



Agriculture and Pastoralism in the Hajar Mountains of the Emirates: A Historical Ethnography

Dr. Abdullah A. Yateem *

Abstract:

This study, based on ethnographic fieldwork among the Hajari Bedouins of the mountain zone of the United Arab Emirates, aims to highlight the significance of agriculture and pastoralism in the political economy of the Hajari communities. It, therefore, provides a detailed ethnographic picture of the extent of local knowledge involved in economic activities such as agriculture and pastorals, and its assumed effect on the political and economic life of Hajari society and their culture.

In the first part of this paper, the author presents a critique of the economic and political studies of the Arabian Gulf societies. These societies overvalued economic commodities, such as pearls, and later oil at the expense of other locally produced commodities in either pastoral or agricultural communities. The study then puts forward extensively the Hajar case by illustrating the importance of local knowledge in tobacco growing, date cultivation, goat herding and husbandry in the economic, political and social lives of those societies.

Introduction:

Recent history, as well as current observations of the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf societies, shows that the remote pastoral and peasant communities- of inner Arabia, Oman, the Emirates' hinterland, Yemen, southern Iraq and the Fars province of Iran- have always maintained commercial contacts and exchanges with the centres of

* Anthropologist & Academic, Kingdom of Bahrain.

trade in the region, especially the small towns and villages which were located along the caravan routes in the desert regions.⁽¹⁾

Of these towns and villages, there is Unayzah, Hufuf and Hail in Najd, al-Hasa and Jabal Shamar regions of Saudi Arabia; the Buraimi Oasis of the Emirates and Oman. There are, also, the small ports and towns of the coastal regions, such as Bahrain, Dubai, Sharjah, Muscat, Kuwait, Basra and several ports of Yemen and southern Iran.⁽²⁾ These

(1) **Acknowledgment:** Data for this essay are based on my residence in the coastal region of the Emirates (1976-1984), and later, on field research in its Western Hajar (1987-1995). My research has been carried out largely among the semi-nomadic tribal groups who reside in the mountain zone of the Emirates, al-Hajar. I gratefully acknowledge support from the University of Bahrain for the research period between 1987 and 1988.

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(2) For a description of the economic, especially the trade and market activities, and social aspects of the Arabian and Persian towns and ports of trade, see the works of European travellers such as those of: (Doughty, *Travel in Arabia Deserta*, 1888; Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia*, 1792; Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom, A Triumph*, 1935; Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert*, 1949; Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf*, 1910; "On the Border of the Great Desert, 1919; Thomas, *Alarms and Excursions in Arabia*, 1931; *Arabia Felix*, 1932; Thesiger, *Arabian Sands*, 1959.)

Muslim travelers have also given interesting description of these societies, see for example the work of: (Ibn Batuta, *Rehlat Ibin Batuta*, 1968; al-Hamdani, *Sifat Jazirat al-Arab*, 1983; Al-Masudi, *Muruj al-dhahab wa Madin al-Jawahar*, 1946; Nasser Khisro, *Safar Namah*, 1983) and also the modern Arab traveler, Rihani, *Muluk al-Arab*, 1924). Several European missionaries visited the remote oases and towns of either inner or coastal Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Emirates regions and provided some useful descriptions of their observations. Many of these observations were published in the journal of the Arabian Mission of the Reformed Church in America, *Neglected Arabia*, 1892-1962.

Of course, for more detailed, historical and geographical descriptions the work of (Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, 1908-15) will remain the most comprehensive reference for the area. As for the anthropological contributions, one can mention here the recent works of Barth and Wikan on the Omani coastal town of Sohar (Barth, *Sohar: Culture and Society in an Omani Town*, 1983; Wikan, *Behind the Veil in Arabia: Women in Oman*, 1982), Khuri on Bahrain (Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State*, 1980), Eickelman on the interior town of al-Hamra in Oman (Eickelman, *Women and Community in Oman*, 1984), Altorki and Cole on Unayzah in Saudi Arabia (Altorki & Cole, *Arabian Oasis City: The Transformation of Unayzah*, 1989), and more recently the work of Al-Rasheed on Hail (Al-Rasheed, *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidi Tribal Dynasty*, 1991).

trade and commercial contacts, while they provided those major towns and ports with power, and subsequently, domination over the remote pastoral and peasant communities, also provided those communities with the opportunity to enter commercial enterprises. Trade and commercial contacts have given remote pastoral and peasant communities the opportunity, for example, to foster elite families who, through trading in agricultural product and livestock, have managed to establish themselves as affluent lineages among their native tribes, and consequently enabling their tribes and lineages to become dominant in their regions.

Another observation can be also drawn from the following fact: During the decades before the discovery of oil, foreign trade and the pearl industry had provided the Arab merchant families of the region with economic and political power, but regional trade- some of whose components were based on commodities produced within the countries of the region- constituted and continued to constitute a vital economic and political resource for both the export and import societies. Local commodities which still have a significant role at the local-level of the political economy of this region are: first, agricultural producers, such as dates, tobacco, lime and mango; second, livestock, of which goats, sheep and camels form the main components; and finally, fish.

Traditional markets in the major Arab Gulf towns and cities, such as Manama in Bahrain, Dubai and Sharjah in the Emirates, Muscat and Sohar in Oman, Kuwait City, and the small towns of Al-Hasa in the eastern province in Saudi Arabia, all encompass shops and stores which have been designated for either the wholesale of dates, limes and tobacco, or as small retail shops which sell the same commodities. There are also the livestock markets.⁽³⁾ In towns and cities such as those which are mentioned above, the local traders of the traditional commodities have had a long history of economic contacts with the

(3) The loose tobacco which is sold by these shops is used locally in two methods of smoking: 1) bottle smoking, the Hubble bubble, in the coastal towns of the northern Arab Gulf countries; 2) pipe smoking, a method largely practiced mainly among the Bedouins of Oman and the Emirates.

cultivators and pastoralists of the Omani and Emirates mountain zones and oases communities.

During the early period of my fieldwork (1987-88) among the Hajari peasants and pastoralists, that is to say the Bedouin of the mountain range of the Emirates, I came across several kinds of commercial transactions which have a considerable effect on both the society and culture of that region. Those transactions were largely centered around commodities, such as tobacco, dates, limes and livestock.

Understanding tobacco and dates, for instance, as an important commodity for the Hajari and the Gulf traders, and the way it operates at the political economy level of the Gulf region, requires one to investigate the amount of local knowledge, resources, expertise and social involvement invested in producing such commodities. An examination of the relevant literature, however, reveals that little emphasis is placed on this aspect. The ethnographic literature, for example, suffers from the absence of first-hand data on the agricultural regime and the economic organization which produces such local commodities: commodities which still have an important place in the local markets.⁽⁴⁾

(4) Apart from some few, recent ethnographies on certain aspects of agricultural practice, such as of Varisco, on the sorghum cultivation in the highland Yemen (Varisco, "The Production of Sorghum (Dhurah) in Highland Yemen", 1985); and Altorki and Cole in the transformation of the agriculture system in the oasis of Unayzah and Al-Rasheed on the Hail oasis-town also of Jabal Shammar in Saudi Arabia (Altorki and Cole, *Arabian Oasis City: The Transformation of Unayzah*, 1989; Al-Rasheed, *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidi Tribal Dynasty*, 1991). There is also Barth's study of an Omani oasis (Barth, "Factors of Production, Economic Circulation, and Inequality in Inner Arabia, 1978), and the early study of the al-Hasa oasis by an American anthropologist (Vidal, "Date Culture in the Oasis of Al-Hasa", 1954; *The Oasis of al-Hasa*, 1955.) The rest of the studies, however, have been carried out by either geographers, such as the important studies of Wilkinson on Oman (Wilkinson, *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia: A Study of the Afalaj of Oman*, 1977), in which he combined his skills in social geography and history, or historians, such as that by Heard-Bey on the Emirates (Heard-Bey, "Anomalies in the Bedouin Oasis of Al-Liwa", 1974; *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*, 1982).

Economic studies of the region seem to concentrate on the relationship between the discovery of oil and the rapid social change and development: the change and development which are believed to have transformed the societies and cultures of this region so radically. The major aspects on which these studies have focused include, for instance, foreign trade between the Arab Gulf countries and the industrial West: oil is seen here, of course, as the main commodity.⁽⁵⁾

Such studies as well as others, however, deal with these trading activities as if they were the result of Western capitalist expansion in the pre-industrial world. As such, this research has ignored the fact that the societies of the Arabian Gulf have a long history of well - established ancient trade. Such research also tends to overlook the existence of trade and commercial practices which put the people of the region into contact with the outside world, including the Indian subcontinent, East Africa and the Far East. It also underestimates another kind of trade, that is to say the one which takes place between and within the societies of the region itself.⁽⁶⁾ As a result, these modern

(5) Several studies demonstrating such an approach have appeared since the late 1970s, the literature now is vast but it is sufficient to cite some which reflect the different schools of thought. Examples of this type of economic studies, however, exhibited itself in the writings of authors such as: (Al-Kawari, *Oil Revenues in the Gulf Emirates*, 1978; Beblawi, *The Arab Gulf Economy in a Turbulent Age*, 1984; “The Rentier State in the Arab World”, 1987; Azhary, *The Impact of Oil Revenues on Arab Gulf Development*, 1984; Abdul-Fadil, “The Macro-behaviour of Oil-Rentier in the Arab Region”, 1987; Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 1990).

