells me proudly on our first meeting few women have. It was much later that she came over to me to tell me that her maiden name is Faleeha Mufleh Flayyan - but that only the old women know her name, to the rest she is known as Sett Um Muhammed. She is widow living with her youngest son, Muhammed, his wife and seven children. Her name is very unlike the other names in the village; she explained that she is of Bedouin origin, she was born in Al Far'a in the Jordan Valley, and that is the reason why she looks so different.

Sett Um Muhammed's name, Faleeha, and her tradition, she said were a little different from the rural habits of the people of the village, but because she had lived so long in the village, she has acquired many of their ways. Peasants in villages, she said, do not trust the Bedouins. This is shown in their building plans; they build homes on a hill and have at least one watch tower for safety

against the Bedouin raids. For Sett Um Muhammad it was vital to make the village trust her, and it was not difficult because soon all in the village discovered that she had the skills of mid-wife and, in addition, healing powers.

Her father, Mufleh, had three wives of the same tribe, "that means they were all Bedouins. I had many brothers and sisters, and we all used to live in a tent in the Far'a Valley with a flock of sheep. Our tribe had a chief called "sheikh" and had its own social rules and way of living". *I interrupted to ask the name of the tribe, but she did not remember:* "I will tell you in my own words".

She married a man who was not from Al Far'a and who is not of Bedouin origin, "Well, it seems strange at first, but it happened and I will tell you why and how. I was thinking of marrying my uncle's son at first, but my father refused. He did not want him, because my father quarrelled with his brother. There was no choice in marriage. A girl like me could not think for herself. What is suitable for a father, what he has in his mind should be done - and without hesitation". *It was not only her father who had quarrelled with his brother, but as she told me later, her mother hated her husband's family. She got the other wives to convince the father that he should marry his daughter off to some peasant, so that maybe life would be easier for her.*

"Then one day three men from Musharafah passed by their tent. With the three men was the village head. Bedouins are hospitable people, the most generous people in the world, more than people in the village and towns". *So of course the men were invited in the tent of the father.* "They spent a long time in my father's hospitality, I was asked by my mother to serve. Before they left one of the men asked for my hand. My father called me and showed me the chief of the guests, saying 'This is going to be your husband'. I agreed, and later thanked my father. He had a good face and was young. But then my misfortune; my father lied to me. The man I said yes to was not the man my father had chosen. He was not my man! My man was another one among the guests, and he was completely different". *She cried.*

A couple of days later, I told her that I had been thinking a lot about her story, and I wanted to know the rest. I also said that I wanted to hear the rest because her story had captivated me,

and that I would not write it if she did not want me to. Um Muhammed repeated that she was telling me what she wanted me to know, and that she wanted me to write the story "the way I am telling it."

"I had no possibility to refuse. I was taken to Musharafah after the wedding celebrations. I was dressed in an ornamental dress and take away from my family". *I tried to find ways of asking why she was not so happy with the man her father choose. Was he ugly, old, fat...?*
"When I saw him I let out a small cry. He was not the same one I saw in my father's tent, but it was useless. I had nothing to say or do. I did not have any hope to change the situation or refuse my fate. I did, however, stay in father's tent for some time, refusing to eat or move. But then I accepted my fate and new life. But I was a very sad young bride. My husband was small, old, fat and very ugly."

Her marriage lasted only seven years; he died because of old age, and she was left to take over the heavy duties of bringing up four children, but she says it was easier than living with him; her husband was much older and became very sick. She was blessed, as she said, with "a gift from God to heal the sick". *She had no* ***'eswah*** *in the village except for her sons, and they were too small to take care of her. Anyway, when they grew it was still difficult because they did not have any* ***nasab*** *in the village, because* ***nasab*** *comes with* ***'eswah.*** "Nobody wants to be around people with no 'eswah. Hamulah is a man's word; it is what men have. Women, if they are lucky", *she said,* "have a dar, and if they are very lucky they have their 'eswah around them to protect them".

While, Faleeha was blessed with the art of healing, she also inherited the gift of mid-wife from her mother. Her stories describing the health teams coming to the village to check on the villagers are full of humour and disgust for the "those who think I am backwards". *She describes how they came one day to watch her deliver a baby and care for him. This she did not like at all, because, as she said, they were in the village only to criticise and tell the young women they should go to hospital to deliver.*

How can anybody go to any hospital when the Jews do not even let the men go to their job? she argued. To be "daya *(mid-wife)*", *she said,* "is a blessing some women get from God", *and not everyone can do it. To be the mid-wife in the village is not only to know how to receive the babies, but it involves a deep knowledge of the village and the peasants who live in the village, that is the stories in every family home* "every dar has a story". *She knows the women so well; they trust her, so the baby is not restless when 'he' is born. But now the young women want to go to hospital to get their babies, and they dress them with clothes they buy in Ramallah, and then they come back to the village and give the baby milk from the bottle, because* "They want to be like America". *She was especially sceptical to the returnees whom she did not know, and who did not nurse the baby,* "Why do they think God gave women breasts?" *These new women have always drunk water from a bottle, she explains to me; they have never tasted the water from the spring, so they use a bottle for their babies.*

The women she helped deliver have all tasted the spring water, which is more healthy because it has flowed down from the higher mountains and passed through the earth, and God has blessed it. The village women were also healthy because they were always moving and worked going to fetch fuel, caring for the animals, baking bread, harvesting olives: all until the delivery, so their bodies were smooth and delivery was very rarely difficult. There were, of course, difficult deliveries and sad deliveries. She remembers especially one of the women who died giving birth to her thirteenth daughter "but it was better that way; her husband was going to divorce her because she failed to give him the son".

Healing and working as a mid-wife were not enough to support her household, so she also cleaned, washed and herded for different people in Musharafah in exchange for food and some clothing. Hard and constant work made it possible for her to send two of her four children to university. "I am also gifted in the knowledge of healing. This is a knowledge I acquired from one of my fathers wives. She did not have children, but she loved me like her own. I even think she loved me more than my own mother. I learned from her to treat all kinds of fever, injuries, burns and fractures. I used to treat and cure all the cases with

herbs, which I gathered, and bandages that I sewed from old clothes. I was known for all the people in Musharafah as 'the healer'". *She also kept a small garden where she grew lentils, beans, and tomatoes. For work as a healer she never asked for payment;* "the blessing from God", *she said. As a Muslim she also helped* ***fi sabil Allah,*** *for the love of God.*

Sometimes she was given milk, eggs, flour and the like for the healing and receiving babies. Like all the other women she fetched water, baked her bread, and she took her laundry to the water spring of ***talat al bir****, this is the spring they shared with women from the neighbouring village. It was by the springs, either the* ***bir Rommani*** *or* ***talat al bir*** *that she was usually told of women's ailments, especially the ones concerning emotional disorder, sadness or infertility. It was safer to make a sign to Sett Um Muhammed by the spring than in the village where fathers, brothers, mothers, husbands and mothers - in - laws were watching.*

The relationships and contacts around the water spring, Sett Um Muhammed explained, were a challenge, because she was not only there to carry out her own chores but also her work as a healer and mid-wife. The mothers sought her advice on strong, healthy brides for their sons, a bride who gives them boys. Carrying out the chores of housework for others was an easier task than the tensions that sometimes developed at the spring. She spoke of the sadness she felt when trying to heal the sorrow of young brides who were suffering in a hostile home. She made a vow at the shrine that if God kept her children healthy she would never torment her daughters-in-law, and she says she kept her promise.

The location of the springs was such that it was an open space on all sides; it was, after all, in the ***khala****, and that is good because the movement is easy; women can speak together without anyone suspecting something. And since she was the healer she was expected to speak to the women at the spring without bringing about any suspicion; it was more problematic when the young women walked over to her.*

For a healer to achieve her objective she needs the contribution of nature, and Sett Um Muhammed believes that these ground rules are fading away, because every corner in the ***khala*** *is being build on:* "Soon nobody can breathe". *It was at times difficult to understand her concern for overcrowding in the landscape, because often when I walked to Bir Zeit, the nearest village, I walked for hours without meeting a single person or animal in an area with large stretches of open landscape and a couple of scattered homes. According to her, healing plants cannot grow if they are either uprooted or built on; soon they will disappear, and nobody will remember what they were for. She would have liked the university people to show more interest in the mountain plants of Palestine, instead of ruining her job as a mid-wife and healer.*

Besides talking about her work as a mid wife and healer, Sett Um Muhammed describes the past history of the village, and because she is so old, she has experienced the Ottoman rule as a child and has many amusing stories about how the Bedouins and peasants always tried to fool the representatives from the Sultan. Her stories are supplemented by the many stories she heard in the village as a young bride. When the Ottomans were in Palestine, the peasants were left mostly in peace. Sett Um Muhammed believes that the mountains protected their village from the interest of the Ottomans.

Those people, the Turks, she told me, were not used to walking on uneven ground, even their horses were "fine". "One day, a group of Turks came up the village and the young children were sent down to spring to fetch nice fresh water for them to wash their face and hands, and drink. Then the older women rushed to the taboun to bake bread. But they were not bad with us; sometimes they saw a nice strong boy and they would take him in the army". *The mother would cry and say that she has lost a son, but then Sett Um Muhammed said with a smile, the mother knew he would have a better life than here in the village and that if he came back she would have become respected and established. Still, she must cry to show sorrow and not too much happiness,* "to shun away the envious eyes of the other women" *she explained.*

Sett Um Muhammed remembers the British well, and she liked them, because they were fair and never bothered anybody in the village. She knows that the British, like the Ottomans and later the Jordanians and the Jews "and even Palestinians in the towns" *look at the peasants in the* ***jebel*** *as backward and dirty. But,* "the English like to walk a lot and they like to show peasants other ways of living", *so we saw them more than our own people in the town. She liked the foreigners, but did not always like the way they watched the women walking and doing their chores:* "They did not know that our custom says that a man should not watch a woman like they do. They should know that when they watch, the men in the village make trouble for us afterwards". *She knew the young, beautiful village girl who was killed because she fell in love with a British soldier, and she is still a tormented spirit. Sett Um Muhammed is sad that her legs are weak, and she no longer can walk to* ***'ayn al balad****, which used to be the most frequently used spring in the village, where the dead girl's apparitions are, because she used to go to speak to the young girl and calm her.*

She liked the foreign women, because they were very beautiful, and they smiled at her and the other peasant women in the village. They also bought vegetables and bread from the women in the village. In spite of the fact that the English women were friendly and beautiful, Sett Um Muhammed did not like that they ruled her land. She maintains that the way of the English is different and that it is impossible for them to understand the Palestinian heritage. Her life was poor and very different from the English women, nonetheless she believes God decided her life, and therefore it was good. She did not care much for the Jordanians; they took many workers from the village "emptying the village of all the men", *and they were followed with the hardships of the Jews. She speaks of a sister who lives in Gaza, and when she was young and travelling was easier she came to visit Sett Um Muhammed. It was during these visits that she experienced her first taste of Egyptian cigarettes.*[12]

[12] *She always reminded me to bring a pack of 'Egyptian cigarettes' on my visits to the village. Being a fervent non-smoker myself I felt obliged to repeat that smoking is bad for her health, and that maybe she should try quitting it. Sett Um Muhammed obviously enjoyed my little monologues about the evils of smoking, smiling and giving me the same reply "I have lived longer than you and everyone in Palestine. I have had children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Everyday I walked to the spring and to the khala*

*Sett Um Muhammed had a hard life; beside her work as the mid-wife of the village with which she supplemented the household economy, she also did the other chores of a wife and mother. When her husband was alive he did not care how late she stayed beside a woman to deliver a child, as long as he got what he wanted and his animals were watered: "*I went at night between midnight and 0200 to the 'ayn and slept at the source. I even gave birth to one of my children at the 'ayn. Wiped him up, wrapped him, fetched the water and walked back. They were happy when I came back with a boy". *She points to her neck "*You see how beautiful my neck is. It is because I was the best at carrying the water on my head. A woman who could do that was clever. Not like today; they moan when you walk from the chair to the bed. Today women, when they give birth, they stay in bed. We never said anything. We always went together and joked and sang. Today nobody is with anybody. Everyone is in her home. A woman walked with her Jarra straight, proud shayfa 'halha (aware of herself). She showed she was clever carried the jarra and calla with pride. The ones who carry on their heads have a more beautiful neck than those women of today. Look at Estehar*"and she pointed to her daughter-in-law;* she has a neck like a man. But look at my neck" *and she pushed her head shawl to the side to show me her neck.*

Today Sett Um Muhammed lives in the house she moved to in late eighties. She moved out of al ***balad al qadima****, the old village when today's Musharafah has had piped water for two years. She had been a widow for most of her life and was tired. She moved in with her youngest son and his family. Her son, she said, had built the home* "all on his own". *But they could not have so much money, so they did not afford a well. And it is more expensive to build a well after the house is finished. "*I regret that we could not afford a well when we built the house. It is cheaper with a well, and in summer the water is cut for 15 days." *said Estehar. She is hoping that her oldest son who is working in*

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collecting fuel; I manage to walk to the spring and carry on my head. You and Estehar do not even manage to lift the jug from the floor." This is always a good time to speak of the past; I get out of an embarrassing situation, and she tells me what I want to know: "the way we do things here".

Jordan will be able to send home enough money for them to dig a well and install an electric pump. Estehar was baking bread on an electric plate and preparing dinner at the same time. Estehar maintains that she has more time on her hands than her own mother and mother-in-law and can be aware of what's happening around her; her mother-in- law disagrees: "How can you find out what's happening when you are always inside the home? Look at what the zaman has done to us and this cursed intifdah made our life even more miserable".

Um Qays

Solid family connections and a good kin surrounding you is both a blessing from God and a curse, they say in the village. It is blessing if you do not have too much land and wealth, because then your kin have to help you. It is a curse when you have wealth and everybody wants a piece, and because of tradition you cannot refuse.

Um Qays was born Wagiha Abdel Magid Ali in Musharafah in the beginning of The Mandate years, and she has always lived in the village. She had two older brothers and five younger sisters "some lived, some died. It is all decided by God". *She speaks warmly of her childhood and of her parents, saying that her father was a good and pious man and everyone came to him for advice. Her paternal grandfather was a sheikh and taught all his children, also the girls, to read. Unfortunately, Um Qays says, she did not get the same possibility, but her father kept a record of the birth of all his children, also the girls. She was born in the olive season in 1920.*

Um Qays was blessed because her father's ***nasab*** *was strong, and the* ***'eswah*** *was* "like iron". "Asabya is when a man in any of the three hamulah in Musharafah wants to marry a girl from his hamulah. He can of course do so. A girl cannot object because she would be killed. But here luckily no girl has ever been killed because it was a known custom in the minds of every woman."

Her father and her mother were God fearing peasants who believed in hard work and "never took anything from anybody and God is my witness". *They were in her mind true Palestinian peasants who preserved the Palestinian values of generosity, hard work and honesty. Her father worked in the field of the*

feudal family and contrary to many of the other women she spoke favourably of the feudal family saying that they treated her family well and never insulted them. Her father died an old man, but her mother died when she was still young, just after Wagiha got married. She remembers her mother as a woman who never sat down to rest; she was always doing chores. This she passed on to her daughters, so it was very easy to find a husband, rumours always travel about hard working girls.

Wagiha got married at twelve to her paternal cousin. She knows that her father got many offers, but he liked his brother and believed it best to keep the family together, so also her sisters were married off to paternal cousins:

"In my marriage we were four instead of two. My brother married my husbands sister, so also his cousin. This way was rather popular in rural areas in the past. Before marriage my brother, who was supposed to marry, was in the army service in Jordan. The family waited for his attendance but it took 12 days till he came so the wedding and marriage celebration took all this period. When my brother came he arranged the whole matter. He bought a silk dress, gold earrings, a ring, a silver chain for the head, a wooden box for the clothes, a woollen mattress and a quilt. My future husband did the same for his sister. The following day, the marriage meal was served. All the people from the three hayamel attended the meal. The other guests from the nearby villages also attended, before I went to my new home after the women had decorated me. They sang a lot and when it time to leave I was put on a horse's back and a large group of women followed. I was so happy because everybody was looking at me. My cousin was also on a horse. We rode together to his home and I stayed inside for one week".

Then she was taken in a procession of ***'talat al bir'****:* "It was a beautiful day and I was like a young gazelle, walking with my head held high, so that all saw me coming out of my husband's dar. They all sang around me. I had on my beautiful gold bracelets and they made lots of sound, a beautiful sound. My 'eswah was large and I was protected. We all carried water jars; I was very small, only 12- years-old, so I carried a tin painted with red shapes, and I had placed herbs on it. I had with me halawah (sweets) for the sid el 'ayn (for the spirit of the spring). So that the

evil spirit does not ruin my dar, and that may mother-in-law would be happy with me. Then I went out to the spring to drink water, and it was bitter to help me give my husband a boy, and carried back water to the house. This was a good marriage because I married in al-'Asabiyya". *Her definition of* ***'asabiyya*** *is that of a concept relating to cousins only, that is the sons of paternal uncles and she added the proverb* "I and my brother are against my cousin, I and my cousin are against the stranger".

During the first weeks, Wagiha was happy and the center of everybody's attention, but then, she said, her life changed when she got married; the celebrations had stopped, and she felt more and more that she was no longer in her home, but in the home of her mother-in-law. She explained that the home is the domain of the woman – the oldest woman, and she decides how everything is going to be done. Men are only home to sleep and eat; otherwise they are always outside the home, and when they come home they expect everything to function, and they should never experience that things are not as they should be. Men, Wagiha explained, do not care where the water comes from, as long as they get their tea and food. They do not want to see a tired woman making an effort, everything has to look easy, and a woman has to look as if she likes what she is doing.

Even though Wagiha married a man "she cared for" *she did not like living with her mother-in-law. It was a big disappointment to find out that her mother-in-law as not the kind woman she thought her to be. She describes her as a cruel woman who beat her and wanted the young bride to work to death, and that is why Wagiha had several spontaneous abortions before her father interfered and demanded that his daughter come back to his home,* "There were many talks between my father and his brother". *The other members of the family got very upset, but proudly she told me that her father told them he would not send his daughter back unless the mother-in-law promised that she would treat the young bride well. She promised, but the relationship between the two women was never warm.*

Wagiha became Um Qays one year after she moved back to her husband "I was happy to be with him", *and that changed everything. Life became better after the birth of her first son*

because "God heard my prayers, and I had given my husband a healthy son to carry on the honour of the family". *Um Qays explains that God has been kind to her, because she has had sons. Four daughters* "also came", *but the sons were what she needed to acquire the respect of her husband's* **dar** *and the neighbours. She says that had not her father interfered, she would probably have died of fatigue. But she managed to survive and achieved to give her husband's* **dar** *and the village sons* "one gives birth to a country"*; the heritage of the* **dar** *and the village lies with the women, she proudly says.*

The life of her children is very different from her own, and yet she has tried to explain to them as she explains to me the foundations of the Palestinian family values, a culture where **din**, *belief, is at the core of everything they think and do. First* "One has to say there is only one God and Muhammed is his prophet", *she said. Faith is their guideline and to go against what God intended is to commit a sin. She explains,* "We are Muslims, and we were daughters; the male kin were carefully watching our goings and comings. The whole village would yak yak yak about any young girl. People in a village like to ruin other people's homes. Always someone was waiting to say something bad about you. So our behaviour was the sharaf (honour) of our father, brother, uncles, the honour of all the men in the dar. We were all married at the age of twelve or thirteen, sometimes as late as fourteen. Some of us were married before we were really women. It was the mothers who wanted to marry off the girls early, because when the girl is married she is more safe from gossip. After marriage our mothers-in-law kept their eye on us; our responsibilities were producing sons, mothering them, keeping our homes clean and feeding our husbands and taking care of the household's every need. God has decided everything".

As I said, her children are different. One of her sons is an engineer in America; he is married to a Palestinian girl who has never seen Palestine, and they have "only two children. Girls". *But he is good and sends money to his mother, so she lacks nothing except the company of the other women. One of her daughters is doing her Phd in London and has not been back to Palestine,* "I feel she does not want to come back here with her husband who is a Sudanese. She knows that the people here in

the village will not be happy with the way I have let her do what she wants. Her husband is black you know, and my daughter is very white like milk. I do not know if I will see her before I die". *Her other two sons work in the Gulf and visit her as often as they can, while her three other daughters have moved to Jerusalem and work with international organisations. She knows they are angry with her because she made them work a lot when they were small.*

Um Qays used to wake up her daughters in the middle of the night to fetch water and feed the animals, "but here we cannot ask the man to do that". *Maybe she says the spring was a curse that made the young girls want to leave the village, but today she knows that she is blessed with a son who sends money to pay for the water bills and electricity bills and the maintenance of the cistern. She has enough money to take a taxi to buy her vegetables from the market or shops in Ramallah or El Bireh, but the other women cannot. So she helps the other women,* ***fi sabil Allah****, for the love of God,* "I am a Muslim and we do that".

Today Um Qays lives with her youngest son, but sometimes her other children visit her. Using an Egyptian expression she once smiled and told me "My sons are the light of my eyes". *The issue of her civil status was a sensitive issue; she told students who came to the village to interview old people about Palestinian culture that she was a widow. To me she said,* "Abu Qays is not here anymore"*; he left the village to find work in Jerusalem in construction, and he used to come back home every month; then he said that one of the men at the construction site had a brother who worked in Jordan, and he left for Amman. He came back to the village a couple of times to visit his family and then the money and the visits stopped. His sons have tried to trace him down, but that was many years ago; still for her* "He was a good man".

Her youngest son who is living with her is married and has five children, "He has not been blessed with sons, only daughters". *But she has encouraged her daughter-in-law, Jasmine, to try for a son. She believes that the sixth or eighth is usually a boy. Jasmine is educated; she is a primary school teacher and does not want any more children.* "She is lucky, *Um Qays says about Jasmine.* "I am not like my mother - in - law, and I am good with

her, but I think she has to get a son, because then she will keep her husband". *According to Um Qays, her daughter-in-law has only herself to think about, she has her mother-in-law living with her, taking care of the children and cooking the food while she can work. Still she believes Jasmine has a lot to learn from the older women in village, who can tell her about Palestinian values. She feels that the life she and her older neighbours have lived is the* "real Palestinian life", *while her daughter-in-law does not know anything about the landscape around her. The authentic Palestinian life, is tied to the Palestinian landscape and the everyday chores that have to be done* "in the khala".

Now that women have electricity and water pipes in the house, they no longer go out and do their chores. Um Qays misses going to the spring to fetch water and is upset that the spring is not maintained. She confirms that fetching water and fuel for the oven was very hard work, but bread baked in the ***taboun*** *is best, and water fetched from the spring is* "natural", *because the springs are located in the* ***khala*** "the land of God" *and walking back and forth is good for the health. She would have liked to have both. She is not so lonely, and her son takes care of her financially, yet she understands that many other women in the village are not so blessed. The time spent by the spring is very dear to her; these were moments when women told each other stories and helped each other, and men were not there to see them resting, joking, or gossiping. And when all that is gone and replaced by the tap, she says, a lot of goodness between people is also gone. Moreover, the solidarity between families in the village is not kept up; it becomes more difficult to observe and judge a good wife for the son, and the sharing of olives is difficult because women do not discuss the harvest together.*

Materially, she said, they were poorer; they had one kettle to share with the neighbours, and they did not have a television or proper beds to sleep in, and the men had too much power over them. "The man goes to the field and he feels he is great. And I had to find water and feed for his horse. All had to be ready. I wanted to take the horse down to fetch water. But he did not allow me. I had to find the water. His only concern was whether the horse had enough to drink. I had to find enough water for the horse and for the house. When it was hot, the months of eight

and nine, all night I was out to find water, and I did not sleep. My head went around (confused) looking for water and making my mother-in-law happy". *If it were not for the spring the women could never have stopped to rest, and they could never have gone out of the circle of the village.* "The water spring was the only place the young mother could permit herself to sit, lie down, even sleep without losing her integrity and pride, without showing any signs of weakness and being accused of being lazy - a bad worker. And because we are peasants we like to be in the khala of the jebel. It makes us feel strong. This is not possible today". *With the* ***'ayn*** *they could afford to eat better than they do today, because the same amount of water was available for all, and the peasants were very concerned with their crops.*

Um Fathi

Like all the hamlets, villages and towns in Palestine, also in Musharafah events have left their mark. Nothing stays the same, things do not turn out as expected and hardship is the fate of the peasants. For Fatima Muhammed Abu Maryam, known as Um Fathi, the intifadah is the one event that has turned everything in her life upside down.

Fatima Muhammed Abu Maryam was born in the neighbouring village of Kobar and moved to Musharafah when she got married. Today she is living alone in a one room home, her husband left and never came back. She is happy that when she moved from her village she did not have to go too far away. The women in Musharafah and Kobar share the water spring called ***tal'at al bir****, so she met the female populations of her natal village when she went to fetch water, news was exchanged, and they knew all about her health and well-being. Her well-being become worse she said with the intifadah* "which came a short while after the 'shirka' piped the water. Then trouble started with the boys throwing stones at the Military. I have a son and a grandson who have been in and out of the Jewish prison. My home has been turned upside down many times looking for them". *At times she shares her home with her sons, but that is very seldom because they are wanted by the Israeli military.*

Um Fathi is terrified and angry when the soldiers come searching her home; a couple of times the soldiers came when her sons

were visiting her, and they pulled them out "It burns my heart to see how they push my boys around, but all is destiny" she cried. Openly she says that the intifadah is a curse on her life; today she is old, alone and poor. Her kin are all going about their own life with their own problems, and "because I am poor and alone they (her kin) don't know me anymore". She had hoped that God would reward her for all the work she had done and because she is a good Muslim.

Um Fathi remembers very well the first visits to the village from the health people and how eager she was to help and improve the "backwardness" of the village. The young people of the health authority and university went around from home to home and asked the women and men to come to meeting with the people of Kobar. Only a few men who still live in the village went, the women could not go. Um Fathi told the young people from the health office and the university that women do not go to the same places as men, and that men never let women speak. So the university arranged a meeting for women and it was headed by an older female teacher at university and a nurse from Ramallah. Um Fathi went to fetch Sett Um Muhammed who is "sore at the health people. She thinks they are the reason the young women go to the clinic to give birth." "Men and women see the world differently. Women have different needs than men; they have different concerns and hopes for their children", Um Fathi explained. At that meeting the women talked very openly about their problems and their needs.

All the women present at the above mentioned meeting, Um Fathi said, had clean water as their priority. They all wanted piped water: "We were all tired of running up and down fetching water. We had enough to do. Many men were gone working in Israel or another country, and we were alone taking care of the olives. We also have our housework, going to the taboun, gathering the fuel, herding the animals, feeding the children, and some were unfortunate and still had the mother - in - law living with them". The question of health was a strong number two after water. Since it is the women who take care of children, they were concerned with the high infant mortality in the village, "I remember Um Muhammed was very angry with me. Because I have always been more interested in new things than many of the

other women. And I saw that the Christians and the foreigners in Bir Zeit had better health than us. Nearly all of us have watched children die and I think it comes from the dirt in this village." *They, the women, also wanted a better road between them and the village of Kobar, then they wanted some sort of regular transport so that they can go easily to sell their products in Ramallah, El Bireh, even in Jerusalem.*

Eventually, Um Fathi, said the great event happened in the mid and late eighties. The village had managed to collect enough money, most of the money came from the "feudal family and others who had family working abroad". *Finally, the Israeli authorities agreed to connect the village to the pipes. This was a wonderful time and the villagers celebrated with food, music and dance. Um Fathi goes on* "They said that NIS.38 would be the minimum rate to pay for the water. At that time we did not think of it and we agreed that we would help each other pay the water and electricity bills Everyone was so very happy, and we wanted to live like the people in the town with water, washing machines and televisions. Then the world went wrong". *The first intifadah broke out in 1987, and many young men joined in; soon the Israeli military found their way up to this secluded village and started searching homes, breaking windows and doors. They arrived at any time, without notice, even in the middle of the night; they just broke open the doors and broke the windows and searched the homes looking for the young men. The boys they found were taken and put in prison, some for a couple of days, others for years. The men who were working in Israel lost their jobs and left to find work in Jordan or the other Arab countries. Many of the women in the village were already widows or abandoned and depended on their children's financial help. At the same time as this was happening, contractors were building a new settlement, and diverting the water to the 'Jews'.*

According to the women, the Jewish settlers attempted to break the ***'ayn al balad****, that is the spring that was closest to the village, also called* ***bir Rommani****. The poorer women stored their water in large containers on the roof of their houses; others like Um Fathi used a large container by the side of her home where she stored* "winter water", *sometimes called* "water from the rain". *She reflects on why they did not go back to fetching water from*

bir Rommani: "We had already felt what it was to have water in the house, and it was good to have that water. Housework was easier. We were getting old, and all our young daughters were getting an education or living their own life outside the village. But I think, to tell you the truth, we did not want to go back to the heavy work of fetching water; we wanted to go together and sit around the 'ayn together, but we cannot just do that. Here women have to work the whole time or else people talk". She went on by saying: "You see we are simple, and shame and zulm is dominating our life". For her shame is a value in itself; it teaches restraint and morality, qualities she believes belong to the past.

Many times she compared the solidarity and pleasures of the past to the harshness between people today. Obviously, she says, the life lived and experienced in the past was not easy, but everything was on a much smaller scale; therefore it was possible to overcome the difficult times. Um Fathi was married at the age of fourteen to a poor man who was already married to "a good woman" who treated her nicely and helped her with the birth of every child. They became close friends, especially after her husband left the house to find work in a city. Both women shared sorrows and joys. Her mother-in-law was also a kind woman.

Early marriage, Um Fathi went on to say, was a good thing, because the girls are then not too old to change bad habits. The mother-in-law and the older co-wives train and help the bride to become a suitable wife for the man; the girl will then grow "under the eyes" of the older women, and there will be no room for her or her mother's ideas. It is easier to teach a younger girl discipline than an older girl: "They become stubborn". If the bride did not perform all her duties, the mother-in-law would find another much better wife for her son and this is an important job for the mother-in-law. It is becoming difficult today when girls are found in towns instead from the village: "A mother can end up today with a useless daughter-in-law who does not respect her".

Life in the village is certainly no straightforward and easy story; life was always getting more and more complicated, Um Fathi lamented. She is not sure if the centralisation of water and the electricity have been a good thing for the village. "Maybe" she reflected once, "we wanted to change our way of life, and that is

not good". *I commented that with all the hardship connected with chores in the past it is surprising that she missed the spring.* "By the spring" *she answered* "the women put their jugs and tins in line. Then we sat there waiting our turn under the olive tree. The rule was first come first served. It was a time to rest, take catnaps, gossip and stay together. *Fetching water from the spring was a social opportunity that organised their lives: The laundry was done by the water spring on designated days and enjoyed as an outing with the children.*

Every fifteen days they went down to the spring with the laundry and the small children; they all brought along food to share. They would hang their covers beside each other or use any large enough cloth, on the largest olive tree to shelter them from the men and the heat. Protected by that shelter, they washed their clothes, the children, and themselves, "it was like an outing. The water at the spring washed away all our pains and sorrows". *There was a difference between the two main springs the women used in the village.* ***Bir Rommani*** *had two taps, and Um Fathi used it about four to five times a day, carrying the water on her head. The Turks dug this spring during her parents' time, and then later during her time the 'English' built the wall with the two taps. The other spring,* ***talat al bir,*** *was also built by the 'English', but it had only one tap and the women in Kobar used it also. Nobody goes there anymore, but she knows that the water is just left to flow in wadi-Kober, and some peasants use it for irrigation when the Jews are not looking. Her mother-in-law was not wicked at all with her; she just always wanted her daughter-in-law around, so it was good to have the excuse to go out and meet the other young women.*

Um Fathi has fond memories of the old mother-in-law: "She never shouted. Always a soft voice, especially with the children. She was a very religious person and always thanked God for everything he has blessed her with". *They walked frequently passed a shrine on their way to the spring. Both women tried to help others who were even in more difficulty than themselves,* "my mother-in-law and me we know how to say "there is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet". *A shrine does not necessarily need to be a building with a known prophet buried inside, she explained. Um Fathi came from a poor family and so*

did her husband, so she has never been to visit the shrine of ***Nabi Musa****. Instead she visited and still visits the shrines of holy persons in the* ***khala****. These are just marked by stones and the names are not known.*

Um Khaled

Baraka*, miraculous claims and faith were a constant theme when we spoke of the spring, because there are several holy places around the area where women go, either alone when they are herding, or in groups on the way to or from the water spring. Um Khaled is a person who is very concerned with the* ***baraka****, blessing, these have bestowed on the landscape of Musharafah. As indigenous peoples of the land, she explained, they have inherited from their forefathers and with the blessing of God the rights to their mountain territories, and that although this is a 'red' village* "we know God, and there have been many with special gifts here". *As peasants their whole circle of life is made up of living according to tradition with the olive trees, the natural water running down from the higher mountain to be collected in the springs and water collected from the rain into containers.*

Um Khaled puts her views forward as their "rights that stem from our use and possession of the **khala** that is blessed. We live according to our traditions, and we have fought against colonisation and people who have tried to change our ways, and also we have been firm against the feudal in Musharafah". *She is sad about the disappearance of life by the spring. Activities around the* ***'ayn*** *involved picnics under the olive trees, where they washed, embroidered and talked. The buildings at the entrance of the village are destroying the nature of the village, and when she visits Sett Um Muhammed they speak of how the pipes and constructions do not blend with the stones. They agree that all the digging and building hinders the growth of wild plants like the strongly fragrant mountain thyme that grows in-between stones* "Nothing seems to be sacred anymore", *and with the first intifadah she says that the landscape became even more closed up and ruined.* "Today nobody, not even the men can enjoy the Palestinian nature", *she told me.*

Um Khaled insists always on washing her granddaughter's hair with cistern water. Now that the spring is dry, she has only the "winter water" to wash "the body" of the little girl. The water is fetched up in a bucket; she cannot afford a mechanised pump. When the water is hauled up, she collects it in a big basin. The water is yellowish, frothy and has a distinct stagnant smell. The basin is left outside in the sun to "soak up the warmth of the sun. It has God's **baraka** *(blessing)*", and flies circle around the basin. When the water is ready to be used there is green rim on the inside of the basin. Every time its about to happen there is a fight between Um Khaled and the girl's mother, Samia. The grandmother calls it "winter water," and Samia is upset and tells her that she using "soiled water".

Samia is actually her ex daughter-in-law, who is living next door with her widowed mother. Um Khaled is also a widow living in a one-room home with her mentally ill, unmarried daughter. Her son just got remarried to a girl from Ramallah. "The new bride refuses to move up to live in the middle of nowhere," laughed Um Khaled. So, they moved to Ramallah where both have good jobs. Samia is today Um Khaled closest neighbour. When I asked why the child was not in Samia's care, Um Khaled was shocked and scolded me back "I am his mother. This is the way we do it here. This is our 'ada. The mother of the boy is best". She was very disappointed in hearing that it was my mother who took care of my children, and that my husband accepted that. Nothing was said the rest of that evening.

The next day, she commented, "I decide when Samia can spend time with the child. But just the other day, Samia started to talk about her rights", and she laughed loudly at what she saw as a ridiculous idea. "Who has rights? Nobody! We are peasants; not even men have rights. But Samia she works in Bir Zeit and watches all these films from Egypt. They put ideas in her head". Um Khaled had spent long hours telling me horror stories about her mother-in-law, so I asked her whether she also would have liked to have more rights, to have had the possibility to say what she wanted to her demanding mother-in-law: to refuse to go to the oven and to fetch water on her head. Wouldn't she have liked to rest when she felt like it, and not just steal some moments of sleep when she was waiting by the spring? Instead of getting

angry, as I feared, she gave me a big smile. "Before we had no time to think about rights and not rights. We thought of nothing. I did not have time to think of what my mother-in-law did to me. We were between the spring, the oven and the olives. And then the children, they also have to grow".

Um Khaled's life is not very different from those of the women living in her village or the other neighbouring villages. She was married at the age of thirteen (she thinks) to a man from the neighbouring village. He was living with his mother, two wives and five children. He was a respected man in the village, and everyone thought she was very lucky. She moved into a crowded home, sharing it with nine humans, a donkey and a couple of goats, sheep and chicken. Yes, she explained all the women had thought of a better, easier life, because they watched the town ladies when they went to the market to sell their harvest: "they were all covered up, but they had fine clothes and soft hands". *Foreign ladies* "walking everywher"e *were also different from them. They also used to compare their lives with those of the feudal family. Her husband died six years later, leaving her pregnant with her fourth child.*

Um Khaled lost a child, and said "I was young, and they made me work all the time. I was tired walking back from the spring; I fell backwards. As I fell I pushed the two walking behind me, they joined in the fall. But no one was angry with me. We were all young girls and friends. But it was too late; I lost the child in my stomach. I said something about tap water making it easier for girls today; they don't fall on the way to the spring and abort their baby. You do not understand. I am tired in my head today. Like the young people today, they are tired in the head. Boys do the work of girls, and girls do the work of boys; it is not the way God made us. Before I was only tired in my body. It is better to be tired in the body; then we do not think about our fate. Now I sit and think a lot".

Um Khaled is aware and very concerned with the foreigners' interest in traditional rural folklore, and she believes that only the old can tell the story of how "it really was". *Her youngest son has friends who study at the Bir Zeit university. He often sends his foreign friends, students and visiting scholars to his mother* "He

tells them that I know about Palestinian customs. Jihad is very proud of his Palestinian origin and he likes me to teach them. So they can go back to their country and tell their family that we have good customs." *During many of my visits to her home, we would sit on the outside porch, and Palestinian students would drop in groups of twos and threes, with questionnaires, ticking off the boxes according to the answers of Um Khaled. They tell her that they are interested in talking to the senior women of the Palestinian villages,* "to learn about our Palestinian heritage, our 'adat and taqalid". *The projects the students work on vary from ancient homes, traditional furniture, tending the animals, baking in the traditional oven,* ***taboun****, and embroidery. Um Khaled enjoys these visits, and always prepares tea for El Shabab el Filistini, the Palestinian youths, and she talk to them about* "the way we do things here". *The visits are popular because she believes deeply in the Palestinian cause, and she wants the younger generation to take care of the* "Palestinian believe in God, our 'adat and taqalid, and pass them on to their children".

*The questions the Palestinian students visiting Um Khaled ask make her also think of the good days when there was goodness and people struggled together. Often she would comment that I was the only one who asked about water, "*I want you to go back to the people you live with and tell them about us, how we filled the water and carried it on our head, how we struggled, but we fed our family. And that we are Muslims". *But was this a good life? I asked. Fetching water and caring for it means that women were responsible for the flow of life. Women made sure the house had the goodness it needed. "*It is our way of life, and it was good, because we thanked Him*".*

Going back to Samia's and Um Khaled's regular quarrel about the little girl's bathing. Um Khaled's comments towards her lazy ex-daughter-in-law reflect gender codes linked to public appearance and behaviour. And Samia's form of livelihood and choices are such that her mother-in-law's cultural frames of experiences seem to be unacceptable. In spite of that Samia is a dutiful daughter, taking care of her mother; she is between her mother, mother-in-law, and basically "everything is difficult to deal with". *Samia's mother, Um Sherif has her two older daughters in the neighbouring village; both are married with several children*

and leading what Samia described to me "normal Palestinian peasant lives". Then there are the three sons, all living with their own families in the Gulf.

