

Abstract

The aim of this study is primarily to describe and analyze the interrelations between kinship system, settlement process, and land ownership in the Jordanian community of Basta, a village in the southern part of the country.

The relationship between the social structure and the settlement process is one of interdependence. It exhibits multitude facets of interaction among members of the Basta community, extending to both neighboring related villages and the urbanized society beyond.

The evidence indicates a coincidence between the transition in settlement patterns and shifts within the organization of kinship relations. The inhabitants of Basta have become increasingly more involved in the urbanized society of Jordan as the displacement of the village, and other villages from a nomadic pastoral way of life to that of a sedentary, agro-pastoral way of life has proceeded. The resulting increase in occupational choice (e.g. army enlistment, work abroad) and educational opportunities has gone hand-in-hand with changes that have taken place within the kinship organization of the village and related communities. These changes represents a shift in the relative importance of the social units that make-up the kinship organization. Internal as they are these changes have not resulted in correspondingly important changes in the functions traditionally performed through kin relations.

In effect, the increase in importance of the fakhdh/hamulah level of kin relations at the expense of those within the more inclusive 'ashira/qabila groupings has not had similar consequences for the social norms and practices associated with such matters as land ownership, patterns of marriage, and inheritance. These have remained largely unchanged.

There is no claim that a cause and effect relationship binds the changes which have taken place within the kinship organization, the settlement patterns, and in the economic base of the community. Nevertheless, the evidence shows that the wider social context, especially as reflected in the role of Government policy, has had a decisive role to play in the process of settlement transition and the changes in the group realignment.