(6) An exception to these studies, one refers to several other ones: of anthropological, archaeological, historical and geographical nature which have applied a political economy approach in studying some communities and regions in and outside the Arabian context. Such studies have treated those communities as part of their regional and world system. In this context, see for example the remarkable, anthropological studies of Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, 1982; Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, 1940; and Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, 1985. At the Arabian Peninsula level, I would like to mention the study of Wilkinson, *The Inmate Tradition of Oman*, 1987; Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*, 1982 ; Hourani, *Arab Sea Faring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, 1951; and that of Edens, “Dynamics of Trade in the Ancient Mesopotamian “World System”, 1992.

economic studies have created an image of this kind of trade depicting it as a kind of economic activity that either belongs to the remote past, or one that is very marginal and thus does not deserve much scholarly attention.⁽⁷⁾

This study argues, however, that it is not always the case that when a form of economic practice does not appear in the statistical book of GNP, it means that such practice is not economically- and consequently politically- important in the lives of the people concerned with it. Experiences show that several aspects of informal economic activity, which surely has a significant role in the lives of certain communities and families, does not necessarily take their proper place in the GNP statistical books. In order to show the significance of such informal economy- considered by the abovementioned studies as marginal, particularly when contrasted with the significance of oil- this study will seek to examine some features of the cultural context of dates and tobacco cultivation so as to shed light on one of the lively Hajari traditions.

The Ecology:

The Western Hajar (*al-Hajar al-Gharbi*) is a mountain zone situated in South East Arabia with an area of approximately 35,000 sq. km. The zone stretches from Ras al-Had in northern Oman to Ras Musandam in the far north of Oman and the Emirates at the entrance

(7) In their ethnographic study of Unayzah, (Altorki and Cole, *Arabian Oasis City: The Transformation of Unayzah*, 1989), Altorki and Cole, provided an interesting critique of some of the stereotypes which have been created by Western travelers and scholars and also Arab academics of the urban, pastoralist and peasant societies of Arabia. The two authors believe that these stereotypes have presented the pre-oil economy of the Arabia as one which was totally subsistence in nature, i. e. one which was lacking any form of market-economy base. This study, in its turn, sees that while such a critique is true, it also releases the effect of such stereotypes on not only the way the economy of inner Saudi Arabia has been represented, but also how these stereotypes been taken away, as far as any Bedouin could reach in Arabia, and applied to the rest of the Bedouin towns, cities and oases in the Emirates and Oman. See Altorki & Cole, *Arabian Oasis City: The Transformation of Unayzah*, 1989, pp. 5-10.

of the Arabian Gulf. Although most of the region is located inside Omani territory, the remaining part, however, is in the Emirati territory and constitutes one-tenth of its total land area.

From north to south the length of the Emirates' Hajar zone is 155 km; the width ranges from 10 km, in the north, to 25 km, in the middle, to 37 km in the far south. (Map no.1) Right in the north, by the coastal villages and the shore of Ras Al-Khaimah and the Arabian Gulf, lies the other border of the region. As far as the southern border is concerned, the Hajar overlooks the northern frontiers of Oman. The western side of the Hajar overlooks the Jire plains of Ras Al-Khaimah and al-Dahirah (the Emirates desert). The eastern side of the Hajar, on the contrary, is bordered by the eastern Batinah and the Gulf of Oman.

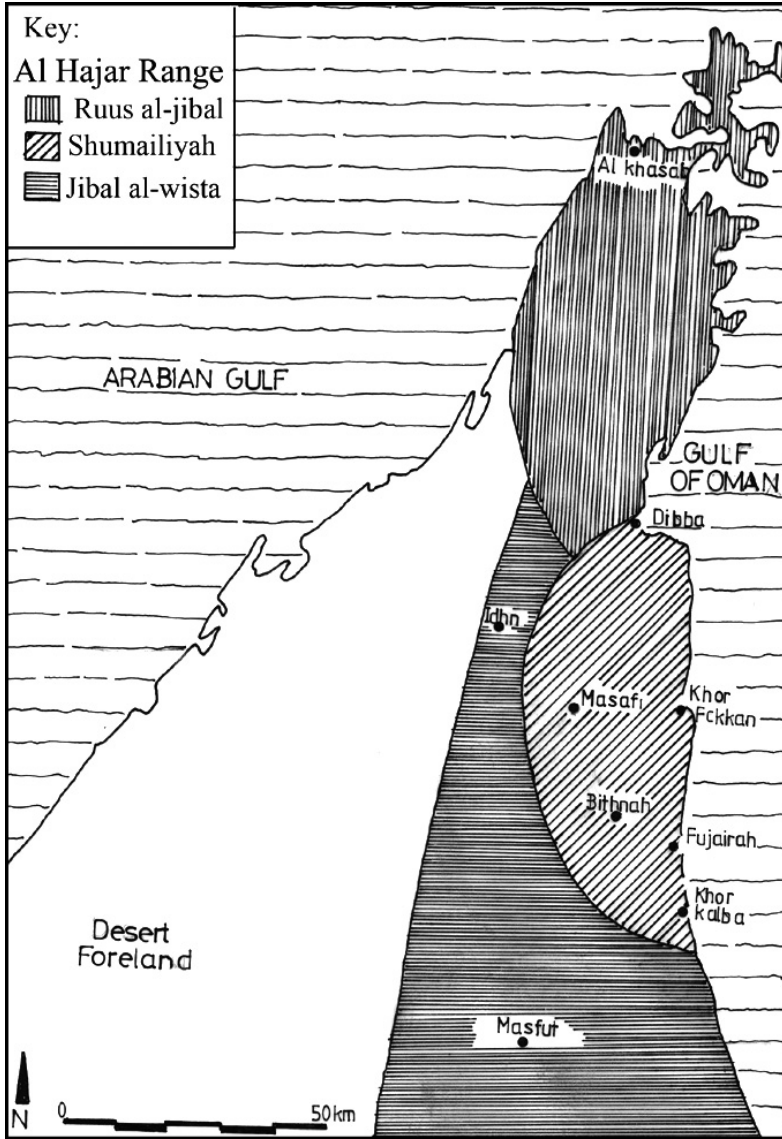
As a whole, the Hajar plateau of the Emirates encompasses three regions: 1) The Rus al-Jibal in the north; 2) al-Jibal al-Wista in the south and middle; 3) al-Shamailiyah in the east (Map no.2).

The Shamailiyah region, for instance, is approximately 55 km in length and between 10 to 20 km in width. The region stretches from the Wadi Diba, in the north-east, to the Wadi Ham and Wadi Qor in the south-east (Map no.1). Unlike other mountainous regions of the al-Hajar zone, the Shamailiyah region is composed of an undivided chain of rocky mountains. The mountains are steep and the slopes are very craggy, particularly towards the eastern plains. The region, in addition, has the largest wadis in the country such as Wadi Diba, Zikt, Giyal, al-Shamch, Madah and Ham. Territorially, the Shamailiyah region is divided between Sharjah, Ras Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah in the Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman. One Emirate, such as Fujairah, can dominate most of this region, and its inhabitants, the Sharqiyin, constitute most of the people who reside in this mountain range.



Source: Fenelon, K.G. 1973. *The United Arab Emirates: An Economic and Social Survey*. London: Longman.

Map No. 1 - Main Wadi Basins of the Northern U.A.E



Source: Mahid al-Buhuth wa al-Dirasat al-Arabiah. 1978. Dawalat al-Emirate al-Arabia al-Mutahida: Dirasah Mishia Shamilah. Cairo: al-Jamiah al-Arabiah.

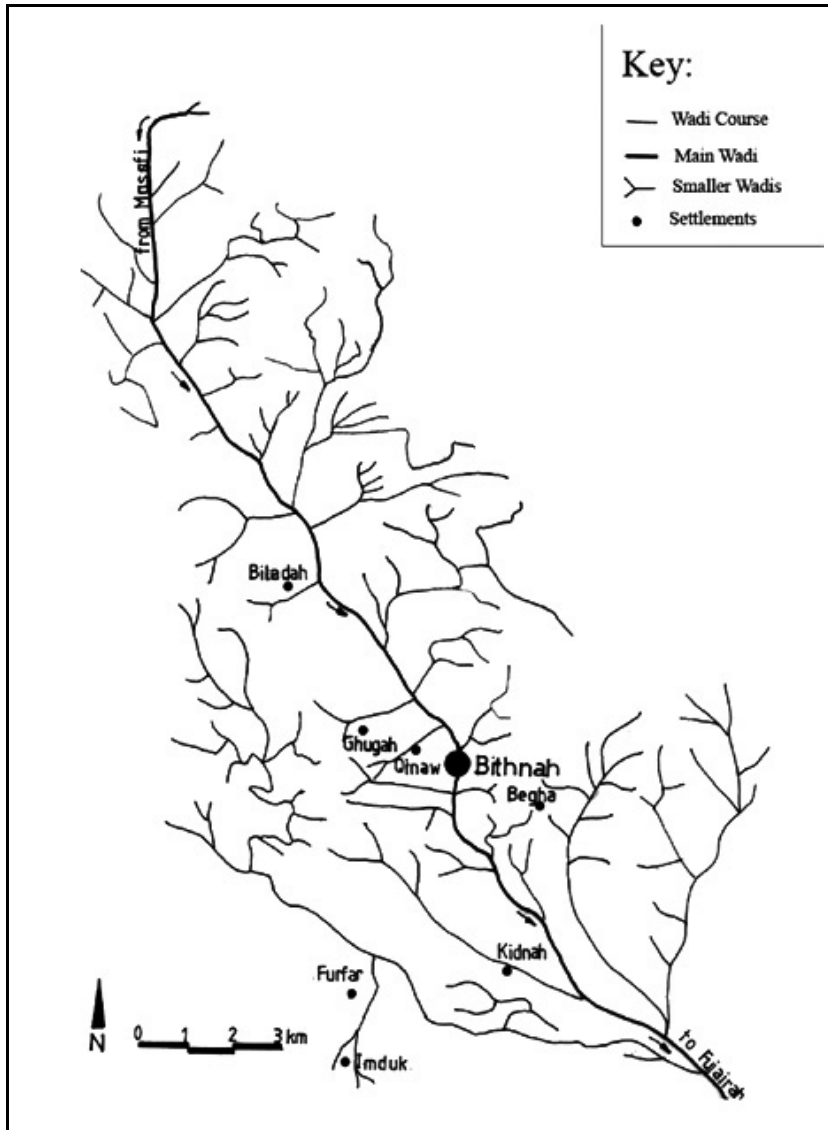
Map No. 2 - Shamailiyah within its Regional Context, U.A.E

Among the wadis in the Hajar, Wadi Ham is the largest and most important one. The wadi's function as the main passageway between the eastern and western coast, gives it strategic priority over other areas in the region (Map no.1, 3). The wadi lies mostly between latitudes 25 7' and 25 28' N, and between longitudes 56 12' and 56 16' E. It is about 35 km in length and runs from the north-west, near the village, to the south-east, near the town of Kalab on the eastern coast.