The boys send money home to their mother; however, Samia said that she also helps support her mother with her salary as a primary school teacher near Bir Zeit. But that her mother always talks about the boys as the providers; she seems to be ashamed of her divorced daughter. When I visited Samia at her school and asked about how she felt about her mother-in-law, she said that she is planning to move out of the village. Her brothers had sent enough money for her to take her mother to live in Ramallah; when she moves she will take her daughter with her. "Um Khaled lives in another world. She will make my daughter as backward as she is. She doesn't understand new ideas. She still wants women to fetch water from the spring and bake in the taboun."

I asked Um Sherif what she thinks about Um Khaleds attitude towards Samia's role as a mother. She felt her neighbour did what is expected from her. She cannot do otherwise: "These are our customs. This is the way we have been taught by our mothers and they by their mothers. This is our way of living together in the village. We need to follow our customs because then we do not get muddled up". No, she did not feel that fetching water and baking at the "taboun were "backwards". She reasoned that "We are peasants, we have always been in the khala; now we are all inside doing nothing. It is against nature". She thought that Samia's comments about her mother-in-law were not reasonable, because, for one thing, Samia learned these demands by watching soap operas with other moral messages and she absorbs these ideas, forgetting where she comes from. While, Um Khaled just did her chores, which were physical, and she had neither the energy nor the time to think about her lot in life.

It is, according to Um Sherif, unfair to demand that Um Khaled denies what she was brought up to do and respect. And Um Khaled knows that Samia has no **nasab** in the village or near the village; a woman is stronger when she has her **'eswah**. It is true, that all the village homes have televisions today and that also the old women sit and watch the same soaps as the young girls, but

when they speak of women's right to marry for love or to have the same rights as men to careers, they cannot relate. They wonder about what will happen to the ***dar*** *if they were to just do what women do on television. What will happen to the Palestinian way of life?*

Um Khaled, like her neighbours in the village and the other villages was a responsible mother-in-law running the chores of the home. A vital resource in survival of the home was the constant fetching of water. Like her mother-in-law and the senior co-wives she had the job of picking the bride by watching her walking to the spring and carrying water; she also watched Samia bake the bread in the ***taboun****, harvest olives and take care of her younger siblings. However, of all the tasks a girl had to manage, fetching water was the most definite in assessing the young bride and her capacity as an addition in her mother-in-law's home. That is, it was the chore where potential grooms and their mother could legitimately observe a girl's strength and beauty. The sons admired the beauty and their mothers watched the good workers. There is here the availability of power imbalance that was part of the division of labour among the women, and that legitimated older wive's and mother's position in the village, and which Um Khaled talks openly about, because, she explained, that one of her son's foreign friends was writing about* "how we decide at home, and the man outside the home".

Um Jihad

At the start of my fieldwork I believed in the common assumptions about folk costumes being traditional, therefore static and folklorist exhibitions from the past. During preparations for a wedding celebration I was quickly made aware by Um Jihad that this is a complex and dynamic craft with vivid expressions of the social and economic reality.

Um Jihad, who is in her seventies, was born Zeinab Muhammed Ali. She lives with her husband, her youngest son and his family and one unmarried handicapped daughter. They are living well because her husband worked for a good construction company in Israel and she contributed to the household with her professional and beautiful embroidery which she sold to a man who had a shop in the old city of Jerusalem.

Abu Jihad keeps up his olive trees and the little parcel behind the house. His wife says he misses the active life around the land, but the **zaman** forced him to work Israel. On Fridays he goes with the other men in the village to the mosque, and then they walk back to one of the houses where they sit and drink tea together before a meal. He says that without the job he had in Israel they would never have afforded to educate their younger children or pay the electricity and water bills. They also invested in a well behind the house and an electric pump. When I asked what he thought of the women missing the water spring, he laughed; he also misses it. He, like the other boys, watched the girls going back and forth from the water spring: "They knew we watched them. You know girls like to show off, and they liked to go to the spring because women like to gossip". He and the other men in the village think that values are out of hand, because, although "women just gossip", it was part of the **"adat** and **taqalid** of Palestinian village life, he said. And when the women went to fetch water, Abu Jihad, said "life in the village was more under control".

People were careful with keeping up the traditions of living in a village. He has experienced life in the town and seen how everyone is on his own. But in the village life demands that people keep close together, because they need each other; nature is harsher in the mountain. Most of his children have met their spouses outside the village, and Abu Jihad is upset about that. Before, the boys watched the girls go to the spring, and the mother judged the girl's ability to work and advised her son: "the affairs of the home were under control". Another issue that concerns him is the change in attitude toward inheritance of land between sisters and brothers. Formally girls can also inherit land, "but they never do that because it upsets the family structure and village life. Here in the balad men decide; we have to protect the women and make sure that the honour is kept within the hamulah. Today I know two homes where the girls are claiming their share of inheritance. They want to sell to help their husband buy a home in Ramallah or el Bireh".

Abu Jihad explained that this is linked to his point about boys not observing the girls doing household chores; instead they met girls with education and careers. Also the girls from the village meet boys from other villages or towns when they study, so they marry not only outside the village but also outside the **hamulah**. When I mentioned to him that the women speak of **dar**, and not **hamulah**, he believed that the reasons for the difference underline his reasoning that women and men have different roles and chores in the village. The women are in the **dar** and the men take care of village affairs. But this is changing when girls are today demanding their share. It has created, according to him, tensions and splits among family members in the village.

Um Jihad agrees with her husband that values have changed and tensions are obvious in the village. There are not only pressures from the Israeli occupation but also among families in the village. Um Jihad and Abu Jihad stated many times that the late president Nasser was the greatest man who ever lived. He was the only one who cared about the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian peasant "more than Abu 'Amar", they said. They keep a cassette with one of the speeches of Nasser, and on the wall there are several newspaper cuttings and pictures of Nasser. He did not only fight against the British, Abu Jihad said, but also against the feudal landowners in Egypt and gave back the land to the oppressed. Abu 'Amar, he said, would never force the rich Palestinian peasants to give back the land they took from the poor peasants.

The fetching of water, Abu Jihad said was women's work, and the spring was a place for women to gossip. He talked about the tasks of men and women, and about the importance of traditions. Um Jihad also talked about village traditions, but from another angle "our village is a typical Palestinian village. Women have to follow customs or else..." Um Jihad made a gesture silting her throat. Production of children is central in village life, and when the women met by the **'ayn** they discussed alliances. These are important issues for village continuity; without them the village will die out, and there will be nobody to take care of the Palestinian **taqalid**. Women have the obligation of making sure life in the village continues and they must not upset the "the village rules".

Um Jihad was also upset about the two girls in the village who were now claiming their share of the inheritance. Women challenging their brothers and male kin for land could never have happened if women were still meeting at the water spring. At the ***'ayn*** *the village was bustling with movement and the sound of small children, laughter, gossip and singing. Even though Musharafah is a 'communist' village, she went on, there have always been customary restrictions on movements.* "Life for the old women in this village in the jebel is boring and sad", *she cried.* "Nothing happens in the village anymore, and nobody uses God's khala".

I want to return back to Um Jihad's embroidery. Her eyes were getting weak and she did not see as well as she once did. Traditional embroidery, ***tatriz****, was a pastime she enjoyed and which she still kept up. Um Jihad learned* ***tatriz*** *with the sole mission of preparing herself for marriage, and at an early age she was taught how she could* "put the thread through the needle". *She was first taught to cross-stitch and then to copy other simple motifs of the village she lived in. As a child, she lived for a couple of years in a village in the Jordan valley, so the motifs she embroidered were the scenery around her. The palm trees in the valley were popular motifs to stitch. Older aunts and other old women in the village, who had the time to spare, taught and helped her in the beginning. Um Jihad was very gifted, so she began at a much younger age than the rest in her family to embroider the panels for her* ***jihas*** *(trousseau) garments.*

Um Jihad took up embroidery as a profession during the 1930s when there was an increasing interest in lavish embroidery and interest from the "foreigners" *in the neighbouring village of Bir Zeit. Because of more contacts with urban centres, certain families in neighbouring villages and in Ramallah could afford more lavish embroidery. Several embroidery centres grew during the period around the 1930s, encouraging the Palestinian traditional identity, and Um Jihad had no problem selling her work. The less a woman worked in the fields and her home, the more time she had to adorn her garments and help her daughters prepare for the trousseau. But in the village of Musharafah the women who lived in the old village were poor and could not afford embroidery threads and garments which were luxuries for the rich*

peasants or women in the towns. They went mostly about in their **jinneh u nar** dress; these were everyday working garments. All the older women with whom I spent time, and who are the main focus of this study were always dressed in their traditional embroidered dresses, and some had flowing white veils which should not to be confused with the Islamic **hijab** or veil.

The demand increased when men from Musharafah found work in Jordan or the United States and sent remittances back home to their mothers or wives. Um Jihad explains that in the village, when a woman started to wear more embroidery it meant that there was more disposable income in the family. During the intifadah of 1987 and 2000, many of the men who worked in Israel lost their jobs, and embroidery decreased.

The people of Musharafah have, like all the other villages in Palestine, their unique way of using colours and motifs in their embroidery. In Musharafah the women embroider in a specific way because they also learned and copied from the "foreigners who lived in Bir Zeit", Um Jihad said. The Maharfa lived closer to Bir Zeit than the people from Kobar. Um Jihad also explained that the time spent on embroidery is an indicator for interpreting economic and social changes in the village life. Today, several Palestinian co-operatives and organisations encourage women to keep up the traditional stitches and sell them through religious and secular organisations that actively market Palestinian traditional craft. The arts include handicrafts such as pottery, glass, baskets, and rug weaving.

Um Ali

Fatima Muhammad Ali is Um Jihad's younger half sister. She married the man she wanted to marry. Abu Ali was her cousin, and he was young like her when they got married.

Um Ali has the unique experience of giving birth to all her children at the spring, "even the professor at the university". Like the experiences of several of the other women, she walked to the spring during child labour, giving birth by the spring. She wrapped the new-born child and walked with it up again to the village, steadying a full jug of water on her head. If the baby was a girl, the women and me said nothing. If the new-born was a boy, a procession of women would announce the news to the village by

a penetrating yell, the ulvating. Regardless of whether it was boy or girl, the young Um Ali walked back to the village to continue her work at the bread oven, feeding the animals, cooking for the house, going back to fetch more water for the household, walking the long distance to fetch fuel for the oven and later in the afternoon herding the animals.

She is very proud of her son Ali who is a professor of Biology at the University of Bir Zeit. He, she repeatedly told me, has opened her eyes to what is happening to the Palestinian peasant. But, Um Ali, is concerned about his believe only in politics and not enough in God, "I try always to tell him to remember al arkan al khamsah. But he has all this communist stuff in his head". She often serves tea, and sometimes even makes dinner for his foreign friends from other universities. "They all sit around the table, with papers and books scattered everywhere. I always serve them the best I can. But nobody asks me. Maybe I could tell them a thing or two about our life". She would have liked her son to tell his 'friends' more about village life, and to ask her questions about "How we did things in the village". Um Ali often confronted 'the Professor' in front of me saying, "She is doing what you never want to hear about". Although she sees the "Good that comes with water in the tap", she repeatedly tells her son that without the **'ayn**, 'real' Palestinian **'adat** and **taqalid** will be lost.

'Adat and **taqalid** were obvious, Um Ali said, in the division of labour between men and women. She sees that by working for the Israelis the Palestinian peasant is giving away the 'wealth' of Palestinian way of life. Obviously, the consequence of wage labour in Israel is not without contradictions, for the old it means not only that production of goods and services in the home diminishes but also the labour. This means that the old women are dependent on an income from family members working either in a narrow Palestinian market or making a living working for Israel, and the revenue is irregular. Um Ali is concerned with the fact that in Musharafah today it is the old women who keep up the agriculture, "it is us who maintain whatever is left of small family plots". Women not only contribute with agricultural labour but also "dry, can and pickle food, make soap and jams, and grind wheat", Um Ali proudly said.

Um Ali has a ***'eswah*** *and she does not come from the poorest family in Musharafah, still life has never been easy. She describes her chores as routine* "I was always pregnant. I would fill water in tins and jugs, prepare the bread dough, wash the room, and walk back to the bread oven to bake the bread and then nurse the baby. Prepare the morning meal for my husband and his father and mother. Then the children. All these rounds were done and the sun would be still rising. If the baby was no more than four months, I would wrap it up and tie it to my taub and walk down to the olive orchard to join in others during the season of olives". *Still, they were not lacking in vegetables, fruits and water as they are today. There was never too much of anything, as she explained, but there was enough to keep the body going. Today, she says, the problem is that vegetables and fruits are too expensive because water is in pipes and costs money. Also she who has been blessed feels the economic pressures, so she knows others suffer more than she does.*

When water was out in the ***khala,*** *it was regulated by nature, she said, so it was more natural. When there was much water it retreated back into nature and was stored; today, with it being piped, there is either too little, or, when there is too much, it is wasted, because there is no natural system. In her view, the problem lies in that the village is mostly populated with old women who neither have* ***'eswah*** *nor* ***nasab****. Um Ali says that she misses the togetherness around the water spring, the walk down, the singing and the gossiping. Most of all, she remembered,* "we knew God. We are Muslims and we knew how to thank Him". *But, she also remembered the hardship, especially in summer, looking for water* "until my head went in circles". *Today what makes her head go in circles is what people say about her youngest sister Samiha who wears trousers in the village, lived alone until recently, and works like the men in town. This, Um Ali says, is not the way of a Muslim girl,* "I always tell her to remember God and that we all have to answer when he remembers us".

Um Ali was happy that her daughters went to school - also the Prophet said that learning is important, she said, but she is not happy that Samiha did not do what a woman is expected to do in

the village: marry and have children "like all Muslim women"*. Her sister never experienced the happiness of singing and laughing and wearing a young bride's* ***taub*** *with the other women to the spring of* ***talat al bir*** *after the wedding. (I want to specify here that although this spring shares the same name as the ritual of* ***talat al bir*** *and was the spring most frequently used for the procession, the women told me it was not the only spring used in connection with this ceremony).*

Samiha

While village mothers used the spring for assessing the strength and beauty of eligible girls and it was the location where in reality the contracting of engagements was facilitated, it was also here that these same marriage arrangements, were broken off. Samiha experienced just that. She is Fatima's sister and is in her fifties, living alone, and running her own embroidery business "I should have been born a man – I defy village values"*, she repeated during our discussions.*

Let's go back to the engagement broken up by the spring. Samiha, like all the girls in the village, went to fetch water with her mother and sister at the spring. She was the youngest: "My father spoilt me. He was against me going to the spring, because he thought I was too intelligent"*. She went to school and finished primary and secondary school; then she went to work for a Christian woman in Bir Zeit who made and sold traditional Palestinian handicraft. In the meantime, the family she was promised to lost interest and broke the engagement* "They wanted someone to walk up and down fetching water, baking bread, cleaning houses and producing children. I was the wrong kind, and Fatima was very sad, but she also believed in education. I know that Fatima is sad that I am not married".

Samiha was a gifted in the craft of embroidery and soon her work was noticed also in the neighbouring villages and towns. During the late seventies and beginning of the eighties there was a lot of demand for such work, and she managed to put aside enough money to build a small home in the village and, with another co-worker, bought a small atelier in Ramallah. Her business went very well, with a slow period during the intifadah, but then

Palestinian returnees started to invest in embroidery, and her business picked up again.

The matter of piped water represents for Samiha a break with the old primitive ways of the village, but it has not been completely successful because Palestine is still occupied. It is difficult to modernise a place, she says, when the people cannot enjoy it because they do not have the means to participate in the process. She joined the other women at the meeting held by the health officials in Ramallah, and she also tried to explain that peasants are not stupid – they are a very practical people. They know what they have and what it is used for, and if the officials want to help them - because they have German, Italian or other money to use (donor money) - they must find out if people in the village can afford the "modern things they come with", Samiha explained.

Samiha remembers the euphoria of having installed piped water in the village at last. But she also remembers the wave of shock in the village when the bills started to arrive, for by that time many of the women were living alone or were responsible for the households. In addition she believes that Musharafah is unique in its political awareness and socialist sympathies, but the maintenance of the modernisation created a larger gap between those who can afford to pay water and electricity bills and to have fancy household equipment, and those who cannot afford these changes. Matters became more complicated with the first intifadah, and all the homes in villages were under constant harassment from settlers and the Israeli army, "The intifadah is a break with these men in Gaza, who do nothing". Samiha also said that the old women living alone faced problems when the 'Jews' destroy their homes adding to their suffering.

Um Ibrahim

Um Ibrahim on our first meeting told me that she is different from all the other women in the village. She made it very clear that although she lives in a village, she comes from a prominent and dominant land owning family living today in Jerusalem. Today, she said, her family is like all the other urban families in Jerusalem. She went to school and never goes around in a ***taub*** unless it's a festive Palestinian occasion. "I come from a good

family, and I am more open to foreign ideas, and I do not believe in primitive healing methods".

She was born Zeinab in a family that owned "many dunums"[13] of good land which provided a good income for the family. She was not only the youngest child but also the only daughter, so her father gave her all she asked for, including the man she chose to marry. Ahmad Ibn dar Ganzuri was a clever young man from the same **hamulah** as Zeinab; he came also from a prosperous family, but, she insisted, he was not spoilt. The man she married was always a tough worker. He worked hard for his father and later also a little for his father in law.

Abu Ibrahim was a progressive man and wanted to know more about the British and their ways. He noticed that they were much more advanced in most things, and he wanted to transfer those ideas to his people. So he started to work with them "not for them, like they think here in the village", Um Ibrahim argued. Eventually, he managed to make enough money to buy most of the land in Musharafah, which was "just a khirbeh. The peasants were poor and the children were dying from dirt and bad nourishment". His project included making life more prosperous in the village. She knows what the other women say about her, and that they most probably did not say anything about Abu Ibrahim's generosity with the peasants. Today they help with the olives and take most of it "as a revenge for the zulm they think my husband is responsible for".

Obviously, the walks to and from the spring were long and hard, but she could not do it, because it was not fitting for a woman from her background to be seen outside doing manual work. Still, although she never went to the **'ayn**, Um Ibrahim is nostalgic about the old ways and says that, to know Palestine, you have to appreciate the life around the **'ayn**, which is all the **khala** around; she pointed to the hills and terraces on all sides. She is also a peasant and carries within her the pride of the Palestinian culture, and she added her belief that "there is one god, and Mohammed is his prophet". One cannot, Um Ibrahim said, speak about the Palestinian's love for their land without talking about the wonders

[13] one dunum equals approximately one-fourth of an acre.

of God. It is in the land of God that life is decided and the Palestinian heritage is passed on.

Um Ibrahim told me repeatedly that she is the lady, the wife of the richest owner; "they call him the iqta'i. That is all right. I understand. But they do not know how much I understand them, because also we are peasants." Most of her life she watched the other women fetch water; they passed under her home, and she heard them chatting, singing and laughing. The women had bare feet, and the stones were hot in summer and cold in winter, and always sharp; in spite of the hardship they never complained; she never heard them complaining. One of the first rules a girl learned was never to talk about herself; only women without shame did so.

When they grew older, the girls knew that it was especially during the walk back to the village from the water spring that they were most attractive: A straight back and a jug well balanced on a well-toned neck was not only a sign of inner strength and determination but was also attractive. Girls were observed while walking along the water route; young men from their village, and also other villages, watched them as they passed, observing their brides-to-be. The fact that there is no 'legitimate' observation of the young women is problematic in several villages today, Um Ibrahim said. She knows this also from one of her sons who teaches at university; several of his male colleagues have complained that their sons find their own brides outside the village.

The job of finding a match for a son or a daughter was never a man's domain; it was always the wife who pointed out the possibilities available and left the men to sort out the contracts. Um Ibrahim said that today mothers have difficulties without a meeting point, and men have no longer the good advice of the wife. In the urban areas women, like herself, meet at each others home for tea and gossip, but in the villages it is different. Peasant women cannot just sit around and do nothing; "the worse thing you say about the village women is that they are lazy".

Um Ibrahim speaks with much sympathy for the peasant women whom she at first admits having disliked and looked down on. She did not want to have anything to do with them until her sons

started frequenting a political group near the village. They eventually left the country to study in the Soviet Union and in England. Two stayed abroad and have only visited a couple of times. The other two came back, one with his foreign wife, but she did not stay long. The ones who came back also brought back ideas, and they wanted to educate the peasants: They believed in a revolution against the rich and the occupation. They started youth clubs and helped finance the education of the young people in the village". *It amuses Um Ibrahim to think that it was in reality her sons who helped the young in the village rise up against the feudal landlord – her husband.*

Because they are Arabs, and Arabs - especially peasants - are an honourable and hospitable people, they were good with the rich landlord. And, she pointed out "also we are good. We know God and my husband did things **fi sabil Allah**". *But the atmosphere in the village changed; the population became much more politically aware and suspicious of programs introduced by the outside. The women still maintained a certain respectful distance to the landlord and his family, but their children were different. Also this eventually changed; she felt that the women still kept a distance, but it was no longer respectful. Nevertheless, she understands the pain they are passing through, having worked all their lives only to spend their old age in non-fulfilled expectations, she said repeatedly;* "This is not honourable for an old Palestinian woman. This is not the way it is supposed to end".

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN

My initial 'surprise' in Musharafah was that the women spoke nostalgically about fetching water from the spring, and about the complexities and contradictions involved in the chore of fetching water. Because of the hardships connected with fetching water, it was surprising that the women miss it at all. But Um Jihad, whom we met, explained that "By the spring the women put their jugs and tins in line, while they sat waiting their turn under the shade of an olive tree. The rule was first come first served. It was a time to rest, to take catnaps, for gossip and togetherness. The water spring was the only place in the whole khala where we could be permitted to sit or lie down and even sleep without being accused of not doing our job. We cannot just sleep at home." *Fetching water provided women with a legitimate arena of activity outside the home, and women have developed this 'freedom' to build on meaningful lives that reflect their own needs and concerns. The 'freedom' to do this has perhaps been enhanced by their greater distance from the influence of the authority of the men and their mothers.*

Narratives are valuable conveyers of information about the wealth in women's lives: the complexity which surrounds the activity of going from the water spring, located outside the home, to the faucet inside the home; and the knowledges - notions and competence - which such a transition impinges on. There are many consequences that we recognise and which we already know are connected to the installation of water: hygiene; lighter work load on the women who are the ones responsible for the fetching of water; more time available for girls to go to school. These are issues which also the women discussed and approved of. "Today it is cleaner, and of course, it is nicer today, but before the 'ayn gave more khayr. The land gave more. Today I can hardly get a handful from the olives. Before I would have the room full. There must be something wrong with the soil" *said one of the elders. It is such testimonials or reflections that demand that we explore the narratives to better understand the totality behind such statements.*

We shall return to the landscape, and the women's conceptualisation of **khala**, in the next chapter. Here I will focus on the way the narratives convey what it is to be a woman in the village. Thus, my attention is on 'the social construction of women' and how the narratives presented in Chapter Three are unfolding towards this construction.

Daughter, wife, mother, grandmother

A woman starts her life knowing that she has a role as a daughter, a wife and a mother; during her early years she learns what is expected from her. The teaching is explicit and the rules are made clear for her to see; there should be no doubt that a woman's behaviour is tied to the family's name and honour. It is also in the early years that girls are made aware that as a mother 'blessed' with boys a woman has a more elevated position than if she only has girls. It is especially when a woman is a new bride that she needs the assurance of her husband's family, especially his mother, and she gets it if she has produced a boy. Later in life, a boy will bring his wife and his children, and ideally they will all be at her side and support her in her old age.

Several women assured me that they love their daughters. One of the grandmothers in particular used one of her granddaughters as an example. I had noticed that the little girl was very spoilt; she was neither the oldest nor the youngest but she received much more affection and attention from both her parents and her grandmother. Her grandmother, Um Jihad, taught her the traditional craft of embroidery and spent hours embroidering with her while the other younger and older boys and girls did the chores around the house. This is rather exceptional, because I had been told several times that embroidery is done after all the other chores in the house are finished. This little girl was treated differently because her grandmother believed that she was much smarter than all the others were, and much more beautiful with her **'asalyi** eyes (honey coloured eyes). The old woman said that her granddaughter was an exception because "with us peasants, we prefer boys". In general girls cannot support and lift the status of their mother as boys can. Still, it is the girls in the family who help their mother with the heavy daily chores.

However, custom and religion say that women are weaker than men and therefore need more protection. Girls leave their home, sometimes even their home village, and join in their husband's household. In short, the girl is considered a bad investment, because she takes all that she has learned from her mother to another home. The son brings home a wife, or several wives, and the childbearing capacity of the women increases the labour in the house. Should the son die, his sons will take up his role in taking care of the family house. The boys inherit double what the girls inherit, and in reality, they also inherit the girl's part, so the wealth stays in the family.

In their description of life in the village, the women speak about how even those who were not blessed with any sons would find a second wife for their husband, in order to secure their own position through another female ally. Another woman in a household was not only perceived as competition; she was also someone the first wife could share chores with. The competence women believe they possess is a co-variant with stratified control over information. When they went about the their chores outside they also visited each other to help; for example, if someone's daughter was getting married they would help sew the last few stitches of her trousseau. "A woman puts the jarra on her head and the man thinks she is going to do her housework"; with this the woman is reflecting that when women fetched water at the spring the men had no access to women's internal politics.

In each home there is a division of household chores between the females and the males sharing that household. The women and children assisted men in many of the chores which were considered for the males, like going to market, taking the animals out, harvesting and working in the field. Men took care of the commercial matters, "but we always had some of our earnings from the market tucked away somewhere he or his mother did not know about", one of the women said, adding that women knew more about what was happening in the world of 'their' men, than the men knew about the "life of women".

With the transition of village life, the villagers are no longer in control of their production, and, as I mentioned earlier, they depend mostly on relatives working in Israel or other countries,

and some women depend on charity. Home production that used to subsidise the household are more complicated to uphold. The ones left to keep up the traditional crafts, agriculture, and animal husbandry are old women; the labour market has also attracted young women. They have a higher education, and home production is unattractive and uneconomic.

The theme of 'doing what is expected' is a theme older woman are proud of and like to talk about. It is their achievement they are proud of it. Working and never complaining means making sure their father's **dar** is proud of them, that their husband's **dar** is proud of them, that they are reliable, never sulky, and that they teach the younger women - either younger wives or daughters - their responsibilities with pride. A woman who manages that can "walk with her head straight", Sett Um Muhammed explained.

Marriage

We heard about their marriages, but still let me start here with Um Khalid's and Um Jihad's careful descriptions of the events surrounding the initial procedures of marriage agreements between two homes, the wedding procession and festivities: – "this is the way we do things here", the two women told me.

First the boy sees a girl going back and forth from the **'ayn**, the women said. Then "God be willing, he is her cousin", Um Khalid says. This is followed by the boy's mother looking "if she has not noticed the girl before", Um Jihad continues. If the mother likes her, she goes to the father, or, if he is dead, to a male kin. **Al tulbeh,** the negotiations between the men is what follows. The bride's father and the groom's male kin meet and negotiate the marriage transaction. This is a private meeting between the male heads of the two families. "It is not a matter of a boy and girl liking each other like what you see in Egyptian television". The marriage is preferably kept within the same **dar** and not of his or her choosing. All dutiful sons and daughters enter into marriage and are respectful to their families' choice of spouse.

The man is supposed to be good to his wife, and the girl should respect and obey her husband's family, provide her new family with boys and not complain. The fathers decide how much the groom or his father should pay in brideprice, and they specify the articles of clothing he should present to the bride and her

relatives. The groom was obliged to make the **kisweh** presentation to the bride and to buy clothing for the bride's mother and eldest maternal uncle (**khal**). It was important that these obligatory gifts of clothing conformed to current village custom, and enquiries were made among recently married men to find out what the groom should buy.

The **aqd** is the contract, and that needs to be signed, the women laugh; "and then everybody is happy", they said. The terms agreed at the **tulbeh** are recorded in a wedding contract, formally signed on the betrothal day. After "the word of agreement was spoken", Um Jihad went on to say, the families of the bride and groom sat down and shared a celebration lunch, provided by the groom's family but eaten at the bride's house; the groom, the groom's father and the bride's father, together with other male relatives as witnesses, gathered in the presence of religious authority, a **sheikh**, to sign the contract.

Following the signing of the contract, the moment all the girls look forward is **zafah al kisweh,** or the trousseau celebration. This is the celebration of the groom's purchase of trousseau gifts for the bride, shortly before the wedding. The **kisweh** involved an expedition by members of both families, but never the bride, to a trousseau merchant in Ramallah.

Laylat al henna is happy. It is the henna night, when women are together laughing and singing and "looking after the preparations for the bride", Um Khaled said. This night is also her farewell to her friends "it is the night before the wedding", Um Khaled continued. **Laylat al henna** was the first wedding ritual in which the bride took part. While the essence of the groom's first step towards marriage was a binding financial agreement, the essence of hers was the parting from her family and friends, and the preparation for the wedding night. The betrothal ceremony was a rite of commitment, and the henna night was a rite of separation from one status and preparation for the next.

Yom al 'urs, the wedding day was a happy or very sad day; it all depended on "where the men were sending the girl", Um Khaled said. The wedding day starts with the procession of the bride from her father's house to that of the groom for the groom's feast and money ceremony. Normally, on the wedding day the groom

held a feast for the male members of both families and other male villagers, the bride and other women were supposed to have their own gathering. Now, this changed the women said, due to strong political activity, young male visitors did not always follow the segregation rules. At times, young men used these events to criticise traditional Palestinian values. A few weddings, Um Khaled said "were destroyed with such behaviour".

Still, generally, the families kept up the traditional segregation. There was dancing and singing around the village spring. The groom also received small money presents from his guests in a ceremony, similar to that which the bride would have the following morning. The **laylat al dakhleh**, is the wedding night - the consummation of the marriage - which was followed the next day with the **nqut**, the bride's money ceremony. **Nqut** this is the presentation of money to the bride the morning following the wedding night. Um Jihad and Um Khaled stressed that "not all brides received money or jewellery. It all depends on the wealth of her dar, her 'eswah and nasab".

Tal'at al-bir, the going out to the well is the ritual both Um Khaled and Um Jihad agreed was the most beatiful one. This is when the bride comes out from a week's seclusion in her new home, and leads the procession to the village well. The bride leaves her husbands home and walks in a joyful procession of women, which includes women from her family, her husband's family and other village women. All carry water pitchers; the bride's is painted with red designs and decorated with sprigs of greenery. At the well she presents the guardian of the spring with a tray of sweets to ensure the good fortune of her new home and fills her pitcher with water. The women recall with much fondness the lovely sounds of all the silver chains as the procession goes back and forth from the water spring. This is a ritual they hope the younger people will keep up.

Weddings are events that bring families together, when pasts are remembered. We have often heard and read that spousal relationships in the rural Middle Eastern households are basically without kindness or love. The women's narratives confirm some of those ideas, but the stories also add other dimensions that are lacking in much ethnography on the Middle East. Women, like for

example Um Qays, cared for their husbands and experienced sadness when they were away for long periods of time. Emotional loss, compassion and gentleness between spouses are very seldom an issue in the writings of family life in the Middle East, and it is a sensitive subject. Although the women did speak, but seldom, of their emotions and loss, their show of affection and emotions remained restrained, Sett Um Muhammed, who has been a widow for most of her life, told me she was forced to marry a man who was much older than she. She hated him, and "his face made me want God to take me". Her younger neighbour has had a different life; she married the man she loved, her cousin, and they had a good life together. A sister lives in a village close to Musharafah with her husband in an extended family, and Sett Um Muhammed once confided - that contrary to peasant tradition - they show happiness too openly; "peasants must always show that they worry. Those people have no shame".

We heard that Um Ali's younger sister, Samiha, remained unmarried until her 50s, and Um Ali was always anxious about the rumours about Samiha and men. On one of my last visits to Musharafah I was quickly taken aside and told by Um Muhammed, who lives in one of first homes at the village entrance, not to mention Samiha's name anymore in the village - a man in the neighbouring village had divorced his wife, who has a sister living in the village. Um Ali, they said, had problems "showing her face in the village". This man and Samiha are now married and living in Ramallah. They, that is the women in the village, preferred to talk about the upcoming wedding, which was " normal" because "it is between two young people". The wedding was obviously coming at the right time, because "the disaster", as they refer to the divorce and remarriage of the man to Samiha, had upset the good relations in the village. This coming wedding would be a good opportunity to be happy again.

The old village where the women grew up and where they were brides contained several patrilineal kin groups or extended families. The village was the primary source of social identity; women married either within the village or their **hamulah**; preferably it was with a close relative, preferably the paternal cousin (**Ibn al amm**). Some also married outside the village of

Musharafah, men from the villages of Kobbar, Atara, Ab Qash, Tireh, Abu Falaah, Bir Zeit. The range of women's everyday social interaction, based on kinship, marriage and neighbourhood, was therefore limited to a cluster of neighbouring villages with adjoining land.

With marriage come more responsibilities, but also more authority with the first son. The older women gradually move to the head position in the running of the household. There is always emphasis on work, reputation and reproduction. There was obviously little privacy in the household, because of the size of the home and the time expected, due to chores, to be spent in the company of the other household members or neighbours. With the new homes and the piped water, private lives were constructed. There are no longer the outhouses shared by many, and women no longer do their ablutions or wash their bodies by the spring. Increased hygiene is respected and appreciated as a 'good thing' by most women, but traditions connected to the water spring still created tensions: this can be seen in Um Khaled's firmness in washing her granddaughter's hair with 'winter water'. While Samia insisted on the cleanliness and privacy of piped water, which she believes to be unconditionally superior to 'winter' or 'spring' water.

Going to the spring or having experienced fetching water from the spring are considered quaint traditions from the past by the young men, and 'backward' by young women like Samiha, who sees it as a threat to her independence. One of Um Kamal's grandsons, Omar, was getting married to Dalal, a girl from Ramallah who is a social worker. She had never experienced or seen women going to the water spring, while Omar remembers his mother and grandmother going to the spring. He is an engineer working in El Bireh and living with his grandmother, his mother, brother and sister, and uncle in Musharafah. Although they both live in the same part of the West Bank, and Musharafah is by car today not so far from Ramallah, still Dalal and Um Kamal's family had fundamentally different ideas as to the role of traditional practice in the marriage preparations. Dalal wanted to go alone with the groom to pick her ring, while Omar's mother and Um Kamal would not hear of it and were very upset; eventually Omar convinced Dalal that there were other more important rituals

which he would rather Dalal followed. Dalal wanted the celebration to take place at a hotel in Ramallah and "not in the middle of nowhere in the jebel"; this time she accepted that since they were going to move to Musharafah it was wise to include the village in the celebration.

Dalal invited me home to her parents to meet them and see what kind of background she came from: "You are a researcher; I want you to understand the values I am used to. I am a true Palestinian; I am a peasant at heart. We all are. But I am not an ignorant peasant, and I do not have peasant ways." For her being a peasant at heart was a question of national sentiments and love for the Palestinian crafts; she showed me what she had embroidered for her new home, and explained that she had started embroidering on them when she was ten years old.

Dalal brought out a collection which she had embroidered: a couple of table cloths, several framed images of the Palestinian flag, and two traditional dresses and belts. The pattern and the main colour, red, is a distinctive feature of Ramallah's traditional design. Another Palestinian rural ritual that she insisted on was that she and Omar, on entering their new home smear the mixture of earth and grass at the entrance to bring fertility and harmony. Yet, Dalal also talked about her anxiety to move to Musharafah, because she does not come from the village, and she was not used to living so far away. She was used to going out to restaurants with her girlfriends and shopping. She was also worried about snakes and scorpions in the village.

Omar and Dalal had celebrated their **khutba**, the engagement, the year before. The **khutba** is also referred to as the **shufa**, display. It is a celebration for the bride and her girlfriends. During the **khutba,** traditionally, the bride and groom are seated together for the first time. At the **khutba** the bride is given gifts by the groom, usually gold. These are gifts and are not part of the **mahr,** dowry.

During the preparations for the wedding, the mothers of the bride and groom were keen to talk about their weddings in the 30s and 40s, when they were girls. The descriptions of their wedding preparations and expectations were told with much humour, looking at each other knowingly and laughing. The transformation

from girl to married woman was part of strictly prescribed rituals, and they were looking forward to taking "this Ramallah girl to the Bir". ***Talat al bir*** was the ritual Dalal was most upset about. She had, after much persuasion, agreed to go through it, but she repeated many times that she found the undertones of the ritual crude and primitive.

Each stage in Dalal's marriage ritual marked the change in her identity and what was expected in the next stage. She told me that her mother and grandmother told her many times that marriage is no simple matter; she was made very aware that stepping into marriage meant responsibility and many concessions. Dalal knew that although she had an education, a good job and came from a relatively urban 'modern' home, "some things never change for women". She will be expected to carry the burdens of housework, and the pressures of having sons worried her. But, she looked forward to "becoming a real woman", starting a "grown up life" with Omar, and making decisions without consulting her parents.

The days before the actual wedding celebration many gifts were exchanged, in reality gifts started coming in to the bride and groom approximately two weeks before the betrothal day. The most popular gifts were dresses and jewellery, and these were not part of the ***mahr***, but for the bride to show off in. It was obvious that Dalal had the strong backing of a large and dominant ***'eswah***. She knew that her kin were her main security against unpleasant criticism from her husband or his family.

It was not only Dalal who received gifts; the groom secures the support of his brides family by giving gifts to her uncles and cousins. The gifts were meant to strengthen the family ties and enlarge the kinship network. This is different from the ***kisweh***, trousseau. The family during the ***zafah*** took the ***kisweh*** to the al ***kisweh*** (bride's father's home). Everyone was there to see what she got. But the ***zafah*** was and still is all about the groom and his family, as several said. The village was there to see how good and generous he was, and that his ***dar*** was happy about the match.

The wedding day began with a procession of the bride from her father's house in Ramallah to the groom in Musharafah; the **zafah** became a grand procession at the entrance of the village, and the bride was taken out of the car and placed on a horse. When she arrived at her husband's home, the groom, Omar, and his mother took her inside, and the celebration began.

A couple of days later we met the bride outside her home; she was dressed in a beautifully elaborate **taub** in red and carried a tray with cakes and sweets. She looked embarrassed and bothered by the number of women waiting outside singing and beating drums. She was given a jar with an olive branch by Omar's grandmother, Um Kamal, and we followed her down to the spring. Since the spring is not maintained, she was taken further down to the **wadi,** where there was water running after a couple of days of heavy rain. All of a sudden a discussion grew louder between Um Kamal and Um Khaled; they disagreed on whether Dalal should wash by the spring or only drink and fetch water back to the **dar**. Dalal refused to bath and drink "that filthy water", she said. Eventually, after much grumbling from the two old women, Dalal left the sweets by the spring to please the spirit of the spring and to bring happiness and fertility to her home. She filled the jar and carried it back to her home. A couple of days later during a visit to the newlyweds, Omar went up to his grandmother while his wife was in the kitchen and asked whether Dalal left the sweets by the spring "to make sure...", he smiled.