The wadi is surrounded by many steep and high mountains. The altitude of these mountains varies from north to south. The highest mountains are in the north with an altitude of about 1153 metres above sea level; in the south, the altitude ranges between 700 to 185 metres above sea level. Near the village of al-Bithnah, in the south, the wadi drops to 146 meters.

The slopes of the Wadi Ham are angular and craggy in nature. This feature makes the wadi very narrow in most parts. Some of the plains and terraces are very confined as the distance in these areas between one flank and the other is very narrow. In some of these areas, the wadi can take the shape of letters "V" or "U" in cross-section. Toward the middle and southern part of the wadi, the plains are wider. The width of these plains extends up to 0.5 km in the southern part. There, the plains are littered with stones and are thus unsuitable for cultivation.

From its starting point in the foothills of Masafi in the north west, the wadi follows a zigzag route until it ends in the southeast. The wadi's mainstream is not straight but curved. It also encompasses other smaller wadis and canyons which lie on its eastern and western sides such as Diffa, Bilaidah, Rumani, Qinaw, Ghugah, al-Ahati wadis in the north; and the Furfur, Kidnah, Imduk and Begha in the south (Map no.3). In some winters, the flow of water from these wadis adds to the flooding caused by the heavy rains.



Source: Author

Map No. 3 - Villages and Hamlets of Wadi Ham

The main feature of the Hajar mountains are the terraces. Due to the steep sides, the terraces are very narrow and in some villages they are not more than two meters across. The widest terraces are in the main basins of the wadis and extend, in width, up to 50 meters. Some of the terraces are part of the natural relief of the wadis, whereas others are man-made.

From a geographical perspective, the Hajar region is considered as one which belongs to the arid zone environment. The terrain, for example, is extremely barren and the mountains are dominated largely by bald and dark rocks. In the summer, the rocks are so hot that they cannot be touched and the reflection can dazzle the eye. Most of the wadis are covered with either large rocks or stones; very little is sand as in the western plains near the Al-Dhahirh desert. Most of the wadis' rocks and stones are of the igneous, lava and intrusive types.⁽⁸⁾ In the wadi-basin are rocks and stones of smaller sizes, also some coarse sand which covers part of the gravel bed. The bed-rock itself is composed of gabbro, ultrabasic and related basic rocks.⁽⁹⁾

The fertile soil in the small pockets of terraces is the result of deposits created by infrequent floods. The soil is of silt and red clay and very grained texture. The scarcity of loamy soil, combined with its loss through winds and floods, makes it precious to the villagers.

Little or no rain falls on the Hajar for several years, and in consequence, the Hajar has limited water resources. Recent instances are the drought which lasted from 1983 to 1986, and from 1990 to 1994. With the exception of light rainfall over a very few months, the wadis remain dry most of the year. The rains are unpredictable: in some years, heavy and sudden rains have caused damaging floods; in 1988, some of the wadis were flooded to a depth of 20 ft. Normally, rainfall in al-Hajar is limited to the brief winter season when short periods of scattered showers occur irregularly between December and

(8) Hawley. (1970), *The Trucial States*, p. 281.

(9) Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. (1979), *Geological Report on Water Supply Augmentation for the United Arab Emirates*.

March. The average rainfall in the northern hills is 176.6 mm, whereas the overall average rainfall in the Hajar region is 140 mm.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Hajaris do not rely directly on the rain so village winter crops are not irrigated by rain. Instead, the village depends on water storage beneath the wadi-basin. The villagers irrigate their farms and gardens by using an underground canal system known as *falaj*.

Summer in the Hajar begins in March and lasts until November. During this period, the heat is extreme and the temperature can rise up to 50 degrees C. The wadis and canyons remain barren, bald and dusty. Combined with the sand and heat, the western desert wind (*gharbi*), makes life in the Hajar almost unbearable during summer.

This harsh environment of the wadis and canyons is reflected in the way the Hajaris have divided their seasons. Unlike other regions of the Emirates, the Hajaris do not have in their calendar the word *rabi'*, which means spring. Instead, they use the word *misayif*, which is closer in meaning to summer. This is because the temperature in this period suddenly rises from 20 degrees C in February to 30 degrees C in March leaving no time for *rabi*. The year in Al-Hajar is divided primarily into two seasons: *ishtih* (winter) and *gaid* (summer). The winter is subdivided into two other sub-seasons, *ishtih*, which lasts 100 days, and *misayif* which encompasses 60 days. The summer, on the other hand, is considered to have three sub-seasons: *al-ghywb* (36 days), *al-gaid* (70 days) and *al-wasmiy* (100 days). Generally, during the summer, the temperature rises to 30 degrees C in March, 41 degrees C to 45 degrees C in June and July, and falls to 30 degrees C in November.⁽¹¹⁾

The Hajar is also exposed to constant winds, the most common wind in all seasons being the *gharbi*, the western wind. The *gharbi* is a very strong and dry wind, which frequently causes damage to date, mango, and tobacco crops. Another typical wind is *suhaly* (southern

(10) Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. (1986), *Meteorological Reports on Rainfall of the Eastern Region and Mountain Zone*.

(11) Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. (1986), *Meteorological Reports on Temperature of the Eastern Region and Mountain Zone*.

wind) which is slightly similar to the gharbi. The least common wind is the kuas, which is a very humid eastern wind. It is when the kuas blows that the weather is most suitable for packing tobacco and maturing dates. Between 1980 and 1981, the average wind speed per day was recorded, and shows that between March and October the speed varied between 180.7 km and 698.4 km per day. In the winter, particularly between November and February, the speed ranged from 165.2 km to 297.9 km per day.⁽¹²⁾ Furthermore, towards the end of winter, the Hajar is frequently exposed to very damaging storms.

The hot and windy weather inhibits the growth of vegetation in the Hajar, but a good year of rain, nonetheless, can create a reasonably green cover on the hills and plains. Among the most important of the 30 types of vegetation which I was able to view and identify, are: *Juncus maritimus lam*, *Zizyphus spinacristi (L) willd*, *Lepideum sativum (L)*, *Platychaeta glaucescens boiss* and *Acacia sp*. Most of the plants survive only until mid-March, though a few survive during the summer.

Agricultural products vary according to the season. In winter, the Hajaris grow tobacco as a commercial crop, whereas wheat, barley, millet, maize, fodder and alfalfa are grown mostly for local consumption. In the summer, the main crops consist of great varieties of dates, mango and lime. The Hajar is also famous for its livestock, which includes mountain goats, sheep, camels and a few local cattle. Other animals found in the Hajar are: donkeys, deer, ibexes, foxes and wolves, as well as poisonous types of snakes, scorpions, and spiders. It is also known for its high quality of wild honey.

People of the Hajar:

The Hajaris are descendants of the ancient Arab tribes of Yemen (Fig. 1).⁽¹³⁾ Some of these tribes, such as the Sharqiyin tribes for

(12) Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. (1981), *Meteorological Reports on Wind of the Eastern Region and Mountain Zone*.

(13) For more comprehensive and detailed historical anthropology view of the Hajari tribal peopole, see Yateem. (2007), "The Emirates Bedouin of the Hajari Mountains: An Essay on Historical Anthropology".

instance, trace their descent to Malik bin Faham of the Azd, a tribe which migrated to Oman in the 6th century A.D.⁽¹⁴⁾ Some other tribes of the Hajar, such as the Kunud, trace their descent to the well known Kinda tribe. The Kinda make up one of the largest Arab tribes in the Yemen, some of whom migrated to Oman at about the same time as the Azd migration.⁽¹⁵⁾

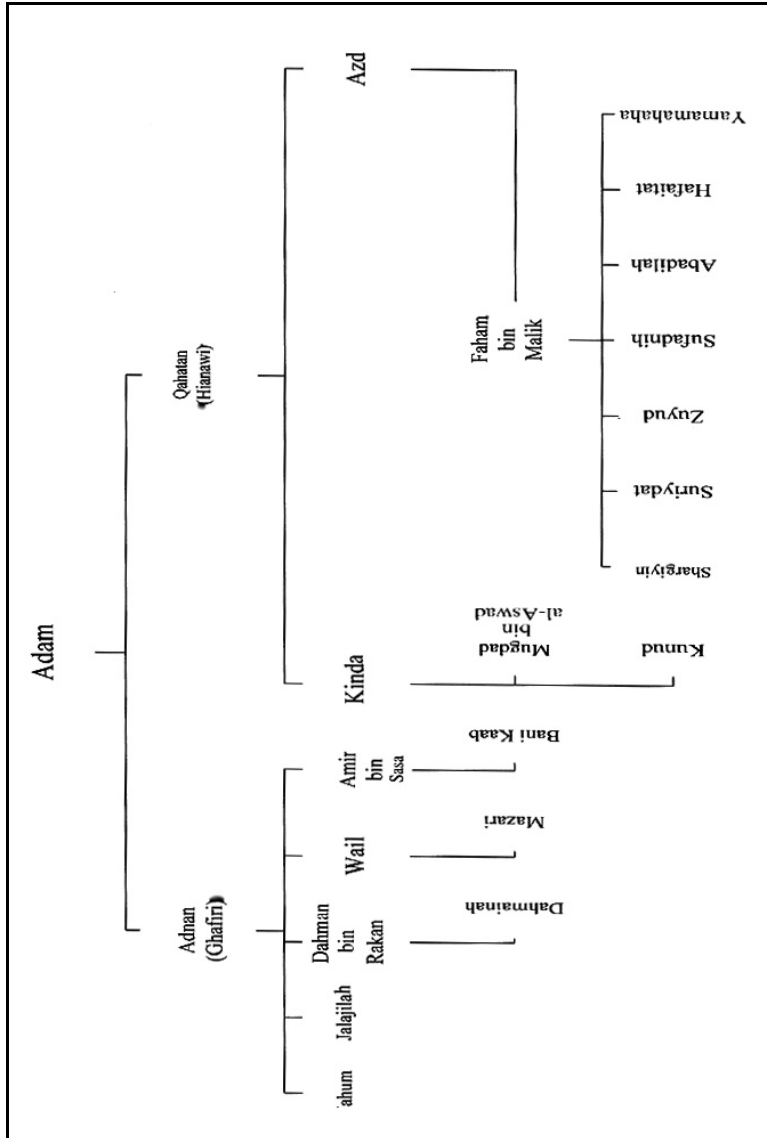
In general, most of the clans and lineages of the Hajar are sections of the main tribes of the Emirates. These tribes are the descendants of the ancient Arab tribes: Qahtan and Adnan. In the Emirates, as well as in Oman, these two ancestral tribes are locally referred to as Hinawi and Ghafiri. The Hinawi and Ghafiri were the two major tribal alliances who have formed the political allegiance in Oman and the Emirates since the 18th century.⁽¹⁶⁾ Every tribe in these two countries must identify itself with either of these two tribal groupings. As for the Sharqiyin tribes of Fujairah emirate, the first group of tribes which established the Sharqiyin tribal confederation- such as the Sharqiyin, Hafaitat, Yamamah, Zuyud, Sufadnih, Suriydat and Abadilah- formed the major elements of the tribal alliance in its early establishment. (See Map no. 4) This group of tribes considered itself to be descendants of Qahtan, and believe that their descent goes back to one common ancestor: Faham bin Malik. Faham is believed to have been an Islamic warrior who fought beside Umar Ibin al-As, the governor of Oman, during the Islamic invasion of Persia in the late 7th century. He is also the grandson of Malik bin Faham who was the great ancestor of most of the Omani tribes, and was the first to migrate from Yemen to Oman in the mid 6th century.⁽¹⁷⁾ Politically speaking, the Hajaris are to be considered as part of several tribal confederations which run across the country. Of these tribal confederations, there are: the Bani Yas, Al-Bufalah, Al-Qawasim, Al- Sharqiyin, Al-Naim and Al-Ali.

(14) See Umer, *al-Khalij al-Arabi fi al-Ausur al-Wista*, 1983, p. 26.

(15) See al-Awtabi, *al-Ansab*, 1984, Vol.1, 375.

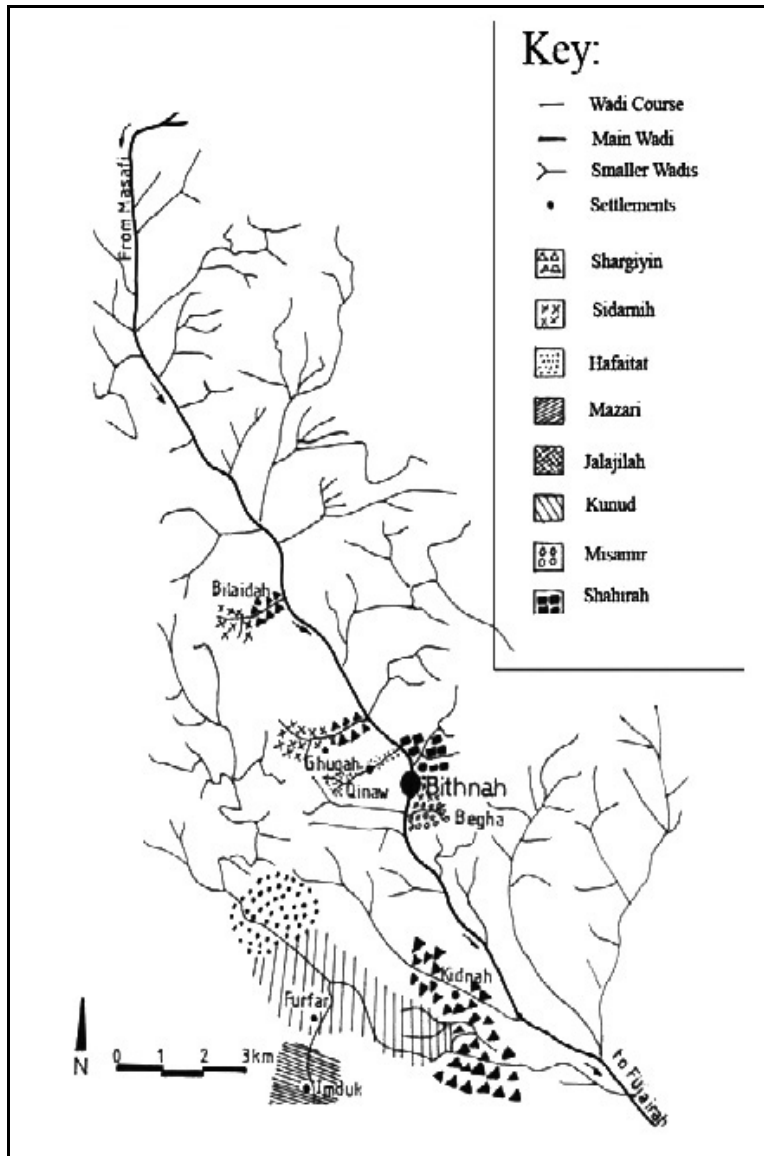
(16) Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, 1908-15, pp. 118-119.

(17) Izkawi, *Kashf al-Ghumma: al-Jami li Akhbar alma*, 1989, p. 19; al-Awtabi, *al-Ansab*, 1984, Vol. 2, p. 122.



Source: Author

Fig. No. 1 - Presumptive Genealogy of the Sharqiyin Tribes of Wadi Ham



Source: Author

Map No. 4 - 1987-1988 Territorial Settlements of the Sharqiyyin Tribes of Wadi Ham

Social Organization:

The Hajaris of the mountain range are distributed among small villages and hamlets, which constitute scattered communities of either peasants (*bayadir*) or pastoralists (*shawawi*).⁽¹⁸⁾ The former group mostly occupies canyons or gorges centred around a water resource, and the wadi-basin, in this case, and the terraces in the mountain steeps hold their small gardens and farms. These gardens and farms are normally irrigated by the falaj or well system. Summer crops, such as dates, and some lime and mango, are exclusively grown in the gardens; whereas winter crops, such as tobacco, barley, sorghum and sweet potato are cultivated in the farms. The settled peasants encompass a group of landlords who are largely coming from shaikhly and native inhabitants (*ahl-albalad*) origins; and also a group of tenants and ordinary peasants. Besides their agricultural activities, the peasants also keep small herds of goats and sheep, as well as cattle and few camels. In most parts of the Hajari region, the political power lies with the settled peasants.

The shawawi, on the other hand, are groups of pastoralists who reside in the mountains' hills and slopes throughout the year. With their herds, which consist of goats, the shawawi spend the winter in the upper hills and the summer in the lower hills. Most of the hills which are used either as grazing land or for camping belong to the dominant tribes in the villages whose members form the largest group of the inhabitants.

The Hajari economy, which is characterized by its division of dual livelihoods of agriculture and pastoralism, is associated with a system of ritual symbolism and moral values. This ritual symbolism divides the world and the things belonging to it into a dichotomy of pure (*tahir*) and impure (*nayis*). This dichotomy is firmly tied with moral

(18) Section of the article has been published before by the author as a part of another article. Furthermore, for a detailed, symbolic and structural analysis of the Hajari social groups, the peasants (*bayadir*) and the pastoralists (*shawawi*), see Yateem. (2001), "Aspects of Social and Symbolic Boundaries Amongst the Bedouin of the Emirates". *Journal of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies*.

values and the notion of honour. Purity and honour are attached to men and to all sorts of agricultural activities; whereas impurity and shame are associated with women and all work that is related to pastoralism, especially raising goats and cattle. According to this ritual classification of the world, all men who accept “women’s work” are to be considered like “them”, i.e., as impure. The only exception in this Hajari code is reserved for camel herding. Camel herding is considered as an honourable job, since the camel is seen as a pure animal, and all men who attach themselves to camels acquire prestige and respect as a result. In this context, the shawawi in the hills and the women in the villages are seen as an impure part of the world, whereas those men in the villages who are involved in tending their land and growing tobacco and dates are regarded and thus treated as comprising the pure part. A whole world of ritual symbols and metaphors has been substantially used by the Hajari to reinforce this duality. I shall return to this point later, but first I will try to throw some light on the Hajari social organization.