Family

Similar to men in other societies in the Middle East, the men in Musharafah have the formal social and political power within their extended families, and this, 'my' women explain, is "because we are Muslims". The spousal role which epitomises the family is rooted deeply in **al din** (I will presently define al din), that is being a good Muslim. This is a sociocultural classification of gender roles and is defined legally in religious expressions. Women socially and culturally are expected to carry out their duties and obligations to the approval of their spouses and the spouses' extended families. Traditionally, their spousal role is judged usually by the extent to which their husbands are content with them. The husbands' support of their spousal role performance, or lack of it, therefore determines their sense of well

being, since it may mean preserving a viable marriage or becoming divorced.

It is true that women lacked influence outside the **dar**, but they like to say that the issues of importance happened within the context of everyday life in the **dar**. Um Fathi, while obviously a very outspoken woman, suffered the constraints imposed on her because she is alone, with no male kin to care for her. Um Qays, on the contrary, is aware that she is well taken care of because of her **nasab**.

The old women have experienced the family's cushioning role in a contradictory manner: Kinship ties are good when they are there to help relatives carry their load together: they struggle together against oppression from the landlord, the English and the Jews. But kin are a curse when they always expect the wealthy one to provide for all the others and when women always have to struggle and suffer on behalf of the men, who are competing in the hierarchy of the family.

When the women say 'family', they are referring to the home they share with their husband, children, his parents, his unmarried sisters and brothers, and married brothers with their families. As we heard, one of the women shared the home with her husband's other wife and shared the chores. The family was the household, because the family was identified with the home – **dar**. Etymologically the **dar** is the house, but it is also the family, or the clan. For the sake of argument I will state that when they speak of the **dar**, it's for them what the **hamulah** is for the men. The **dar** is within their universe of the intense interactions of daily life, while the **hamulah** is lifted away or above by the men. **Hamulah,** as the women see it is concerned with the power division between the men, because they frequent the public domain which demands a positioning of alliances. The **dar** is concerned with the private domain where women have the chores and spend most of their time; this is not least a domain that women dominate information that men are dependent on for their alliances. At least, that was the rule when women still went to the spring to fetch water and exchange news, gossip and scrutiny.

Let me go back to the women's definition of ***hamulah****. Um Kamal told me:* "Hamulah is larger than dar. It contains more than twenty dar. Sometimes it has even thirty dar. In the village we have three hamulah: 'Ali, Abu Maryam, and Abu Flayyan". *She went on to explain that* ***hamulah*** *has always one grandfather, and this grandfather has several branches. Each branch sets up its own family.* "This means that several dar grow. Each dar has then its own grandfather. And these grandfathers are the connection to the founding father. One grandfather who created the hamulah, my ayla (family), is that of Abu Maryam; it is made up of twenty **dar**, and I am from dar Ali Abd Hamid. Following my marriage I became a member of dar Abdallah"

Obviously, the women have their own perceptions of the system of ***hamulah****, I have already indicated that during the mourning periods they spoke about the* ***hamulah****'s involvement, and yet it is interesting that they comment mostly about which* ***dar*** *a person comes from and not which* ***hamulah****. They did speak about the* ***hamulah*** *pressuring a marriage, meeting to conclude a marriage and participating at the celebrations. Nonetheless, when for example one of the women says that she comes from* ***Dar*** *Ali Abu Maryam , she is talking about what directly concerns her, that is her father's home, while if she had said* ***Dar*** *Abu Maryam, she would be referring the name of the* ***hamulah****. Then she told me she married into* ***Dar*** *Abdallah, her husband's home not his* ***hamulah****. Continuing on the same note, it seems that when we are told of the* ***hamulah*** *in a framework of rituals, it is a system which upholds a unity among a distinct group of people through their shared memory. That which they remember and which holds the group together is provided and transmitted as tradition based on common genealogy.*

This genealogical glue becomes an economic and political effort balancing a configuration of interests with the means of a forefather. Ideally, and if we were to follow in the established zones of researching the Arabs, the ***hamulah*** *in villages have more than just a common* ***hamulah*** *name: it is male, and it is linked to land, and honour within the* ***hamulah*** *is important. It's members also share honour and the same personality. Status and honour are linked to blood and acquired through a strengthening of common identity, which is visible during these*

events which require bonding, such as marriage agreements. It may be seen that it is essentially not only a question of the level of identity we find ***hamulah*** *and* ***dar,*** *but also of whose reality is involved and how the concepts are applied and maintained.*

We have seen that there is a difference between structures of families in the cities, villages and refugee camps. Dalal came from Ramallah where she lived in an apartment with her parents; the question of ***hamulah*** *did not concern her while* ***nasab*** *did, because that is much more useful in the city. In the refugee camps and villages there is still a much larger dependency on the extended family as the basis well being and welfare. Musharafah is a village going through a sort of transitional family structural where there is blend of extended and nuclear family, as in for example the home of Um Muhammed. They consist of sons and their families, unmarried aunts and one or two grandparents, with a growing majority of households headed by old females*

Everything is in the Hand of God

Religion is a force which expresses life and is the constant companion in their narratives. The women spoke about doing good; **fi sabil Allah**, - they *"know God"* - and hold that *"everything is in the hand of God"*. Um Muhammed has been blessed with the gift of healing, and Um Khaled reacts strongly to the mess the Jews and the returnees are making of God's nature. For the women the events of life are all 'written'; although they lament circumstance, **zaman**, they also know it is destiny and they can do nothing about it. There is a deep religiosity towards life and, at same time, a reaction to shattering the faith by outsiders.

In several narratives, the women speak of **din.** Faith and women's religious life is referred to as **din**, which is their gratitude, humbleness and submissiveness to customs and traditions endowed by God; uttered through **tawhid** - the expression of God as the sole creator - communicating that they, the women, are always aware of God's power. **Din** is the total way of life; it is the order which ties the

women with their creator in a lasting relationship, which will continue into the hereafter. Worshipping God covers the entire pattern of their existence; it is the sum of social life that forms and guides towards the pure pathway of faith.

In the narratives we have see that the basis and foundation of **din** lies in its guidance from God on how to organise the whole of their life on earth in consonance with the true reality of existence, which is the hereafter. Life based upon this principle generates felicity; it promotes the flourishing of all human capacities and potentials in a constructive balance that secures the enjoyment of all the benefits of life and the earth within their natural limits, without corruption or injustice. This submission and self-surrender creates the balance and is the stability. Turning away from the right guidance that should be the substance of the organisation of **din** opens the path for waste, corruption, and hence injustice in social existence. This should be seen in connection with the way they talked about **zulm**, injustice.

The elders find their guidance to **din** in the messages from God although they are illiterate.[14] It is a Muslim setting with rules concerning the public and private discourse at one end; these rules have implications of modest codes of conduct between men and women, where honour is embedded in negotiations of space. At the other end we have in Palestine a situation today where women head households; they are central in the grand discourse as the keepers of national heritage and mothers or grandmothers of martyrs. The years following the first **intifadah** and the **Al Aksa** intifadah are contested in the village: Um Fathi has her sons and almost all her grandsons dead, hiding or in prison; she is upset that family traditions are breaking up around her. Then there are the few young people in

[14] *Samiha is not included here.*

the village who were active in the first **intifdah** and have now joined Islamic movements which they believe challenge the PNA and conserve a more genuine Palestinian Muslim identity.

Life as lived is entrenched in Islam as the cultural category which gives meaning. Although most of the women are illiterate, they have heard verses from the **Koran** cited and have learned several verses by heart; they know the **Hadith**, and the power of God is part of their stories. The **Koran** is the literal word of God, the women say, and it is revealed by the Prophet Muhammed and recorded by his companions as he recited it. This uncontroversial, all embracing approach to their belief is universal; they share it with all other Muslim women, and it is unifying within their local community.

In their lives religion has come with its categorical commandments and its recommendations, and it shapes their fate and the ***zaman****. The* ***Koran****, I have said above, occupies the narratives, and it is not only embedded in the cultural, but also in the physical landscape and is expressed through popular piety. We have heard in the narratives the phrases* "everything is destiny", "it is all in His hand" *and how their faith is manifested in the area of emotions and response to their spiritual awareness. Listening to the women's narratives about* ***'ayn, khala, jebel*** *- their response to nature - we find also their experiences as Muslim dealing with the meaning of 'their' life. Islam for the women in Musharafah is a submission to a superior force, a sort of unity with God's creation, and it is also about being in the world by Divine force. They repeatedly said,* "the peasant was placed on earth to work the land and thank the Almighty".

Many times the women repeated that they strictly observe ***al arkan al khamsah****, the five pillars in Islam. Yet, it is in the cultivation of local, popular religious expression that the women deal with everyday worries and joys. This is based on knowledge of a world that is engaged by men and women who have a supernatural contact with God. There are shrines of both known and unknown saints, some are visibly marked others are just*

'known'. These are holy locations and they transcend ***baraka****, blessings. The good and evil forces are embodied in nature and manifest themselves in some people either as good such as in healers, who have the gift to heal others, or as evil such as in those who are obsessed with envy. Now, most people, the women told me are in between the good and the evil.*

Nonetheless, when a person is not evil, the 'evil eye' can sometimes take over, this is not always within individuals powers, and it is not always known to the individual that they are obsessed. The ritual of ***zar****, which is for example also practised in Egypt, is essentially a way of dealing with the powers of the* ***shaytan****, the devil. A couple of women knew about* ***zar,*** *but it is not performed in Musharafah. They said that when a woman experiences* "the devil close by", *she asks one of the women with* ***baraka*** *to help her. They go to one of the holy sites in the khala, to Ahmad Al Mushrif's tomb by the mosque or they recite the Koran together.*

Charms, such as stones, branches or plants are collected in nature, and they are also taken from individuals, for example strands of hair or pieces of clothes. Ceremonies are performed either individually or collectively, upholding a cosmological outlook or order in which formal Islam, like the five pillars, occupies an imperative but by no means absolute function. Saint worshipping strengthens and confirms the solidarity among what is still left of the women's network and stresses cultural perseverance. It is not so much saint preference as practical accessibility that decides from which saint the women seek the ***baraka****.*

Only a few of the women have been to Nabi Musa during the spring festivities, and even fewer have been to the Masjid al Aksa.. During the past years they have all shared the shrines in their area: they either go to the tomb of the ***wali*** *Ahmed al Mushrif, or to the others which are located to the north of the village. These last ones are piles of stones or a stick with bits of rags attached to it; they mark tombs of persons known for having performed miracles, but whose names are forgotten. The visits are often conducted alone, on a woman's way to herding, or*

during religious celebrations in the company of others. The many ***mulid****, larger celebrations, involved both men and women.*

In the month of ***Ayar****, spring, and depending on the means of each home, women went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of* ***Nabi Musa****, above the Jordan Valley. The celebrations are happy with singing and dancing:* "The women who can still move dance the dapka". *Children eat sweets and play. Sometimes the villagers just visit Nabi Saleh, because it is closer to the village, and especially lately few have been able to travel as far as the shrine of Moses, not far from Jeriko, due to the recent military closure. The women describe the shrine as a place that is dedicated to women:* "Like in your country. You are lucky you can visit Sayyida Zainab in Cairo", *I was told by Um Qays. The shrines are dedicated to men and women who have led saintly lives and are believed to offer blessings,* ***baraka****, to those who visit them and keep their promise to them.*

The shrines, like those in many other countries in the Middle East, are the most durable features in the rural women's native way of life. Most times, the women told me they visit outside local celebrations; sometimes they visit because they need assistance in affairs over which only God and the saints can help. Difficulties that are beyond their control are infertility, marriage and health. Musharafah, like other villages, cities and towns in Palestine, has also its own ***wali****. A village may have several* ***wali****, but Musharafah has one such guardian, Ahmad Al Mushrif. The* ***wali****'s shrine is located by the entrance of the only mosque in the village, and it is mostly the old women in the village who continue the tradition of leaving food for the needy by the shrine. And some told me they store their jewellery and money in or around the shrine, because they believe that others would not have the audacity to steal goods under the care of a* ***wali****.*

The observances of the old women form a parallel to their belief in ***Khala*** *as attached to the unconditional belief in God's will. Visiting and praying by the shrine are primarily female activities; these 'small' ceremonies involve an intense situation of communication with supernatural powers, that it is beyond the sphere of restraint by others.*

Although the visits are arranged in groups, the relationship itself and its performance, that is the prayers, lamentations and praises are based on the individual's state of mind. The ground surrounding the tomb of the ***wali*** *and the piles of stones are holy and demand respect; they are places of prayer, rest and closeness to the hereafter. It has become more difficult to worship outside the village core; on several occasions we were confronted by settlers around 'holy ground'.*

Saint-worship has generally diminished in recent times; young women are not interested, the elders say. They have succumbed to the combined onslaught of official Islam and what is perceived as a totally secular PNA; both, Islamic organisations and the PNA; have been capable of extending their authority into the marginal areas of ***al jebel****, meaning not only the hillside, but also the hinterlands. The women are sceptical to both the Islamic movements and PNA; instead they prefer to obey the five pillars and worship at the tombs and sites of local saints.*

The local saints and the ***wali*** *are able to cure physical ailments, and protect their wealth which the women hide nearby or below the* ***wali****'s sarcophagi. These holy sites create a miraculous ambience around their persons. They range from supernatural interventions down to such mundane but agreeable occurrences as the unexpected pregnancy of Um Hashim's daughter after fifteen years of marriage. Um Hashim is living alone with children scattered, as she says, all over; she was very distressed about her 'barren' daughter and promised to slaughter a lamb if her daughter got pregnant. Her prayers were heard, answered, and the lamb was enjoyed by many. Another good occurrence was when Abu Jihad did not get a taxi ride from Musharafah to Bir Zeit and later heard that the car crashed with a car of a Jewish settler. Um Jihad claimed that is was because she has donated several embroideries to the neighbouring refugee camp. The* ***karama****, grace, from the Divine are the ways in which God regulates life and fate, and the graces are told and repeated with joy.*

When women speak of Sett Um Muhammed or Um Awad there are clear indications that they have inherited certain ***baraka****. Their mothers, and their father's wives are buried elsewhere and their tombs have acquired mystical powers.* ***Baraka*** *may be*

transmitted through the bloodline, by means of designation, by visionary appointment, or by a combination of all three. Um Awad and Um Muhammed alluded to this by saying that "when God remembers them", their tombs might convey such powers. It is difficult to distribute such powers among several from the same family because "the strength diminishes", but since their kin are buried elsewhere in Palestine the portion of **baraka** will be more concentrated by the burial place close to their home in Musharafah.

The women are basic about religion: "It is the most important matter in our life". Beside their popular saint-worshipping, they also follow the "al Arkan al Khamsah", the five pillars. The **shahâda** is the first of the five **arkan**, or pillars in Islam, and the women bear witness to God and to his prophet often when they speak about their belief. The second pillar is **salat**, and they have always prayed and expressed gratitude to Him. They still pray on a regular basis in their homes, and also before and in between the hard tasks they remembered to pray "in the khala or at home". Because of the nature of their lives, they did not always have the possibility to wash thoroughly or change; some did not even have more than the garment they had on. But they did their best to always appear clean when they faced Mecca, and when they withdrew to pray, no one had the authority to interrupt "not even my husband or my mother - in - law", Um Qays said. She, like the other women, looked forward to these few minutes five times a day when there were no disturbances and demands. She could concentrate on thanking God and asking him for help to overcome the difficulties in her life. Because, a lot of their time was spent by the spring, it was often there they "praised God together with the other women", said Sett Um Mohammed.

The third pillar is the **saum**, fasting during the months of Ramadan. Even when they fetched water during the hot month of Ramadan, they did not drink a drop. They frequently talked about the importance of fasting during Ramadan and in being with other women during the fasting "we helped each other forget the thirst". They know that the Christians in the other village never smoke, drink or eat in front of Muslims during Ramadan; they, of course, have a much easier religion; it does not demand much from them. But they are very upset about some of the careless "youth and

professors" *who do not remember their traditions. Even when they were younger and* "were always with child", *they fasted, at least for a few days to keep a vow to God and to make sure that He gave them a son.*

The fourth pillar is ***zakat****, alms-tax, it's sharing with the poor and needy. Proudly, they tell of how the villagers were generous with each other* ***fi sabil Allah****, for the love of God they helped each other,* "if somebody had more they shared with the others". *The tradition of giving* ***fi sabil Allah****, and being generous is something they believe is typical of Palestinian village life and embedded in* ***'adat*** *and* ***taqalid****, they always said that peasants are generous people, and especially when there was a death in a family. The* ***azzah****, or the mourning ceremony, is especially a time of need. Mourning and visiting the family is a category of religious ritual which differs for men and women. Women receive mourners inside the home, and the* ***Koran*** *is recited; this is one of few occasions where they spoke about the role of the* ***hamulah****.* "We all observed our Muslim tradition of offering help and co-operated with each other, because we lived as a unit within the same *hamulah*. When a person died all the people in the village felt sorry and participated. The person was buried after he was washed and dressed, either in a common cemetery or near his own house. After the burial all the dar of the dead were invited to have a meal by another *hamulah* and then another dar invited the next day. This went on for three days. And the people of the village came to console the morning family for three days. We lamented and wept for a week. A widow went through the period of Hidad - it's a time without pleasure."

Death was a subject often spoken about when the question of religion came up. My field notes were taken and impressions were received during a time of extreme turmoil and in the years following the first intifadah of 1987. The context was one where men and boys were put in prison or killed, and women were killed in their own homes. "To understand the issue of death you will have to understand that death is the only reality in people's lives today", *the Palestinian archaeologist Faida Abu Ghazalah, who accompanied me several times on fieldwork wrote to me in an electronic mail:* "It is what people experience every single day,

either personally in their own family or they hear about it. It means that everyone has a feeling that he or she will die at any moment - and that they will die for no obvious reason. All through the intifadah, many women were killed in their houses. They have tried, like all mothers do, to protect their children from the Israeli bullets and attacks. But sometimes they are also killed, because for the Israelis there is no difference. Another reason is that every day we experience at least two or three funeral; many of them have been those of small children and some of them are young and others are old; there is no difference between the people. And with every funeral the woman in Palestine thinks about the girl, boy, woman or man who is killed; it could be her daughter, son, sister, brother, husband, relative or friend".

Abu Ghazalah goes on to write: "This is not all; danger is not only when people go out of their homes; danger could be just outside your door; you never know exactly when you will be a target. Travelling from one village to the other, or within the one village itself, also reflects immediate danger. Settlers are all around; military is surrounding civilians, and planes are dropping bombs. It is very difficult to explain the deep feeling that accompanies Palestinian's daily lives. You never know when you will see each other alive again. At the same time, some think that being at home is safer. But they do not know whether their neighbour is the next one to be attacked, or if they will be the next victim. Remember" *she went on,* "with guns, tanks and aeroplanes all over, you inevitably start to dream about war and death around you. Musharafah is in area 'B', and here the Israelis like to keep up a continuous bombardment. The only explanation the women have is their religion, it does not go away. The women sit with people, and everybody discusses only news, stories from the newspapers and television; conversation is all around death and tragic events. Even when they decide to switch off the television, or radio, their neighbours, friends, and family are in one way or the other suffering. It could be calm in one area, but there could be serious trouble in an area where their family or friends live. Here they start worrying again, and again - there is no end". *(p.c.4.7.2001)*

The women in Musharafah explained that without **al din**, that is all aspects of religion and religious observance, they would only face a painful reality, a truth that the peasants wake up to everyday. They explain that when the subject of death, and imprisonment is present in their lives all day and night there is nothing else to think about. What they are confronted with is truly war: "People are in war even within themselves", said Um Hashim. God according to the women, made them stronger than men; this always gives them the ability to sometimes laugh, even in times of hardship. But they quickly explain that one must not laugh too much because of the evil eye: "if sometimes we forget and laugh too much, then we have to remember something bad, so that nothing bad happens - it is the 'eye' you know". . They know that "when God remembers me, he will be good with me, because I have always served Him," Um Hassan says.

To be a Muslim, they say, is also to believe that it is the 'Hereafter' that is true. "When God remembers them", as the women say when they refer to death indicates that they do not view death as final. Death, they know is an inevitability of life, and it is a transition from this world to eternity. And, they frequently said, "the purpose of life is to prepare us for the day of judgement". In Musharafah, the villagers hope to be nearby at the time of their loved one's death; to mourn, to prepare the body for burial, and to bury or visit the dead during **mulids** to read the **Fatiha** and tend the grave. The villagers in Musharafah have during the past years witnessed the destruction of their graves, many are not allowed to bury their dead in family or village cemeteries because either the 'Jews' have dug them up for settlements or the places are considered a security risk by the State of Israel. Finding a burial site where their loved ones can be questioned by the two Angels is a problem villagers are constantly faced with. The problem of the destruction of Palestinian family and village burial sites, hence the eradication of historical and cultural documentation, is an urgent issue which should be researched more in depth.

The fifth pillar is the **haj** to the central sanctuary in Mecca; this was and still is limited to the rich who were also limited in number. "Religion is part of the Palestinian heritage, it is our custom", the women regularly said. The religious feelings were

stronger before than today. This was especially seen in the relationships between family, neighbours, how the young were with the old, and how the old were with the young. Women and men prayed systematically and followed all religious rituals. The ***haj*** was for the rich. No one in Musharafah was rich enough. The ***haj*** was time consuming: "it took about two months to reach Mecca. The pilgrims used camels and went in caravans. They celebrated with religious songs and prayers all the way to Mecca. When they came back there was a big welcome for them. I have never been to Mecca, and I pray that I will one day do my duty. But now no one can go anywhere; we don't have money and the Jews control our lives," *Sett Um Muhammed.*

Musharafah has a reputation among 'outsiders' of having many non-observant Muslims; as indicated earlier the village is branded as the 'red village'. The old women got very distressed when I asked about how they felt about religion in the village; they saw an obvious worsening of morals. On the contrary, a number of the academicians and younger people told me proudly that this was one of the few villages where girls and boys were seen dancing traditional dances together at weddings. In Musharafah, young men were seen smoking openly before ***iftar*** *(breaking of the fast), during the month of Ramadan, and there were no veiled girls or young women in Musharafah. The older women have a traditional head scarf covering their head.*

Chaotic lives

The reader has seen how the women struggle with husbands, mothers-in-law, children or the lack of male children. But we also realise that they put their trust in God and that, although their life is further aggravated by today's political turmoil, they maintain their belief in Divine mercy.

Today several of the village women live in a situation where households are without men. This is a result of the civil unrest of the intifadah, a condition which is described by several women as turning "life upside down", *events which have complicated life. The direct consequences of men migrating are obvious in Musharafah: with their departure, the women are faced with loss of labour power, and variable material resources. The women are also faced with the strain of being alone without a male head of*

the household. Remittances are not always reliable. Um Qays, who still speaks fondly of her husband, has not been receiving any help from him for several years.

Um Fathi, searching for some light in the chaotic affair of the intifadah, says that at least it's not under Hamas. She is very definite in her dislike for Hamas, arguing that also the illiterate peasant women are influenced by all the "communist talk". Samiha, who is much younger than Um Fathi, was proud of the village's communist sympathies; these she believes helped liberate the women in Musharafah.

For Um Fathi the intifadah marked a civil movement, independent of the PNA, which is a male bastion. And this is positive. Yet, it also involved more suffering for those old women who live alone and whose lives have become even more difficult with constant 'Jewish' aggression. She does agree that the intifadah, has brought with it a movement towards more freedom for young Palestinian women, but it has also blown life into Islamic military groups. Several women exchanged stories about young people they knew who had joined Hamas at the University of Bir Zeit, and the university is not far from the village.

During the initial years of the intifadah, the nationalist duty for women involved creating a solid and supportive home for their husband and children. The movement also made it clear that women had to produce children to populate and fight the occupation. With time and increased violence, death and desperation, women are taking over the traditionally male position of heading the family. In Musharafah the men are either serving time in Palestinian or Israeli prisons, have been killed or have emigrated; this has left the women alone to provide for the family members who are left by earning a wage and acting as the head of the household. The more privileged ones have a son or daughter who provides for them financially; otherwise the women depend on charity.

CHAPTER FIVE:

WOMEN, WATER AND LANDSCAPE

A girl who stayed in the kitchen, drawing water from the tap, would never get married. *Hassan Fathy,* Architecture for the poor.

In this chapter the attention shifts from the social construction of women, which I reflected on in Chapter Four, to what the narratives more specifically say about water. Here the perspectives are on water in terms of the women's experience with the changes in water use, and moreover in terms of broader issues of how water is connected to the women's notions of landscapes. The narratives we heard in Chapter Three speak about the physical landscape surrounding the village and describe the various water points in that landscape. Moreover, the women's narratives reveal various metaphorical levels in which 'their' landscape plays a part. First there is the landscape as a symbol of the Palestinian nation and heritage, hence their own positioning within that nation. These women spoke of Divinity in the landscape, the religious context of the landscape, that is their place in the 'order of things' – "everything is destiny". *But let me start with water itself.*

Water and well-being

The women are forthright in saying that water in the home, piped water, is a "good thing". *They 'know' about hygiene, the connections between dirt and sickness. They also know that piped water is what prosperous people have. They also 'know' that, had the economic and political situation been different, perhaps piped water would have contributed to their well-being. But life took an unexpected turn. The women's assessments and reflections on their material condition since the installation of water conclude that with the advent of pipes they are faced with more unexpected trials. In the narratives the women pointed to the price of water, saying that not only was water priced but it was, in fact, not always accessible. And the accessibility of water in the pipes is mirrored in the price of fruits and vegetables, which are vital in* "in a healthy diet", *they told us.*

Furthermore, the old women were sceptical of the young experts who come from donor offices to carry out appraisals in

Musharafah. They do a survey of the needs in the village. The health workers recommend clean water and the women agree that hygiene is "a good thing", but they are also concerned that the engineers who plan the installations do not understand or realise, that water in taps is of no help if they, the women, are living alone most of the year and are dependent on sporadic help from kin or charity from neighbours. "Water was free for all", several said. And we must not forget, they said, that "much goodness comes from the jebel"; this is lost in the clear tap water.

The outspoken Um Khaled says specifically in that having to pay for water makes it difficult to follow a healthy diet; "We cannot grow vegetables without worrying about the bill. Today we cannot use tap water from the Shirka (company) to water the garden; it is too expensive, so we go to the market, and there the vegetables and fruits are not always good, and they cost money. In years when there is little water in the tap, the vegetables are too expensive to buy, so I do not buy any, and I feel sick. You know vegetables and fruits watered with water from the jebel are healthy - it is the best thing for you". Giving me cup of tap water, Um Khaled asks me to smell it "it smells medicine". So, the small parcels, which she and other women have kept by their homes, are watered with the 'winter' water. Until recently, some women still went down to the **'ayn**, but the homes are not close to the springs and the young women "think they are too important to walk with us old peasants", so the walk is too far and the 'settlers' are violent. But, Um Khaled repeated what the women regularly said "we miss being close together".

One of the first families to move out of the old village and to the 'new' Musharafah was Abu Ali's family. They moved before the installation of water, and the others followed when it was clear that homes were going to have piped water. Within a couple of years a Jewish settlement was built on the highest point above the village, so women fetching water in jars faced the risks of confronting settlers who patrol the areas close to the water springs. Irrigation is a different matter; it is still much easier to use the overflow of water in winter and spring to water the olive trees and the few crops still cultivated by a couple of families.

As mentioned earlier, I was 'surprised' with the profusion of information which the transition from the spring to the faucet gives about the women's life world and what is significant in their lives. Fetching water involved more than just daily work; it secured a way of life, and furthermore it involved negotiations between women about how to deal with that way of life. We will see that lives in the village are not spun from the same threads, and there are no ready and clear answers. There is the story of Sett Um Muhammed, of Bedouin origin, who enjoys speaking of her achievements as a healer and mid-wife; she curses the health workers who were so keen on piped water, making it difficult for her to carry out her work. Then there is Um Qays who has a strong **nasab**, lives with one son and whose other sons visit frequently Um Fathi, who lives alone, and rarely gets any help from her kin, was at the head of the demands made from the village for the installation of water, yet today she wonders if it was a good thing. Um Khaled is a strong believer in preserving the Palestinian landscape and not cutting it up with pipes, and Um Jihad, who lives with her family and has enjoyed a materially secure life, laments the life that revolved around the fetching of water.

While all these lives have been different and experiences vary, they are not fragmented. The women share similar threads of reasoning, reflections on circumstances, and understanding of cultural rules. So that when Sett Um Muhammed or Um Khaled grieve over the loss of the spring and Um Fathi curses the intifadah, the other women have no difficulty understanding what they are actually talking about. It is not so much the loss of the spring - after all, they also see the benefits of piped water, and it was not the ideology behind the intifadah - also they want the liberation and sovereignty of Palestine. It is more about the unintended consequences which are an outcome of or connected in time to the introduction of piped water in Musharafah, and which are the concern of all the women I have spoken to.

The wife of the feudal landowner, Um Ibrahim, also shares the reminiscences of life around the water spring and the apprehensive response towards the first intifadah. Perhaps the clearest example of contradictions, conformity and divergence in the women's assessment of life before and after the piped water

is the story of Um Ali and her youngest sister, who is in her fifties and has "scandalised the village". *Um Ali is a self-respecting matriarch who is proud of having done all her duties as wife, mother and daughter-in-law; Samiha, on the other hand, rejects many of the values Um Ali honours. Yet, also she maintained that piped water affects a totality of women's life in the village and that developments in Musharafah do not include those women who are alone or who do not have the means to benefit from material progress.*

"Everything was in the khala..."

The women share a past spent working, moving, talking, joking, singing and crying in the ***khala****, for now translated as landscape. Several remembered well how long it took to walk to the spring and how tiresome it was. It is only ten years since Um Khaled fetched and filled water from the spring. She did not have a donkey; only a couple of lucky women had permission to use the family donkey to fetch water. Yet, she was more free, healthier and happier than what she believes young people are today.* "Everything was in the khala. The homes were small - animals walked in and out; they were more important than us women. The khala was our place of rest". *They had a certain space when they reached the water and could wait for their turn to fill the* ***jarra*** *or* ***calla****; the collective spring was an arena for all manner of other interests and purposes which we hear about in their stories. Water from the spring is a dense symbol for interactions, which are lost. These are the culturally mediated experiences and descriptions that it make easier for us to understand the perceptions involved in the poetics of water, and what the resource is made to represent.*

So as better to grasp the complexities, constructions and agencies associated with recollections of fetching water from the spring and going over to using piped water, we need to explore the cultural categories which the women connect to water. Two such framework for all things 'traditional', cultural categories and connections need to be expanded on as the: family life - which involves their place as daughters, wives, daughters-in-law, mothers, and mothers-in-law - and religion, ***Din****. In the narratives we heard about hardships and endurance, and we glimpsed the constraints which the women emphasise, yet at the same time*

the narratives presented the contradictions which are a part of the reality of the circumstances of everyday life. The main reality is that many women live alone and have done so for most of their married life.

Even though the women did take the initiative to have piped water in the village, and it was they who celebrated the installation of piped water, their water discourse is not about the comforts which piped water brings to the home. The narratives show that the women's water discourse is about what is lost and not about what is gained. They lament the loss of the *"togetherness"* between families and neighbours, the *"goodness"* which women shared, the *"taste"* of fruits and vegetables cooked with spring water, and the beautiful *"colour"* of that water. We need to consider that water is not just the resource fetched for the survival of the household; there is also the poetics of fetching water, which interprets and grasps the world. In narratives we shall see that when the women speak of water they speak of many other issues and emotions which are linked to fetching water.

On my trips to the spring or when the women were inspecting their cistern or well, they pointed to the water or scooped up water saying that 'winter water' or 'rain water' is *"redder"*, *"more yellow" "more bitter"* and has *"more froth"* than piped water. They are slow in describing and explaining, and their conversation is followed with acknowledgements to the Divine powers. They use traditional village dialect and speak of the mythical qualities of water: water is **nabiyya**, which means it is spring water and it therefore contains qualities which result in fertile soil, *"the soil is tayyib"*. Their cognition is merged with the **khala**. The most valued water is spring water. In villages where the springs are dry or in Israeli controlled areas, cistern water is considered best. From my experiences in the villages, talking to the older women, the models of managing water are merged with their role in the household. There is a connection between principles or models used about water and the entangles of village life.

The landscape referred to here is a blend of nostalgic images of Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel and what peasants recognise as still open space. ***Khala*** *involves the*

mountain's nature: valleys, the trees, the terraces, the fields, the earth and the water. It is the rough country that is God's creation before the peasants ploughed parts of that sacred place, but they did so under divine guidance. It is particularly here that the women speak of their knowledge and where the tension lies between their emotions towards 'their spatial physical landscape' and an outsider's approach to that nature and landscape. **Khala**, old women explained means "ard maftuha", that means opened land/earth. Um Khaled, said that land, or rather earth, is opened, that a landscape is not built on but is open space in all directions. It is God's land, and therefore it is also divine. It was common among the women in Musharafah to say that to "walk about" in the **khala** is like "walking in God's paradise on earth". As **fellaheen**, peasants, the women know it is the right thing to do when they cherish and tend to the land, because it through love of the land that they show their belief in and gratefulness to God.

Lexically the concept of **khala** means wilderness or open space. The landscape of Palestine as a whole is for them **khala**, and for the village women who have been "out there fi al khalah (in the khalah)" all their life it is the symbol of their Palestinian rural identity and the heritage they wished their children would pass on their children, it is what being a Palestinian **fallah**, peasant, is all about. It is, they said many times, the authentic Palestinian way of life. The women believed that the only proper and fitting way of living and behaving is to go back to tending the land and water, hence revering God. Evidently the concept is closely related to land and is therefore loaded with emotions concerning the loss of their land to colonisers, occupiers, and feudal landlords. The feeling for the land is attached to belief and a clear criticism of the younger generation's lack of religiosity. **Khala** is therefore a concept strongly linked to historical events and cultural categories referring to customs and values, but also to the physical nature of the mountains surrounding the village.

Khala belongs to the village's open mountain landscape, **jebel**. It is part of the negotiation of space between men and women, informing each of their domain. So fractions of the landscape belong to the private sphere of everyday life, that is the locations where women wander doing their tasks, and this is the area where they spent most of their time. Regulated everyday chores

take place in the **khala**, which is good and positive; this order is destroyed when the landscape is changed, and life becomes chaotic. The **Jebel** is "difficult", they said, and yet it is full of "khayr (goodness)". The ground in the **jebel** is rugged; the weather is mostly harsh, and life was difficult, but "the land and water are close to heaven".

We have heard in the narratives that the **khala**, gives the women their link to the village environment and explicates the tautness that exists between the elders and the colonising power, returnees and the young in the village. Within today's constant confrontations with outsiders, it is they, the women, who are distinctively and faithfully peasants and who represent and unify the 'true' Palestinian timeless culture of the people. The notion of **khala** evokes a deep understanding between the women as they articulate what they have lived through in their past and where they believe things went wrong. The village settlement is they say, in a specific area that imposes its own rules on its people, and they have lived for generations witnessing processes and events in that landscape.

The women are clear in pointing out that the true experiences of Palestinian values take place in the in the **khala**, and there are traditional peasant working clothes, **taub**, in which to do that kind of work. A peasant, they said many times, is a woman walking with her head held high and back straight. She, the peasant, is either by the side of her husband digging, harvesting, or carrying fuel or water on her head. She does all this with a child in her stomach, one on her hip, another one holding the end of her **taub**, and the older children helping out: "a peasant is either going, coming or doing work", said Um Jihad. The best time, they tell us in their narratives, is when they gossip (**kharafu**) in peace by the water spring; the **khala** around the spring is always fertile and peaceful. Several women felt sorry for the young ones who lack Palestinian experience. Abu Jihad talked often about the Palestinian **fellah** and **fellaha**, that is the male and female peasant, saying that the new generation is not so fortunate as to have lived and worked with real Palestinian values.

At the heart of the usage of **khala** is the designation of tasks that were necessary in controlling the needs of the household. The

coming of piped water, and also electricity, redefined the rules and norms of space. The identification of people with landscape was created or produced by social relations based on that specific area of experience, which is emotional and physical. It shaped the women who had it as their place of doing chores; it affirmed their existence. The women's reality, their realm, was above all related to the home and the children. In Musharafah, their narratives tell us, the definite organisation of space is clearly articulated in the women's (and men's) networks of social relations and understanding. Within their frontiers for permissible movements women were active producers of defined spaces outside the four walls of the home. These locations were part of their domestic working area, and they remained so as long as the chores the women were doing were vital for the village, for their family production and reproduction. Also, this space remained open to women as long as men were not part of that space or did not claim it as only theirs.

The village springs

Sett Um Muhammed whom we have already met was of Bedouin origin. And during my first weeks in the village she taught me to look for the fine distinction between 'villages of herders' and those 'of farming'. Both are **fellaheen**, peasants, she told me, but their primary use of nature differs slightly. Now Musharafah is different, Sett Um Muhammed argued, due to the nature of the surrounding landscape: to survive, both animals and crops are important. Because water is piped and the spring water is taken over by the 'Jews', the desertification or bareness of the landscape increases, which means that herding is difficult, and that water has to be paid for because it is centralised and piped. Hence, keeping up a cultivated parcel is difficult. These women who told us their stories, insist that the spring is not as full of water as it used to be before the piping of water because the water is "stolen from us and put in pipes" instead of being available for all out in the **khala**. The women raise the issue of quality of life in relation to the degradation of natural elements and the impact this has on the diet of the village. The lack of walking to fetch the water from the springs has degraded the health of the village.

Coping with what was expected from them as peasants is characterised as always having been a woman's struggle to satisfy the village. Yet the women frequently added that life also used to be full of goodness, because the nature of the landscape was an integral part of living. Everything needed to survive had to be managed, organised and produced in the village. Water was the key to that survival, because without water neither humans, animals nor plants grow. The aridity in Musharafah is visible, especially in summer. This is especially obvious because of the nature of the ground, and the way the first rainwater in winter is rapidly drawn into the thirsty soil. Therefore it was vital for the women to fetch water from the spring and collect what there was of what they referred to as rainwater and store it. Here they had a command of specific knowledge of the landscape; they knew how much water they had to use on their households and how much was needed to sustain the crops and the animals.

The women spoke of two springs. The village water was from the stream that passed through the **wadi** and from a spring to the east of the village. They depended on rain and the flow of winter water down from the higher ridges for watering their crops. The flow came from several nearby sources, among them **'ayn Sinya** passed **wadi balat**. **Bir Rommani** is the place north of the village, and the name indicates that the Romans build it. But the oldest women claim that the Bir was dug by the Turks and that the British rebuilt it later because they were thinking of creating a Jewish settlement in its place. **Bir Rommani** had two taps and was used regularly by the women.

The second main spring is **talat al bir**, because it is the spring the young brides walked to in procession - some call it **'ayn al balad** - and is located east of the village built the British. It has only one tap. The women used this spring and it is associated with several childbirths, and 'bride-assessments' by mothers, and "bride-watching" by sons. The water flows down from **Wadi** Kober. The women here disagreed as to whether the springs were still in use or not. There is still water there, but the settlers patrol the area and the women fear them.

There is a village legend of a tragic death of a young woman attached to this spring **talat al bir**: the women say they often met

a ghost at dawn and dusk. This was the spirit of a young woman killed by her cousin. It seems she was seen with a British soldier and was planning to run away with him. But she was betrothed to her cousin, and he felt that his honour was compromised by the rumours. Young unmarried girls used to go together, with the pretext of fetching water, to ask the dead woman's advice on marriage, especially if they were forced to marry someone they disliked. The legend says that she was of great beauty and hated the ugly cousin she was supposed to marry. She was, however, not killed by the spring: She came there because it is said that it was by the spring she first saw the British soldier, and by the spring she was happiest.