Comparing Wilkinson’s interpretations of the Omani tribal system with my own ethnography on the Hajari, I found that the concept of *shaff*, which means alliance, is also used by the Hajari tribesmen and it certainly fits with Wilkinson’s interpretations. Shaff is a form of tribal organization which unites a group of tribes or clans with different ancestors into one tribal confederation.⁽¹⁹⁾ Misconception of the Hajari institution and concept of shaff prompted some European sources to use the word ‘tribe’ rather than the word “shaff” to name such form of tribal confederation.

A Hajari tribesman views the people who are related to him through a patrilineal link, as the people of his tribe. Such kinsmen can form different types of descent groups, such as clans, sub-clans and lineages. He calls these patrilineal kinsmen *bani amm*, if they are more distant kinsmen of his tribe or clan; and *ayal umm* if they are members

(19) See Wilkinson. (1977), *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia: A Study of the Aflaj of Oman*, p. 178; *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, 1987, pp. 121-23.

of his own lineage. But to distinguish those to whom he is related by descent from those to whom he is related by tribal alliance only, the Hajari calls the kinsmen of his tribe *asba*.

Members of the *asba*, in the case of tribe, clan, sub-clan and lineage, are obliged to show their group feeling (*asabiyah*), since they are united by their common descent. Thus a Hajari tribesman expects help and protection to come in the first place from his *asba*, that is, from those whom he feels he is united with by blood (*dam*). He believes that to protect the tribe's honour, whether in a feud or in his everyday behaviour, is a matter of showing his loyalty and respect to his *asba*. The Hajari feeling and responsibility towards each other are dominated by the ideology of patrilineality. Members of the lineage (*dhila*) not only interact and meet every day, but also have a common guestroom (*majlis*) and a common obligation towards their guests for as long as their father or the elder person of the lineage is alive. The lineage's ideology of patrilineality is also manifested through the dominant authority of the lineage elder (*shabih*), whose sons, and the sons of his brothers, do not call him by his name. The lineage's patrilineal ideology and corporateness are demonstrated by their insistence on keeping their land undivided, because dividing the land always indicates or carries with it the seeds of intra-lineage disputes and conflicts.

In general, Hajari marriages follow to a large extent the rules of endogamy, that is to say, the majority of marriages have been taking place between members of the same tribe. For instance, of the 178 cases of marriage I recorded in the Ham valley, 103 (58%) cases took place between members of the same tribe (*tyaifa*). These marriages are called by the Hajaris the "cousins marriage" (*zawaj bani al-amm*). The second main type of marriage is the exogamous one. The majority of instances of this type of marriage occur between members of different tribes within the one single alliance, and they are described as the marriage of the alliance's sons (*zawaj bani al-shaff*). Whatever form the marriage takes, most of the marriages in the wadi are very local. Marriage still acts as a means of presenting and enforcing the solidarity of the descent group, the unity of the Hajari shaff and the ideology of patrilineality.

Households in the Hajar vary in size and type. The average size of a Hajari household in the valleys is between five and six persons, and though they vary as far as their pattern is concerned, the majority of them are nuclear families. The nuclear families, which constitute 72% of Ham valley families, comprise either young couples with or without children, or couples whose children have married and moved to a nearby house. The peasant or settled families had, until recently, almost the same pattern of dwelling as that of the shawawi, but with an additional place assigned as a stable for the cattle, and one more hut which is used as a guestroom. Today, of course, Hajari peasant families live in houses built with modern bricks and cement. These houses, which were built with the help of the federal state in 1976 in a standard design, have been modified by the Hajari in order to suit their traditional lives. A shawawi family usually lives in isolation in one of the small canyons in the wadi, therefore they have fewer visitors than the peasant families in the village.

No matter what type the household is, it constitutes the smallest economic unit in the Hajar which, until very recently, was a unit of production and consumption. It can either produce its own income (and put it in the common pot) from the herding of animals as the shawawi do, or by working on the land and looking after some animals as the bayadir and landowners do. With increasing opportunities to work in the towns in the state army and police, the household has started to be a unit of consumption.

The Agricultural Calendar:

The agricultural year for the seasonal activities of the Hajar is based on a calendar different from the Islamic calendar.⁽²⁰⁾ The latter is a lunar calendar year which regulates the villagers' ritual and religious activities, and is known among the Hajari as *al-sinah al-arubia* (the Arabic year). The Hajari calendar, which organises their agricultural

(20) Wilkinson argues that the *darur* calendar of northern Oman is an equivalent of a Persian calendar known as *Ruznameh*. Some further information on the operation of this calendar in Oman is also provided by Wilkinson, see Wilkinson. (1977), *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia*, p.111.

activities, is known among them as darur (Table no. 1). The *darur* calendar is based on a solar year which consists of 366 days (the Islamic year is 355 days). These days are divided into 36 *darr*, each *darr* comprising ten days. But the Hajari added six additional days called *sita al-masariq* (thesix stolen days). In fact, these are the inter-calary days, which together with the 360 days constitute one full darur year.

The 36 *darr* which form one solar year are divided into five seasons (*mawasim*), namely: *al-wasmi*, *al-ishtih*, *al-misayif*, *al-ghywb*, and *al-gaid*. These seasons are of different lengths. Alwasmi and al-ishtih are the longest seasons, each consisting of 100 days while al-misayif constitutes 60 days, al-ghywb 30 days and al-gaid 70 days. This also means that some seasons consist of ten *darr*, others of three, six or seven *darr*.

Some *darr* of particular seasons are assigned distinctive names, such as *darr al-naruwz*, *tibishrah*, *murba* and *murbaniya*. Each of these *darr* either inaugurates or culminates a season. Thus the first *darr* which initiates the first season in the new year is known as *naruwz*. Not all *darr* have distinctive names, particularly those which lie in the middle of the season. Such *darr*, instead, are known by their ordinal numbers. A Hajari farmer, for instance, will ask his colleague which day it is by saying: *shu min yaum andina*. The answer to his question will be: *al-yaum alkhamis min darr al-ashir* (today is the 5th day of the 10th *darr*).

The seasonal cycle, summarised in (Table no. 1), shows that the first season, al-wasmi, begins in August and lasts until late October; the second season, al-ishtih, starts in early November and ends in late January; the third season, al-misayif, launches in February and continues for 60 days until the end of April. In the last week of April, however, a period of six days is reserved as *sita al-masarig* (the six intercalary days). Immediately after these six days a fourth and short season, al-ghywb, begins and it lasts for the whole month of May. Al-ghywb is known as a season in which famous stars like *thiria* (profiteer), *agrab* (scorpio) and *mizan* (libra) disappear temporarily, or are difficult to see. This season is also known for its worst monsoon wind (*al-gharbi*), which lasts until early June. Finally, the last season in the calendar is called al-gaid. This is the peak of the summer, starting in June and lasting until late July. This season is inaugurated officially with *darr al-tibishrah* (the early harvesting season of date crop), and

ends with another darr known as *al-murba* (the days of dividing and packing the dates crop).

Darur is not written down as a calendar or measured by the stars' movement (the stars' movement, for instance, is used as a time index for measuring water shares), but rather, it is based on the memorizing of the year by some knowledgeable elders in each village. Thus, a specialist in the darur calendar can tell the exact day in which the last darur year, or the year before, started. He can also indicate inaugurating days of the darur year for the next three or four coming years. Consequently, the knowledge of the darur calendar constitutes a source of prestige and power which usually increases the authority of such elders in the village.

Table no. 1
Darur Calendar

Season	Period	No. of darr per season	No. of days per season
<i>al-Wasmi</i>	Aug. - Oct.	10	100
<i>al-Ishtih</i>	Nov. - Jan.	10	100
<i>al-Misayif</i>	Feb. - April	6	60
<i>Sita al-Masarig</i>	Late April		6*
<i>al-Ghywb</i>	May	3	30
<i>al-Qaid</i>	June - July	7	70
			366

Source: Author

* These are the inter-calary days.

Having said this much about the darur calendar, it is time now to show the types of agricultural activities that fall within the five seasons (Table no. 2). During the first season of *al-wasmi* (Aug.-Oct.), for instance, all tenancy contracts regarding the date sharecropping (*baidarat al-sih*) are either invalidated or renewed for the next year's season. In this season, some work will be hurriedly completed in the date gardens, such as packing up the remaining dry dates, cleaning the gardens and waiting for the wali to collect the 10% zakat on the crop,

and also the landlords' share of the crop (*nasib al-hanqara*). Meanwhile, new contracts are established between landlords and some tenants for the new tobacco season about to start. By mid-August, most landlords will have received their last season's revenues from their tobacco traders, and will also take new loans (*silfa*) for the next season. Consequently, the landlords, the tenants and the farm labourers each will collect from others their shares and salaries.

The first three darr of this season (in the month of August) will be spent in ploughing. The farms will then be irrigated, manured and hoed. The season will bring some Baluch and Pathan (including, in previous years, some Omani) migrants to work as farm labourers. A monthly salary of DH.800 will be paid for a good, experienced labourer, and DH.1,000 will be paid to a team of five labourers for ploughing a farm of one acre. By mid-September, the first seeding, according to the darur calendar, takes place for the early winter crops, such as barley, wheat, sweet-potato, chilli, garlic and onion. Toward the beginning of October, the seedlings of some of these crops will be transplanted from their small beds to the main farms (*dawahi*, sing. *dahiya*).