In Musharafah the women say that it was after the war of 1967, or as it is referred to among the Arabs ***al naksa****, that the shape of their agriculture and trade with other villages changed, especially their contact with Gaza. The 'Jews', took control and ruined the backbone of the village - that is landholding, production of fruit and vegetables and the market. They did so by building settlements on the paths that once were open between the villages in the West Bank and Musharafah and the connections between Musharafah and Gaza. By 1980 several young Palestinians were working abroad, and the new economy in the village made it in many ways possible for the peasants to move from a subsistence level of economy, where they depended only on the harvest of their land, to a market economy based on the revenues from all those working outside the village. Through revenues and local taxes they established new public services, such as the supply of electricity and piped water. But the political situation changed, and the village suffered economic difficulties which led to more young people leaving and to an increasing number of female headed households unable to meet the demands of a market economy.*

As in the rest of the region of the West Bank, also in the village of Musharafah, it is apparent that this is a place of dry farming, and large areas have to remain uncultivated because of lack of water. The peasants made it clear that some areas were and still are not cultivated; "This is God's creation", *the women often said. Due to the obvious bareness of the hills, there are large areas of pastures, but the Israeli government today expropriates them. In*

spite of the fact that the village is in an area of rocks and aridity, with small shrubs on which goats and sheep can feed, the expropriation makes grazing very complicated and at times impossible; this is because the area, left for the Palestinian rural and nomadic communities is overgrazed and eroded. Peasants maintain that the 'Jews' lack vision and understanding for the workings of nature. They do not abide by the rules set by the environment: each section of nature has its uses, some for cultivation, others for pasture. Respecting those rules means that the products "of the earth" as the women said, are of better quality. Otherwise, "people waste more and throw rubbish all over the khala".

This form of controlling areas and, therefore, villagers' movements, has increased since 1998; the shepherds are simply kept back by the army and the settlers. When the Israeli army closes off the area, as they do at times if the area is on top of a hill, they guard it while it is cleared for a settlement. For the villagers it does not matter which government is in power in Israel; they are all active in the spreading of Jewish settlements. Sarah Graham-Brown quotes from the Labour government's master plan before 1977, illustrating the Israeli policy of colonisation (Graham-Brown 1984, p.174) ... utilisation of available groundwater resources, the clearance of slums and refugee camps, the improvement of inland and air communications, development of the tourist potential of the area for the benefit of the entire country, the development of the periphery of Samaria and Judea so that it may become integrated with the rest of the country (Graham-Brown 1984, p.174). It is clear that there has been a plan to populate the West Bank with Jewish families and businesses.

According to the villagers "the Jawhud are not stupid, they make sure their people can get land and water easily. They started off in the Jordan Valley and then they moved into our land and built houses on our jebel and took our rain". Nevertheless, the Jews, as I indicated earlier, are perceived as ignorant of nature, and this is seen as due to their lack of knowledge of Palestinian nature and natural resources. The Palestinian villagers maintain that "every time they (Jews) see a jebel they build on it, so that they can look down on us". Such a situation strongly affects the

villager's ability to produce their personal dairy products, an advantage that is critical when bearing in mind the increasing village poverty and the proximity to other market places.

I have already mentioned that foreigners sometimes did live near the village of Musharafah. These were not among the decision makers: they were missionaries, scholars or teachers. It is apparent from the British surveys of the settlements from the 1920s and 1930s, that the highlands were not included in the studies. The Jordanians tried to also carry out a survey, but according to a professor at the University of Bir Zeit, only 35% of the area in the hilly West Bank was registered. This area still suffers from lack of reliable land registration. The same professor used as an example the point that many of the peasants farm land to which they have no official or formal legal proof of ownership.

The Israeli policy and Zionist project based on restriction, expropriation and occupation have had serious consequences for the villagers' access to water springs in the surrounding landscape. As the women in the village see it, all this began with taking away the land that was by the springs that they used. Letting the settlers wander around with arms in the area was and is perceived as a danger by the villagers, and the women are afraid of them.

When the village finally got piped water, the villagers were relieved at the start, because it meant they did not need to go where the Jews were. But the tap water proved problematic, because a company regulated it, and the women had no knowledge concerning its availability. This water cost money, and the taps were dry in summer, and the women had no longer the possibility of going to the spring. "Before our eyes" the women say, their world "turned upside down, and we could not use expensive water to keep up the garden, and buying vegetables costs also money. If an old woman is alone she has no money; she depends on the kindness of her neighbours – it is a shame". As Hanan Al Ashrawi in her lecture at "The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance" (August 28, 2001), argues, the need is to lift the veil, to examine the facts themselves, and to come to grips with the

horrific price paid by an innocent nation for the mere fact of its existence. With this Ashrawi is pleading for awareness for the total degradation of another people's existence.

Without their water the villagers in Musharafah explain, their village will perish like so many other villages in Palestine. With the increasing construction around the village, the women feel that all their water will go to the 'Jews'. Just above the home of one of the women is the Israeli settlement of Atteret, with its imposing water tower. This is in contrast to what the old peasants believe is the location or place of (and for) water - on ground level. Water is the limiting element in agricultural production; so when the peasants are planning to plant summer vegetables, water in this context means also the preservation of moisture. The women refer to this method of watering as giving the earth the quality of **Reibiyya,** which in their local language refers to earth that has a softness. **Reibiyya** is a local word that the young people in the village did not know and which the old women had to describe in other words. They used adjectives such as soft, moist, and mild. So when the ground is soft, water and soil are interrelated. The soil in Musharafah, they say, is receptive to rain and stores the water in the root zone. The problem is that the piped water, which they are expected to use, does not have the same 'consistency'; it is hard and does not retain the moisture; also as I have indicated several times, piped water is not free.

One way of solving the problem of little water has been to plough the earth. This, they said is effective way of moisturising the earth, because the narrow openings retain water, while if water was left on flat ground it evaporates faster. There is a Palestinian proverb 'my' women used to explain the reasons for tilling the ground: "If you till the earth twice, you have watered it once." However, limitations imposed on the peasants regarding not only land and water use but also movement has made such an alternative difficult. With occupation, the women say that also the markets they depended on have changed; today people go to shops to buy what they need, and with the unstable political situation markets have become more rare. Israel has offered a labour market that was attractive under such market conditions, and with the combination of restricted land and water, restricted

movement and the diversion of labour, the rural agricultural traditions are difficult to keep up.

Although a few women still plough the earth, it is hard work they said, because they do not have "the strong arms" they used to have when they were younger. Today they need help, Um Qays explained, "but everybody is sitting behind a desk, and nobody wants to work the land. It is a shame." The village of Musharafah today has too few young people to help in ploughing and keeping up the land. But in spite of the difficulties, the old women still manage to harvest their gardens and farms on a modest scale, and most of them have moved their gardens to their homes. This, they explain, is resilience.

The management of water and land is about the cycle of planting, watering, harvesting and shepherding. Water for agriculture depended on fifty to sixty days of rain during the year. For as long as the oldest women in village can remember that water was meant for the crops and to cover the household needs of thirty households during the months when there was little water in the spring. They describe the cycle of water by beginning with the first winter rain – **wasm**; but because the village is at relatively high altitude, the peasants preferred to plant **'afir,** that is before the rains, because the cold affected the crops. The end of November and December was a time to plant wheat and barley, followed by broad beans. The period after the winter rain is called the **reiyy**, and that is when the peasants planted onions, garlic and potatoes. The practice was to exploit the night dew at the beginning of spring to plant the tomatoes, cucumber and watermelons. By May most of the planting ceased, and the summer months were harvest time.

Rain is still today the source of water for these small gardens and the olive trees, which depend only on the winter rains. The rains in the mountain are believed to have a quality referred to as **nabiyya**. This is a concept that Palestinian geographers explained is used to describe the water which is from a spring, yet, as indicated above the women in Musharafah used it also in contrast to water that is piped. Such water is "from heaven" they said, which means that it flows with a purpose of bringing

goodness. This is a quality, the women said which is not found in the lower areas like Gaza.

Managing household water involved communicating with other women from other parts of Palestine, because the ceramics and the jars were often bought from the women in the village of Jib. The women in Musharafah traded their dried figs for the Jars from Jib; "Musharafah was known by all for its figs and grapes". As indicated earlier, the old village still shows traces of the fig trees and grapevines, and with olives these were the crops which the villagers traded and which the village was proud of. The women from Jib took the dried figs with them to Gaza and traded them for wheat. With such trade the women in the villages exchanged news and stories.

Life in Musharafah has always been rougher, and the people work more, the women told me, while in Gaza life was easier; they have flat, easy land and the sea, so people are not as hard working. They added that naturally the women, like themselves, also have to work all the time. The old women often spoke of "a funny story from Gaza", and this story shows, they told me, the differences between the people from the **jebel** and the people from Gaza.Um Fathi liked to tell it this way: "Peasants in Gaza are called Egyptians. They have an easy life. Not today, but before they are near the sea and Egypt and can fish all the fish they need. They also have sheep and goats, so they eat meat and cheese. Orange trees and all other fruits are in Gaza". Now this is the setting for the story about the old sheikh who lived with his four wives. The sheikh was rich and very fond of his wives, children and food. His favourite fruits were the figs from the mountains. Everytime an old wife died he married a younger one. So it was always the youngest one who came to Musharafah for the figs. And the wife told them in Musharafah that when she arrived back in Gaza the sheikh - here Um Fathi laughed - would lie on cushions, eating figs and being fanned by his youngest wife - "thinking he was Harun el Rashid". So in Musharafah when the women boased about their figs they said that "they are good enough for the sheikh in Gaza".

"Water like the rooster's eye".

*A spring is called **'ayn** in Arabic, and the peasants say that one must never forget that the springs in the landscape, **khala**, are the eyes of Palestine. When they were prosperous and used the spring water "*the 'ayn was sparkling. Just like the rooster's eyes". *But since the **nahkba**, the water has been gradually taken over by the 'Jews' living there. The women in Musharafah are obliged to pay for the piped water which they either cannot afford to use or do not have during the long months of summer. The water in the **'ayn** according to the old women in the village is made up of masculine and feminine water, so there is a blend of sweet and bitter taste. The dominant taste should be the bitter one, because such water brings males; if the water is too sweet the family has a majority of girls. The **'ayn** water originates from the **wadi**, and the **wadi** is the opposite of the desert. In the desert, water is* "is very deep down, and only some plants can reach down to that water", *I was told, while in Musharafah the water comes from the **jebel*** "and we can reach the water".

*The **'ayn** which the women used is water that is collected in a relatively open basin or runs down the valley along a narrow canal. Yet the women also mentioned a couple of narrower springs which resemble wells, but it has been several years since there was any water there. These wells are ancient, the women said; they believed the wells belong to the time when the **keniseh**, that is the old ruins of the church in the village, was built. The Christians lived in Musharafah before, the old women explained; they have these wells mentioned in their holy book,* "so we take care of them", *Um Husein explained once on our walk to the **'ayn** with Um Fathi.*

*Now, fetching water was a shared past, because it took so much of their time: to walk and wait together. The households, both that of the landlord and their own, depended strongly on the women's administration and storing of water and on their ability to do this together, without tension. In the village of Musharafah the water was fetched in the **jarra** or **calla**, and these are balanced on the head. The **jarra** is a large clay water jar, and the **calla** is a kerosene can. Both types were common and both were balanced elegantly. The larger clay jar is called the **zir**; it is a sort of 'Ali*

Baba Jar', and in it water is stored. This is generally placed in a shady spot in the courtyard and regularly filled with water.

It is especially the **jarra** that is important. This is moulded of a specific material, a carefully blended mix of carbonated clay and smooth ash, a speciality (according to the Palestinian archaeologist Tahani Ali) of the highlands of the West Bank. The women explained that the strength and consistency of the water jug depended on the smoothness of the ash. By using this material they avoided the water's seepage or evaporation. Also, that blending of clay and ash also kept the stored water cooler for longer time. This is different from the practice of the villages in the lowlands of Gaza, where the stones are sandy. There is also a difference in building wells and cisterns. In Musharafah the cisterns on the outset have the round shape and the appearance of wells, but they are deep containers build into the ground. Tahni Ali explained that in the highlands of the West Bank the stones, which are used to construct the water cisterns, have also a consistency which keeps water cooler and thus avoids evaporation. These pits or cisterns were in the past constructed in between the olive groves; today in Musharafah - if the family can afford it - they are built alongside the home.

Every winter since the connection to the centralisation of water, the old women in the village prepare for the winter rain, evaluating the signs in the weather, and checking to see whether their cistern needs cleaning. The cleaning of the cistern requires much discussion, because most of the women live alone and need somebody strong to help clean the cistern. They agree that although it is far easier with tap water, the cistern water, or winter water, is best. It has many good qualities; it's good for tea, cooking and bathing. Cistern water is also much cheaper – it is a free gift from God.

As a consequence of the searching, waiting, filling jars or fetching the water the women were involved in a very intimate context: not only of sharing vital resources for keeping up the settlement of the village, but also of spending most of their lives together. Here Um Qays, reflecting on the past, said that water "is in the hands of God". By this water as a resource becomes sacred, a spiritual entity depicting a particular world view. Hence the women's

friendships' were and are sealed within such a strong belief in God. Today the only reliable water is still that which comes "from above", the women said. So they keep up the tradition of collecting the rain water. The "winter water" or "water from the rain" is still used for the household chores of feeding the family, the animals and sprinkling the seeds in the spring.

So speaking about water is for these women always a divine matter, "From water we made all living things", they quoted from the **Koran**. The process and scope of water is in this way always in the "hands of God." Water is 'given' also with regard to the cycle of seasons; the rhythm of village life depended on the time spent fetching water. In the hot summer months more time was spent "walking in the khala to find water. Walking here and there," they said, and then there was the time spent waiting for the drops of water to fill the jar. What the peasants did or still do when they fetch, store or use 'winter' or 'spring' water is to know that the water is from Him. Thus they show their gratefulness to their Creator. Rain is by this a sign of God's mercy on "us the poor peasants". Being grateful and believing in Him they make the gesture of kissing both sides of their hand, which is signal of gratefulness for all that God gives them.

The women's reference point has always been the rural village setting. Very few have visited shrines far from the village, and they do not have many possibilities of going down to Ramallah. And the women often told me that they never feel comfortable moving outside the village environment. "We peasants in the mountain were put on this earth to work. We arrange the land around us. We spend all the time with the land. We sweat working on the land and fetching water. When we walk our sweat falls on the land. Water from the spring and our sweat made vegetables grow. Today nothing grows; you need a lot of water to make vegetables grow today, and they taste nothing". Here Um Qays talked about water as a sacred gift to the land given through the rain that falls. The water goes into the ground, flows in the streams from the top of the mountain to the springs and it collects in the wells. "The water journeys through the land of God before it reaches us and collects in the spring". The water infiltrates the earth making olive trees produce large harvests and vegetables grow. From the women in Musharafah, we have heard

that land and water have been the only source of life for them. They have depended on it to sustain them - and it did. When they speak of land they call it "the blessed earth", and refer to it only with reverence.

Two further points need to be made. One about the way women relate water and landscape to the Palestinian nation. The second one is about how water and landscape are part of the larger scheme of things, in which Islam plays a basic role

"Everytime you see a cactus plant..."

The stones from which homes of the Palestinian villagers are created are gathered
from the surrounding hills and valley. Often these stones have belonged to homes, temples, or watchtowers from a more ancient time. Aged stones and younger stones, each belonging to its era, are blended and used to build the same home. Whatever the age, the stones are the essence of the bond between the peasants, the landscape and their village – the blend is the Palestinian patrimony. In one of his poems, where he addresses the Zionist intentions of taking over the land, Mahmud Darwiish illustrates the particular connection between stones and places in Palestinian memory and life: Your insistent need to demonstrate the history of stones and your ability to invent proofs does not give you prior membership over him who knows the time of the rain from the smell of the stone. That stone for you is an intellectual effort. For its owner it is a roof and walls. *(Parmenter 1994, p.1)*

Village poetry is at the core of rural and urban Palestinian discourse. Whether they are intellectuals, merchants in urban areas, peasants or returnees back from the US, they or their forefathers have roots in an Arab Palestinian village. The levels of engagement with the village and its surroundings are interesting in both the Big Story and the story from below. I will try to be more specific.

There are especially two national symbols that the women attach to the poetry and semblance of 'traditional' life in the village life. The craft of embroidery and the olive tree have particular resonance in Palestinian culture, also among the women of Musharafah. Embroidery is a craft girls are taught by their

grandmother or older aunts and women neighbours at an early stage. They learn about colours and images, and the importance for a young bride to show off her talent. The Palestinian embroidered dress is central in feminine peasant symbolism, indicating the wealth of heritage as well as of male kin. Shelagh Weir in a beautiful book about Palestinian costumes writes about how the embroidery reflected the family identity. In particular, the male position was tied to the amount of fabric and density of thread used in embroidery (Weir 1989). During the intifadah, I was given what the women called "the flag dress": a basically traditional **taub** with the Palestinian flag embroidered on the chest.

The other essential symbol is the olive tree, with its roots deep in village identities. This is an important component physically and emotionally, connoting the steadfastness and authenticity of Palestinian peoples' connectivity to their land. As it is ancient and thus carries roots of the nature of the Palestinian history within it, what especially matters are the roots of the tree, which the inhabitants of Musharafah refer to as the symbols of village origin and resistance. The olive tree is thus an emotional element in the village, and its prosperity and fertility are embodied in the lives of people.

On the local level most of the peasants I have portrayed say that they have lost their land to the Ganzuri family, but they still own their olive trees. These trees are considered to give good fortune, because olive trees have "lived", "seen", "fed", and "sheltered" many generations from the heat of the sun. "As the saying goes", Um Fathi said "leave the young ones a home made of stone or olive trees". The olive trees demand the same amount of maintenance as the fig trees and grapevines. Due to the global interest in olive oil, it has also increased its value in the world market; the price of olive oil is much highter than corn oil, and today olive oil dominated the economy of the village. Olive oil had three basic uses: as a cooking staple, for light, and for soap production. The villagers claim that their olives are of superior quality to those of the other villages. This is usually a claim contested by all, but in the case of Musharafah also outsiders praise the quality of the olives. But the stories about land are also

about national issues, and below are two incidences which illustrate how the old women keep the Palestinian narrative alive.

"Every time you see a cactus plant and stones lying about you know its the remainder of an Arab village", said a little girl when I took her on an outing to another village, where her grand aunt lives. She was repeating what her grandmother, Um Jihad, tells her when they talk about the past. The grandmother repeats her descriptions of the destroyed mountain villages to her granddaughter in great detail, and when we drive past the remains of a couple of villages the little girl tells me what she learned from her elder about the specific villages. She talks about the families, the animals, the hills, the terraces, the fig and olive trees and the many springs with running water where her grandmother used to go. It is an amazing description from a person who has never experienced what she is so vividly describing to me. "We lived in Paradise before the Jews came and took our land and put us in hell", she sighs. When I asked her if she learns that also at school, she replied that her teacher is not allowed to say the whole truth about Palestine. The little girl is talking about a sight many of us witness travelling through Palestine and Israel: the remains of homes or just stones scattered about among fig bushes and cactus plants - the remains of Arab villages.

Another similar experience based on the recollection of the past was at a wedding in Musharafah. A party of young children sat with their grandmothers talking with visitors from Amman, Jordan, and the talk turned to the subject of "the way life used to be". One of the young boys from Amman was telling his grandmother, that he had heard from a Palestinian friend at school that the refugees in Lebanon have the original key to their home in Palestine hanging at the entrance or beside the **Koran**, and that the refugee camp homes were very different from the village homes.

At the instruction of one of the grandmothers, a girl began tracing the old village for the visitors from Amman and for me. She drew on the dirt road. The drawing was of several small homes, and when she was finished with her sketch she wrote on top of one of the homes in large childish handwriting "my grandmother's house". The little girl read aloud what she had written to her

illiterate grandmother; everybody sitting around laughed and clapped their hands, telling the girl that "she was a good girl".

Testimonials are theoretically explored by Susan Slyomovics who writes in The Object of Memory, that her book is an historical, literary, folkloristic, and architectural attempts to relive, revive, and expose both the symbol and the reality of the threatened Palestinian stone house (Slyomovics 1998, p.xvii). She writes about an Arab village called Ein Houd. The inhabitants belonged to the same clan, but in 1948 they were either exiled or moved to the new village of Ein Houd al-Jadidah. Jewish artists who moved in and turned it into a tourist attraction restored the old village with its stone houses.

Susan Slymovics also draws on several other works to explore how a place that has been destroyed or taken away by others' is rebuilt in words (Slyomovics 1998,p.3). She focuses on the role played by memory to construct a nation and a community and the specific and symbolic sites where memory resides (Slyomovics 1998, p.4). This memory is beautifully linked to the Palestinian stone house with its ecology and landscape, and in so doing the text brings forth the architectural experiences into space, hence tackling physical and mental space and their formation in political Arab/ Israeli context from a Big Story perspective and from the stories which people tell.

The poetics of the Palestinian heritage are also the main theme in the paintings by Palestinian artists, poets and writers, and the peasant is certainly a signifier (Swedenburg 1990). What has especially struck me are the postcards of images of peasants with a rural background. The **fallah**, peasant, is a symbol of **sumud**, and they are aware of it; when they say that they are peasants, they add their attachment to the land. The iconisation of the peasant is about holding on to the land, being rooted with the soil and the water and the Palestinian landscape.

Hence, the discourse of water is present in the national folklore of village life. We find representations of women in ethnic dress, carrying beautifully shaped jugs of water on their heads, or siting by a well. They carry the family's household water. Women in various Palestinian regional dresses posed with water jugs, decorate the walls of hotels, restaurants, offices and also

postcards. Arabic folk songs praise the graceful walk of girls on their way to the water spring or canal. Such illustrations of national dress and household water recapture women's agency as keepers of the Palestinian values.

I started this section with writing about the stones that hold the Palestinian home, and I mentioned the cactus; both are at the village level. The old village, al ***balad al qadima****, of Musharafah is often admired by the old women: they point in its direction and speak of togetherness and goodness. To outsiders the dichotomies are between village life and city life. These are common ways of familiarising a stranger to village customs and lifestyle. An example is what I have described in the story of Um Khaled, who liked to speak with the Palestinian students who asked her about village life, architecture and food. To the students Um Khaled glorified the old village life - where people looked after each other and nobody paid for anything, and family was always close by - as different from city life which was crowding the village. Yet, the narratives in my material show that the women, like Um Khaled, contradict such images from the past: they had to deal with a husband they did not want, mothers - in - law they disliked, and either a demanding or absent family.*

A gift from God

We send down water from the sky according to due measure, and we cause it to soak in the soil; and we certainly are able to drain it off with ease. *(Sura 23:18)*

Water is the most precious natural resource, and its scarcity has created a specific social life in the West Bank. Value assumptions embedded in models of water institutions of other areas can be disruptive for a region such as the highlands of Ramallah. The value of water among the peasants is based on it being a gift from God.

Emerging laws and Shari'a and the colonial past have all influenced access to water. Rivers, wells, springs and rainfall are sources, which tell us something about settlements and their possibilities for food production. The ways water is interpreted and used depends greatly on the aridity of the environment, that is, the region's average rainfall. Fundamentally, water is what is essential to food production, and as yet we know no other

replacement. Being vital for all living beings, it is the underlying dynamic in the social organisation of people's lives. In the Middle East, where water is a scarce resource, it is the reality which people have to deal with daily and which gives perspective to everyday life. Because it is so scarce it has cultivated mysteries, and the images of water are often identified with a secret and divine nature. Among peasants and nomads there is a clear distinction between water that comes from God, which is free for all, and water that is channelled in pipes and which therefore does not have the same virtues.

In Islamic tradition land and resources are common until a person gives them life, discovers them. This is done through the principle of **ihya'** to "endow with life". Normally this principle is applied to land. This is based on a tradition of the Prophet Muhammed and is accepted as authentic by all legal schools of Sunni Islam. A specific **Hadith** of the Prophet says that: He who endows barren land with life, it becomes his. In order to obtain legal ownership of such land, the person developing it has to prove that it had in fact been barren and did not belong to someone else. Ownership of land obtained in such fashion is known as **mulk hurr**, freehold. Such land can be bought and sold without any limitation and could be also passed on from one generation to the next. This principle applied to water. There is an operational problem in the process of modernisation and institutionalisation of water between common property versus public property (Mallat 1991), (Allan & Mallat 1995).

In spite of subsequent written water laws introduced by external powers or other government, the basic principles of Islamic water law are still observed and strictly followed, as local customs and usage, by the population (Caponera 1992, p.68). That local customs take precedence over written water laws is clear in people's administration of water sources and wells. During his time, the prophet Mohammed had to arbitrate in water disputes. The principle of individual rights to water is applied when a canal is shared among several owners; it follows that the ...right to use water can be separated from the land to which it belongs, not by sale but by legacy (Schacht 1966, p.143). With the standard of legacy in mind, there is a division between specific water **khass**, and public water, **'amm**, as for example rivers. In the first case,

limitations could be introduced on the right of use by privileging a given village over 'those outside'. But in the case of 'my' village it is not rivers that are interesting but wells, ponds and springs.

If a person drinks from a well that is not his or hers, the owner cannot claim the water back. The owner of the well may suggest, however, that the person go to an alternative watering place where water is outside and therefore not part of a property. If the water is not close by, no individual can refuse another individual the right to quench his or her thirst. There is also the water that is stored in jugs or vases: This is very different water, because it may be even sold by water vendors, who walk to water points and carry water in vases to sell. But if that water is stolen, Islamic criminal law does not apply; the thief's hand must not be cut. As to water quality and environmental consciousness, peasants refer to the rule that if a peasant is irrigating his land he must not cause harm to the neighbour downstream, and animals must not soil a spring.

God rules over creation, and it is He who expresses His will directly to villagers in Musharafah, and they 'know' that water is life and therefore holy. This resource is not simply life; giving it is endowed with legendary qualities and is a metaphor for Divine intervention in their world. Water in their perception is part of the creation, the good of this earth which is in the hand of God, and which He has bestowed upon humans and can therefore take away. I have already indicated that the women have not gone to school; they have never learned to read or write, but they have learned several verses from the ***Koran****, and they know the* ***Hadith*** *that concerns their everyday life. In the* ***Hadith****, they say, Muslims like themselves are* ***shurakat****, partners, in water, pasture and fire.*

Pasture is free for all peasants; they herd their animals wherever the animals go. They share water; it is their right to ***shafa****, that is to drink and also to give their animals water. Sharing water means also the right to* ***shirb****, to share available water for irrigation: this is the rule which Sett Um Muhammed said was especially important in the villages in the Jordan Valley near the area where her family pastured their animals. In the Jordan Valley there were canals, and the right to* ***shirb*** *implied the*

amount of time given or allotted to each family for using water for irrigation. In the villages to which Sett Um Muhammed refers the water used to be the property of the richest landowner family, El Husseini, and she remembers several quarrels between the most outspoken peasants and the 'feudal' family, because, she explained, water is not servitude. But then, they had a sheikh meditate, and he said that according to Shari'a the El Husseini family, were permitted to sell water which was on their property. Um Muhammed said that the feudal family in Musharafah were never that mean. But then water in the mountains is different; it comes to a spring which is shared by all, and free for all.

With Islamic water traditions as reference, the women in Musharafah say that water is found in four locations: in a river basin "like the sweet water of el Nil"; sea water, "they have that in Gaza", and canals in villages "like in the villages in Gaza and Aricha (Jeriko). Then there is their yellow, bitter, and frothy 'winter water' in containers or wells. In the mountains the irrigation water comes from the overflow of the spring water "and we all shared that water; even the feudal had to share with us", they assured me. Pointing to the valley they explained that below the old village is **wadi al balat**, and here are two categories of water: the **say** refers to the water flowing in spring in the **wadi** below the village, while the **khabra** are rain pools where water collects at the end of its journey and which are especially helpful in irrigation and watering animals.

In the mountain, peasants are close to God and nobody can refuse another person water without sinning against God. Even animals are taken care of, and they are not allowed to die of thirst. Several women talked about animals watered before they quenched their thirst. It is clear that when a peasant has invested in a well or cistern by his home it is private. Still, the right to break the thirst cannot be refused, so the women living alone with no well or cistern expected their neighbours to help when the water runs dry in the taps or they can not afford to use tap water.

Close to the expressions of God and the mountain is the concept of **Harim**, these are generally protected areas around water points; these are established by prohibiting the digging of new wells close to wells in use so as not to reduce the quality and

quantity of water. For the women, the ***Harim*** *implies the landscape around the village where they believe water runs. There are several sources of water, some close others far, but they should be protected to allow the one dry to* "rest and fill up". *The returnees building so close, and the settlers' construction on each mountain top appears to show disrespect for* ***Harim****, and causes the women much irritation and unease.*

CHAPTER SIX.

THEORISING MUSHARAFAH'S WOMEN'S NARRATIVES

Societies occupy space as well as time, an occupancy which provides a rich source for the production of national legends and social metaphors. *John R. Short Imagined Country.*

Telling the story

I am suggesting that narratives have a way of shaping what we remember and giving our memory duration. So, when 'my' women in Musharafah repeat their stories they are not only maintaining a mental picture of happenings, they are also reproducing a landscape. Olivia Harris maintains that in order to better understand the anthropology of change we need to look closer at the temporalities of not only change but also tradition. These are two concepts, which ... indicate notions of order, of legitimacy, and above all of continuity *(Harris 1996, p.2). Continuity is a duration that is familiar to those living it, and the underlying flux is just part of the duration of traditions. For me the chronicalisation of continuity is an important tool in documenting and constructing the historical heritage of 'my' women; it tells us something about the endurance of traditions. What Olivia Harris refers to as the temporalities, and which I borrow to talk about everyday lives, cannot be understood if we do not take the stories we hear seriously.*

We will not be able to do justice to virtual memory if we do not appreciate the opportunities which narratives give us. And this is especially important in understanding the muted or the history of the subaltern. Although we do know that history is written by the victorious, they have not necessarily witnessed it. As mentioned above, memory and history are not the same. Memory is a resource the women use in their narrative. They give memory a contextualised form which
they convey according to circumstances. So within this background it is certainly history, that is, if we agree that history is not necessarily only recorded in writing but also includes oral transmissions from the past.

In essence narratives are memories of the past interacting with the ethnographic present. Using narratives historically is rather

awkward despite their significance, because they are stories, dialogues and remarks which are carelessly conveyed, and yet it is just this method that contains the spirit and gives vitality to the narrative as significant testimony about why people do what they do. I side with Ricoeur in saying that narratives are fundamental in grounding human experiences through time, and basically I agree with him because it is the only way the subaltern with no written documents can communicate. Ricoeur's work on narratives is the theoretical backdrop for Peter Gottschalk's work, and he takes Ricouer further into an analysis where he does what Paul Ricouer does not, namely recognise the reflective tool of history that connects lived time with cosmic time: place *(Gottschalk 2000, p.70). Narratives are in context, and we need to see them in relation to time and space:* narratives regarding the past offer a particularly useful tool of examination because by their very nature they often include important ingredients for identity: references to the present community in time and space *(Gottschalk 2000, p.69). And here we must add that interpretations of narratives are only possible when we are observing the interactions and relations which are manifested in the social organisation.*

Sahlins is clear about culture and history; in his first sentence in Islands of History *he writes:* History is culturally ordered, differently so in different societies, according to meaningful schemes of things *(Sahlins 1987 ,p.vii). He goes on to say that the reverse is also true. He is concerned with such an historic approach because he is concerned with distant encounters (Sahlins 1987, p.viii). The rules of history correspond to the cultural order, as the abstract corresponds to the concrete, as the possible to the necessary, and the potential to reality. We should be more concerned with our cultural schema, Sahlins tells us, which is special, specific and unique: Different cultures, different historicities (Sahlins 1987, p.x), durability of culture is not necessarily about holding on to traditions; it is about informing the past. And it is precisely just that which* ***'adat*** *and* ***taqalid*** *do – they are engaging historicities.*

Knowing history through narratives implies that the women's stories are more than just remembrances from another time; they are descriptions of experiences combined with nostalgia, adding

to the poetic, emotional load that the 'old' water is made, retrospectively, to carry. In the narratives, we have heard women link the spring water with bride-watching, girls showing off, family alliances, bridal rituales, birth, communal washing, escaping mothers-in-law, laughter, sorrow and rest. These are aspects of life out of which the women create collective symbols, not what they, or others, intended and decided to do on a cost/benefit basis. When we take the women's agency and elaborate on the culturally mediated experience we see that the use of yellow, frothy, holy water is a dense symbol of what has been lost, in this respect and in so many other aspects of their life.

In exploring the unintended consequences I arrive at the culturally mediated experiences which fetching water had. I am speaking here of water as the mediator of "culturalism". Again I turn to Sahlins and say that it is true that victims of missionaries and imperialists recreate themselves in the image others have made of them (Sahlins 1994, p. 377), and I did already mention this point when I described Palestinian postcards. But the point here is that when cultural experiences are lost, we need to examine the remains. Sahlins asserts in his work that cultures evolve in situ, and that modernist concepts of pragmatic rationalism projected backwards in time and across cultures do little to broaden our understanding of the past; they actually reflect a contemporary expression of traditional colonist thought patterns rather than post colonial thinking. (Sahlins 1995)

Sahlins has clearly made the point that, within the world system, subordinated populations' work to reconstruct their collective identities or rather bundles of identities (Manger 1999, p.17). And all peoples are aware, Sahlins says; after all, the first thing of course is to survive (Sahlins 1994, p.389). With this line of line of thought in mind, it can be seen that specific categories are integrated in the survival of 'my' women, and they are reproduced, again in "bundles", through the means of testimonials. Manger is specifically concerned with Muslim identities and local realities (Sahlins 1994), and challenges static and singular identities; 'my' women are also Muslims and also their stories contest regularity, and yet their stories 'resonate' with Islamic traditions.

Memories and histories

You have no right to despise the past. *Baudlaire.*

The testimonies are infused with human detail and individual experience, and they give personal judgements. These oral histories are told by a fairly small group which shares a moderately close life, so they offer clues as to the position of the discourse's perception and constrains which are shared. Ultimately, they tell us less about the fine detail of events and experience than about their meaning for people. And they highlight the complexity and variety of experience within any 'community'. Collecting oral testimony provides a way to gain understanding of those perceptions and their influence on people's thinking. An oral testimony records not just events and practices, but provides hints as to their meaning and their significance for people telling the story.

Obviously, when I speak of oral history I base myself on unorthodox history, because it's founded either on what the women have themselves witnessed or what they have been told by those who were older. It is complex because it is about peasants who are women and who live in the third world, and we must agree with Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Margaret Strobel when they warn against the pitfalls of defining the history of women into the categories of exotic, women as victims, and women as anomalies *(Johnson-Odim & Strobel 1992, p.xxviii). We need, of course, to direct our attention to the subordination of women in history. But we will have to 'see' women through the exploration of their agency and by employing culture in the form of knowledges. Hence we need to expand our discursive approach. Johnson-Odim and Strobel write that scrutinising women's history will necessarily be found in other less doctrinal methods such as* oral testimony, mythology, life histories, genealogies, religious records, missionary and explorer accounts, archaeological excavations, language, legal codes, land tenure arrangements oral and written literature, or cultural lore and fable *(Johnson-Odim & Strobel 1992, p.xxxi). Now as we have seen I have relied heavily on the memory of the women and on what they could tell me their parents remembered.*

There is a difference between history and memory; for one thing, historians' use of time is again very different from the ordinary experience of individuals. Historians create historical time periods which have meaning for their professional concern with tracing synchronies and sequences, but have no correspondence with any historical experience anyone ever lived through, no anchorage in any collective memory (Halbwachs 1980, p. 18), writes Mary Douglas in her introduction to Halbwachs's book. For him memory is different from history, and I agree that historical memory is a senseless term connecting two terms opposed in more than one aspect (Halbwachs 1980, p.78). History, in general terms is about notable facts (Halbwachs 1980, p.78), and starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up (Halbwachs 1980, p.78). For Maurice Halbawchs, history and memory cannot be the same, because memory is kept only alive as long as those who have witnessed the events are there to keep those events alive.

History as Halbwachs tells us begins with social memory, and yet it is scholarship, while collective memory is not; it's allotted out there in society. He believes there is but one history, while there are many memories, that is collective memories. If we follow him here then history is objective, while it is also limited to the life span of those remembering. The distinction between history and memory is also made by Pierre Nora writes that the lieux de mémoire is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community (Nora & Kritzman 1996, p.xvii). Consequently, sites of memory, as for example in our case the water spring in the **khala**, are places where memory crystallizes (Nora & Kritzman 1996, p.xvii). Pierre Nora makes a slightly different comparison than that of Halbwachs; he looks at the difference between artificial history and true memory; he maintains that by its very nature memory is living, while history is not only constructed but also reconstructed. Nevertheless, I will suggest that the division between history and memory is too uncompromising and foils the flux between events, peoples lives and official history.

With respect to my material from Musharafah I will suggest that it is awkward to maintain that 'one history' is the same as 'one truth'. And I will follow Elisabeth Tonkin who makes more useful suggestions concerning the past in peoples lives. Tonkin writes that: People talk of the 'past' so as to distinguish 'now' from a different 'then' *(Tonkin 1995, p.9), and she is not categorical as to whether it is memory or history. Her main objective is to understand oral history as social interaction. A fruitful outcome of her approach is that she listens carefully to the person telling the story. Tonkin is concerned with the narrator, and she also keeps in mind the spectator. She makes a note of the location and includes temporality:* The representations of pastness that these interconnections involve include the occasion, when teller and listener intersect at a point in time and space, as well as the times recounted *(Tonkin 1995, p.9). Tonkin is telling us that narration only exists within and can only be articulated through social relationships. She joins memory and history, orality and literacy in her reconstruction of narrating pasts, for the reason that the origin of the texts is after all orality*

When the women in Musharafah speak of their history, it is because they are devoted to the orality of their history. There is a rich tradition of story telling in the region of the Middle East. The women's narratives are not monolithic stories, and they are certainly not monotonous tellers. Instead the women presented their stories in the tradition of 'Arab' story telling: vivid and active in their stories, and constantly reconstructing historical records, and thus giving life to peoples experiences. Temporally, the narratives are complicated: they involve other peoples: Turks, British, Jordanians, Egyptians and Jews. We heard of other groups and social controversies: between croppers and feudal, city and village people, love and hate, marriage, and above all religious idioms.

Some might say these women, like several other marginal groups, are 'without a history' because it is not written and they are not able to write it; they are either illiterate or have a couple of years in primary school. But, still they speak as passionately of their heritage as 'those with a history' do. Above all we must recognise that their witnessed testimonies are intimate and accessible in their lives as lived. Its vulnerability lies, as we have

already seen in the large stories of those 'with a history' who contest their story, and in that Palestinians have always had to assert their history in the face of counter-claims, which have persistently presented Palestine as 'a land without a people'. (Bowman 1993, p.73-74)

Very conscious of their continuous self assertion as a people belonging to community with shared memories, and therefore their own orality in the land, the elders present a historical repertoire based on shared memory. There is a distinction between village memory and urban memory. Connerton says that the design of the space in an urban area makes knowledge about other people around feeble, and therefore there is the need of 'presentation of self'. In a village, however, it is the gossip that is the glue that generates 'presentation of self'; it is not necessary because the villagers remember in common. (Connerton 1989, p. 17)

This common remembrance which villagers have implies the 'histories from below', yet Connerton does not make the point that people remembering are no more regular or symmetrical than the societies they talk about. We have heard the women remembering and reflecting over their yearning for the spring, or rather going to fetch water from the spring. And the reasons they give are at times conflicting and irregular. Still, we need to transmit this irregularity or else we would be doing what Keesing claims anthropologists do – invent 'alterity' The world in which we have situated that alterity – the world of Lévi-Strauss's "cold societies" of unchanging tradition - was our anthropological invention. We continue to invoke it...(Keesing 1994, p.301). This is the strength of 'history of below' that it makes it absolutely clear that also marginal peoples lives are complex and that things are not clear/evident. But, most significantly, people reproduce their own experiences.