In November, during the al-ishtih season, some tobacco farmers will start to sow their seeds, and others will transplant their early seedlings planted since the middle of October. Meanwhile, commercial transactions will be made to buy more manure (*samad*) and *gashia* (dry sardine fish used as a fertilizer for improving the quality of the tobacco). By December, farms must have been cleared of all other crops, and immediately planted with tobacco. As January starts, the tobacco crop will receive its initial application of *gashia* (*tagshia*).

During this period, work does not completely stop in the date gardens, because the garden must be visited every other day to carry out work like irrigation, manuring and some pruning. It is believed that if a date-palm is treated well during this particular part of the season, it will yield a good crop.

Between January and March the peasants continue with weeding and manuring work on their tobacco farms. Such work is carried out intensively on most farms. At the same time, pollination of date-palms also takes place in the gardens.

The harvest of the tobacco crop starts in the last darr of al-misayif, around mid-April. The crop must be cleared from the farm and hung in the warehouse as quickly as possible, to avoid the start of al-ghywb, the fourth season. The season features desert winds capable of drying up the standing crop in a week. Thus the peasants must make good use of the southern wet wind (*kus*), which arrives a few days prior to the westerly desert winds.

The harvesting of tobacco at this time, toward the beginning of al-ghywb (the month of May), serves as a proclamation of a new transitional period between two seasons and two types of agricultural activities. The one just ended is known as: *khidmat aldawahi* (the open field activities), and that commencing is *khidamt al-zaraib* (the garden activities). The tobacco farm labourers are given their salaries and released, the crop stored in the warehouse for two months (May-June), and those engaged in date harvesting must start making themselves ready for the season. From alghywb onward, the farms of the village will be left untilled and abandoned until the month of August, when a new agricultural year starts. This fallow period lasts about six months.

The fifth season, al-gaid, was until very recently officially inaugurated by the wali of the main village. During this season the shawawi will have already made a seasonal move from their winter dwellings to their summer dwellings. Among the settled villagers, the peak of the summer work in the date gardens occurs in June and July. The major part of the intensive work in harvesting the date crop will be carried out throughout these two months; some kinds of date crops will need additional work until September. In this and the dry one (*sih*) make up even today the main daily item of the Hajari diet. Even the lowest quality of date finds use in feeding cattle (*halal*), sheep and goats (*hush*). The Hajari treat the date as something that possesses a high religious value. It is, for instance, the first food with which the Hajari break their fast in the month of Ramadan. A Hajari never cuts a date-palm (*sarim*) or removes it for dispensation; rather, every household keeps from one to four sarim trees in the middle of the courtyard of the house as a source of blessing.

A young female date-palm (*sarima*) is carefully cut, after two years, and removed from the parent tree to a new bed. The young

sarima will have its long branches removed and will be well covered with jute and leaves until it has adjusted to the new bed. A new sarima will be watered daily for 40 days and then will have one watering (*saqi*) every seven days. It will take three to four years for a good sarima to give its first yield of sih.

Season, some cultivators will be also busy growing in part of their gardens, grass and alfalfa as fodder for their livestock in the summer. Officially, however, most of the work in the gaid season must be finished by late August. A tenant must return the garden to his landlord if he does not wish to renew his tenancy for another season.

Land Classification:

Land (*aradi*) among the Hajari is classified according to its functional usage. Thus, land which is used for cultivation is referred to as *rum*, whereas that used for grazing is called haram. These two terms, rum and *haram*, are always clearly articulated and emphasised in any land sale or purchase contract.

Table no. 2
Seasonal Activities Associated with Darur Calendar

Season	Period	Seasonal Activities
I. <i>al-Wasmi</i>	August-October	Ploughing. Growing early winter crops, millet, barley, wheat, etc. Watering, manuring trimming the date-palms.
II. <i>al-Ishtih</i>	Nov.-Jan.	Harvesting the winter earlycrops. Transplanting tobacco.Pollinating the date-palms.
III. <i>al-Misayi</i>	Feb.-April	Continue pollinating the datepalms. Harvesting tobacco.
IV. <i>al-Ghywb</i>	May	The summer dry wind. No farmcultivation. The shawawi movement to summer camps.
V. <i>al-Gaid</i>	June-July	Harvesting date.

Source: Author

Different irrigation methods divide rum land into two sub-

categories. The first, which is called *falaj* land, consists of all lands which are irrigated by the tunnel and well system known as falaj. Thus lands like *nakhil* or *zariba* (dates gardens) and *dawahi* (open farms), which are irrigated through the falaj, are referred to as *nakhil wa dawahi al-falaj* (the falaj gardens and farms).

The second type of rum land is land which may also constitute date gardens and open farms irrigated by wells (*tawi*). The majority of the traditional gardens and farms in the Wadi Ham fall into the category of falaj land, whose value is greater than that of tawi. Falaj land is 50% higher in value than tawi land for several reasons: it has a secure source of water; it uses a less costly method of irrigation; and it occurs in the mainstream-bed of the wadi. The falaj land, in contrast to tawi land, receives its water through a main channel which does not require human effort to elevate or raise the water to the surface. Consequently, the tenant of falaj land need not spend money on a water-pump, or on the water wheel (*yazira*). The location of falaj land means that it reaps the benefit of flooding by gaining the best clay soil. When contrasting falaj to tawi as a method of irrigation, especially with regard to the availability of water, we will find that water in tawi land is known to be variable, and the supply is not always continuous. Digging a well could cost an owner DH.30,000, with no guarantee that the well would be successful.

Spatially, the rum lands of falaj and tawi constitute the focal area of each village, since such lands are, in most cases, located in the mainstream of the village. Consequently, the further land is from the mainstream, the less economically valuable it becomes. As a result, all lands located on the outskirts of the villages are classified as *awabi*. Awabi land, a sub-category of tawi land, is rarely cultivated by the villagers. It will be left abandoned for several years, except in a very good season of rainfall. Even then, awabi land can only be tilled with a great deal of effort. As a category of land, awabi lies between rum and haram; nevertheless, it is classified by villagers as a third kind of rum land.

The haram land, on the other hand, is uncultivable land situated beyond the rum land and the village's outskirts. The part of haram

land which is attached to the rum land is considered to be the property of the rum's owner.

The haram constitutes a gravel plain and few hills. Such land is used mostly as land for grazing, and as a place for collecting firewood and wood for fencing. The term haram, however, is reserved for formal conversations, and is a term which is usually heard during disputes. In daily conversation the haram land is never referred to as haram, but as *sayh* (plain). Thus a household mother will ask her daughter to take or bring the herd from the sayh, not from the haram.

Agricultural Methods:

Hajaris grow several crops such as millet, barley and wheat; chilli, garlic, onions and sweet potato; and also grass and alfalfa. They also grow lime and mango. With the exception of chilli, garlic, sweet potato, mango, lime and alfalfa, which are grown partly for local consumption and partly as commercial produce, the rest of the crops are oriented totally towards local consumption. Two main crops, date and tobacco, however, are grown more than other crops, and have a greater impact on Hajari life than the above mentioned crops. Since date and tobacco have many political, social, economic, and ritual implications, I will concentrate on the process and technique of their growing in order to reveal their role in the Hajari mode of life.

Dates (Sih):

More land is used as gardens for date cultivation (*zarayb*) than is used as open fields (*dawahi*) for winter crops.⁽²¹⁾ Approximately two-thirds of a village's cultivable lands in the Wadi Ham are used, for example, as gardens for date cultivation. Both, fresh date (*rutab*).

(21) For comparison with other traditions of date cultivation, see Vidal's ethnographic study of the Oasis of al-Hasa in Saudi Arabia, and Heard-Bey on the Al-Liwa Oasis in the Emirate of Abu-Dhabi. Stevens, also came across some date cultivation traditions in his article about the agricultural practice in the al-Ain Oasis of Abu-Dhabi. See Heard-Bey, "Anomalies in the Bedouin Oasis of Al-Liwa", 1974; Stevens, "Changing Agricultural Practice in an Arabian Oasis", 1970; Vidal, "Date Culture in the Oasis of Al-Hasa", 1954; *The Oasis of al-Hasa*, 1955.

There are about 18 types of date (*phoeniw dactylifera*) in the Hajar alone.⁽²²⁾ Dates, in general, are classified according to their seasons of yield and their quality (Table no. 3). Like all other crops, the date is also classified into two major types: the *gidim* which are harvested at the beginning of the season (June-July) and the *ikhir*, which are harvested in the late season (August-September).

Table no. 3
Type of Date According to Season of Cultivation

I. Qidim Season	II. Ikhir Season	
1. Nighal	1. Hilali	8. Lulu
2. Qash Filgah	2. Yabri	9. Maktum
3. Khinaizi	3. Khisab	
4. Anwan	4. Nighal Hilali	
5. Qash Khisra	5. Qash Habbash	
6. Halawi	6. Akhir Dadna	
7. Baqal	7. Fard	

Source: Author

A date-palm is usually given priority in receiving water from the falaj. A palm garden or grove is referred to as *zariba* or *nakhal*. Each garden is assigned a feminine name, and in daily conversation it is these names which are used, rather than *zariba* or *nakhal*. Common names, for instance, are *al-rugiba* (the nick), or *al-hiriaga* (the fire) or *al-bada* (the created).

A *zariba* may measure from one quarter of a hectare to a hectare. Every *zariba* is divided into large sections of beds called *walim*, and each *walim* is also divided into smaller beds called *yill*. In general, each *yill* is planted with three to five palms. A *walim*, which sometimes consists of more than 10 *yill*, can hold more than 30 palms. All *walim* in the *zariba* are given names derived either from famous palms in the *walim*, or named after the previous owner, or a name of a precious palm planted in the *walim*. In the old *zariba*, the palms are planted

(22) Hawley listed 35 types of date in the Emirates as a whole, see Hawley. (1970), *The Trucial States*, p. 299.

indiscriminately, while in the new zariba each of date-palms type is planted in separate walim or yill. An example of date garden may help in elucidating its economic organization and the social involvement.

Zariba al-Nymah:

Zariba al-Nymah is about one hectare (9.768 sq.m.) in area, is owned jointly by the heirs of a ruling shaikh. The zariba is a kind of terraced garden which consists of the following walims: *al-faly*, *bin kharbash*, *al-safarial*, *al-khiba*, *al-hiraba*, *manzifa bint rahshid* and *sabat al-wadi* (Map no. 5; Fig. no. 2). Each of these walim ranges between quarter and three quarters of an acre. Al-Nymah is situated in the bottom of the wadi, and thus has easy access to the falaj. In its condition as a garden, it is held now, and since 1936 on a tenancy contract by Haj Salim bin Ali. In the past, after paying 10% of the date crop as Zakat, Haj Salim used to keep quarter of the crop for himself and give three quarters to the landowners.

Haj Salim still pays his zakat, but his share in the tenancy contract has become higher. He now keeps half of the crop for himself and gives the other half to the garden owners. In the summer of 1987, Haj Salim's Zariba produced 40 *dharif* of dates (a *dharif* is a sack used for packing dates which, when full, weighs 28 kg). Today, the garden contains the following types and number of date-palms, see Table 4&5.

Table no. 4
Date-Palms and Trees in Zariba al-Nymah

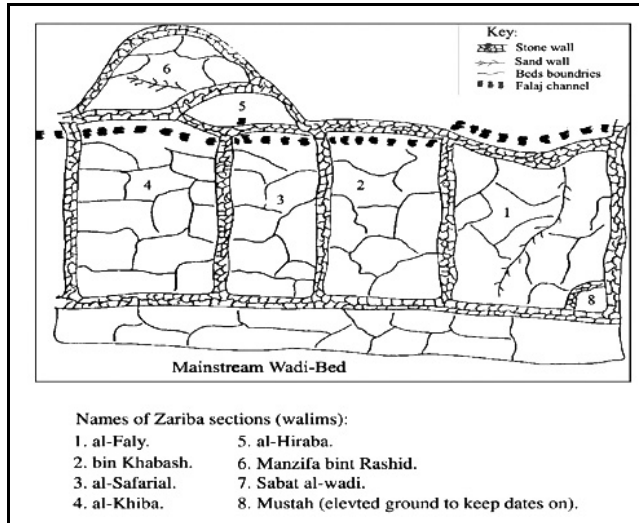
Type of Date-Palm	Number
Anwan	17
Bagal	15
Nighal	14
Qash Filgah	10
Khinaizy	5
Qash Sawaih	3
Ain Baqar	2
Total	68

Source: Author

Table no. 5
Trees in Zariba al-Nymah

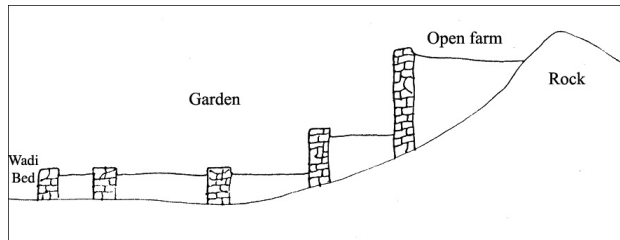
Type of Tree	Number
Mango	30
Qunice	24
Lime	7
Total	61

Source: Author



Source: Author

Map No. 5 - Detailed Map of Zariba al-Nymah (a terraced date garden)



Source: Author

Fig. 2 - Zariba al-Nyamh: A Terraced Date Garden in Cross Section

Comparing it with other types of crops, date cultivation is a perennial type of work which requires constant labour engagement. The agricultural year of date cultivation, for instance, is divided into four seasons: *nabat* (pollination), *hamal* (fertilization/fertility), *gayd* (harvest) and *raha* (rest). Each of these seasons consists of three months. The *nabat* season (January-March) takes place during the tobacco season. Pollinating the palms is a kind of work which is carried out mostly by young men who can climb the palm. Normally, the pollen of a male date-palm is collected from the same garden or donated by a neighbour since otherwise it will cost DH.15 to buy one single pollen. The pollination process starts by pollinating the early season date-palms (*gidim*), for these palms produce their blossoms earlier. By March the work will be continued on the late season date-palms (*ikhir*).

A farmer usually checks every palm, almost every day, to see which blossoms have recently opened and are thus ready for pollination. He may also continue pollination in some palms on which he had started work the previous day. In general, pollination in one garden is work done by one man. He uses a rope around his waist for climbing, known as *habul*, and a sickle to cut and open the pollen.

At the beginning of the next season, *hamal* (April-June), the usual irrigation is continued by soaking each bed in three inches of water. Every cultivator carefully watches his garden and protects it from the increasing strong gales. As the winds shake the trees heavily, more of the young date (*khala*) fall. Gleaning of these *khala* is usually done by the farm labourer (*bidar*), but some women, helped by their children, come to collect these dates from the gardens regularly. Towards the end of this season most of the date branches will be tied together by a rope and then tied again to the main trunk of the palm. This process, called *tasiyr*, is carried out so as to protect the crop from the western wind, which shakes the trees and causes the dates to fall while they are very young and unripe.

As soon as the third season *al-gayd* (July-Sept.) arrives, the work in the garden increases. This period is the high season in which the harvest is carried out daily from morning till afternoon. The tenant and his family members, and sometimes a paid harvester (*hasid*), start their work in the garden in the early morning. The men climb the palms to

cut the newly ripe branches of dates, and women take these branches to a small open area called the *mistah* (see Section 8 in Map no. 4) to separate the dates according to their quality, and then expose them to the sun to dry. The women, who are sometimes assisted by their young children, gather the dates which have fallen in the garden.

The first few yields of ripe dates are called *tibishra* (the good news), and all landlords receive some of these dates, carried to them by their tenants. As harvesting continues in the *zariba*, active transactions to sell the daily yield are carried out in the village and in the town market. In early September most of the harvesting will be finished; subsequently, the wadi or village governor (*wali*) will arrive to collect both the landlords' share in the crop and the *zakat*.

The last season, *raha*, starts in October and lasts until December. Although it is a rest period for the date-palms some work, such as irrigation, will continue. In this season, the palms need to be prepared for the next pollinating season. The palm will be carefully trimmed, cleaned up and irrigated for a prolonged period. In addition to this, dry fish is also buried in a small hole near each palm, and more manure will be distributed in each bed.

One season of date cultivation in a one hectare garden costs DH.1800, three months' wages for a paid labourer during the harvesting season; DH. 500, for ten sacks of *qashia*; and DH. 250, to pay the trimmer-man (*makhalib*) who carries out the trimming job during the rest season. A good palm produces two to three *dharif* (sacks), that is, between 90 and 130 kg, while a weak palm will yield during a drought period between half to one *dharif* (= 22.5 to 45 kg).⁽²³⁾

Nowadays, since demand for fresh dates exceeds that for dry, most of the Hajari sell their crop immediately in the village while it is fresh. A full fresh yield of a good quality of date-palm, such as *lulu* or *khisab*, will bring, in the early season, an income of DH.500. In contrast, the lowest quality, such as *anwan* or *baqal*, can be sold as cheaply as DH.50. However, a sack of good quality fresh date (*rutab*) once dried (*sih*), which weighs 28 kg, could bring DH.150. A *dharif* of dry date of low quality, which is used as livestock fodder will cost a

(23) A *dharif* of date weighs 28 kg.

buyer DH.50. For more details on the income and expenditure of a hectare of date garden, see Table 6. The prices paid for different types of dates (as collected in the summer of 1987-8) are listed in Table 7.

In general, few of the Wadi Ham villagers sell their date crop in the town's market, and most commercial transactions are carried out in the villages. Many of the middlemen traders and individual buyers buy the crop directly from the villagers and then resell it again in the coastal towns.

Table no. 6
Expenditure and Income of a Hectare Date Garden

Expenditure	HD
3 Months wages of farm labourer	1.800
10 Sacks of dry fish	500
20 Sacks of manure	250
2 Weeks wages of the trimmer-man	250
Total	2,800
Income	
Income from selling produce of 20 palms	4,000
Income from selling 15 sacks of dry date	2,250
Income from selling 10 sacks of lime	1,000
Total	7,250

Source: Author

Table no. 7
1987 Prices Per Full Yield of Date-Palm

Type of Date	Price (DH)
<i>Lulu</i>	500
<i>Khisab</i>	500
<i>Nighal</i>	300
<i>Khinazy</i>	150
<i>Qash Filgah</i>	150
<i>Anwan</i>	50
<i>Baqal</i>	50
<i>Maktum</i>	50

Source: Author

Tobacco (Ghalyun):

Arab Gulf traders consider the Hajar of the Emirates as the only region in Arabia where the best quality of tobacco can be cultivated. In the Hajar itself, tobacco as a crop is a more commercially oriented one than dates. The involvement of landlords (*hanagrah*) in the tobacco business tends to be an index of their social prestige, and a source of their local power. Ritually, tobacco, unlike the date, is perceived by the Hajari as impure (*nays*) and disagreeable (*makruh*). Without exception, when the Hajari are at prayer (*salat*), whether individually or collectively in the mosque, men wash their mouths with water, and keep their tobacco mixture (*dukha*) and pipes (*midwakh*) outside the mosque or away from where they stand for performing the *salat*. As a sign of good manners, the Hajaris also do not light their pipes in front of their shaikhs or Islamic canon law judges.