Because history begins when we start recording events – we, that is the recorders, make history by creating our source. It is also worth noting what Paul Connerton does - establish the fact that also beginnings need something to fall back on; all beginnings contain an element of recollection (Connerton 1989, p.6). But he is talking about memory as separate from historical

construction, and this is where I break with Connerton. I agree that history has it is very own agenda, but still memory, when we record it, is the past and the present interacting into some sort of historic body of construction.

The truth in the stories

The important question is not 'is it true?' but 'whose truth is it?'
John R. Short, Imagined Country

I will go on to say that, clearly the 'truth', whatever that is, is important. Yet, I believe that the stories told are no less reasonable than other written documents and citations, which are also based on individual rationale. Narrative in the context of how women look back on fetching water from the spring elaborate the reproduction of values which they share in the Palestinian villages. Despite its many obvious disadvantages, the narrative challenges and contests current knowledge about the role of women in managing scarce resources in the villages of the Middle East. It brings forth a tacit or rather muffled past and tells us something about the consequences of change on village everyday life. As Judith Tucker insightfully points out in several of her works, the general story is that the Middle East has gone through economic development, just like most of the Third World, but she tells us that we have missed the point of what happened towomen's everyday work.

The work women did before the inference of the world economy was home based tasks and crafts. With the advent of the labour markets, the men left the villages and travelled often very far to join the job market in the urban areas. Men leaving resulted in marginalisation of the household products which women where actively involved in; their work was no longer necessary, and they were made dependent on men's income. Due to cultural constraints which remained, women were denied access to the work market; instead they attempted to imitate town people's way of life. (Tucker 1993) Hence, Judith Tucker makes it clear that when we ask questions concerning the outcome of the changes of the twentieth century we find that the answers are more complex, because economic change and nationalist movements did not end the seclusion of women. On the contrary in rural areas the women's production arena was reduced, and the family

networks on which women relied were shattered. (Tucker 1993, p.62-63)

Several have defended the integrity of narratives; rather than speaking about the reliability of narratives Burke maintains that narrative compositions are like descriptions (Burke 1992). They can be thick or thin, but what counts is the strength of what is being told. What we should concentrate on is particularity in the culture we are studying. On the thicker side of narratives we are describing and interpreting the constraints that affect social dramas, making the flux in communities difficult. The stories told by the actors who have experienced them are interpretations of present lives and about how change is experienced. Burke reflects on the essence of the memory on which narratives are based, and he writes: What goes on now is interpreted from previous knowledge, from memory. The present we live in is built from past events (Tonkin 1995). Such a statement implies the problematic involvement around the authenticity of memory. In the village of Musharafah, like other villages in Palestine, recollecting the past is done often in the company of others who have been part of that same past. Talking about the past is a social event; it comes up at certain moments; as the women walked past the new houses being built in the village or towards the olive groves where century - old trees still stand.

Therefore, authenticity is not only to be faithful to the culture and the events as they 'really" happened but also to the past (Handler & Saxton 1988, p.243). An interesting angle in the writings of the past is the method of acting history or 'living history'. Handler and Saxton talk about acting the past, they mention that magic moments come up when persons experience their own past lives. These are moments ... better described as evanescent flashes of consciousness steeped in the actor's recollections of his own experiences (ibid. p.256). I will suggest that living history has been merged with anthropology through the studies of the subaltern, a concept developed in an Italian prison by Antonio Gramsci. Subaltern, meaning 'of inferior rank', refers in his 'notebooks' to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include

peasants, workers and other groups denied access to 'hegemonic' power. (Gramsci & Forgacs 1988)[15]

Since the history of the ruling classes is realised in the state, history being the history of states and dominant groups, Gramsci was interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes. Gramsci maintained that the history of the subaltern classes was just as intricate as the history of the dominant classes, although the history of the latter is as a rule that which is acknowledged as 'official' history. For him, the history of subaltern social groups is unavoidably uneven and intervallic, since these groups are always dependent on the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel. Undoubtedly, they have less admittance to the channels by which they may control their own representation, and less access to cultural and social institutions.

The narratives of Sett Um Muhammed, Um Qays and the other women reflect traditional rural female agency and conflicts and tension with the settler/occupation power and within the general Palestinian society itself. We have, in fact, seen that struggle is based on historical knowledge. The women lamented the destruction of their everyday life in their stories, constructing a past that included those values that communicated togetherness. The n etwork of solidarity they spoke about was basically found around the water spring and in the nostalgic emotions embedded in the goodness of water that flows down the valley. Such waters, they told us, take with them richness from the earth and feed the soil. Today life is such that there are circumstances over which the old women feel they have no control; the water flows is blocked.

The women in Musharafah live in a village that like all other villages in Palestine is under continuous threats from settlers and military oppressions. They struggle to live a dignified life, to end their life in dignity according to Palestinian peasant tradition. Instead, they have to confront the 'Jews' and frustrations in their own community. They struggle with their status as old peasants,

[15] *See also Freire (Freire 1972). Gramsci's generative ideas are also roughly similar to Freire on the construction of hegemony and how to deconstruct and overcome it. Freire's work and projects were aimed at assisting the subaltern overcome the 'colonisation' of their mind.*

and some face social oppression inside their family circles, due to their under-privileged socio-economic background or present situation. Even those who live in a family or are regularly taken care of by their family feel the tensions which they have no way of controlling.

The anxieties brought about by the Israeli reactions to the first intifadah have added more anxiety to their difficult living conditions. Principally, the elders, face two trying confrontations: a basic one against the occupation, and a more tricky struggle in which they labour with the image of the reverence age demands in Palestinian culture and which should give them an effective role in the functioning of society. The women have different backgrounds and their reflections and reasoning are based on various experiences. Still, they share an elderly Palestinian peasant identity (with the exception of Samiha), and their ability to cope with life has come in conflict with the unintended consequences which were the outcome of water in the tap.

Narratives about Landscape

Whereas the need to theorise narratives should be obvious, given the presentation of 'my' women and their stories, the notion of ***khala*** *is also very dominant in the way they experienced their position in the world. Therefore, I feel the need to theorise landscape, and I will start with William Lancaster who worked for twenty five years doing research in Bilâd ash-Shâm. He begins his chapter on environments with a explanation which is similar to my material:* Users of physical environment turn natural facts into culturally and socially constructed landscapes *(Lancaster & Lancaster 1999, p. 97). In a detailed book on the landscapes of land and water in Bilad ash Sham, particularly among the nomads, Lancaster writes that water is the organising component.* Views on the nature of water are derived from observation and practice, and consistent with a long tradition *(ibid, p.129). In order to build a foundation, with homes, schools, markets and places of worship there is a need for some predictability; that enough water is going to be available to sustain the survival of the settlement. Survival is also about cultural gaps.Villagers use the land and the water around them intensely, not only to maintain their village household with shelter, food and water, but also to hold on to the expressions of life that*

are passed on and which give them meaning. The interaction between peasant, land and water has been going on for millennia; it has assisted them in creating a method for the people to organise their lives together in their surroundings.

Several other works on the cultural implications of landscape give me the possibility to develop my perspective on narratives and landscape. Steven Feld and Keith H.Basso are concerned with the 'sense of place'; they say it involves the experiential and expressive ways places are known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested, and struggled over; and the multiple ways places are metonymically and metaphorically tied to identities (Feld & Basso 1996, p.11), and these are the variables which concern the authors in their book. One of them, Miriam Kahn writes from Papua New Guinea, but touches on an issue that also involves the same emotions the women in Musharafah demonstrate when they speak of **khala**.

Kahn describes the emotions which the people sense on her behalf; they feel sorrow for her being far from where she belongs. She writes that she grew familiar with the Wamiran's sentiments with regard to places and their nostalgia about places (Kahn 1996, p.172). Although they do not understand her reasons for leaving her home and moving to their place that is dry and hot, they still had the sense of union to the place and were puzzled that she did not feel the same towards her home. Miriam Kahn does not problematise the word 'nostalgia' in the above mentioned article. I often thought about this sentiment when I listened to the emotional descriptions the women in my study attached to their landscape. They believe that the Palestinian landscape must be the most beautiful scene, and their life blends into this "land of God", they said repeatedly looking up to heaven.

In 1998 the university of Bir Zeit organised a conference on the Palestinian landscape from which a book was later published in 1999 (Abu-Lughod et al. 1999). The collection of articles addresses the past and present of Palestinian attachments to their landscape, and bringing forth how colonisers and occupiers of the land have distorted the landscape making it into an available place for occupation. The volume of essays has a multiple approach to landscape; each essay has a different way

of positioning and invoking the concept of landscape in a Palestinian context. The critical concern I have here is that the volume has some tendency to use the notion of landscape uncritically, with land as physical space and cultural imagination within the general Israeli/Palestinian discourse. This is certainly vital. But, instead, my material is constructed around how locality embodies life-worlds. In Musharafah, we have the women's conception of landscape as open space in danger of being cluttered by pipes, Israeli settlements, Palestinian returnees, and other young Palestinian families with no association to the spirit of the landscape.

The women create their lives and experiences within the context of the physical parameters. These are measurements which not only they recognise and can relate to, but also men, as for example Abu Jihad, can relate to. The social structure of the village was part of a whole pattern of physical characteristics, which were divided between men and women. Within that setting emerged the chores that defined the division of labour and legitimated the practice of bride-watching. With the installation of piped water women's appropriated space turned into dominating space (Lefebvre 1991). Whereas appropriated space may well be combined with dominated space, it is more useful as its contrary. The dominating space is today the places watering network organised by water authorities. It is a space transformed by 'outsiders' technology that has cut through the landscape, crossing boundaries and eventually making its way into the home.

Images and narratives of water explicate rootedness. The ongoing institutionalisation of the water has been as a result experienced as an alienating process. I want to draw a comparison from another country in the Middle East, to Timothy Mitchell's analysis on the colonisation of Egypt. He explains how the reconstruction of the village of Egypt (Mitchell 1988, p.44) distorted a way of living and disfigured the rural landscape in order to create a recognisable order which was more familiar to the British. In Musharafah the peasants recall the breaking down of the Palestinian spirit by taking their "stones, land and water" - their "khala was gone" as Um Qays put it, and "giving it to the Jahud".

For instance, the water spring was no longer part of the village; instead it was under the control of a new Jewish settlement located on the highest point overlooking Musharafah. Also the roads constructed by the British altered the structure of the village, for in spite of the fact that some of the new roads were welcomed others destroyed their traditional paths and routs, for example those they used to meet the people of Gaza. When I speak of landscape, space and place, I am speaking of the power of the past in the present lives of the women. I agree with Hirsch's view that landscape is an open concept, (Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995) and perceive here the dynamic process and discourse between memory and landscape: the poetics of landscape.

Poetics in landscape take us to Tilley and Lowenthal; each, with their respective academic tradition and discipline, makes use of the poetics of the landscape that I experienced in the old women. People live in places; that is, their identity is interpreted within a designated place. Not only the water spring but the path to the water spring are relics in the story of everyday life. They mark the stories they tell; Like memories, relics once abandoned or forgotten may become more treasured than those in continued use *(Gathercole & Lowenthal 1990, p.240). The water point is an obvious example of such a precious object of memory and cultural heritage. Lowenthal reflects on another place, England, but his thoughts are also applicable here.*

Lowenthal explores what makes the landscape characteristic of heritage, particularly English, Most heritage reflects personal or collective self-interest, things prized as mine or ours. We may be modest about what we are, but rarely about what we were. In celebrating the symbols of their identities societies are really worshipping themselves. Heritage is hence innately incomparable. The legacy we laud is domestic; that of others is alien... Heritage differentiates; we treasure most what sets us apart. Its uniqueness vaunts our virtues *(Lowenthal 1991, p. 7). Also for 'my' women there is an obvious pride when they describe the paths, the walk and the waiting by the spring. The problems they face come about when parts of that cultural heritage are systematically eroded.*

Lowenthal's searches in history and heritage: he examines the requisition and uses of the past. Furthermore, he differentiates between real history and our understanding and use of it, and the hold that heritage has on us. I will suggest that Lowenthal is implying that history is by far more authentic than heritage. The reason is that history is fairly particularised, while heritage is composed of our discriminating choices of what is past. It means that we assemble heritage, so as to single out ourselves; thus, through the use of heritage we rationalise our agency and conduct.

At times we discover heritage in the locations of relics. The old women see the relic of the water springs in all its importance as a life granting and stabilising factor in the village. The relic is also a mark of a time when all shared the same water, stood in the queues and nobody among the peasants had more access than others. This contrasts sharply with the situation today, for there are some who have been able to afford a cistern, while others depend exclusively on the expensive and unreliable tap water. Memory and history pinpoint only certain things as relics; the rest of what lies around us seems basically current, suggesting nothing past. (Lowenthal 1985, p.238)

But, what happens when relics are demolished, destroyed or as also in the case of the village partly occupied by outsiders? One of the springs is today occupied by the neighbouring Jewish settlement, and it becomes an example and a reminder of entire pasts spent struggling against servitude and occupation. To the villagers it was the Romans and the Ottomans who built the springs; the British did build some, but they believe these were to help the Jews move in. While relics might be considered static, because they are just 'around', these objects of memory are also a reminder of codes and shared values.

Water is visible around the village spring, that is the two springs closest to Musharafah. During the winter and the spring there is water flowing down, but the grass has blocked it and stones stop the flow. To my question of why they do not clear up the stream or flow, they answer that "they want us to progress" *or* "they do

not want to see women walking with water on the heads"; *'they' are the authorities, health, water and planning.*

To my comment about paintings, postcards and posters portraying women carrying water on their heads, they answered "but they are young and beautiful. They are decoration". *For them water is a cultural heritage that made it possible for the village to survive. In dealing with that vital resource they were, as Daniel Roche (writing about its history in France) put it:* its interpreters: ferry-women at the various crossing-points of life - midwives, mothers of families *(Roche & Pearce 2000, p.138). Being interpreters of what is today a relic, the women are aware of the reality that the young are interested only when they hear about the spring in its capacity as a village tradition or custom, that is as* "what our ancestors did".

In the past, frontiers in Musharafah were distinct, and therefore ***khala*** *was clearly defined so that division of labour was specific; the locations of labour were defined by those who are experiencing the space. Tilley suggests that space depends on people's activities and relationships, moreover, that space is beyond place. Responsibilities were carried out in specific places within a selected space, with the intention that the daily activities and work roles were clearly identifiable. The chores which women were responsible for carrying out were articulated in a network of relations and in the establishment of biographies. The stories they tell and which are explicit in bringing forth what they accomplished and what happened in the landscape they frequented, indicating that these places and sites are embedded with meaning ...* the landscape is both medium for and outcome of action and previous histories of action*" (Shanks & Tilley 1992, p.23). Tilley's poetic approach to the interpretation of the past is relevant when we try to understand women's place in the landscape.*

We have seen through narratives that landscapes are temporal collages of life worlds. Just as Maurice Halbwachs argues that memory is not only about time but also about space, collective memory is present in the shared landscape or sphere of activities. Lowenthal has similar notions about landscape; he identifies biographies within it. When this occurs landscape is not

just a physical space; it is also culturally embedded with the knowledge of the past. In his many works on the subject he makes the point that the past is forever entrenched in the landscape.[16]

*Musharafah, is like many other similar Palestinian villages; work tasks and activities are not only accorded their space but are also placed in time; to paraphrase Bourdieu, ideology is visible, and the choreography of social life is visible and as such it is interpreted by the position and memory shared in the community...*For the man, the house is not so much a place he enters as a place he comes out of, movement inwards properly befits the woman *(Bourdieu 1993 (1977), p.91). Bordieu's Kabyle home is a place where space has its qualifying symbols. The division of the home is such that the parts metaphorically represent male and female roles. Describing the housing of Kabyle villagers in Algeria, Bourdieu represents the symbolic exchange of messages in the relationship between men and women in the village and indicates that this exchange has also a functional side to it. This is the conventional nature of symbols, what we normally recognise as their expressive character. The Kabyle home shows that symbols take the form of things that are regarded as cultural expressions of society.*

In the village women's movements are in and out of the home: to fetch water by the spring; cultivate or wash around the olive orchards; to bake at the oven. The women speak of a landscape that clarifies prohibitions which arise from the notion that their should be segregation, not only between women and men but also the landlord and the croppers. There was in the past, in the village, an organisation of space where the social map was clear to the peasants; there were the spatial rules, thus allocating gender to space. It follows that these rules were articulated in a network of social relations and understanding. The women were participants in the traditions that motivated the creation of these frontiers for acceptable movement, and also for forbidden terrain.

The homes, the holy site(s), the meeting square, the footpath to the olives, the water spring are all places, sites and locations

[16] *I have also drawn on the work of Short (Short John 1991)*

allotting meaning to the landscape and assigning to space the role of defining social structures. In the summer months the nearest water point was often dry and the women needed to walk a distance from their homes, the stretch that they walked was an extension of the woman's private domain. The inwards property (ibid) were based on the fact that the home had no water or electricity. It is misleading to presume that men and women never "collided", because the home was generally one or two rooms. Work tasks such as looking after chickens and pigeons, and activities at harvest time, were done by both. All domestic work was done physically outside the home. The women constructed their lives within the context of the physical parameters, and walking to fetch water was, of course, straining. Yet, they all reflected on that in spite of the fact that their bodies ached, the achs were familiar. So, waiting in line, filling and carrying the water was part of their own social drama, and the aches were recognisable. Today the "body hurts in other places and the pain is different" the old women of Musharafah lamented

PART THREE:

Water Development and Women's Knowledge

"I did not go to school to learn to read and write. I sent my younger daughters to school and then they went to university, and such things. But, you know, they do not know what I know". *Um Jihad*

CHAPTER SEVEN:

WATER DEVELOPMENT: AGENCIES AND DISCOURSES

Water is the matrix of culture, the basis of life. *Vandana Shiva* Water wars.

Water in Palestine – the Big Story

Much has been written about water in the Middle East, a region that accounts for about 5% of the world's population, but has access to only 1% of the freshwater. Water experts have taught us that the average renewal rate for rivers is about eighteen days, within that time span - that is to renew every drop taken out - while for large lakes and deep aquifers the rate can be up to a thousand years. Water scarcity or availability is based on what for an anthropologist seems too be very mechanical and intricate. But, Malin Falkenmark, explicates the issue plainly.

Falkenmark is one of the most quoted scientist by other hydrologists (De Villiers 2001), expresses the thresholds as number of people per flow unit of water, with a unit equal to one million cubic meters per year. She uses 600 persons per flow unit as an indicator of a country experiencing water stress, and 1000 or more persons per flow unit as an indicator of water scarcity. It is widely recognised that the region of the Middle East and North Africa region is by far one of the driest and most water scarce regions in the world and that this is increasingly affecting the economic and social development of most countries of the Region. (Ohlsson 1995)

In 1997 the United Nations presented a study on global water consumption. It shows that the consumption of water has been increasing at more than twice the rate of population during the century and that the resulting shortages have been worsened by contamination that damages already insufficient supplies. In no place in the world is the problem more acute than in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

We know water in the Middle East not so much through such images of paradise as much as through the language of conflict (Dolatyar & Gray 2000). Before going back to the village

perceptions of water I will briefly outline the bigger story of water, starting with the well-known statement that, apart from the Jordan River, the area does not have access to any source of surface water, with the exception of a few small perennial or seasonal streams fed through springs. In addition, rainwater harvested at a household level has long been an indigenous source of water for Palestinians. More recently, growing water scarcity has resulted in the increasing use of unconventional water sources, such as desalinated water and reclaimed waste- water. The area that is between the Jordan River to the east and the Mediterranean to the west has groundwater as its major source of fresh water and is thus of primary importance to the Palestinians. The chief Palestinian and Israeli water resources are aquifers, or underground geological strata that yield significant amounts of water to wells and springs. (Assaf 1993)

The rock formations of Mandate Palestine are highly absorbent, thus allowing most of the water that does not evaporate or transpire to percolate underground. There is little runoff or floodwater, and surface water in the country is mainly that of the Jordan River basin.

The politics of water

Israelis and Palestinians have signed three agreements during the past decades. Following the Oslo agreement they negotiated and signed The Declaration of Principles in September 1993. Then in May 1994 there was the signing of the Cairo agreement, when the Palestinian Authority was established in Jericho and parts of Gaza, otherwise known as 'Gaza-Jericho First'. The Taba agreement signed in Washington on 28 September 1995 followed these two agreements. This final agreement gave the Palestinian Authority limited jurisdiction over the population in parts of the West Bank.

Despite these agreements, reconciliation remains a long way off. There are several unsettled critical issues, and questions which are at the heart of the conflict have not been solved: the tragedy of the refugees; the nature of Jerusalem's future status; the growing number of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza; boundaries; Israel's security, and the question of survival - namely water. (Said 1995) (Lønning 1995; Said 2000)

The allocation of and access to the water are at stake. Following the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, military orders were issued which severely restricted the Palestinians. Some of the substance of the orders issued by the office were rational steps needed for the management of scarce water resources. Controls were firmly exerted on the Palestinian population, and few permits for what were issued. This policy was carried out at the same time as rapid development of water resources took place to supply the needs of Israel and Jewish settlers. The Israelis changed existing water laws, imposed restrictions, a nd w ithheld licences for well drilling and pumping. The Palestinian water resources have been managed under military authority and through military orders. Historically, the constitutional status of water in the Palestinian territories is unclear and confused, due to the legacy of Turkish, British, Jordanian and Egyptian interventions and water legistlation and the current Israeli military orders. Under Israeli water law, water is a state property, and ownership of land does not include ownership of water sources underlying or passing through owned lands. Water rights of individuals and communities are defined in terms of quantities without specification as to source. (Karen Assef, p.c)(Kahhalah 1981) (Lindholm 1995)

Two Israeli water companies were given the important role of planning the water development in Israel and the occupied areas, its access and distribution: Mekorot and Tahal. Mekorot had total control over the water, implementing for Palestine and the Palestinian people. Mekrerot was drilling wells in Palestinian land to sell water to Palestinians (Mutin 2000, p.94). There is an inequitable apportionment of water between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Israelis, either in the settlements or in Israel proper, exploit 80% of the water originating in the West Bank of Palestine. Basically, it is within the framework of the uneven distribution and access to water that we find development narratives.

The development design

And the meek shall inherit the earth - until a project comes along.
P.Sainath

The World Bank programs 'promote awareness of water scarcity' and their experts attempt to create policies to 'mobilise local expertise'. These aims are constructed within a framework in which it seems as though the ones who have been managing household water for millennia are unaware that it is in fact a scarce resource in need of special attention. The Indian physicist and environmentalist Vandana Shiva asserts that the World Bank in its water policy is creating a situation where water is privatised and the poor have less access to their own water resources; the Bank is transforming that scarcity into a market opportunity for water corporations. *(Shiva 2002, p.87)*

Shiva is not alone in her doubt of the development procedures of the World Bank. Ruth Pearson portrays the World Bank as the high denizen of development orthodoxy, *(Pearson 2000, p.385), and M. Barlow and T. Clarke illustrate how economic globalisation, encouraged by the World Bank,* is the story of the separation of water from the land and from the "commons" to which it belongs *(Barlow & Clarke 2002). The Bank has a privatisation policy which is expressed in their publications. It supposes that water accessibility at low or no cost is economically non-viable and it is also ineffective. Even the poor should pay for a resource when it is scarce. By making the resources reliable the poor will be willing to pay (World Bank & Water Resources Management 1995) (Serageldin & World 1995). As pointed out in the 'World Development Report' of 1992 (World 1992) the poor need to be granted a wider range of options so they can choose the level of water services for which they are willing to pay, thereby giving suppliers a financial stake in meeting the needs of the poor. Fee schedules can be structured so those consumers receive a limited amount of water at a low cost and pay a higher fee for additional water.*

This, I will suggest, is the logic of reducing universal fundamental rights - such as the right to water - to commerce and markets, and then 'targeting' the poor to provide access to water in a system that essentially excludes the poor. The World Bank has

recently initiated water sector reforms, aimed primarily at privatisation of water resources and commercialisation of water management. The privatisation policy recommends commercialising operations at all levels, private investment, substantial increase in water prices, increase in agricultural power tariffs, and creation of water markets. These are recipes for conversion of water into a tradable commodity rather than a life support base for all humankind. (World Bank & Water Resources Management 1995) (Shiva 2002)

Privatisation will aggravate the water crisis. Given the inequalities between rich and poor, industry and agriculture, urban and rural, water markets will take the water from the poor and given it to the rich, take water from the impoverished rural areas and transfer it to affluent urban enclaves. It will also lead to overexploitation of water, because when access to water is determined by the market and not by limits of renewability, the water cycle will be systematically violated, and the water crisis will deepen. Local community management is a precondition for both consumption and equitable use.

Ignoring limits of water availability and the conservation imperative, the Bank recommends a shift from a 'supply-oriented' to a 'demand-oriented' approach. Demands of the economically powerful will therefore override the needs of the poor and the limits of nature. Partial application of this logic through World Bank lending is not the root of the present crisis. Full implementation of the logic of privatisation will not reverse the crisis; it will aggravate it.

In his material from the Solomon Islands and Himalayan India, Keesing pleads for the recognition of ... grim realism, given the economic situation of the less-advantaged villagers (Keesing 1990). He is concerned with villagers realistic everyday life, in which the architects of change (ibid., p.59) are imposing change in agricultural systems, which have survived the test of time. The program the 'developers' introduce brings with it unknown systems that create marginality and helplessness.

Capacity-building depends on incentives and training to build competence, confidence and performance. Seemingly it is a concept closely linked to the idea of empowerment, of giving

people possibilities for social mobility and to make development of communities more accessible. Capacity-building in relation to water projects makes it easier to institutionalise water development, locally or nationally. Institutional water development involves vision, reflection, incentives and participation. Learning needs are addressed, monitored and evaluated through institutions; then the results are fed into new strategies for redefining capacity-building.

The Norwegian government has, through the Norwegian Agency for Development, NORAD, donated 1.3 billion Norwegian crowns to Palestine, and a further NOK 1.3 billion is the sum to be donated between the period of 1999-2003. This makes Palestine the largest single recipient area of bilateral Norwegian assistance. According to NORAD's homepage the aim of the assistance is first and foremost to help the Palestinian Authorities establish sustainable institutions. Institutional development is therefore an important component of co-operation in the fields of energy, water, statistics and physical planning.[17] *When I visited The Palestinian Water Authority, PWA, in 1995 they were developing regulations and working on water legistlations suited for the Palestinian people and the land, and not just* "what we have inherited from the Jordanians, and forced to follow by the Israelis", *a sociologist working for the PWA explained.*

The Palestinians I met who were working on water issues in the Ramallah area wanted to have their own laws concerning their own resources. And the Norwegian government generously funded not only their water building, just at the entrance to Ramallah and Al Bireh, but also their technical and campaigning work, The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate has also contributed to this effort. Through NORAD, Norway has also financed experts to assist the PWA to prepare the Palestinian national position for the final status in their negotiations with the Israelis on the access and availability of water. The aim is that the PWA develops regulations within the sectors of licensing, controlling water usage, making sure that water tariffs are introduced, and that the water available to the people is of good quality.

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[17] *http://www.norad.no/default.asp.*

Multilateral institutions like the World Bank promote capacity-building because they say that 40 % of world population lives in water basins shared by at least two countries. The Bank also reminds us that one in three people will experience water stress by the year 2025. The "Water stress index", which I mentioned earlier, was first used by Falkenmark; the index refers to moderately developed countries in an arid zone, and it is based on the roughly calculated minimum level of water required per capita to maintain an adequate quality of life. While Latin America and the Caribbean have the largest renewable water resources per capita, the Middle East and North Africa have the least renewable water per capita.

In the Middle East the cost of supplying water is also the highest in the world. The explicit agenda is that the population of Palestine is expected to adjust their social structures to the changed and ongoing changing economic circumstances. Despite the substantial economic growth, the country faces a population growth of 3.7%, one of the highest in the world. Water statistics for the West Bank are haphazardly collected. There is an absence of reliable baseline data for pre-1994 period, when water was supposed to be under the new Palestinian Water Authority.

Within the donor community The World Bank is one of the largest institutions in the Middle East, and it has been one of the foremost multilateral donor institutions encouraging change. Its policy towards the region is that the population is faced with a need to change in order to meet global economic circumstances. New effective policies have to be met with a spirit of co-operation between governments in the region and World Bank staffs. Falkenmark maintains that effortless availability and disposal of water is fundamental for all human and socio-economic development. This means that water eases development and makes economic achievement more attainable. When water is scarce, development, as in economic strength is slow. (Falkenmark & Lundquist 1995)

The World Bank argues that the looming water disaster in the Middle East, and especially in the West Bank and Gaza is

generally due to five factors: (1) The lack of mobilisation among the people and a lack of co-operation between the authorities and the people; (2) there is an obvious lack of integrated water resource management; donors and authorities do not co-ordinate their experiences; (3) inefficient and ineffective management of water resources; (4) the legacy of unrealistic water pricing; (5) the lack of initiative to seek alternative sources of water. These arguments which are supplied with models to solve the above issues, do not fit the contextual reality of village life.

The solutions and strategies, which are suggested, or rather implemented, are meant to built the necessary capacity to provide a sustainable foundation for the future and promote rural development. The global declaration strategy is to combat poverty, and there is recognition of the increasing poverty of the Palestinian people, especially in the rural areas, due to prolonged "unrest". The World Bank recognises that the Palestinian people are aware of the local water scarcity, and that for projects to succeed the people will have to participate through their own water council representatives.

Social assessment of traditional water uses and users in the villages should be included to enable users and those who know traditional water usage to move on to a "higher value" use of water. Such "community" based association is essential, because it would lead to more efficient, low-cost alternatives, such as water-saving faucets, low-volume flush toilets, low-flow showerheads. Although there is recognition of the participatory dimension and the inclusion of available surveys on the real effects of how aid is felt "on the ground" in the everyday lives of ordinary Palestinians through the policy of partnership on ownership of projects, there is little evidence that they are included in policy formation.

The above projects are implemented in communities where there is an expansion of the cities, followed by the migration from the villages; these in turn affect rural everyday household activities and especially the lives of the ones left behind, often the older women in the villages. However, because of time, constraining budgets, and many other reasons, women as primary users of household water, and as farmers, are not involved in diagnosing

the needs for their society. The intimate knowledge of the scarce resource base acquired through generations of experience is an asset that women can offer planners of the newer technological methods of water management. Astonishingly enough, none of the village women I spoke with knew of or were involved in an exchange of experiences with policy makers responsible for capacity building for institutional development. Their life work has been ignored and dismissed, they said. Water becomes an institutional matter and no longer an individual matter.

The field of development in the words of Jan Nederveen Pieterse involves thinking and policy… *which* is a terrain of hegemony and counter-hegemony. *(Pieterse Jan 2001,p.9) Between the interests of the developers and the 'stakeholders' we have an imbalance of power. Large governmental and non-governmental aide involves technicians, hydrologists and engineers whose work is done in co-operation with local authorities to secure predictability for what are experienced as poor water environments, and they have access to maps, documents and statistics which represent overall control. Access to water data is politically sensitive; it's gathered outside with the Israeli occupation rather than with the Palestinian peoples. The World Bank documents that are behind the interpretation of the models are not accessible to the women in Musharafah who are concerned, and even if it were available they would not be able to read them. Building institutions based on inaccessible evaluations is problematic, but it is also problematic when projects are initiated during a time when the people's lives alternate between occupation, uprising and Balkanisation.*

Following the modernisation of the management of water during the past years, the resource has been going through several development projects, administrated and controlled by scientists moving on the cutting edge of water technology, and it is frequently assumed that technology is in partnership with development. The organising and building of water institutions is a time consuming enterprise involving large budgets also from other multilateral and bilateral donors. The reality of living with water springs, 'winter' water, cisterns or wells in a place of scarcity goes beyond the notions of capacity-building and institutionalisation; it involves interactions between individuals

which are displayed in the doings and happenings of everyday community realities. The whole complexity of cultural responses, such as value, evaluation and judgement challenge the projects and indicate that constructing other people's realities is premature.

The development discourse

Most of the old women in Musharafah are illiterate, old peasants, while 'development' in itself is about elites and experts committed to legitimate western rationality and scientific knowledge; this dates back to Saint Simonenes' belief that intentional change directed by the elite is founded on rational planning and also often based on noble ideas (Shenton Robert & Cowen 1996). In 1990 the UN first launched the Human Development Report (HDR), with the evocative notion that to be successful development policies must be people centred. Development must permit people to make free choices that will make it possible for them to live a life with integrity. Prior to the Report, aid programs of bilateral aid donors and international institutions such as the World Bank have been blinded by the brilliance of economic growth indices and failed to look at people's individual choices.

Today, the humanisation of development has moved into the core of the general development rhetoric, yet not always necessarily in practice. The 'human' in the Report focuses on the development of the individual's measurements of health, education and wealth, and every year the HDR concentrates on specific themes. The first report in 1990 was dedicated to the measurement of development and complexity of the development issue, while the 1995 issue was devoted to gender and the issue in 2001 to the transfer of technology. Transfer of knowledge is certainly an immanent issue in our global reality. The challenge is to realise where the discrepancies lie.

Such a general understanding of development encourages an idea about what is underdeveloped and developed. At the onset the plans to reach development must be worked out by those who have the required 'newer' technical knoweldge and development, but lately this is questioned; there is demand for more insight into local knowledge and participatory development. The voice of the people must be heard, and on the whole the

development discourse has taken that into consideration. Development transfer of technology has reached a turning point. On one side there is a world of plenty and a world where help and aid are methods to reduce the rift between the rich and the poor. On the other side there are discrepancies between knowledge systems and an unequal balance of power constructed between doner and receiver.

In his study of madness and criminality Foucault maintains that madness as a phenomena in itself does not exist, but is constructed through language and the way it is discussed through time (Rabinow 1991). Initially, discourse analysis was a tool in historical method to illustrate how concepts and references were constructed and how the discourse both divided and formed our relationship to the phenomena. Discourse about madness was decisive as to what was defined as madness and how one should relate to madness. Pathologically it is possible to establish a 'treatment', so the phenomenon was reproduced within an apparent practical framework.

Discourse as it is used here is about what is regularly said and done, and it is tied to conditions of knowledge and power. I use Foucault's view on knowledge.as meaning that which infiltrates social power relations. Foucault claims that the criteria for that which constitutes knowledge, that which excludes and is given the qualifications to know involves activities of power. The construction of knowledge legitimates and indicates directions for actions; this is also relevant in development projects.

Considering the 'contents' of the development discourse, Grillo says that to a large degree it involves contextualising and the contest of ideas. Discourse is a semantic room where social meanings are produced and acted out, and he regrets the absence of a room for actors and peoples in discourse analysis. By seeing development as a discourse we avoid discussing the predicament of the actors role in daily interaction. For Grillo discourse analysis gives a far too biased picture of the practise of development. The analysis is founded on a much too ambitious level of abstraction and functions only on the level of an impression. One pacifies and overlooks the involved parties. We end up with a situation where both the receivers and the givers of

aid are both trapped in an arrangement that is beyond their control. (Grillo 1997)

Accordingly, development is not just one sided, but has several voices and different approaches. Grillo agrees with Hobarts identification of several parallel discourses, but he goes on to say that within these discourses there are many more variations which Hobart does not consider. In specific situations such an analysis is insufficient, because it does not consider the actors in the picture and their unique interests, resources, and degree of power. Grillo considers how individuals actually manoeuvre, manipulate and choose alternative strategies within the established shell. Those same individuals involved in development move on alternative levels within different meaning and 'policy' systems, and they are also capable of juggling the system.

When we go back to Grillo, we find that he uses Arce and Long's (Long & Long 1992) study from Mexico alongside Ferguson's ethnography from Lesotho (Ferguson 1994); it is a "salutary experience" of alternative thought to the reflexive post-modernistic discourse analysis of development (Grillo, 1997). Arce and Long treat that encounter between the developers and the locals as a meeting between different forms of knowledges. They do not see it as Hobart does, as a meeting between separate discourses. In explicit situations knowledge is about practical solutions that are objects for negotiations and positioning, with tactical spectators in the foyer.

Unlike previous pre-post-modernistic approaches to the study of development, the discourse perspective has contributed with new angles to development. There is discussion that separates intentions from results, and finds reasons for why development is carried out and what it represents, and explores the reasons for unsuccessful projects (Pieterse Jan 2001). Also in my fieldwork I find that what Grillo's (Grillo 1997) analysis says of the ongoing failures of the discourse are in many ways relevant. It is true that it is far too easy to see the whole development apparatus as part of the same discourse. Discourse includes a power relation without an acting subject, the idea being that a phenomena has consequences in itself which do not necessarily correspond with

its 'intentions'. Although intentions are 'noble', there are unwanted results, results that are incorporated into the development discourse and rhetoric.

Constructing the underdeveloped

The development discourse constructs a picture of Palestine that is characteristic of a so-called underdeveloped country. Within the configurations of their representations the planners create room for operating with available funds. Following such a train of thought one can see that the concepts of ' poverty', 'third world', and 'underdevelopment' are used as a construction/creation to be able to help the ones involved. With these concepts one has created a discursive room, a set of concepts and practices that create a reality one wishes to relate to, and here is a framework that gives the possibility for pragmatic actions.

In anthropological works on development attention is given to the principle, "culture", (Escobar 1991, p.666) which is founded somewhere between critical and applied anthropology. Traditionally there have been two approaches to the anthropological study of development: to study and come up with more information in the hope of improving the projects, or the use of Marxist or dependency theory to label development as an imperialist project. The focus has either been on the structures, or actor orientated action. Cowen and Shenton (Shenton Robert & Cowen 1996) differentiate between immanent and intentional development. The former is when history takes its course and change is inevitable, passive. It is just something that happens in the course of time - things change. Intentional development occurs when there is an active incursion in order to direct (immanent) development in a desired direction. There are still two dominating paradigms in development: modernisation and dependency theory. Both are conceptual frameworks founded on the idea that development is about progress and growth for the 'underdeveloped' and poor countries. The former paradigm maintains in that modernisation and growth in poor countries is possible through the help of intentional development.

Dependency theory is founded on the historical events and criticises the modernist thought, asserting that the expansion of capitalism and international free trade is what

operates/runs/manages progress in the North, while at the same time maintaining underdevelopment in the South. It is because of the integration of the capitalist markets that the poor remain poor, because the surplus is drained from the local community and into the metropolis and ends up in the North. With such a perspective in mind the only alternative open for the South's survival is suspension/break with the international and capitalist markets. Kate Manzo in "Modernist Discourse and the Crisis of Development Theory" reminds the reader that we know what ails the patient (Manzo 1991, p.5), and that initially both modernists and dependency theorists end up evaluating the world the same way. In spite of their criticism of modernists, dependency theorists' point of departure was the same as modernists' theories about development: development is part of the nation-state, and they do not question the motives behind development. Hobart goes further, saying that both modernists and dependency theorists pacify the 'receivers' of the development efforts. Their society or culture (Hobart 1993a, p.4) is perceived as either an encumbrance - by the modernists - or as subjugated by market economy. (ibid)

Escobar (Escobar 1995) is sceptical about what anthropologists can contribute within the development apparatus and believes that it is naive to not consider development institutions as cultural manifestations. He claims that anthropologists should remain on the outside of development institutions and study development as discourse. Escobar points out that when anthropologists work as developers the underlying issue is that development becomes something everyone should have - it is universal. It is true that also the old women in the village wish for some 'progress', "new things", as some of them put it. But they are selective and resist changes they do not want. The idea of planning as a motor for social change, and therefore progress, is the basis for the needs for development.

There is a belief among scholars, NGOs and governments that development is urgent and that it represents the only way forward if we are to erase global inequality. Development anthropology echoes sensitivity and relativism, but even these virtues cannot deny the ethnocentric features underlying the idea of development. Development anthropologists see their role as the

interpreters of the poor and desolate (Escobar 1995). Escobar's writing reflects a political standpoint, where he concentrates on the role of the anthropologist in the development discourses. The anthropologist is programmed to bring the grassroots out, in the open, so that poverty becomes visible for all to see. The anthropologist transmits information about the poor. He, the anthropologist, becomes more visible.

Developers accuse anthropologists of being unscientific, and the result is that anthropologists become far too scientific and follow the directions of the developers. So, the problem is constructed, and development is the only way out. This is precisely the way I read World Bank reports from Palestine. A problem is analysed, alternative measures are suggested and a policy is formulated. This procedure may be referred to as 'policy' (Shore & Wright 1997), which becomes an instrumental part of a discourse, because documents showing the plans illustrate the dominant discourse regarding the issues. The different plans or documents and the involved discourses make up what Ferguson calls the 'anti-policy machine' (Ferguson 1994), because they remove questions about power from the issues and redefine the questions as pragmatic and technical problems which need to be solved. The policy is brought to life, later to be evaluated by a team of experts. Here Escobar says the anthropologist is wise to leave the development alone. Being a 'mainstream' anthropologist Escobar advises anthropologists should do what we do best - namely ethnography.

Being (ideally and in principal) egalitarian and relative in our approach to those we study and write about, we do well to avoid the pitfalls that end by putting us in the firing line. We should avoid the seduction of being part of the team of developers; anthropologists have much to contribute to the development discourse outside such teams. Anthropology is a subject with long traditions of holistic studies. Our aim is to strive to understand other people on their own premises. We do so through our cultural relativistic approach. Such an approach builds up scepticism toward change from the outside. The developer's operative system of concepts about development is difficult for anthropologist to accept because such development concepts suggest that one society is better than another.

Gender and development

The context of development which we are exploring is a component in the ongoing, dynamic field of gender and gender roles in the Middle East. The World Bank has put considerable effort into involving women as stakeholders through their promotion of gender equality. Enhancing women's participation in economic development is documented in an operational policy report (Nguyen Minh & Bhushan 1995). Projects are appraised as to their GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure), especially demonstrated by the Bank's educational policy which is oriented towards girls' education (Pearson 2000). These ideas are applied through earmarked funds aimed at the education of girls, education being.... The single most important measure that we can adopt to promote both development and sound environmental policy over time. *(Ferguson 1994, p.15) In the spirit of 'putting people first' almost all development programs today are more gender oriented in their modernisation campaigns.*

Nevertheless, the issue of gender is basically about women's heavy chores in communities in the South. The success of the projects are generally assessed within the agenda constructed by the large development institutions and donors - often disregarding other connections. The reactions of the old women confirm the view that economic development policy not only affects the position of gender but is also a question of generations. The questions of whether the old women are experiencing the global wave and whether other opportunities are accessible to them are controversial questions.

It is generally agreed upon that generalisations of gender differences in the region must consider religion, class, education, and urban and rural differences. We must also consider age; educated Muslim upper-middle and middle class women in the urban centres perhaps due to contacts with foreign schools they have always been closer to the impulses from outside, and the younger women are now pursuing careers in the labour market. Yet, the implicit agenda of this same urgent modernisation has alienated the lower and lower-middle class women in the urban centres, women in the rural areas, and, as my material shows

especially older rural women. Capacity-building institutions, as such, introduce change in more than one direction.

While the studies of lives as lived are fundamental to our understanding of the complexities which engage men's and women's lives in the region, still we find that there are a varieties of knowledges which we need to address. Within the water development context we should be concerned with the skills that women have shown throughout history, in particular their capability to cope with the scarcity of water which is literally a matter of life and death in this extremely arid region.

The documentation of women's everyday life and their chores concerning water management throughout history is certainly a problematic issue. The narratives and vignettes illustrated that although the lives are lived similtaneously, patterns of experiences show variations, contradictions and complexities. Hence it is problematic when women's agency is confronted with the donors and the programmes of centralisation of water that are based solely on project appraisals in which piped water is part of the 'freedoms'.

The women, I have already said, welcomed piped water; they looked forward to progress, and it seems that nobody thought of the water spring until it was lost. 'Piped' was perceived to be in the same group of 'issues for progress' as education and health. The developers and health officials saw the possibility of a remote village finally getting piped water as an empowerment process: women are provided with water at home; children are given clean drinking water, and people and homes are cleaner. Yet, Palestine is still under what the UN charter defines as an illegal occupation, and things did not turn out as expected.

In spite of the obvious advantages of running water in the homes, the 'primitive' chore of fetching water at the spring is missed, because it served practical needs and had an emotional purpose. Hence, if we accept the provision of a piped water supply as a prerequisite for the 'empowerment' of women, we will be disregarding viable cultural negotiations, for instance roles within the household concerning, for example, the balance of responsibilities between men and women. A narrow understanding of water is futile, because, as we heard in the

narratives, fetching household water dealt with a totality of women's world. The women's knowledge about water is but one feature in complex connectives; the women also have an in-depth knowledge about Palestine's nature that is physically and emotionally embedded.

With narratives in mind I will go on to elaborate further on the development discourse drawing on the gender empowerment discourse. Feminist researchers have focused on both the negative and the positive effects of gender empowerment which are introduced by development projects. And an increasing amount of feminist inspired research has provided alternative and more complete ways of analysing development from a gender perspective. Since the appearance of Ester Boserup's book Women's Role in Economic Development in 1970, much has been done to highlight the differential impact of development on women. (Boserup 1970)

Yet, the persistence and in some cases intensification, of old problems such as poverty exemplify the insufficiency of this approach. Policy makers and practitioners must consider both the material realities in which women and men are immersed and the ways in which institutions and ideologies (political, economic, cultural, and religious) position women and men and affect their lives differently. Thus, using Michelle Barrett's terminology (Barrett & Phillips 1992), it is important to analyse 'words' as well as 'things' to understand the gendered dimensions of development in general and poverty in particular. This implies that our understanding of poverty as women experience it must include factors attached to its meaning as well as to the material elements with which it is connected.

Gender and development discourses begin at the theoretical level, yet they have clear practical implications. The abundant literature on women and gender and development that has appeared since the 1970's has made considerable use of the household as a unit of analysis. This has proved to be a useful and strategic starting point for understanding the significance of gender relations and unequal distributions of resources and power. I will briefly point out distinctions between three different views of the household and explore their implications for the

analyses of poverty and the formulation of poverty eradication policies.

First, the orthodox neo-classical approach tends to view the household as a harmonious unit within which decisions regarding consumption, the division of labour, and labour market participation are made without apparent tensions among household members. In its most extreme version, an altruist household head (assumed to be male) essentially guarantees not only maximisation of household utility but also supports the families in need during times of adversity and insecurity. Thus, poverty eradication measures informed by this model assume that there is no need to conceptualise separately the experiences of women living in poverty, because their needs are automatically and harmoniously addressed by an altruist household head. Additionally, the existence of a high proportion of female-headed households across countries is foreign to this conceptualisation.

Second, the household has been viewed as the locus of tension and struggle where unequal power relations between women and men are manifested. This approach questions the notion of the family as an harmonious unit, suggesting that it must be understood as a location of production and redistribution (Hartmann 1987, p. 111). Without denying that families also are concerned with emotional and physical security, it calls attention to the type of labour people perform in the family and also their personal influence on the produce of their efforts (Hartmann 1987). Using this approach, poverty eradication measures must take into consideration the division of labour within the household and the gender-related resource distribution which affects gender relations. For example, because women tend to use a higher proportion of their earnings on children and household expenses (Benería & Feldman 1992; Benería & Roldán 1987), poverty eradication measures that increase women's income are more likely to have a positive effect on family well-being than those addressed to men.

Finally, an intermediate approach conceptualises the household as the locus of both tension and cooperation. It interprets the family as a contradictory institution through which power, affective relations, and resource distribution are played out at the micro

level. Amartya Sen's household bargaining model, which emphasises the 'cooperative conflicts' that characterise household relations, typifies this approach (Rai 2002). In this framework, the process of bargaining depends upon a series of characteristics that define the relative strengths and/or weaknesses of different household members. Within this approach, actions can be taken to improve women's bargaining position. Hence, this approach is useful in providing guidelines for gender-sensitive poverty eradication measures, such as those geared to increasing women's self-esteem and autonomy, improving their health, decreasing their work load, and ensuring their greater access and control over resources.

Many practitioners and thinkers have tried to make women 'matter' in development. However, women-focused approaches have often sought to address women's needs outside the wider social contexts in which they live. As a result, they have been perhaps more damaging than earlier 'gender-blind' efforts which simply ignored women's specific concerns. In Musharafah, there is the constant actuality of an occupation and the women are affected in one way or another by this occupation. Women are particularly vulnerable to new management methods that are introduced in the wake of economic liberalisation. Indications from villages demonstrate that women are under increasing pressure to meet expectations that the policy makers and donor countries are unaware of. Projects of women's empowerment are launched during a critical time of political unrest, and these demand approaches include analyses of rural women's ability to cope under conditions of conflict. With gender mainstreaming policy, and a development of pro-woman, the donor countries and development agencies demands have failed to look more closely at the 'power' in 'empowerment'.

Development for the women

We have heard that the Big Story of water in Palestine is also the history of the Arab/Israeli question; it is the element that expresses the intensity of the political conflict, because it is about land. For both peoples water expresses their love for the land of Palestine. It is constructed in memories and landscape. Palestine is the land that is watered by the rains and the dews. Its trees and its ploughed land do not need artificial irrigation...Filistin is the

most fertile of the Syrian provinces. *(Said 1980, p.11) Water and land are surrounded by the mountains, plains and valleys and constitute the landscape bestowed by God. For the women of Musharafah water cannot be controlled and priced by man;* "It is against God's wishes", *they repeated time and again. Water is a gift of God bestowed on humans for the preservation of life, which is* "in God's Hands"*; therefore water must be shared freely by all.*

In their descriptions and explanations of the village they go back to the authentic Palestinian community and argue that the land is largely agricultural with a large society of peasants who worked and lived off the land. Water is hence perceived as an extension of the land, which within the political discourse is otherwise known as the homeland.

Subsistence agriculture was the foundation of Musharafah's livelihood, and the peasants' main concern was to secure their livelihood. In the village narrative the availability of water in the spring is tied to securing the village settlement. The aim of the peasants was always to manage and acquire a livelihood or ***muna****.* ***Muna*** *was secured through the storing of the harvest of grapes, olives and figs, some of which were taken to the markets by the coast where they were exchanged for wheat, barley and lentils. The women also exchanged dried figs for pottery and wheat from the villages in the plains. The dried figs are known as* ***quttein*** *and were especially popular trading goods between the women of Musharafah for ceramics from Jib, a village south of Musharafah. The women from Jib traded the figs in the villages of Gaza Strip, and this was a connection which the women told us they appreciated. But after the Israeli occupation in 1948, the trade route became more difficult and eventually all contact ceased.*

The agriculture was based on rain-fed grains. Summer vegetables such as squash, tomatoes and cucumbers were mainly planted to cover the needs of the ***dar****. The seedlings were put down in small holes in the ground; spring water was used to cover the seedlings, then dry earth was put on top. The dry earth functioned as insulation against the summer heat. When the vegetables sprouted they retained the moisture from the remaining humidity in the ground. Onions and garlic were grown*

in winter, and some tobacco was raised for local consumption. Musharafah was among the villages in the Ramallah hills known for its vines. But the grapes were invaded thirty years ago by a root parasite, ruining the harvest. The basis of agriculture from the Ottoman period and as late as the 1970s was olives, figs, and grapes. These are the crops which the villagers of Musharafah believed were the "fruits of paradise". *Paradise, in the village story is the place of rest sheltered from the heat by fruit trees and cooled by running water.*

The women's story timeline is the beginning of the twentieth century and up to our time; this is part of a period which the historian Judith Tucker has defined as wrought by an encroaching world economy as well as various forms of European imperialism, including settler colonialism *(Nashat & Tucker 1999). These changes intersect with the already existing social order and bring about alterations, or they* forge a new context for both men and women *(ibid). Hence, Tucker insists that we must not create constructions of modernity in contact or conflict with traditionality; rather we should concentrate on the outcome of such a complex mingling. Anyway, European expansions were not evenly distributed in the region; we can, for example, assume that changes in villages like Musharafah, up in the highlands of Palestine, had a totally different rhythm of transformation than the more accessible city of Jaffa.*

We know that women in the rural Levant were active in the village tasks of gathering fuel, fetching water, harvesting, shepherding, and we know that the gradual supremacy of the European market wage labour attracted male peasants to larger villages or cities and left the women to tend the village resources. Integration into market economy marginalised women and dislocated their chores or tasks from what was a village structure. Tucker argues that the development which started in the nineteenth- century brought about a certain confusion among the women; I believe we still see in villages like Musharafah: The economic changes of the period did not necessarily spell improvement for women or raise their level of participation in the economy. Indeed, in the case of peasant women, at least in regions where commercialized agriculture came to dominate, the erosion of the family economy and the rise of wage labor could lead to their economic

marginaliztion *(Nashat & Tucker 1999). Tucker does not add that, while receiving the transmissions of that came with change, the Middle East remained set in its patriarchal traditions and held to the constraints which make it difficult for women to join equally in the wave of change.*

With gender mainstreaming as a policy The World Bank and other large development institutions are aiming at doing more for women in the Third World. The World Bank's women's monitoring group are keeping "women's eyes on the Bank", and it is not difficult to agree with Pearson that gender mainstreaming in development projects is also a success story. If we break down development to specifics such as education and health, we see that development has contributed positively (Pearson 2000). The empowerment that has been the Bank's aim has introduced changes that are welcomed by many women in the south, including Palestine. Since development hinges on empowerment, then education as an alternative way of learning about life is fundamental.

Empowerment of women through education is a concrete achievement and provides space for women to challenge internal cultural practices. It is one the optimistic possibilities which empowerment through development, specifically education, presents that are prominent in development discourse of The World Bank. And yet, postmodernist critiques of development are at issue with the Bank, suggesting that one of the major causes of women's continued desperate position is the Bank's neglect of and lack of serious engagement with women's life experiences and knowledge.

Deconstruction of the World Bank's dominant education/knowledge-transfer discourse is also a theme in Sittirak's work from her home country Thailand, Her point of departure is namely about what change through development has meant to Thai women, presented through a vivid story which challenges the development discourse. Sittirak's chapter on what development has meant to her mother is especially revealing. She talks about the profound changes that women have had to deal with and which have wrecked many lives, and how

development has caused alienation in women who otherwise had an active everyday life. (Sinith 1998)

During the past decades several studies have focused on the link between gender and nature, maintaining in both a spiritual and a conceptual sens .(Pearson 2000, p.390) Ecofeminism comes to mind here; a new term for an ancient wisdom (Mies & Shiva 1993, p.191)activates women's relation to the environment, and idealises the challenge the earth is faced with, by intimately linking earth to women. Such semblance or images from for example Vandana Shiva are double edged. She argues that development is a systematic course of action promoting colonisation, and it counters fairness in variety and superimposes the philosophies constructed by Western technological man as the answer to all problems (Shiva 1997). Shiva demands a more ecological and feminist conscious policy that recognises diversities, rather than continues with 'their' (Western) 'miracle' trees and seeds which are only destroying eco-systems and drying up wells. In her work, Shiva concludes that the only solution is to adapt a more feministic approach to the environment. In agricultural societies women, due to the nature of their livelihood, also have their domestic domain outside the four walls of the home. The 'Earth movements' and 'eco-feminism' discourses are a reaction to the growing capitalism and consumerism; this evolution is regarded as taxing on the environment.

In the West demands have been manifested through marches against nuclear plants, factories emitting toxic gases, and research in genetic engineering. Fundamental in the philosophy of the 'earth movements' is the idea of, and the demands for, more consciousness and attentiveness towards the wellbeing of Mother Earth (Shiva 1997) (Mies 1998). The idea of motherhood as part of earth matters goes back to the linking of the history of women with the narrative of the natural environment (Merchant 1995). By overlooking the connections to other forms of subjection, ecofeminists have simplified the oppression of women. Mies makes reference to research, also so-called liberal studies, where gender is included as a policy of the time, as in 'add gender and stir'.

The so-called western feminism is labelled as suffering from biased conclusions about the definitions of oppression, as determining the position of women according to western feminist ideals. Researchers, especially from the South, are today insisting on more awareness from the public concerning the problems caused by increased global industrialisation, which also include women's consumption in the west, and the predicaments of cultural constraints, which define the lives of both men and women. Yet, the framing device alludes to the spiritual alliances between nature and women as an appearance and not as an activity. Shiva compares nature's breakdown to the source take-over by male technology, which is defined as patriarchal male supremacy over women, insisting that the tendencies of the ecofeminist cause must not become a movement of 'luxury spirituality'. Instead, issues such as industrialisation and cultural constraints should be judged for what they cause: an increase in the future estrangement of women from their primary domain and sources of subsistence. It is a serious concern, because the role women have held in rural areas is that of helping to maintain the household; there is no active role that immediately replaces the work they do. Women's agency, through the spirit of nature, is also part of the institutionalised patriarchal system.

Several other trends are pointing out that absolutist mainstreaming supports Western thinking in a discriminatory fashion and structures representation of gender in the Middle East in specific contexts (Bush 1998) (Pearson 2000). When we go back to the representation of knowledge we find that, according to deconstructivism, all knowledges are socially created; hence the issue should concern the procedures that make knowledge hierarchies possible and on the power negotiations between men and women in everyday lives. Development includes a power relation (Escobar 1995)without an acting subject; the idea is that a phenomenon has consequences which do not essentially correspond with its 'intentions'. Although intentions are 'noble', there are unwanted results: results that are incorporated in the development discourse and rhetoric.

The development discourse constructs a picture of Palestine that is characteristic of a so-called underdeveloped country. Within the configurations of their representations the planners create

room for operating with available funds. Following such a train of thoughts, one can see that the concepts of 'poverty', 'third world', and 'underdevelopment' are a construction/creation made able to help the ones involved. With these concepts a discursive room has been created, a set of concepts and practices that create a reality one wishes to relate to; here is a framework that gives the possibility for pragmatic dealings.

The postmodernist articulation involves development as a knowledge and power imbalance. Development within the context of gender is an implementation of surveillance and control whose effects are so pervasive that even failures reinforce the system by defining relationships between target groups and sources of expertise. While employing a similar method of deconstruction, others disagree with the postmodernist theories. Jan Nederveen Pieterse sees 'alternative development' as an angle that has been concerned with introducing alternative practices and redefining the goals of development. It has been successful in the sense that key elements of both have been adopted in mainstream development. *(Nederveen Pieterse 2001, p.74) He criticises its lack of vision concerning the relativity between micro-macro perspectives, still he says that methodologically alternative development has explored* agency, methods and objectives of development. *(ibid)*

While for Escobar 'modernisation' as in 'development' has been a fraud inflicted on powerless peoples, alternative development is less orthodox, involving anti-capitalism, Green thinking, feminism, ecofeminism, democratization, new social movements, Buddhist economics, cultural critiques, and poststructuralist analysis of development discourse *(Nederveen Pieterse 2001, p.75). What marks alternative development as alternative is its goal to satisfy basic needs thorough the encouragement of community participation for self-reliance.*

Alternative development is usually practised by NGOs looking to apply their development expertise to local communities while working with local communities. This generates knowleges; an effort to form mutual knowledge that works in spite of the policies of development mainstreaming established by the Big Story of development. Still, with reference to what the women say about

their water in Musharafah, there are problems with the alternative approach.

What concerns me here is the trap of generalisations, that, the poor peoples of the Third World are less sophisticated, and their lives more 'physical' (rather than also emotional) than peoples in the West. The women also aspire to modernisation, they do prefer being driven in a car to Ramallah rather than walking; television is vital, and the 'bellyphone' (mobile phone) is desired by the old women. At the same time they resist the 'technocratic' world of 'modernisation' and 'development' which occurs in a framework of occupation and poverty. The women want to maintain certain 'peasant ways', like the landscape, water, embroidery and olive groves. Thus there are complexities of inner struggles between what fits in their lives and what they can engage with.

Exploring what is going on within the field of 'women in development', or 'development and women' - two of the main trends - we find that the gender discourse in development is an embattled issue. In an article which reviews her own discussion on women bargaining with patriarchy Kandiyoti writes that there seems to be no obvious way to bridge the gap between theories of gender and feminist social practice, especially in the field of gender and development (Kandiyoti 1998b, p.147). When we look closer we see that the women's story of Musharafah is part of the global issue of feminisation of poverty within the context of female headed households.

In Musharafah, women are increasingly the economic actors and heads of households, and their households have become poorer. I am here measuring poverty in terms of inadequacy of nutritious foods and health. In 1996 the Human Development Report introduced a new index that reflected the percentage of people who lack three basic, or minimally essential capabilities: to be well nourished; have access to health units; literacy. Shirin M.Rai has argued that within the framework of international concern for the position of women, the 'culture' issue is identified with oppression; For western development agencies...women's silence on issues of cultural practices reinforced the Oriental imagery of oppressed women waiting to be rescued through new

development initiatives *(Rai 2002,p.57). Rai is referring to the patriarchal discrimination against women. Today, NGOs are generally 'culture and gender conscious', and there are more assessments in which gendered culture is seriously considered. But connecting homes to potable water and introducing 'decent' sanitation is normally not problematic; it is a subject that is perceived as being 'for the good of the stakeholders'. Piped water, within the framework of development, is part of the gender empowerment which is a cross cutting issue in the development discourse.*

Lets turn back to the village ethnography; In the economical reality of the village there is increasing unemployment among the children and grandchildren. Hunger is a growing critical issue and a growing problem among older village women, because income shortage has created food shortages. The issue of hunger is sensitive a nd d ouble e dged: a ccording to Palestinian traditional values the family is expected to stay together and support each other, yet occupation shatters such ideals. Indeed, in my data hunger and poverty are linked to the changes that have come about after the installation of piped water. Day-to-day life demands more expenses from the villagers; tap water is expensive. This makes keeping a small vegetable garden difficult, and people have become increasingly dependent on help. What we hear in Musharafah is that the women talk about how in the past they were more in control of their lives, while today they have become more exposed and vulnerable to the outside economic and political market forces.

An important contribution to development research in the Middle East has been the insistence from several scholars that the life of women in the region is visible, diverse and complex. Still, the question of female headed households left alone, poor and hungry, cuts into the very vein of regional religious principles. It is important to bring forth the contradictions and realities in 'modern' lives so to better understand the particularities of the lives as lived. There has been a break away from the dichotomies of earlier works which placed the Middle Eastern woman as either traditional or modern, either in the West or the East. (Kandiyoti 1998a)

What I saw in the villages is that women are going through changes in their encounters with market-modernity and that, in effect, the past becomes a dynamic part of the ongoing transitions. Traditionalism is not a static situation, but a dynamo responding to substantial change. In dealing with demands to change old ways and adopt new technologies, the women draw on collective stories, shared by other women of their generation. Through collective memories, they not only encounter new ideas, but they also bind the modern with the traditional, and separation with continuity, because they move within and between the market and the household. My material shows that the so-called traditional rural society has flexible elements that the debates so far have not recognised as a part of traditions.
Women are part of the market economy because their work is tied to the macro system production in one way or another.

However, their work is unnoticed, because it is tied to the private sphere and internal dealings of the household unit. Their choices involve cultural constraints that prevent them from joining in the change. There is a chaotic relationship between change induced by donor development and cultural constraints, and we need to review established dichotomies between tradition and modernisation. Perhaps we should think of modernity in terms of inclusion versus alienation. There is a need to bring forth the nuances of how growth of market economies should come to terms with traditions that are the foundations of modernity.

Modernity within the context of gender in the villages is generally analysed in a social-cultural perception of the individualisation of men and women. Modernity creates a context that encourages individual aims, while in an economic context modernity is related to industrialisation and progress towards market economies. Such dichotomies give an impression of totally separate worlds, where market economy is then separated from private spheres. If we insist on defining modernity as the individualisation, rationalisation, secularisation of society we will lose sight of the dynamic processes which are found and created in the juncture between so called traditional and modern social forms. Speaking of modernisation in Musharafah is a way of indicating change in the lives of old and young women. The change takes place in the form of matrixes planned and created in and by development

institutions and organisations, without consideration of conditions in which these ideas will have to function.

By demonstrating how Palestinian rural women do not fit into the static picture of passive peasants in traditional village community and do not fit into our picture of the 'unaware woman', we can get a more realistic view of what is happening. That which links past gender roles with present gender roles, in other words response from the women, suggests that development shows women as agents confronted with change, yet their social functions and roles remain constant. Institutionalisation of water initiated by multilateral donors and the traditional management of household water are a contradiction in terms. Institutions created by donors are meant to substitute for a tradition where a group of people, in this case rural elderly women, were the prime executors.

During the past decade, NGOs and other others involved in the question of development and empowerment have relentlessly sought to increase both their insight and accessibility to the deprived peoples of the Third World. They have shown sincere concern for the disadvantaged and expressed noble objectives for the empowerment of the weak through mainstreaming esteemed ideals such as the 'environment', 'gender equality', 'human rights' and 'democracy'. Clearly, development workers have brought with them many goods: improvements in health and education. Yet in their efforts to expand possibilities and put order in what seems unorganised, they have changed ordinary lives, and the consequences of that 'modernisation' are beyond the control of the peoples involved.

While there is recognition among development workers that knowledge is locally rooted, there is also the assumption that scientifically based knowledge creates a future situation which is an improvement of current lives. Through the policy of 'participation', local experiences and knowledges are involved in projects, but the question remains whether 'consequences' of projects is an issue which developers will take seriously.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

BETWEEN TRADITION AND DEVELOPMENT: FINDING A PLACE FOR WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE

In the general development discourse technology is defined as knowledge of the rules of thumb of those practising it. The Human Development Report of 2001, entitled Making New Technologies Work for Human Development *(UNDP & Report 2001), emphasises the potential of technology as a tool for development and not only, as it is often considered, a reward for economic progress. Many poor people around the world lack access to basic services and resources: the HDR statistics show that of the 4,6 billion people in developing countries and approximately 21.7 % lack access to decent water sources, while 52.1 % lack access to basic sanitation. The report challenges the World Bank's GNP approach to development and says that:* Human development is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interest *(UNDP & Report 2001p.9). The report has a 'leap frogging' system approach to technology transfer; with proper inventive public policy the transfer of technologies is an instrument for progress. (UNDP & Report 2001)*

Two years earlier the World Bank published its report on Knowledge for development, *and is careful to include the time perspective and space awarded to knowledge:* Knowledge takes time to evolve, be disseminated, and be accepted...Knowledge can also be lost *(World Bank1998 / 99, p.101). Despite the noticeable change in development 'paradigm', there is a construction which adheres to the dissimilarities between the indigenous and the scientific; hence while attempting to 'empower' the 'indigenous' we have still the policy of a development/underdevelopment polarity.*

By using traditional knowledge, do we mean that it is indigenous? There are several obvious objections to this claim. This is important, indigenous indicates certain claims, and the women obviously claim water as part of their cultural and emotional

property located in a physical place that they have particular knowledge about. Hence, this information can be applied when distribution of land and settlement is an issue. Indigenous knowledge of the water spring is dependent on an emotional and local place. It is closely linked to a complex social history, constructed by meetings between various knowledge systems. Water in this context is a symbol of life, sharing goodness with others and belonging to a land.

In Musharafah the women speak at length of belonging to the **khala**, because they 'worship' and 'know' it; the water is theirs because they have the knowledge about managing it, about the temperature of the water, and the consistency of its natural benefiting properties. They have a vast experience of manipulating and managing scarce water resources for the benefit of not only the household, but also for economic and political stability. Concentrating more on local classifications experienced through years of management would not only prevent new water reformers from overlooking the significance of traditional water experiences and management; it would also include the household administrators in making the new technology more viable. This means more than 'participation' projects. I am suggesting that the significance of the outcome and consequences must be included in the participation discourse.

Toward a Global Science: Mining Civilizational Knowledge is a questioning book written by Susantha Goonatilake (Goonatilake 1998). In it he tells us, using many metaphors, the history of science from a particularly South Asian experience. His aim is to create a science which totally includes the scientific poetics from the Third World. Particularly in his first two chapters he explores the meaning of the metaphor "mining", and he wants to imagine a knowledge tree with branches which attempt to develop views on the world they are sampling (Goonatilake 1998, p.13). Goonatilake asks us to go back and find the windows which have influenced the production of knowledge. While today's science is basically Western, the West has not yet acknowledged that non-western civilisations have contributed greatly to the greatness of Western scientific development. Rather than dismiss these civilisations' 'stock of knowledge', the West should be more enthusiastic and less positioned and adopt ideas from the past

achievements of these cultures. Maybe such an approach will assist in realistically considering the eventual undesired consequences of projects.

Knowledge is a principal issue here, and Barth says that knowledge provides people with materials for reflection and premises for action, whereas "culture" too readily comes to embrace also those reflections and those actions (Barth 2002, p.1). He focuses on knowledge rather than culture, and although I use 'culture' as a concept, I did indicate in the introduction that I privilege a pragmatic approach to theory in order to explore my material. So, although, I do use culture, I also apply Barth's theories of knowledge, both to be able to understand women's agency and their engagement with the world. Knowledge is a sharper instrument to use when we are engaging with experiences. It brings forth the subtleties of variations in 'my' women's construction of their world.

The stories I have discussed in Part Two and the interpretations they give are grounded in shared engaging and connective knowledge. Knowledge, Barth has repeated in much of his recent work, is dispersed in society; we have it and we also use it. As anthropologists we speak to people while they are using knowledge, which means that we must also be aware of the processes of change which are in effect as people communicate. When Dalal as a new bride, was going to perform the ritual of filling water at the spring, the two old women who quarrelled about the procedure were falling back on their memories. With no written tradition of their ritual there is a path dependency; that means that through the act of performing they are actually building on their last performance of **'talat al bir'**.

To understand the ritual and festivities surrounding **'talat al bir'** which the old women insisted so much on, we will then need to investigate and understand that last act of the knowledge. This knowledge is sustained within a certain social organisation and carries a certain set of values which are used to build on. Fetching water has symbolic values, which are used in different constellations which we might think of as cultural. Yet culture becomes diffused into an unspecified realm of things, so that we could say that culture is made up of a jumble of disorganised

symbols. Further, the system of knowledge organises the confusion into procedural models which make it easier for us to grasp what is going on and thus easier to take into account the unintended consequences of actions. In a sense culture is the context in which knowledge operates.

If we draw on the 'social interactions' anthropology of Fredrik Barth we begin from a precise and complete delineation of all observable social behaviours in a given context of competition or conflict at the level of individual interactions; we seek a generative model capable of accounting for the processes that produced every manifestation. If we follow Barth, then, the sources of historical transformation are embedded in individual interactions. Knowledge is what we use to interpret and act on the world; it compromises not only our skills but also our feelings which we use to understand the world.

Everyday things cannot be said

'Everyday things cannot be said' may be what in essence defines the complexity of the subject I am attempting to explore and write about. Fetching water is an everyday thing; it is one of those chores which Daniel Roche writes about so brilliantly. His French title is Histoire des choses banales, freely translated 'the history of banal things'; the formal English title is A history of everyday things. These trivial chores of everyday life, like fetching water, baking bread or herding goats are connected to such a web of complexity that they are no longer really banal. The banal fades away, leaving behind a trail of historicity and hints to build an interpretation of everyday lives on.

It is the linkages or rather connectivities to what the women 'know'- applying Barth's definition of knowledge (Barth 2002) as the meanings whereby people relate directly to an external world - which can then aid us as an object lesson when we try to capture their conceptions and concerns. It is possible to take advantage of this above definition of knowledge and use it to delve into the implications a distinct chore has on the women's entangled lives with significant others. The women cannot or do not say everyday things about the landscape, yet they can talk about it in relation to where they belong in a system. It is simply this I do when I draw on knowledge, which is stored and

transmitted to the events and memories of chores and identity that are attributed to landscape.

The perspective on traditions of knowledge, which I draw on, comes from the fundamental academic theories Fredrik Barth has opened up to anthropology. I am referring here in particular to his explorations into traditions of systems of knowledge, and how it is possible to apply those not only in understanding other people's realities ...for their insights into life (Barth 1995, p.66). I understand Barth's use of knowledge as being contrary to Schutz's use of the same concept. For Schutz knowledge is, as with Barth, on the practical level of people's everyday life, but he keeps 'rationality' in everyday life aside (Schutz & Luckmann 1989). While Fredrik Barth's actor is a rational, 'calculating' individual, for Alfred Schutz, the individual acts in everyday life on the basis of routines. These 'rules of thumb' are preserved in the already existing structures, and although Schutz has another angle than Barth, I use his concept of 'stock of knowledge' here to elaborate on which knowledge we are talking about in development.

I will now go back to the operational problem occurring when donor countries finance the building of water resources management institutions in the third world. Here we are faced with seemingly intricate questions. Upon whose water experiences are the institutions being built? Which stock of knowledge is going to count? Is "old" knowledge worthy? An approach might be to explore discourses on systems of knowledge as they have evolved within gender and modernisation frameworks, and within certain discrete fields, such as economic development and the study of nation state. How can the old women meet change without "becoming confused?" the women ask. The outline of the life the women have lived is judged in terms of a specific supply of knowledge that is relevant for what they according to local culture are supposed to apply. All knowledge is local, no matter what its pretensions, (Rosaldo 1999, p.31); it follows that the answers to the above questions will need to consider the power of articulation. We are dealing with cultural categories and constraints, and the eventual possibility for the women in Musharafah to respond to unintended outcomes.

Knowledge discourses

Knowledge is critical for development, because everything we do depends on knowledge. World Development Report 1998/99

In analysing the outcome of piped water we are met with methodological procedures of defining knowledge among peoples and making sense of them. Studying such knowledges has many labels; indigenous knowledge, local knowledge, folk knowledge, folk science, ethnoscience, and traditional knowledge. I use traditional and local knowledge.

The basic anthropological debate on knowledge is concerned with knowledge as abstractions that we acquire during fieldwork. In the tradition of Radcliffe-Brown, it is said that knowledge is socially created. So it follows that alternative knowledge that brings about change in isolated communities is difficult, because the people in such places do not have optional "language" with which to estimate their own society. Such a view visualises the local knowledge as static and uncompromising. I agree with Maurice Bloch in that in anthropology, when claiming the 'natives point of view', there is a tendency to conceptualise 'their people' to the absurd *(Bloch 1992, p.127). They assume that the 'folk model' used is compatible with 'common folk view' (Bloch 1992, p.28). But the building blocks which are relied on are more often 'multi-stranded' (Bloch 1992), and he therefore also pays attention to the process of interpreting language and understanding other cultures' conceptualisations without presenting their cognitive worlds as outrageous or implausible, an objective that requires nuances in the balance between local and scientific.*

Hobart (Hobart 1993b) introduces local knowledge and western scientific knowledge as two unattached and contrasting knowledges. He talks about local or indigenous knowledge as several limited entities, while western scientific knowledge is that which takes no notice of these local knowledges. There are in other words a number of local knowledges and one scientific western knowledge, Hobart points to the idea that underdevelopment and the methods to solve underdevelopment are defined with reference to western knowledge. And it is within such a context that local knowledge is refused and ignored - seen

as irrelevant. Within the framework created by science local knowledge is obsolete and irrelevant.

Turning back to 'my' village, before village water can be 'developed', the villagers in question first have to be defined as 'underdeveloped', and ignorant. Ignorance Hobart writes, ...is not a simple antithesis of knowledge. It is a state which people attribute to others (Hobart 1993b, p.1). It follows that the emergence of knowledge brings with it a corresponding growth of ignorance; ignorance, Hobart says, refers to iniquity and stupidity, failure and sloth (ibid).With this in mind, it means that ignorance is part of the western/local dichotomy, and that systematic ignorance results from the specialisation of development experts (Hobart 1993b, p.10,16), so that the result is the two forms of knowledge which are in conflict. Scientific knowledge has the power to undercut other forms of knowledge, making them obsolete.

We need to address local knowledge which Hobart (Hobart 1993b) defines as situated or localised practice. It is created by the past, and there are complex systems involved in the engagement with local knowledge. Local knowledges are practical: factual, detailed, personal and sensitive to the locations and circumstances to which they pertain. Such knowledges can be tested; this involves theory and metaphysical conditions, but not in the same way as western analytical philosophy. Local knowledges must be evaluated as to their usefulness to the surroundings, and not whether those forms of knowledge are true or false (ibid., p, 4, 17).

Nevertheless, scientific knowledge is what developers use to conduct the transformation of society from so called underdeveloped to developed. The use of scientific knowledge requires homogeneity and quantifiable results rather than outcomes which are qualitatively different. Development experts act on 'expert' understanding that refers to a larger powerful structure of western scientific knowledge grounded and legitimised through academic work. Since relationships between developers and those being developed are hierarchical, the situation is bound to be reduced to one in which experts transfer their instructions and, subsequently, the locals are made invisible.

Expert insight is made appropriate and justifiable with reference to a knowledge form that is manifested in universal laws (Hobart 1993b) with which Hobart disagrees. He believes that such a view easily leads to the reasoning that communication is the core of knowledge and that it is essential to the possibility for understanding in a development context. This implies the idea that better communication will destroy barriers and make successful development possible. Hobart maintains that rationality is not shared, and knowledge is difficult to communicate, and, also, that such a view ignores and simplifies the fact that people have their own reasons for not wanting to communicate. Lack of participation, distancing and even complete "silence" can be employed as strategies to show disagreement.

Let's turn to Foucault, whose approach to discourse is pertinent in Hobart's work. Hobart expands on Foucault's discourse to speak about several co-existent discourses of development, (Hobart 1993b, p.12) identifying three discourses: the developer's, the local people's and the national government (ibid) discourses - and all three overlap. Due to the fact that all three discourses coincide it is impossible to improve communication between them; instead approaches wear on the locals involved and results in techniques of evasion, silence and dissimulation (ibid., p.16). Tying up with Foucault as reference Hobart maintains that the criteria for what lies behind the construction of knowledge are agentive (ibid., p.12), which means that they indicate who is qualified to know and act, and who is not (ibid), thus fitting into the developer's philosophy. Retaining that within the discourse, it is clear that there are those who have the knowledge and the power to use that knowledge, and then there those who are muted - whether they in fact say something or not.

I do not agree with his argument here, because I believe that Hobart takes 'knowledge' to an extreme that is concluded with a standstill. He says that local and expert knowledge belong to separate discourses which again belong to separate systems of knowledge. As we have heard the women say, many did support the 'new' water, hence there must have been a level where communication took place. Hobart's perspective is also based on

the idea of knowledge as something that is homogeneous, static and lacking in variations. This is not the story in Musharafah.

The water springs are not only locations; they are also places where knowledge was demonstrated and passed on to younger generations of women; it is in the nature of transferring skills that we find change. I see this transfer as happening where old knowledge is passed to the less experienced through the medium of interaction, where the teachers, who are the older women, transmit what they know to the younger women. As Barth writes about the relationship between the pupil and his Guru, which enhances the rank of the giver (Barth, 1990), the knowledge of water promotes the older women. Barth refers to Keesing's use of reading ...from knowledge (Barth, 1990, p.651) to establish the power balance, and he chooses instead to start at the other end: to 'read' the 'empowerment' to establish the patterns of knowledge.

In the introduction which he co-edits with R.L Stirrat, Grillo (Grillo 1997) criticises Hobart for his sharp division between the different knowledge systems. The theory assumes that local knowledge has another philosophical establishment than Western knowledge: that local and Western knowledge do not share the same opportunity to develop similar rationalities. The aim of Western scientific knowledges is the final destruction of local knowledge (ibid, p.13 -14). The relationship between expert and local knowledge is also interesting because both represent different life worlds. People represent different knowledge domains. So far it seems that locals are not active. Scientific knowledge as observed in development practice generally represents the superior knowing expert as agent and the people being developed as ignorant passive recipients or objects of this knowledge (Hobart 1993b, p.5). With this the focus is from 'above and down'. But is there a place where the two knowledges meet? This I believe is the challenge in which developing agencies and development scholars will need to engage.

The women I write about do not live in totally isolated places; there has always been a connection to 'others', so there has been some sort of interaction and communication of knowledge. Still their respective and alternative language for 'being in the

world' is constrained by constructed abstractions, and such abstractions can easily become remote complications. During my field study, I experienced what Barth refers to as the particulars (Barth 1993,p.287); his object of concern is that of a very varied social and cultural Northern Bali. Whereas, to understand the traditions of knowledge available in fetching, using and storing household water, I have to pay attention to how the knowledge is integrated by the women to their experiences in a less varied situation.

The knowledge I am looking for is reproduced by old women who have experienced a village arrangement where going to the spring was a vital cultural glue. Consider, for instance, Um Khaled who still bathes her grandchild with 'winter water': "In 1985 the village was attached to the piped water system, but I prefer to bathe with winter water. The tea has to be made from yellow winter water, because it has froth so you see the bubbles when you pour the tea. I like to see the tea when I pour it, then I know what I am going to drink. With water from the company, now inside the kitchen and bathroom, no one needs to go out in the khala", she said. Talking about the returnees she says, "they sit in a bath full of bubbles everyday. They are not used to lack of water. It is difficult to explain to them. They do not know; only He knows". Um Khaled is saying what her world was like when she fetched water, and what happened when she no longer goes to the spring, or cooks her food outside, but that she at least is going to keep up her custom as much as she can "yellow winter water with froth", "to see the water in the khala" are metaphorical expressions, which are not related to the science of hydrologists or agronomists.

Old knowledge and new knowledge

The Middle East in particular has attracted several political studies regarding water as a, political and economic source of conflict, peace, development or underdevelopment. The attention has been regarded as timely by the international community, because it has given emphasis to political and economic issues relevant to water allocation and management. River catchments have now been analysed more comprehensively by scientists than at any time in the past; these have been discussed with

respect to international relations, water pricing and the economics of water in agriculture.

The use of technology to ensure water supply is a subject that has been given high priority by donors sending out appraisal missions to evaluate water projects. A taskforce of consultants are given clearly defined terms of reference and sent on an appraisal. They assess the project in question by carrying out interviews with officials and NGOs, then gathering, sampling and systemising the data. Normally, this is followed by a 'water campaign', informing the people that water is scarce, that its quality is poor, and that with the help from the public more can be done to 'secure a sustainable future'. Various models of sampling and information campaigns are introduced and tested.

Developers have certain ideas about Palestine, and these ideas act on and influence the projects, whether the ideas are sensible or not. I want to look at the developers' implementation of ideas and how their perceptions are a vital contributing factor in their formulation of policy implementations. Their ideas, whether true or false, have consequences for the outcome of the project. I follow Ferguson's (Ferguson 1994) recommendation in treating the development outcome as an anthropological puzzle (Ferguson 1994, p.17). I concentrate on the constructive aspect of the ideas and therefore separate interest from results. Ferguson classifies two discourses: the 'academic discourse', where he belongs, and the 'development discourse', represented by the World Bank report (Ferguson 1994, p.29). The discourses are not separate epistemologies; however, they are grounded in different contexts.

I will examine his developer's discourse, where the developer's job is to localise and make legitimate the problem-area that needs to be solved with tools and means available. As such, in the case of Musharafah, the use of technology to ensure water supply is reasonable; it is an issue that has been given high priority by donors who send out appraisal missions to evaluate water accessibility, usage and needs. A taskforce of consultants was given clearly defined terms of reference, definite mandates, and sent on an appraisal to the villages north of Ramallah; Musharafah was one of them.

In the village I met two local consultants: Ahmad Abu Maher is an engineer and Nadia Abu Mater is a social worker. Both did work in the West Bank, and knew about the water project in Musharafah. Even though they strongly believe that water and electricity, like education and health are human rights and essential in the Palestinian transition to a nation-state, they also believe that the Israeli occupation is the obstacle to any realistic 'modernisation' of Palestine. They reacted strongly to the agencies' condescending position towards the intellect of the Palestinian people: "they think they need to teach us ABC", Nadia said. There exist viable constraints that limit the transformation in the village that the planner anticipated. Planners have an aspiration to reverse what they see as a strained social and economic situation. I have suggested that I believe their wish is based on good faith; they see village life made easier for all, and with their gender and environmental sensitive policy they are offering what they genuinely believe is an easier life for the women. Yet, they overlook, or they do not think of, the constraints which are the reasons for life led in the village.

Tradition, while something of value in the development agency reports on indigenous knowledge, is a dead-weight in reaching development in the context of water management. For the modern scientist there is green water, that is the one to be used for watering plants, and there is blue water for human consumption. He or she is unaware of the old village women, and their images and narratives of waters that are based on the idea that there is the cool water from the mountain that is different from the hot water from El Ghor (the Jordan Valley depression). There is the yellow water that is different from the colourless water, there is the bitter tasting water which is not the sweet water, and above all there is that frothy living winter water as opposed to that lifeless tap water. Water from the company is sweet with no colour; it is neither "man nor woman" the women said.

P. Bordieu positioned the theory of practice solidly on the map for the social theorists (Bourdieu 1993 (1977)). Many have taken and applied those theories as background, they have done so to draw out some implications for policy and practice in development. The

surviving talents of peasants which appear make use of magic and such irrationalities are processed so as to appear sensible and well thought out to outsiders. To be able to do so, that is to make sense of the strange, performances must be seen within a social context. Local knowledge is a concept applied in its totality of principles that are relevant for a people and exercised in practice, as craft skills and collective work. Knowledge is generally local because the villagers have a know-how that cannot be generalised, and such knowledge ..presupposes an active, knowledgeable actor, who is the "agent" of the unity and constant interaction of mental and manual work *(Ploeg 1989, p.149)As such it is also a science, a folk science. Relative to and depending on the academic field involved (for example: physics, literature, geography, economics) the term 'local' may have different connotations, depending on how it is used.*

One way of using the term 'local' is by describing an expression, either individual or collective as in culture, gender, age or class. Such a definition is, as it were, contemporary - that is postmodernist in the sense that cultures like text, can be deconstructed and have a multiplicity of meanings, open to flexible interpretations. Another way of using the term 'local' is more physical, explicit as in the geopolitical sense of place. By concentrating on the particular condition in its particular context we avoid generalisations.

With reference to "Art de la localité" Van der Ploeg writes that ...local knowledge in craft-based agriculture is the way it is interwoven with the labour process *(Ploeg 1989, p.146). Managing the water that is available for the running of a household is such a 'craft'. It involves 'knowing' and 'doing' and requires a system. It does not require theoretical intricacies as in scientific discourse; in fact doing so alienates the* art de la localité. *Decisions are made by particular peasants on a particular part of the land and during a particular time in the year. Thus plans are not made on the basis of a design, but as part of a performance, subject to dealings. Van der Ploeg says that it is misplaced to assume that such choices and actions are simply the outcome of a limited amount of indigenous technical knowledge and can be judged out of their time and place.*

Moreover Van der Ploeg's work illustrates the processes involved in the practice of knowledge, and he contest what he deems as simplistic ideas about the nature of indigenous knowledge, or art de la localité. Popular views are lacking in theory. With theoretical approach Van der Ploeg claims that 'modern' science and art de la localité differ because the former constructs universal laws while the latter is engendered in and through labour relations in a precise place. The questions that arise when science and art de la localité meet are exemplified through his case about the Andean farmers who have received gifts of improved varieties of potatoes from technical elites. The different types of potatoes are developed in regulated and orderly settings, and then a selection is made; in these settings locality and the seasonal variations are irrelevant. When the farmers accept these scientifically bred assortments their cultivation habits have to correspond to those homogenised by the scientists. Since these settings are unfamiliar, and do not correspond to local conditions or knowledge, the new potatoes establish a process of dependency leading to alienation and obscurity of the local farmers.

Relativism and knowledge

Mary Douglas writes about knowledge as a notion related to meaning at the level of analysis at which particular meanings connect with one another, to make a coherent inter-dependent set, each part guaranteeing the place of the others (Douglas 1999). She is here employing what in short is called a relativist standpoint. Such rhetoric is used in anthropology in the positive sense - which is when we will not be judgmental, or in the negative sense - when we are devoid of moral principles. The result is that debates in anthropology concerning relativism create more heat than light. (Fardon 1999, p.253)

When we discuss knowledge we are again involving the question of relativism and several new questions come up: is their knowledge of any value? Can we compare theirs to ours, as it were? Douglas says that knowledge involves a process of realisation that includes the implicit and the explicit. Particular meanings are parts of larger ones and these refer ultimately to a whole in which all the available knowledge is related. She believes that knowledge is a product of social behaviour, and that

meanings are created through the interpretation of the social context.(Douglas 1975)

Now Fredrik Barth demands that we go further with our relativism. He would answer affirmably to my question about the value of 'their' knowledge, and, instead, negate the second issue concerning comparisons. We need to 'reaffirm' our relativism and... 'our' Western way of life should be reduced to the status of being only one among very many different and equally possible ways (Barth 1994, p.351). To deal with our 'egocentric ways' Barth suggests engaging with 'knowledge traditions' rather than 'culture'; knowledge makes it possible to recognise the 'cultural realm', whereas 'culture' constricts the possibilities of also engaging with the outside world.(Barth 1994, p.353)

An interesting issue comes up: is indigenous or local knowledge concerned with traditions of knowledge, or is it simply 'culture'? I will propose that indigenous knowledge - the local knowledge - is unique to a given culture and that it contrasts with the international knowledge systems which are generated through the global network of universities and research institutes. Normally, indigenous knowledge has been a symbol of controversies in conflict with 'new' or 'scientific' knowledge. We know of several dual concepts: the folk/universal knowledge; traditional/modern knowledge, and tacit knowledge versus scientific knowledge. These binary approaches view indigenous knowledge as something that is collective, static and only practised. Geertz speaks of local knowledge as a body of thought that is based on immediacy of experience.

Van der Ploeg as I mentioned earlier speaks of art de la localite that is correlated to spatially definite practices. Both are location-specific, and disclose great insights into indigenous knowledge systems, yet they do not discuss such knowledge as contested. Henrietta Moore discusses this, and she argues for more attention to the hybrid character of the indigenous point of view (Moore 1996). In her article "Interior landscapes and external worlds: The return of grand theory in anthropology" (Moore 1997) she also addresses our, that is anthropologists', 'hybridity'. (Moore 1997, p.28)

It seems that the conflicts involving knowledge systems which are encountered in development are twofold: They are clashes between knowledges and cultures, and secondly they are about power struggles over resources and politics. But, while revealing insights into indigenous knowledge systems and world-views, few authores have questioned the representation of local knowedges as culturally constrained systems, and even less valuable, in these times of deconstruction.

Local knowledge as a cultural construction is embodied in technology. This involves the acceptance and assimilation of technology into societies. This application of technologies requires organisation and this too depends on changing shared meanings. Let's consult the older women who are confined to their village and are engaged in a daily struggle to harness water, preferring its taste and colour to piped water. They do accept, by and large, new technology such as pills when confronted by disease, and by doing so they accpet knowledge embodied in technology, which is based on beliefs that new science has the ability to transform nature. But the same women turn their backs to tap water in their food, not only because of its poor flavour, but also due to their alienation from the resource and the piped water expense has imposed on their lives. The issue is whether the modern and the traditional remain parallel; that means exploring the crossing or interaction between knowledges.

Today, the informal and non-formal are treated separately; the informal is replaced by the formal through regular formal education. The transfer of knowledge through socialisation is no longer as relevant, and the pattern of socialisation has changed. Between the interaction of new and old we are met with the analogy between being an excellent woman and being able to provide water for the family. Is a woman's knowledge of any value? Even with the centralisation of water, women still have to overcome the problem of water shortage, low annual rainfall and hot long summers, through local methods of inducing, harnessing, and then storing of water from various sources. According to the Archaeological Institute at the University of Bir Zeit a blend of carbonated clay and smooth ashes are used in the water jugs of the Highlands of the West Bank. The strength and consistency of the water jug depended on the smoothness of the

ash. By using this method they avoided that water seepage or evaporation during long periods of storing in cisterns and jugs.

We are dealing here with two different kinds of knowledges which operate on different scales, in different scopes and are operational in different cultural realities. The meeting of formal and non-formal knowledge is an experience of an epistemological challenge, and it is easy to agree that the Socio-economic progress means emancipation from the whims of mother nature and from the domination of the already established. And, it seems that only human-made technology resources can provide the foundation for such progress (Elmusa Sharif & Georgetown University Center for Contemporary Arab 1994). Thus, in conventional terms, local knowledge is something that is emotional and strongly situated or entrenched in its location.

From the perspective of what I indicated is situated knowledge, it becomes clear and obvious that economic development has been slow in Musharafah, but the 'entrenchment' of knowledge is not entirely the only reason for poor development. We have heard the women say that they were well aware of their intransigent dependency upon 'traditional ways'; Um Fathi said that their local ways were less efficient in coping with the world. But then she found out that water supplied to homes in pipes did not necessarily improve their livelihood; the consequences were not expected.

The time saved in fetching and carrying water to the household is, in several villages, used to wash the house, since more water is available to the women. Fetching water was also attached to a calendar of seasons, and the logistics of co-operation in each season were attached to patterns of lives shared. Owing to the change in the household water management, the old agents fall outside the current scope of development. In meeting new science the ancient craft becomes incompetent and redundant. the women are secluded from the company of the other village women and kept out of the happenings, "left alone" in their narratives; this is contrary to their description of earlier lives when they say "before, when there was goodness". With this in mind men and women often see the benefits of piped water differently.

Different types of knowledge are based on different dimensions and founded in other contexts of realities. The challenge is to involve the new with the old, to convince the older managers of household water that tap water is worthy of more than just washing the floors. This is difficult, because as Connerton reminds us: All beginnings contain an element of recollection (Connerton 1989, p.6) . The remembrance of a way of managing everyday chores is always in relation to other things; it constitutes several layers of connectivities. This is important to remember when teaching or introducing new knowledge.

Old knowledge/ knowledges need to be attached to something. "Old loyalties" are lost in an existential surrounding. Camus in L'etranger speaks of the feeling of absurdity when the surroundings are unknown, because, in the most fundamental way, experiences are based on prior contexts in order to be at all intelligible (Camus 1971). So, when hydrologists come with new technology it has to be possible to connect it to prior experience. Those coming with new sciences face the job of creating alliances between the new and the old. Prior old knowledge is, for example, that colour and taste are good in water; these are related to incorporating and inscribing practices. The challenge is to ask how fundamental concepts organising new thought, such as 'polluted water', compare with local epistemologies supporting basic concepts such as 'bitter versus sweet water'. The issue is to ask how concepts make sense within a particular socio-cultural, economic, political and ecological environment. Translation between old and new knowledge involves connections with complex realities.

Understanding silent/muted signals is a problem which researchers always meet (although they are not always aware of the silence). We are not always quite sure of what people are referring to and we are not always familiar with their local analytical vocabulary. This creates another demand: how to ask the questions in a locally meaningful way, and how to be sensitive to local variations, differences of opinion and differences which not only reflect gender and age differences but also different political and economic experiences, as well as technical experiences.

The tradition of household water management that Um Khaled refers to here has been a movement of knowledge from one generation to the next. We saw that there are also diverse versions which are not separable from the women's role and historically situated practices. The knowledges are linked to a complex social history, composed of dynamic articulation between various knowledge systems. Their water knowledge included finding the resource in summer, storing it without the water turning rotten, and using it. There is the metaphor of water as a symbol of life mixed with resistance against the feudal and the occupier. To point out their approach to knowledge production as a process, the women say that "they learnt" *or* "were taught". *This knowledge is a blend of* informal *and* non-formal *knowledge. The terms describe a situation where, through socialisation, the individuals' learning is directed. Fetching water is an action which can be broken into parts; these are pieces of a system. Classifications which fall into fetching water are "typical" of a society based on traditional 'informal' knowledge, where the chores have their fixed intervals and places.*

Consider Um Jihad's statement, "I did not go school to learn to read and write. I sent my younger daughters to school and then they went to university, and such things. But, you know, they do not know what I know". *Her reflections raise the question of whether the women really know what they are doing. Are the women aware of the reasons behind their choice of water management? Have the women systematically tried out their knowledge? Or is water management just a tradition passed on by their mothers and grandmothers? Are their choices in water management based on well-developed basic knowledge of the ways of water? It could be all of the above.*

I am suggesting that Um Jihad and the other women I spoke to do have some basic knowledge and possess their own science of water that should not be decontextualised from their understanding of plant-soil-water relations. The knowledge comes from the everyday involvement with their households and their detailed knowledge of harnessed water as an ingredient, giving the right and familiar taste that the woman refers to above. Water that was stored in summer did not go stale, they said, because they knew how to keep it cool and how to add seeds

and herbs to improve its taste. The management of water was dependent on the peasant women. They were in charge of the whole process of administrating household water. They learned from failures. The scope of managing water is not static and not narrow. They were involved in the whole cycle of harnessing water and, therefore, were made aware of other perspectives.

They obviously do not possess the repertoire of experience hydrologists and engineers have. This scientific knowledge is being developed, studied and institutionalised according to a different scope; it is based on another type of knowledge system. The result of transformation of the water cycle is reasonable only if it functions for the users, and the reorganisation of the water system is the reorganisation of social systems and established water routes.

PART FOUR:

Orientalism and patriarchy: women in the anthropology of the Middle East

Chapter Nine:

Reading The Oriental

Every year that passes, ...you see thousands of Europeans travelling all over the world, and everything they come across they make a picture of. *Mubarak quoted by Timothy Mitchell*

Timothy Mitchell's starting point in his book Colonising Egypt *is the World Exhibition in Paris in 1889 which expressed European mischief (Mitchell 1988). Non-European visitors found themselves being placed on exhibit or made the exotic objects of European curiosity (Mitchell 1988). For example, Mitchell describes how Egypt was presented to fit into the taste and the expectations of Europeans. There the 'other world' was presented as though it were an exhibition to be edited and rearranged by its creators, namely the French organisers in Paris. Mitchell uses the concept* enframing, *which is a method of dividing up and containing (ibid., p.44). With* enframing *Mitchell illustrates the European project of making the pieces of their vision of Egypt into a regimented regularity, a display they were comfortable with.*

This enframing *stuck to the colonisers as they travelled to Egypt. Theirs was not the accessible, valid or existent Egypt. On the contrary it remained also, upon relative close encounter, an object they produced from their own expectations. Both the country and its people were described and theoretically constructed by these preconceptions; hence, The Europeans agreed that Egypt and the Levant have* never possessed ...order *(ibid., p.33). So, to have control (and also to assist Mohammed Ali in making a modern country out of Egypt), the colonisers - basically the British with the help of French architects,* would try and re-order Egypt to appear as world enframed. Egypt was to be ordered up as something object-like *(ibid.). There was a need to recognise and make accessible the object under rule: it had to make sense* ...to become readable, like a book...*(ibid.) Thus the project was the surveillance and ordering of what seemed to be unintelligible communities; there was a need to change the mentality of the natives.*

While the colonialist representatives were generally negative towards the growing suffragettes' movements in Europe, the

issue of the position of the Egyptian women was used to illustrate the 'backwardness' of the country, (Mitchell 1988). The British administrators of Egypt saw a need to change the Egyptian mothers and enable them to resemble more the ideal of European motherhood. To do so they had plans to ...break down existing patterns of association and segregation mystified and romanticised under such labels as "the harem" (Mitchell 1988, p.112). These associations were suitable only for a minority of women in the urban areas and in large estates.

Traditionally, homes in Middle Eastern villages are planned with a courtyard to keep the women of the house out of the sight of outsiders, however, the new colonial plans aimed to erase these traditions in several villages. The seeming interest in the rights of women in Egypt was part of the reorganisation of the protectorate, to make it easier to govern by introducing norms and values familiar to the colonisers. Although peasant women do most of their work also outside the walls of their home, the women's areas were defined and monitored. Under the pretext of modernising and industrialising the Egyptians, the British destroyed whole villages, rebuilding the homes in such a manner as made it possible to observe the villagers. Women could no longer be kept behind walls, out of the sight of uninvited men. This new architecture where the farmers where exhibited was meant to change their mentality.

I am suggesting that the Arab/ Muslim woman is still an object of 'enframing' in a web of gendered theories that have not yet moved beyond the traditionality of particularising patriarchy and Islam. There are several attempts to contest established discourses, and I will agree with scholars such as Abu-Lughod and Fernea that we need to deconstruct Western feminism and engage with the complexities of feminism and modernity in the particular lives of women in the Middle East, and specifically the Muslim population. This is a highly charged issue tied to nationalist ideas. Building on this already emerging body of scholarship on the 'women issue' in the Muslim Arab Middle East, I nevertheless, will suggest that we should take the women's narratives beyond the particular and see them also in relation to the Big Story of urgent issues which general development discourses are addressing.

I will start my review on the image of Arab women by going back to Mitchell, and what he writes on Cromer's interest in Egyptian women. Cromer wished to control domestic space also. Because women were acknowledged as eligible citizens, possessing this social role was important enough to interest the British colonisers. The British were joined by an Egyptian intelligentsia, who claimed that women were the source of Egypt's debility; Qasim Amin was one of the most active in that group. For Amin, women were the reason for men's 'failure' and 'ruin' (Mitchell 1988). Scholars like Amin were educated in the new European- inspired legal school, and for him modernisation was believed to begin in the home, with the mother. Here she was supposed to make sure her daughters were given an education, so they would themselves be able as mothers to offer scientific answers to the eternal questioning of their children (ibid., p.113). Educating the daughters meant giving the coming generations of Egyptians the possibility of being modern citizens and breaking the evil circle of ignorance and backwardness.

Others have also criticised Amin's approach to the 'liberation' of women. Lila Abu-Lughod criticism of Amin's work is interesting here. It is also timely within the context of the 'empowerment of women' discourse. She reflects that Amin's account is based on his inner circle: he is writing about and for men and women within his circle of intellectuals. He is placing the context of the 'liberation' of women in that of Egypt under British rule, which was promoting a family discipline unfamiliar for the majority of an Egyptian population. For many, Amin's ground-breaking book The Liberation of Women published in 1899 is seen to include the founding ideas of Egyptian feminism. He supported Western ideals where men and women were joined in their efforts to build their country, believing that through common effort Egyptians would be able to build a nation.

Studying Amin's work more closely, it is also clear that his idea of women's education went only as far as primary school, and he saw higher education as not needed among the upper class women, who were taken care of. Higher education, he believed, was for the not so fortunate, who would otherwise be forced into inappropriate ways. While Abu-Lughod's discussion is within the

framework of the modernisation debate, Leila Ahmed's focus is on Amin's acceptance of the colonial undermining of the Egyptian culture (Ahmed 1992). She believes that he disregarded the context within which the majority of the people lived and that Amin, therefore, promoted Cromer's colonialist objective of the surveillance of the Egyptian family in his book The Liberation of Women.

The theme that the advocates of women's liberation seemed to agree on was that the Arab woman is ignorant and needs to be educated in the Western mind. And there is perhaps no other notion that connotes Muslim Arab ignorance as does the image of the Arab women. We know that the 'Oriental' women have inspired paintings, literature and music composed by men fascinated by 'those' exotic women. The obsession about Arab women by Western men is the subject of Fatima Mernissi's book Scherhrazade goes west (Mernissi 2001). She explores the Western male image of the harem, a place where lightly dressed, over-weight women are eager to please. In reality, Mernissi says, the harem is a place where women have been restless, reflecting and going about their responsibilities. She questions the two very different approaches to the notion of harem. She uses the same method she employed in her other works, here she draws on oral traditions She tells her own memories and these of her grandmother, and she confronts the inventions about the position of women in the Muslim world as compared to the assumptions of the Western about their women.

Orientalism has indeed nurtured a set of misperceptions about the Middle East as a place and the Middle Easterns, or rather the Arabs, as a people. As already indicated, it is particularly the Arab women who have long been the object of fascination, in western patriarchal literature, arts and media. Edward Said's Orientalism, of course, comes to mind, yet such thoughts have been written about before. Fanon, in his first study of the effects of racism and colonisation, Black Skin, White Masks, and also in Fanon's later book The Wretched of the earth, gives an essential analysis and discussion of the methods and outcomes of oppression by colonisers and of the power of the occupier on the occupied.

Fanon shows how cultural systems based on historical events can take over the minds of the colonised. This is very similar to Edward Said's writing in Orientalism; the gaze of the West, past and present colonial powers, creates a basic three zone anthropology. This Abu-Lughod describes as generally including the components: men, politics, and violence (Abu-Lughod 1989, p.285). Here Abu-Lughod is looking for a less stagnant research concerning the themes in the Middle East, as she writes: Nearly all the segmentation theorists are men, while nearly all those who theorize about women are women (ibid., p.288). Lila Abu-Lughod wants a research in which we move beyond the patriarchal and towards ... dynamic areas within anthropology. (ibid.)

The Arab woman and her position in society continues to promote research from several angles. Yet few have done what Sarah Graham-Brown does in her Images of Women where she explores the iconography of the women in the Middle East. They epitomised the orient through the lenses of Orientalists, colonial administrators, and missionaries, but certainly also the elites and the Arab media. Graham-Brown uses an impressive collection of photography and text based on historical sources to deconstruct the western image of the Oriental woman. She says...women and photographic images of women have often been used as symbols for concepts which have little or no relation to their identity as women or as individuals. Proponents of Orientalism, nationalism, 'westernization' and various religious ideologies have all found in women powerful metaphors for their own concerns. (Graham-Brown 1988, p.239) Graham-Brown explains in her introduction that the photographs in her book demonstrate that the core of the images of the Oriental women lies in the dominance of not only the colonisers, but also the designers of Orientalist imagination and of men. (Graham-Brown 1988)

An image we know from Orientalism is that showing women carrying water or standing by a well. This is a familiar contemporary Palestinian image, and we see it also in much of other Middle Eastern folklore. In Egypt, for example, in the Nile Delta houses are built with sun dried mud bricks, and many have no water network or electricity. Scattered in between are the houses financed by migrants to richer Arab countries; these are houses built with red bricks or limestone and with installed water.

However, due to the frequent cut off water and permanent cuts during the hot summer months, the women living in these 'finer' houses still walk to the canal to do the laundry, wash dishes and fetch water. This has been described in magazines and newspaper as a 'traditional' and 'authentic' part of Egyptian peasant life.

Many times in lectures and writings the architect Hassan Fathy has described how such women carry out their ascribed domestic chores within a defined space in the Egyptian countryside. Doing the washing by the canal, the women talk together, and they walk back to their homes in groups. Their distinctive characteristic is the large basin, traditionally made of aluminium; the more modern ones are in pastel coloured plastic. The basin is known as the ***tesht*** *and is an important part of a traditional urban and rural woman's trousseau. The* ***tesht*** *is used for washing children, laundry and for doing the dishes. Women are seen with the* ***tesht*** *on their heads, visible for the rest of the village or urban neighbourhood to see; they are not only observed; their work is also being evaluated, making sure they have a reputation of being dutiful daughters, hardworking wives or caring mothers.*

This heritage that women represent was one of the concerns in the work of Hassan Fathy. When he was drawing a village and planning the form it would take, one of his many concerns was the time it would take Egyptian peasants to get used to piped water. He estimated it would take more than a generation. Fathy writes about his dilemma when he was planning the water supply in the second village of Al Gourma, in Upper Egypt. His analysis was based on the idea that the Egyptian peasant woman relates to water fetching as a social function, a way ...to smooth the exchange of gossip *(Fathy 1989, p.99). Hassan Fathy compares this to the city dweller's meeting at the Hammam, the communal bath. A communal bath in the Egyptian countryside would serve the same social functions as fetching water from the canal. Fathy admits, though, that he has qualms about the change to piped water, with its modifications on cultural practices and images.* ...It is hard to imagine a village in Egypt without its black-robed women, erect as queens, each with her water jar... carried nonchalantly on her head, and it will be a pity to lose the sight; *he is worried that by bending down in front of a tap,* the magnificent

carriage of which our women are renowned would dwindle. *This quote tells us that the 'Orientalisation' of the Arab woman needs to be further explored. The imagination, which those women inspire, does not necessarily only originate from the West.*

Misperceptions resulting from 'othering' have shifted from creative envisions of the 'Oriental women', 'women of the Middle East' or 'Muslim women' to gender in the Middle East. Arab Muslim women in the Middle East are engaged with relation to specific topics, for example feminism. Initially the post-Orientalist scholarship on the Arab women has with much influence from the feminist poststructuralism, focused on deconstructing the oppressive discourse on women in the Arab world. Two books which could today be considered 'classics' in this turning-point genre are Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Berzigan's Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak *(Fernea Elizabeth & Bezirgan Basima 1977), and Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie's* Women in the Muslim World.*(Beck & Keddie 1980)*

These above mentioned two books are Beth Baron's starting point in her review on recent emerging works on the subject of Middle Eastern women. Baron suggests that the above two books from the 1970s have indicated the coming out of the research domain of women in the Middle East (Baron 1996). I agree with her when she points out that there were several works on women prior to these books, yet the writings presented in the two books according to her comprised the first corpus of material *(Baron 1996, p.172). This is true in general terms; nonetheless as I have previously indicated in my introduction to this dissertation the works of Hilma Granqvist were pioneering works in this field. Her ethnographic studies from the West Bank village of Artas in Palestine of the 1930s has inspired my approach of trying to grasp the totality of women's everyday lives, yet Granqvist's work is seldom remarked on in the current gender discussions and theorisations.*

What follows is not only about Granqvist, Abu-Lughod and others who have inspired me, and how they helped reflect on my material from Musharafah. The following are also about exposure to theoretical encounters, selected both because they have been fundamental in my approach to the material at hand, and also

because I will propose to develop them further in order to move beyond Orientalism.

Moving Beyond Orientalism: let people speak for themselves.

It just goes to show that there is always someone more politically correct than you, which might be a good reason for reconsidering whether the game is worth the candle. *J.C. Jarvie*

Images of the characteristics and situation of the 'Oriental woman' are at the heart of contemporary intellectual discussions. I began this chapter with Timothy Mitchell who, accepting the concept of Orientalism as discourse, takes it further. Mitchell exemplified how cultural products were created through a lens that highlighted the occidental domination. In Colonising Egypt *he examines not only the context, but also more interestingly the personalities involved in the colonisation. Interpretations of the 'other' were evident in the statements and actions of 'imperial' representatives, who played on drawing attention to Orientalisation and cultural hegemony. I have also written about more recent works concerning the critical aspects of the Orientalisation of the women in the Middle East. My focus here, however, is to go back to water, Islam, and women's daily chores and show how I have attempted to avoid Orientalist reflections in working with and presenting my material. I will start with Granqvist, who has already been mentioned. She engaged with subdued voices and challenged the established construction and misplaced observations of the 'Muhammadan' in the 1930s.*

The paradigm which several scholars believe is exceptional in Granqvist's work is her use of photography as a medium, Granqvist's photography was revolutionary at the time, portraying women in the process of doing different tasks, or on their way to work. She had a collection of photographs from the different phases of life in the village. Annelies Moors in her keynote address at the symposium in Beit Jala in 1997 used several pictures which Granqvist had taken of the villagers in Artas to illustrate how those snapshots demonstrated women as dynamic in their life; they are not immobile. Instead the photos illustrate, and suggest, villagers actively interacting and going about their everyday chores.

Because Granqvist used the camera, 'her individuals' did not only have a face; they also had a name and a biography. Her five books are based on her intense quest for what many of us try to extract during fieldwork, that is ' life questions', a quest she pursued during her long stay in the village and later in her academic writing. Granqvist labelled 'her' village as a 'Muhammedan village' where the people followed 'Muhammadan' rituals, and the rites were adapted to their life situation. But she did not explain Islam as a monolithic order; on the contrary she explained that Muslim law and non-Muslim customs are intertwined, and 'her' peasants bent Islamic law to manage different situations they were confronted with.

Social organisations of the village were kept up because the people followed the rules, but only insofar as they were practical in their life situation. History causes rules to bend; that is, for Hilma Granqvist the historical events were the tools that over time bent or changed the rules in the village. In realising the dimension history has in the village everyday life she listened and was especially sensitive to religion's hold on rural women's everyday realities. Through photography or writing about their chores, 'her women' were presented in situations realistic for village life at that time in history.

In today's anthropology, and especially in the study of gender in the Middle East, several 'new' authorities on the subject are reflecting on the issue which Granqvist wrote about in the 1930s, yet they do not seem to know about her. Consider the following quotation from her work ...as soon as the position of the Palestinian, or as one has preferred to call her, the Oriental woman, is under discussion, one has been too easily content to make judgements of a purely subjective kind instead of inquiring into the facts, the special conditions and laws which regulate the life of women in a Palestinian society *(Granqvist 1931, p.22). Her theme of, to paraphrase Abu-Lughod, 'writing against the Oriental' is also a contemporary 'discussion'.*

Hence, Hilma Granqvist represents an early voice in anthropology, concerned with puzzling out 'life questions', taking everyday life seriously and including it into academic writing. She

let the women and men speak into her text, and demonstrated through her method that men's and women's work was part of the internal village negotiations and variations. The contemporary anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod is also concerned with tacit expressions and women, and to do so she rejects 'culture'.

Contrary to Granqvist, Abu-Lughod is celebrated in her time. We know from her own writings that she is a 'dutiful daughter' and a 'halfie', and that her project with the stories she writes is for the purpose of making "higher good" of critical ethnography working in the service of "writing against culture". (Abu-Lughod 1993, p.38) I draw on Abu-Lughod's analysis which is based on the multifaceted realities and sophistication in people's lives, and the need to bring that forward through stories. Thus, as mentioned regularly in the dissertation, the aim of the narratives is that we become more sensitive to the everyday lives of those we study and that the elements of duration and fluidity, are complex, varied and contradicted.

The women in Musharafah are strong, persistent and proud of their achievements, they have succeeded in carrying out their responsibilities according to social norms. I see, for example, a parallel between Lila Abu Lughod's Zaynab (Abu-Lughod 1998) and "my" Um Khaled, whom I have quoted earlier. Both are matriarchal and caught between two worlds. The one world they know; it is the past with its recognisable system of doing things; the other world is the present, strange to them. Both Zaynab and Um Khaled are older women who worry about neighbours "talking". There are norms to follow, and Abu-Lughod in her work expects us, the readers, to know and recognise the notions reflected in what Zaynab says. Now for Um Khaled, the worst two things her neighbours could say about her is that she is "lazy" or that she has "no faith". When she was younger "there were of course other things they could say". I believe that it is problematic for readers unfamiliar with Palestine or the Middle East to take in Um Khaled's anxieties. Thus a requirement for understanding these women is prior knowledge of cultural reproduction in communities of the Middle East and, in the case of Um Khaled, also knowledge of Palestinian village norms.

Hence, even though Abu-Lughod writes against culture as I have already mentioned earlier, nevertheless culture filters through in her discursive sphere because of the fact that the essence of her narratives evokes and requires insight into the social and linguistic environment. I have indicated earlier that Lila Abu-Lughod makes it clear that there is a dilemma in her interpretative and reflexive ethnographic writing (Abu-Lughod 1993). Her objective is to write against western assumptions about the peoples and lives in the Middle East, particularly the Muslim population in the region (ibid.). She wants to avoid indications of ideology which nurture fixed productions about the Middle East. Instead, she demands from anthropologists a critical self-examination.

With a feminist perspective, Lila Abu-Lughod, considers the way our writing occupies a position of power and advises employing a more self-reflexive analysis and voice in writing ethnography; this is a project she presents beautifully in Writing women's worlds (Abu-Lughod 1993). In her writing Abu-Lughod wants to bring forth the implications women themselves assign to realities which are significant to their lives, and the voices in the narratives form the central part of the ethnography in which she is the 'interlocutor' (Abu-Lughod 1993). The crucial question is how we can, from our researcher position, learn to ask the right questions in order to get access to inside information, rather than relying on neat labels of culture which are convenient for our project. Abu-Lughod argues that to write about 'lives as lived' and about the richness in people's ordinary everyday lives, we should concentrate on writing against the world as a text.

In engaging with the narratives from Musharafah I find that Lila Abu-Lughod's approach towards sensitivity to other lives is convincing. I do see the value of a diminished engagement with 'culture' as a label, and instead I have looked at the power in the meaning of the words. With my material the aim has been to bring forward fluctuating complexities and contradicitons in the lives of the individuals in the village, and **malli**, fetching and filling up water into the jar, opens up subtle shifts in meanings. But my material is also concerned with the individual's production of cultural experiences, which I find in **'adat** and **taqalid**. If I am concerned with **'adat** and **taqalid** it is because the women in

Musharafah were comfortable using these concepts. Hence, I am suggesting that as long as I connect with the narratives, culture will not lead to primordial static constructions of 'lives as lives'. On the contrary, when the women in Musharafah say that "this is the way we do things here", *they are sharpening our awareness of* ***'adat*** *and* ***taqalid.*** *In their continuous interpretation of the meaning of life, the old women are situating shared notions of the totality of fetching water:* ***dar***, ***'eswah***, *and* ***din***. *My position is that we can still use 'culture' and yet avoid simplistic interpretations, instead distinguish complexities and contested points of views in the communities we study and the lives we interpret.*

My material warrants more consideration to 'culture', and I am suggesting that we cannot entirely 'deconstruct' without losing parts of the meanings which are embedded in language and context. Basically, 'culture' in my material is an overriding and enduring theme informing consistency. We have read about the turbulent events surrounding the lives of the women in Musharafah; all these realities they have to deal with, but to my surprise in the midst of all the upheavals in their lives they talked about ***'adat*** *and* ***taqalid***. *I have grappled with this 'irregularity' of consistency and flux, and I considered discarding the concept of 'culture' as Barth recommends. Using Barth's 'systems of knowledge'is twofold: to structure my material around agency, and so to make it possible for me to elaborate on individual innovations and negotiations with consistency. Further, 'systems of knowledge' is used in its form as competence, to talk about how the old women master everyday life, how their individual competence about 'life questions' is informed in the everyday ritual of* ***malli*** *- fetching and filling up the water.*

Now - in attempting to gain insight into ***'adat*** *and* ***taqalid*** *in a part of the world where 'culture' weighs heavily, whereas the people are still individualistic - I go to Sahlins webs of cultural production. Here I find his defence of 'culture' and his approach to situating history in interpreting lives fruitful for my line of reasoning. His views are inspired from the French milieu in which cultural semiotics was developed along the ideas for that the cultural form structures the social, that is lives of people. I do not develop women's narratives in a structural direction which I believe this would, in the context of my material, reduce culture to a mere*

utility and thus contain the tensions. The frictions of everyday life that inform contradictions, negotiations and variations would be missing. Instead I draw on Sahlins when he writes that not only do people share a culture, but they are also committed to it (Sahlins 1999, p.410). I will maintain that we only get 'commitment' with agency and not simply with reproduction. This means that culture is not only a reproduction of norms, but has agency and dynamism.

Interpreting the totality of water is an unstable project; in the midst of flux and duration there is an analytical tension. Barth suggests that we recognise knowledge as a major modality of culture (Barth 1995, p.66) and thus we have the possibility of an approach that centres on the experience of the individual and her engagement with contradictions. Obviously, the 'streams' are fundamental, but when we leave out culture it is difficult to define settings in which knowledge makes up a whole. I want to maintain my focus on the dynamics between agency and structure, because it gives room for thinking about Islam's role in the women's lives and is a code for dealing with life questions. And I will suggest that the narratives tell us that we need to look again at the internalisation of culture, in order to grasp when they help each other **fi sabil Allah**, for the love of God, or when they remind me that they "know God", and "everything is in the hand of God" - "everything is destiny".

In their narratives the women reproduce Islam, thought not 'orthodox' Islam, but nonetheless their religious experience meditates cultural knowledge, in the sense that they link **'adat** and **taqalid**. Now, we need to develop this further and make space for a discursive sphere where culture and knowledge mingle. I will suggest that both 'culture' and 'systems of knowledge' can provide us with anthropological tools with which we can impinge on the seemingly dualistic nature of flux and constancy. I mentioned the position of religion in cultural reproduction, and I also contradicted the use of **hamulah** and proposed reformulation of lineage concepts which are significant to the village women's reality, such as **dar**.[18] I have argued

[18] See also the work of Susan Slyomovics,(Slyomovics 1998) and Rothenberg (Rothenberg 1998/99)

against **hamulah** as the common way to classify Palestinian emotional attachments, because for the women in Musharafah **hamulah** belongs to the men's world. We have heard that **hamulah** is present in the spouse selection, and all aspects of arrangements are generally undertaken and controlled by certain members of the household. The data from Musharafah supports the notion that marriage functioned as an indication as to which women had a **'eswah** or **nasab** and which did not. So, rather than speaking about the strength of the **hamulah**, they told me about weak and strong **dar**, depending on the **'eswah** and **nasab**. Ultimately, they are coping with and communicating the meaning of everyday life.

The stories the women tell illustrate that reasons are multiple, at times contradictory, and often in the context of events, which encroach on Palestinian village life; the stories have political undercurrents. In the above relationship between Barth and Sahlins I have attempted to talk about that which is dynamic and durable through Barth's and Sahlins's concepts of 'knowledge', 'culture', 'production', 'reproduction', 'individuality' and 'agency'. I suggested that we have here core concepts, which can help us grasp that knowledge is not only agency; it also involves structures. Moreover, culture is not necessarily bounded; it is about reproduction, but it is also about 'commitment' and thus involves agency.

Water, I have said is at the core of my questions which evoked the women's narratives in Musharafah. And water remains fundamental because of the way in which the women talk about the **'ayn** (water spring), the "winter water" or "rainwater", and the act of **malli** as giving voice to their 'being in the world'. We saw that what they refer to as **'adat** and **taqalid** are connected with water, and I have applied both as reference to the local equivalents of culture. Turning to 'systems of knowledge' and culture as 'commitment' I have the possibility to convey 'life questions': the gratification the women express for who they are, how they have prevailed, what they have accomplished, what they repeat and what they are committed to repeating.

'The fate of culture' as in the fate of knowledge systems depends on its uses (Ortner 1999, p.11), and as I have already indicated

above, I want to add that both culture and knowledge inform the anthropological tool-bag, yet have their different constellations. **'Adat** and **taqalid** are suggestive and give a sense of experiences which are included within the cultural reproduction. I am suggesting that in anthropology we can still work with culture, and open it up without discarding agencies. This we can achieve by locating cultural production/reproduction and entanglements within the sphere of 'being in the world'. So, we give attention to individual access to cultural production, and here narratives are the key to the urgency of Musharafah's women's lives.

Both **'adat** and **taqalid** are concepts about everyday life and the meaning of life, which have a resonance when the women answered "this is the way we do things here"; in them we can read 'life questions' - the fluid exchanges which are all about the meaning of life. So, representations of other peoples real lives is thought provoking; we must be attentive to the context we are interpreting, conveying and elaborating on. As the narratives in the dissertation indicated, the women are enthusiastic when they talk of the past and of what they have struggled against and accomplished. They are engagingly aware of change and opinionated about its outcome. My material also shows that women, that is female peasants, are responsive to their agency and guardianship of Palestinian heritage, tradition and culture - simply saying that "this is the way we do things here".

Chapter Ten:

The 'Cinderellas' of Anthropology

Feminism, to the young women I interviewed in Kuwait, was synonymous with America, with fast food. *Elisabeth Fernea*

The current scholarship on gender in the Middle East has reinforced and questioned the liberalisation discourses of modernity and feminism on women's life. The studies have engaged with women as 'particulars', thus avoiding the 'Orientalist' generalisation of 'Arab women'. Perhaps the greatest contribution in questioning Western experience of the Arab world lies in engaging with this previously muted group. But, I will suggest that my material shows that we will now need to go beyond the particulars and also address women's lives within the Big Story.

The basic problem with the 'woman' issue in the Middle East is that it continues to involve a 'special subject' approach. Judith Tucker calls for a more scholarly involvement with and reflection on the total history of the Middle East in which women are also included without being reduced into something out of the ordinary. So far there have been the implicit comparisons with the 'Western woman'; she is the 'new', 'modern', 'aware', 'Christian', and 'benevolent' woman. And she is very different from the 'traditional', 'insignificant', 'ignorant', 'Muslim' and 'wretched' woman in the Middle East.

Gendering the anthropology of the Middle East, until recently a European project, has the pitfalls of secluding and isolating women in the region. Such studies create women as 'subjects apart', frequently anchored in western feminist studies, so much so that during the latter part of the 20th century there were major economic changes in the region which were not addressed. The global trade economy, the expansion of the cities, and the migration from the villages are matters that prove that economic policy is not gender neutral; these issues also affected the lives of rural women and their household activities.

It was Ester Boserup who encouraged a generation of researchers to analyse the impact of economic development on

the status of women in the developing world (Boserup 1970). Boserup advocated empowering women by increasing their self-esteem and their access to education, and to wage employment. This started off the debate on whether it was women's alienation from capitalism that caused the problem or if in actual fact their assimilation into the capitalist economy was inclined to construct more gender inequalities. If women do join the market economy, it is based on other entrances than the ones used by men. And in spite of economic transitions, and various political frameworks, the Cinderella role remains stable.

There is the conceptual framework of modernisation vs. traditional. Development agencies employ such dichotomies when the 'women's question' comes up. Abu-Lughod is impatient with the modernisation/traditional dichotomy. We need to be careful not to accept uncritically the notions of 'women's rights' and 'empowerment' that are part of the narratives of progress and enlightenment in the North. Agreeing with Lila Abu-Lugod's criticisms, I believe that to accept these notions is to undermine the realities of generations of women from the south who have unique experiences and distinct interpretations of their role in society. To get out of the trenches of generalising about the Arab woman, we will need to take seriously the voices of the subaltern. We have experienced tacit signals from studies presenting African women in the image that others like to see ... from the fertile and nurturing Earth Mother to the lazy, debauched young beauty. *(Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997, p. 1) Coquery-Vidrovitch shows how histories of the sub-Saharan Africa have left out the histories of women, and that, as in the case Arab women in villages, documentation of women's lives and contributions are difficult to trace.*

Throughout history, merchants, missionaries, and travellers wrote from their experiences in Africa. They were men, and their sources were also male. When women are mentioned they are royalty, owned as slaves or living in a polygamous marriage (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1997). In most travel chronicles from the Middle East, women were not mentioned at all. K.Tidrick's portrayal of a fascinated group of British male travellers illustrates their romantic notion of the Bedouin culture (Tidrick 1989). Their travel accounts are, seemingly, void of women. Tidricks', analysis

of several works does not include reflections on the fact that none of these works includes the division of labour in the societies visited, or that the view of Arabia was one of men given by men, and thus incomplete. Ideals, such as these travel accounts invent the exotic Arab woman. They disregard what the people had to say about their lives, drawing boundaries which do not exist in reality. The result of boundaries has been that women are not acknowledged in their capacity as active providers in their society

Thus, as I have indicated to the reader several places in the study, the traditional Big Story discourse on the societies of the Middle East has been mostly male oriented. Sources from the region and outside the region have generally not considered the role of women as active contributors to the society other than as producers of children. In the travel or ethnographic accounts men and women have been part of the overall description of the region, and about the lives and habits of the natives. Men and women remained voiceless in the background of the monographs and travel tales. Descriptions of family life, mentioned women as brides leaving their homes, taking care of children, washing the home, making food, fetching water, or acting as mourners. They were described as 'bearers of wood and carriers of water': daughters, mothers, wives, slaves or dancers, and only insofar as their male kin were concerned. Yet since travellers, with few exceptions, were men, their contact with natives was with other men. The province of women and their participation were not considered part of the overall household economy and organisation of the societies, because work according to gender was not an issue.

Similar to the history of feminist anthropology in the main, the curve of Middle Eastern feminist ethnographic effort has moved from an anthropology of women to a more all-embracing variety of methodological and analytical approaches: these include embracing discourses and symbolic expression, more reflexive styles of writing, and a development toward gendered analyses of negotiating identity. Perhaps more frequently than in other localities the anthropological project is framed in the paradigm of patriarchy.

Writing about Arab families in the working class neighbourhood of Camp Trad, Suad Jousef couples connectivity with patriarchy. First she defines connectivity as when the persons feel a part of a significant others. (Joseph 1993, p.466) Then she defines patriarchy as privileging of males and seniors and the mobilization of kin structures, kin morality, and kin idioms to legitimate and institutionalize gendered and aged domination (ibid.). She says that connectivity is not necessarily gender specific and yet within the context of family it is coupled with patriarchy to produce patriarchal connectivity (ibid.).So through connectivity and patriarchy communities and identities are shaped, a theme that is idealised among 'my' women in Musharafah, like Um Khaled who insists that she is the one to bring up her grand-daughter and not her ex-daughter-in-law. But then we have seen that circumstances changed connectivity and patriarchy in the village. The village is basically inhabited by old women; the senior men are either dead or working abroad, and the women are left to manage with help from kin or from neighbours. Here connectivity as in 'patriarchal family ties' becomes something of the past, something that is gone with the advent of piped water, which symbolises for many women loneliness and poverty.

Even though Musharafah is no longer a village where men live, the traces of patriarchy remain. There is after all, still the ideal picture of family with a male head, not only in the larger Palestine and Arab discourse, but also among the women when they speak about their 'culture'. Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics make the favoured position of family a point very early on in their introduction to Women and Power in the Middle East (Joseph & Slyomovics 2001). This privileged position is enshrined in the constitutions of many Arab or Muslim states (ibid., p.2), and they add that patriarchy is the foundation of every part of Arab society, that within the context of patriarchal rules we often define the role of women in the region.

Deniz Kandiyoti argues in her work on the role of patriarchy in Muslim society (1996), she maintains that the ideals sought by the middle and upper classes of the region were, in all practical terms, unrealistic for the poorer women. The institution of segregation between men and women was easier to maintain

among the richer women. Nonetheless, wealth gave the upper class women the possibility of controlling property, and the time to receive some education, and consequently, it is among these groups that we find the feminist activists. The feminists in the region were concerned with the lives of women within their own circle, and liberal feminists, such as Doria Shafik responded to the sufferings of the middle class women who wrote to her about family problems, such as polygamy and divorce, which meant women who were urban and literate, and not rural, abandoned and poor. (Nelson 1996)

In general terms and within the patriarchy debate, the increasing pressure on women's time and labour power has been addressed, among many others, in the work of Friedl from Iran. She shows how established patriarchal customs become more evident with the advent of stable settlements, like villages. Evidence shows that defence armies and a powerful priesthood were supported by the increasing institutionalisation of property rights, because of the rise of urban centres. In such segregated societies, women's efforts were no longer considered necessary, and their sexuality had to be guarded to ensure the continuation of property within the family. (Friedl, 1991)

The emphasis on patriarchy has predominated in Middle Eastern and Arab anthropology for one main reason: Islam. Islam in general, is a patriarchal organising factor in which options are created to control the social order, and therefore men's and women's social maps. These maps locate women within a domain that is formally secluded from the public sphere. Women are taught submissiveness to men, and in daily life communication between men and women is minimal. Women's (and also men's) marital choices are regulated and women's chastity guarded, and all their activities are supervised. The space in which women can move is a viable means of communication, transmitting social information, and therefore helps replenish society's collective sentiments.

Within the discourse of allocating space, the private versus public dichotomies have been the main theme, with trends towards emphasising the importance of the private sphere in the Middle East, explaining that it is within that sphere that important family

alliances and information are brought about and exchanged. This discussion is about the contextualisation of so far isolated dichotomies created between traditionality and modernity, a discourse not fitting in a region where family alliances still hold strong. The consequences which follow family alliances might be that a gendered workspace should be treated like speech, which also transmits not only culture as in values, but also politics, and which are generated in social relations conducted within the private sphere.

Men have social and political power within their extended family, and women, in theory and practice, lack any such influence publicly. I do not altogether agree with the dynamism given to the private sphere area, which I must admit did seem rational and likely before I carried out my fieldwork. Normally I consider that the region of the Arabic Middle East is in essence family oriented. However, this is also a predisposition of envisaging the region as static and not responding to the global changes. Discourses about public and private spheres need to be seen in the light of a changing region with a civil society absorbed (for better or for worse) in a market economy, which creates various new alliances.

Several have pointed to the first intifadah as the beginning of the end of the Palestinian clan outlook. I will take it further to include water channelled in pipes where women suddenly find themselves without the chore that regulated their activities and was a form of social adhesive. This shows that the public and private were never equal - they may have fulfilled each other, but it is within the public sphere that values are decided and agreed upon. This has endured, while the private cannot withstand the change. The public and private sphere paradox is that the dichotomy is especially obvious in the urban areas of the Middle East, also among the middle class families.

Rural women are supposedly freer in the sense that they move outside the home, but they are at the very bottom of a strict hierarchical economic, political and social structure. This is the starting point of Abu-Lughod's criticism of literature about the

Middle East.[19] In Writing women's worlds first chapter called "patrilineality", Abu-Lughod lets the widow Migdim tell the story of a woman who is strong and wilful and demands her rights from her sons. She is an authority figure who has lived through the battle of El Alamain. This and all the other chapters are meant to show that variations in peoples lives can only come to the surface if we let them speak. By doing so we not only write against generalisations of the others but certainly against the generalisations about women in the Middle East. Abu-Lughod's ambition is to make the lives of the "others" accessible, and thus to show that the emancipatory ambitions of feminism in the West are not fitting when we realise through such stories that women in the South, have other ideas about the lives of women and have other agendas: the women in the Middle East might have other concerns which are different from those of the women in the West. By using the words of the people concerned we avoid the entrapment of misleading concepts introduced and imposed by the West to describe something that is not understood. In all her writings 'against culture' Abu-Lughod makes the accusation that culture epitomises the misleading concepts; culture is the today's tool that leads to further (racial) discrimination.

Similarly, Fernea points out the dearth of scholarship on Islamic Feminism, that is on including the women's point of view from their stories (Fernea Elizabeth 1998). The theme of women as victims of patriarchy and Islam has been replaced by women as identities negotiating their survival. Like Abu-Lughod, Ferneas goal has been to bring Muslim women's lives and voices into closer dialog with the theoretical implements we employ to examine and explore people's knowledges. The Muslim woman can speak, and she has aims and ideas about her role in society, and yet, women tell us through their narratives that they also aspire to fulfil their wishes within the context of their specific cultural spaces.

Elisabeth Fernea uses the accounts of women in several Muslim countries to answer the question of whether there is such a thing as Islamic Feminism. Elizabeth Fernea's journey from the United States to the Middle East and Central Asia in search of 'Islamic

[19] See Abu-Lughod's review article,(Abu-Lughod 1989)

Feminism', demonstrates how Muslim women approach feminism and that a great deal is at stake. Change in the law should not be made at the expense of the family. 'The woman question' is about their agency and it requires bringing forth documentation of societies in the Middle East while women are actively finding solutions to their own challenges. Fernea tells us that there are several and different voices in the Middle East, that views are also contradictory, and above all there are several contributing voices to the debates on the future of the patriarchal society.

The patriarchal discourse is also an essential part of the Palestinian woman's discourse, where we find it on two fronts: we have the internal which is the family, and the external, which concerns the Israeli occupation. And despite the obvious affects of the occupation on the women's everyday lives and regardless of their visible role, in both the national and social struggle in the Occupied Territories, their distinct and articulated reflections and concerns remain largely absent from most of the studies which are concerned with the gendering of the Middle East. Clearly, there have been both feminist scholars and women activists who have been actively insisting on the inclusion of women in wider national discourses, because state and society interact, and there are dramatic implications which impinge directly on women's every lives. Going back to the Big Story of Palestine, there are, as the reader now realises competing claims to the collective memory which are constructed around the struggle between Palestinians and Israeli narratives. The counter-hegemonic local and intellectual discourse, that is the Palestinian Big Story, is enthused by the creation of the national historical narrative. And yet, we have not heard as much about the Palestinian women in villages, and the women in Musharafah have retained a slightly different angle in their Palestinian narrative.

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod places the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip within the category of 'conventional expressions' of colonialism and imperialism. Contemporary Palestinian resistance to Israel's occupation, like earlier expressions of opposition to the British mandate, has been consistent with the struggle of the colonized in general (Nassar Jamal & Heacock 1990, p.4).And as in other national struggles in the Middle East, Palestinian women have been active in the

struggle, and yet also they have faced what Kandiyoti says are the local and cultural processes.(Kandiyoti 1996, p.19)

Kandiyoti offers an outline of feminist academic work in the West, maintaining that the relationship between Western imperialist discourse and colonised subalterity must be discussed at the point of their intersection. She looks into the discursive limitations (Kandiyoti 1996, p.x) of contemporary works and divides critiques into three phases. In the early phase of struggle for independence, women and their rights were incorporated in the national cause, yet they remained within the patriarchal grip. Then in the second phase, rights were created within either a Marxist or a 'modernisation' framework, and the ideologies became part of the reconstruction course of action. The third phase dealt with the pieces of feminist epistemologies, the shifting from 'women' to 'gender'. The current phase is described as both post-Orientalist and poststructuralist; here Kandiyoti leaves the future open.

In the same book, which Kandiyoit edited, Hannah Katz debates the 'national narratives' as 'gendered texts' in which nationalism is described as masculine fighting for the feminised and eroticized land of Palestine. In this dual interchange, the women's position becomes the symbol of either 'modernisation' or 'backwardness'. Katz looks into the original Jewish and Arab texts, documenting the construction of the new nationhoods as masculine and Palestine as a female entity to be wooed, protected and killed for. The article elaborates on how people perceived the status of women as an indication of their national standing. Whether it was girls' education, motherhood, equality or domesticity, it was for the sake of Palestine, for the Palestinians, or Zionism, for the Jews. And thus, in the Big Story, women are fixed symbols of each nation.

The Palestinian women's narrative for self determination and national sovereignty has suffered from the images of the Big Story, whilst it still is at the core of the patriarchy/nationalism discourse. The process of struggle today is embedded in internal gender negotiations and conflicts between different social groups such as refugees vs. townspeople vs. peasants; opposite ideologies compete, and these issues have politicised class and

gender issues. In an early work by Peteet about Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon she illustrates how the sovereignty discourse and the activist role of women in the national struggle is seen by some women as an integration into public life, and yet Fateh publications and speeches by its leaders pay scant attention to the liberation or equality of women....(Peteet Julie 1991, p.97) I recognised the lack of women's involvement in public office during the post-Oslo agreement state-building processes. Several friends working in public offices, NGO offices and universities spoke of the elections to the PNA as a "a sham"; very few women were on the list, and the ones mentioned could be controlled by the men.

Several scholars have discussed the role of women in the intifadah; Lisa Taraki et al. claim that, regardless of popular representations of the Palestinian society as radical, it is indeed traditional (Kandiyoti et al. 1995). Yet the Taraki (p.c) does not dismiss the Islamic movement of Hamas, instead she points to the fact that the women's movement needs to engage women from all classes and religions. For Hanan Ashrawi the Islamic Resistance is considered a serious obstruction to the women's movement, in an interview Ashrawi warns firmly against the ... resurgence of traditional thought associated with religion. Hamas has always been viewed as the main threat to women's rights. (Zalatimo 1998, p.189)

Finally, I want to go back to my suggestion at the start of this chapter. I wrote that the critical issue in gendering the Middle East is the 'special approach' outlook towards women's lives in the region. For the most part our focus has been entrenched in reflecting on women within a framework of patriarchy and Islam. These are certainly two principal issues, and as we have seen they intersect in the Palestinian national discourse. Hence the ethnographies do what I have referred to above and what I have drawn on in my dissertation are significant, some are path-breaking. Yet most studies fall short; they do not go further with the issues beyond patriarchy and feminist ethnographies 'of the particulars'.

Empowering women in the emerging mainstreaming in development needs to be attended to generally, and more

particularly with concern towards women in the Middle East. We need to probe and be more specific in our discussions on the impact of global economic development on women's 'lives as lived'. I have in the dissertation mentioned the Palestinian woman as an authentic village woman sitting by the well, the spring, fetching and carrying water, and these are images to which the old women in Musharafah have also alluded in their narratives. In a development discourse on the Middle East we should examine the lives of village women as both guardians of the heritages of which they so proudly speak, and also as survivors in their battles with deprivation and food crisis. We need to explore more pragmatically the realities which many women, like 'my' women in Musharafah, face everyday.

MAJOR POINTS AND FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Anthropology has been involved in basic theoretical comparisons and questions regarding knowledge in social and cultural analysis. "The Wet and the Dry" is the Lévi-Straussian title of Geertz' article where he compares traditional irrigation systems in two quite different environmental settings: east central Morocco and South-eastern Bali. Bali has a tropical climate, and no shortage of water. Because of the abundance of water people there demonstrate a collective approach to the organisation of irrigation facilities. Morocco, on the contrary, is an arid country. Since water is scarce, society there shows a more individualistic approach to the regulation of water. The contrast, between the strongly group-oriented Balinese approach to water control and distribution and the highly individualistic Moroccan, illustrates the connection between the availability of water and the internal organisation of two societies. (Geertz 1972)

Geertz writes that ...physical, social, and cultural factors are integrated in to quite distinctive ecosystems with human beings in them *(Geertz 1972, p.37); that human life depends on surrounding environment is an established fact, but the ecology of the two settings, Bali and Morocco, infiltrates the whole structure of society. Water usage is traced in an attempt to demonstrate that patterns of adaptation are susceptible to other aspects of social and cultural life. He is describing and analysing water used in irrigation, while my material is based on household water, which is fetched for washing, cooking and laundry;* "a few drops", *they said, were for the vegetables in their garden. The other difference is that, although Palestine and Morocco are both arid, my study is from the Highlands of Palestine, and the actors are old women. These differences might be reasons for not identifying the same individualism Geertz writes about from Morocco. Water in Musharafah is a metaphor of the totality of their lives. When collecting water and gathering fuel, several women, as they described in their stories, went together to keep each other company.*

Carrying out the chores collectively socialised women separately from men, legitimated gender jobs and, of course, encouraged spatial segregation. Places or sites were a central part in the

hierarchical segregation and the exchange and reciprocity within the social life of the village. The sites expressed shared values, friendship, loyalty and struggle; these were defined within the definite organisations of space, articulated in the above network of social relations and understanding. There were frontiers for permissible movements; women fetching water were reproducing their granted space, part of the **khala**. **Khala** was part of their domestic space only as far as men were not part of the same space.

In contrast to the organisation reported by Geertz in his Morocco material, in Musharafah water scarcity, and especially during the 'season of summer', encouraged collective enterprise. During these hot months, women walked to the spring or pool in small groups. It was dark when they walked to the spring, and often they had to spend the night waiting for their turn, and "for the drops to fill the jarra or the calla" Potential for a so-called head-on encounter for individuals (Geertz 1972, p.37) as Geertz writes from his fieldwork, is likely if the individual women or factions experienced that they were losing water because other individuals or groups were using more water; this, 'my' women claimed, never happened.

I see my conclusion as a resumé of the study, and an attempt to draw together the different complexities that make up themes in the study. I have claimed that narrowing the focus to include only water and water development is futile, because when we deal with household water in the village we are dealing with the entirety of women's performance, experiences, the structure of significance and identities. A woman's life involves acting on the world, 'being in the world'. My project has, as the reader knows, not been a straightforward venture. In using narratives concerning women's knowledge of water we saw the role and position water has in everyday realities.

Listening to and using stories from below is a method of insisting that agency is diverse and complex; there are no uncomplicated lives. I have argued for the value of bringing forth the contradictions in lives so that we can better understand the particularities of the 'lives as lived'. Thus, the study has been concerned with the avoidance of pitfalls of conceptualising

women into a position where they are the mere 'others' mirroring the uneventful and the static.

I have also been pragmatic, maybe even eclectic, as to my use of 'culture' and 'knowledge' and have used both to elaborate on categories surrounding the women's everyday realities and experiences. The narratives which I draw on have helped me avoid sweeping generalisations about women's lives; they have rather illustrated the experiences which are constituted by 'real' individuals who have particular, complex and contradicting histories. These are the credentials of 'being in the world'.

In Part One, I began with the realities of the village, its biographies, symbols and resources. In this first chapter I have attempted to explore, describe and discuss the complex agency of peasants, the elders in the village of Musharafah and the fact that their entrenchment in the village is also one that has produced tension with and towards the internal historic turn of events.

The landscape serves as a backdrop for their agencies; the women are not remote; they have dreams, goals, aspirations and obstacles to overcome, and they fashion landscape into their narratives. We heard about marriages, family relationships and belief, all negotiated and placed in a local geography and in a time perspective. This is life as lived before and after potable water. The cultural, economic and political specifics are what gives their stories the complexities and textures. Fetching water has its essential place, and its explanatory power includes other segments of life.

The reality that was unfolded in Chapter One is more multifaceted than the nostalgic and evocative discourse, which fits into the Big Story, because we hear stories which resemble the essentialisations in the Big Story. The particular point on the essentialisation of Palestine is brilliantly exposed by Annlies Moors' article "Presenting Palestine's Premonitions of the Nakba".

Moors uses photography from the early 20th century from illustrations in National Geographic *magazine and compares them with Walid Khalidi photo-histories. She analyses the*

imagery representations of Palestinians and Palestine, with the aim to show for whom the illustrations were meant and objective of the images. Within the context of the National Geographic, Palestine has very explicit and strong connotations to the Old and New Testament. The pictures used by Khalidi are associated with debates about modernity and cultural authenticity. Moors concludes the article by saying that the counter-narrative of Khalidi in Before their Diaspora is a representation of a viable Palestinian urban class, while the peasants remain nondescript and their agency remains circumscribed.(Moors 2001, p.22)

In Chapter Two I reflect on Palestine as a nation, and possibly one of the most direct references pointing to the discourse on this contested land is Dyan's quotation: We came to this country which was already populated by Arabs, and we are establishing a Hebrew, that is a Jewish state here. In considerable areas of the country we bought the lands from Arabs. Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages, and I do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you, because these geography books no longer exist; not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either.... There is not one place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population.(Said 2001, p.207)

Mustafa Murad Al-Dabagh and Walid Khalidi's projects are precisely projects aimed at bringing forth the evidence of thriving Palestinian culture in the land of Palestine long before the Zionists occupied the country. While Al-Dabagh draws on recorded documents, Khalidi in both his major works All that remains (Khalidi 1992a)and Before their Diaspora (Khalidi & Institute for Palestine 1991) draws on photography, which is a vital tool in recording and documenting belonging.

In Part Two I reflected on how the women spoke about a family system based on a patriarchal head of family and their **dar**, rather than the **hamulah**, Yet, in fact, many either live alone, or head a household of women. Still, in talking about life before piped water their agency is placed within kinship ties which they make us understand are crucial in survival and struggles. Their lives with other women depended greatly on network and doing the chores expected from them. Within that reality power was acquired

through seniority and by bearing male heirs. As young brides they tell us that they entered their husband's household at a young age and at a disadvantage - of being subordinate to the mother-in-law. It was not so much all the other men in the household that concerned them as much as the power of the mother-in-law. Then they speak of the change and the power they acquire with the birth of the first son.

Narratives also made it possible to see that the 'power' in 'empowerment' is problematic. During the Palestinian election campaigns of 1995, women from several neighbouring villages were invited to attend an information meeting. Um Awad, because she is old and therefore has "seen everything", told all in the meeting, that she would speak up on behalf of all the other old women and especially on behalf of Sett Um Muhammed who was to tired to come. The other women nodded in agreement. She wanted the young man to know that they, the old women in the village, are concerned with water quality from the tap, its availability and the expense imposed on their households. When he did not seem to know what she was referring to, she asked him where he came from, that implies which village and from which **dar**. He was born in Al Bireh, but his family, he said came from a village not far from Musharafah.

Satisfied with the young man's answer, Um Awad went on to tell him that I was joining the women in the meeting because I was writing about their lives and all that they did for the village, and that his grandmother would interest me too. She added that she and the other women, stressing "the old women", know all about water and that also his grandmother had gone to the spring to fetch water for her family. Although Um Awad had never met her, she was sure that also his grandmother was anxious that, during the long hot months, "there is hardly any water in the tap", she said what really needed to be done was to maintain the old springs, and build more cisterns and wells. "Do you want to go back to carrying the water on your head?" the young man asked. "It is better than having no water in the tap and paying money for each drop, and seeing each other growing poor in our last days. Look around you, we have nothing to do." This time it was Um Qays who answered him.

Initially, water in the form of management has been linked to the men's domain, also when the Palestinian Authorities have been planning the institutionalisation of water. I indicated in the introduction that within the framework of the Big Story of water, the importance of managing water obviously depends on who is talking about it in geopolitical terms. I also said that I favour the water story from below. In its essence, water in the women's discourse is a considered a gift from God, to be drawn on wisely and not squandered. It comes in the form of rain from the heavens, flowing down from the surrounding mountains through the earth; whatever its source it is a miracle.

As part of my conclusion, I want to diverge briefly here and add a parenthesis: At several workshops I was made aware of the sexuality of water and women, and every time I have taken that issue back with me to the elders who laughed or shook their heads at the "foreigners" approach. This reminds of Gunnvor Berge (p.c) who told me once about her dilemma with the 'tent' among nomads. She had come across questions about the symbolism attached to the seating of the nomads in their tent. Yet, when she bought up the theme with one of her informants he told her that he chooses the place available whether it is to the north, south, east or west. Obviously, questions asked by 'foreigners' are not necessarily relevant.

There are two approaches or rather stories: we have the Big Story of water, and we also have the story from below. I favour narratives because they bring out agency and experiences more clearly. In choosing to do so, there are several levels of abstraction and many issues that are contested. My story from below is problematic because it is by no means a straightforward story; instead it concerns contested sites of water supply, women's lives, development and knowledges. These are sites where ways of thinking about the world come into conflict, women whose forms of knowledge collide, and where, as so often happens, the more powerful cancel the weaker.

In Part Three I explore the outcome of piped water and the development issue. We are met with a simple equation; if one useful item of traditional life is removed, then there seems to be a need of replacing it with some other item that will perform the

same social function. When traditional roles have been erased, must prevailing and grounded cultural constraints prevent ageing women from finding replacements?

The most important source of respect and authority in the villages is carrying out community responsibilities. Household water was a woman's essential contribution to the working structure of the community. Community life as a whole depends on how land and family weave a pattern of life, not only for the old of Musharafah, but also the Palestinian rural women in general. The village is ideally for them a self-sufficient world; with the advent of piped water, the women find that the final result is the unintended circumstance of being totally dominated by Israel.

Women like Um Fathi who were initially positive to the pipes in the village, find that they are particularly vulnerable to new management methods that are introduced in the wake of economic liberalisation. Statements from the women in Musharafah indicate that women are under increasing pressure to meet expectations that policy makers and donor countries are unacquainted with. As the study showed, the piped water came at a time of political and civil unrest, and the economy of the village suffered as a result of the narrow or closed labour markets which followed. The result is that today there is an increase in the number of old women living alone under poverty conditions.

We know from several studies and we heard in the stories of the women in Musharafah that women and girls often carry the heaviest burden of economic adjustment. This is because of their reproductive roles and the household and village constrains on their lives. Adjustment packages which come along with development plans have intensified their workload by increasing their participation in formal and informal labour markets, while locally their public role is not accepted or it is simply not acknowledged.

The life in both formal and informal spheres is changed by development agencies through what has been called 'packaging', a term referring to the performance of several jobs in either or both the formal and informal economic sectors, typically resulting in an intensification of women's workloads. Similarly, studies on the effects of adjustment on agricultural communities have

documented ways in which gender relations mediate the dynamics of adjustment in the Third Word, often breaking codes of cultural constraints. The women in Musharafah tell us in their narratives it was often they who had to assume the responsibility for 'feeding the children' when the men died or sought work elsewhere. Moreover, the women could not always rely on their sons, or daughters, to sustain them in old age.

Hence, while structural adjustment which encouraged 'packaging' or 'mainstreaming' had intended to create more 'gender-equality', in Musharafah we see that local political and cultural constraints affect realties which the development goal did not consider. We see in the village of Musharafah an illustration of how macroeconomic policies that work through and within gendered structures and relations shape the choices and material conditions of women and men differently. Although there is a lack of systematic country data on the gender dimensions of adjustment, numerous case studies and accumulated evidence from different countries during the past decade reveal that an unequal burden of adjustment has disproportionately fallen on women.

Given the longer than expected length of adjustment and the devastating social and cultural costs experienced by Palestinian women, especially refugee and rural women, there is an urgent need to rethink adjustment policies. Within the current Israeli occupation policy, there is an increase in social polarisation and increased poverty. Mainstream development theories on gender, policies and strategies to implement these goals have analysed poverty through what I will claim are myopic approaches with regard to the position of women caught between the firm ideals of a patriarchal society and an occupation.

Many of the elderly in Musharafah defined themselves as poor, and they did not foresee any improvement as long as Palestine is restrained through the occupation. Policies and strategies to assist the poor are more viable within the context of a sovereign society living in peace. Traditional poverty eradication measures and prioritises the provision of 'basic' goods and services, such as clean water, food, housing, health care, and education for women and men. The role(s) of economic, political, and social

institutions and ideologies that are implicated in the production and perpetuation of poverty processes are not questioned. There have been several poverty alleviating projects created on the assumption that the people will benefit, for example the social investment funds that have been implemented in Palestine to assist the poor during the process of institutionalisation and nation-building. Projects have been designed specifically to assist the women: in those projects the most common presupposition has been that women will benefit alongside men from project implementation.

Nonetheless, the social investment funds as they have been operated have ignored women and proved unable to address the specific needs of women living in poverty. I will suggest that the reasons for project failures are principally because the lived experiences and the daily realities of the women involved have rarely been understood. No time has been spent hearing what the women have to say about their lives and about the particulars that surround them daily.

Hence when the material realities of women are theorised, women are primarily perceived in the roles of dependent wives and mothers, and as a result they are incorporated into policies only in terms of these family roles (Beneria 1982; Beneria & Bisnath 2001) and not in terms of their actual lives, as illustrated by my material. The realities of cultural norms, colonisation and occupation construct a situation that needs to be addressed from the ground. Um Fathi and even Sett Um Muhammed, who was very sceptical of the piped water, envisioned a better life. They hoped for an easier future for their children and grandchildren and a decent old age for themselves. From the perspective of the water experts and health personnel the water project was formulated from limited, stereotypical and essentialist notions: that women suffer walking when back and forth from the spring, and that with tap water hygiene will become better.

We see in the institutional discourse that the ritual of fetching water is consequently used to reinforce the picture of Third World women's subordinate position within their households and communities. This is a different image than those the women in Musharafah have of their past and their chores of managing the

household water. Alternative development occupies an in-between position: somewhere between development and post-development. It shares with post-development the radical critiques of mainstream development, but it retains belief in development and accordingly redefines development. Pieterse (2001) argues that the key issue lies in the connectivity between culture and power. I translate power to be the occupation and the occupied in the Musharafah context. The concern for us anthropologists should be new alternatives to development policies under such harsh conditions; the transformation of female consciousness and development is a process that depends on the political events, and here is where I believe our work with the role of cultural and knowledge analysis begins.

Part Four explored the Middle East and the Palestine narrative as sites for the colonisers, traveller, and researcher; vulnerable and contested from several fronts, basically because they are an expression of relationships based on a long standing encounter between the West and the 'Orient'. The debates which started in the 1970s and then developed during the past decades have contributed to much scholarship which also includes the increasing availability of Arab women's research and literature in English and French translations. This has brought the Arab woman out of her remoteness in the Western academic debates and into the wider generation of broader themes concerned with her realities. Still, it is certainly not a simple project to integrate the discourses which surround women's realities.

There are still obvious questions to ask when the women are lamenting about a nostalgic past. Why did they move in the first place, away from the old familiar ways of the old village, and live in scattered settlements? Once they were scattered, well meaning engineers and developers thought practically about how to save the peasants trouble and enhance hygiene by delivering water to their homes. And why didn't the peasants ever really do something about their water distribution? After all there are sophisticated water systems in the region that are about 3000 years old. As they say they seem to have welcomed the delivery of water to their homes. I did not ask questions which today might seem like good questions to ask, but I do know that the convenient water shattered the congregation (good and bad) of

close lives. Things just happened to the women and their village life; and the results were inadvertent.

Water triggered what the women told me in their stories. The old women of Musharafah have a mission to realise in their life. At a certain intersection in their history clean, clear, sweet tap water was advantageous and a sign of prosperity and independence on the path to a 'free Palestine'. Still, at the crossing to modernisation and independence the frothy, yellowish and bitter spring and rainwater represent the past with all its goodness and togetherness. There remains a knowledge gap between fetching water and tap water. Now, they have told us that in their life world suffering has never been a stranger, but neither have achievements and resilience.

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