The Hajaris justify their involvement in growing plants like tobacco, which is impure and disagreeable, as their fate (*nasib*); or their destiny in temporal lives (*dinya*). It is one of the evil works in which man mistakenly gets involved. Most ordinary tobacco cultivators in Wadi Ham, however, cannot resist the temptation of growing tobacco. The sentimental attachment to tobacco, and the social lives and activities attached to the cultivation season and smoking habit make some Hajaris break their previous year's oath very hastily and start cultivating tobacco or smoking again. It takes approximately six months before a landlord, tenant and bidar receive their income from the tobacco crop.

Tobacco cultivation entails several processes, which include ploughing, sowing, transplanting, growing, and harvesting. It is important to look into each of these processes, so that we can realise the amount of energy, knowledge and expertise and social values involved in it.

Ploughing (*Hys*). The best quality arable plots (*wab*) in the open field are allocated to tobacco by the Hajaris. These *wab* which are in Wadi Ham are small in size, but have a very rich, silty soil. The open

field (*dahiyah*) is usually left fallow (*ayba*) in the summer (April-August). Toward the end of August all fields are ploughed for the short season of wheat, maize, barley, millet, etc. By late October these crops will be harvested and the field will be left for tobacco crop only. A very small plot is usually ploughed by pick-axe (*kasima*) and small shovel (*misha*), while a large one is tilled by a mechanical plough rented free of charge through the Agricultural Office. Since the early 1970s the traditional plough (*hyasia*), pulled by a bullock (*thur*), has been abandoned for a mechanical plough. When the ploughing is completed, the field will be left for three days. Then a large quantity of manure (*samad*) is carried to the field from the villagers' own livestock yards (*zarib*). The manure will be scattered on each farm-bed (*yalba*), mixed with soil, and then watered every day for a week.

Once the early crops have been harvested, in late October, the field will be hoed by pick-axe (*khasin*) and small shovel. At this time one more turn of manure will be added, and then the field will be watered frequently until the day of transplanting arrives.

Sowing (*Badir*). Like the date, tobacco cultivation is divided into *gidim* (early season, October) and *ikhir* (late season, November). The seeds (*badir*) are usually collected from the last crop, or donated by fellow cultivators. A tobacco grower usually kneels on one side of the field and distributes the seeds by hand in four to seven beds; each bed measuring 9 sq m. Immediately after broadcasting the seeds, the beds will be carefully watered, since the seeds are very fine and can easily be washed away. The watering will be continued once a day for about a week. In the third week goat-dung manure will be applied to the seedlings. Some cultivators will also give their seedlings, once or twice, a syrup made out of dry fish called *khisa*.

Transplanting (*Tahwil*). Between mid-November and mid-December most of the tobacco growers (*ashab al-ghalayin*) will transplant their seedlings. The *tahwil* is carried out by the landowner or the tenant, who will be either helped by the male members of his family or his tenant neighbour. In many cases, there will also be paid

farm labourer (*bidar*) who will work on the farm throughout the season.⁽²⁴⁾ For about a week prior to the day of tahwil, the field will be watered once every day. As the sun is hot during mid-day, the transplanting is carried out between 12 a.m. and 5 p.m. Plucking seedlings (*gur*), a job mostly done by two people, is carried out by hand only. When the seedlings are plucked, they are immediately put into a covered basket (*gafir*).

In the field, while waiting for seedlings to arrive, the person who plants the seedling makes small holes in the beds for the new arrivals. Before sunset all new seedlings should be quickly watered. The watering will be carried out every day for about eight days. A field of half acre will take about five days to be transplanted by two *bidar*. During this season the social ties between the tobacco cultivators are reinforced by the frequent exchange of seedlings and voluntary help (*faza*).

Growing Period (*Bilugh*). The growing period for tobacco extends normally from October/November until March/April, and is extremely tiring and time-consuming. To maintain his reputation among his fellow villagers as a good tobacco grower, and to guarantee a good price for his crop, a grower must carefully tend his crop. Among the tobacco growers, there is a well-known saying which reflects the tricky job of tobacco growing: “Even if the tobacco crop (*ghalyun*) escapes the fire of an evil-eye, it will not escape from killing itself”. During the long period of growing, which lasts for about six months, the crop must be protected from many things, among them: the excessive water, numerous diseases, locusts, hailstones, flood, western gales, the “evil eye” and the foxes which come at night and dig under the tobacco plants for the dry fish.

After one week of transplanting, a large quantity of manure (one

(24) In the Hajari context a *bidar* (pl. *Bayadir*) means both a farm labourer and a tenant. Until the early 1970s a low-paid *bidar* came mainly from Dhauriyin of Shihuh tribes. Others also came from Oman and Baluchistan. Nowadays, however, most of the *bayadir* are Pathan and Bengali migrants.

loaded pick-up costs DH.500) will be scattered immediately on the bed. In January, the crop will also receive an application of dry fish (*gashia*). This type of fertilizer is buried under each tobacco plant; and each sack, weighing 16 kg, costs DH.50. Each plant must receive 2 kg of *gashia* during its growing period. In February, just a few weeks before the crop reaches maturation (*bilugh*), the crop will have its second dose of *gashia*. In the remaining period, some tobacco growers give their crop the syrup of the *gashia*. The syrup is made by soaking the dry fish in water for a week and is distributed in each bed during irrigation. Since it is more economical, some people who cannot afford to buy enough *gashia*, will use the syrup method plus more manure. The growers know that this method will not attain a good price for their crops, but they have little choice.

After eleven weeks of continuous work, in which the cultivator moves from weeding work and irrigation to manuring, the crop will be mature (*baligh*). At this stage, the tobacco plant will reach 3 ft in height, and the head of the plant is cut off: such work is called *tawqif*. From this date a daily plucking off (*gatif*) of the small unwanted leaves growing rapidly on the plant's stalk will be carried out continually until the harvesting period.

In March, as the weather gets warmer and warmer, the crop will be watered every other day. The change in the weather means that the crop must be protected from diseases, such as *alternaria solani*, leaf curl virus and mosaic virus; and also insects, such as aphids and bugs of various kinds. Insecticides and fungicides are sprayed once by a mechanical sprayer provided free of charge by the Agricultural Office. Some tobacco growers, however, still use the old method of insecticidation by spreading the remaining ash of burned trees in the beds.

Harvesting (*Gisas*). According to the *darur* calendar, the crop must be harvested before the *al-ghywb* season begins, around late April. The harvesting (*gisas*) consists of six consecutive stages: *gisas* (cutting the plant); *talig* (hanging the plant); *tabyit* (the storing process); *tahdir* (laying the plant on the floor); *tabkir* (segregating the plant); and *tarbit* (tying up the bundles). Because tobacco leaves

can be easily destroyed by the dry western wind common in the Hajar, all the stages mentioned above are as such determined by the southern wet wind (*kus*). Thus harvesting which starts one day with the *kus* wind may be cancelled the following day if the direction of the wind changes to westerly.

Harvesting is usually carried out by a team consisting of five to ten people. Every farm has a warehouse (*maarash*), where the crop is to be processed and stored. A warehouse holding 150 bundles (*rabita*) of tobacco, each bundle weighing 16.5 kg, is built on land measuring 2400 sq ft. The warehouse has two stone walls; the other two walls, and the roof are built with palm reeds and leaves.

Tasks are divided on harvesting day: some cut the plant, others take the crop to the warehouse, some tie the tail of each plant with string, and others will hang the fresh tobacco plants by their tails from the ceiling. In general, a field of 1.5 acres will take ten people about six days to harvest. Protected from direct heat and sun, the crop will remain two months in the warehouse (May-June). In July, the *gaid* (high summer season), will bring more of the southern wet wind, and the other three processes of harvesting (*tahdir*, *tabkir* and *tarbit*) will be carried out. The crop, at this stage, will be tied up in bundles, each weighing 4.5 *man* (16.5 kg).

During the harvesting season, great business transactions flourish and frequent visits and social gatherings take place. Furthermore, fresh and dry dates and coffee are always available for the team, as well as for passers-by and visitors. In addition, all pipe-smokers will have the chance to get a new supply for their pipes as a gift (*khitara*).

Income and Expenditure. Growing tobacco is a hazardous business, for the farmer may either lose or win. If a crop survives most of the previously mentioned hazards and finds a good market, then a Hajari cultivator will get a good price. In general, of ten seasons a Hajari loses in four, therefore, more money has to be spent to get a good crop. To produce a good crop, a plot of half an acre will cost the following:

Table no. 8
Cost of Tobacco Cultivation

Item	DH. Per 1/2 Acre
200 Sacks of dry fish	10,000
4 Loaded pick-ups of manure	2,000
One season's wages for 2 bidar	7,000
18 Sacks of chemical fertilizer	900
Total Cost	19,900

Source: Author

A good tobacco crop, carefully tended, will bring DH.300 per bundle. If the above mentioned plot (Table no. 8) of half acre produces 100 bundles, which is the normally expected quantity, then the its revenue will be DH.30,000. The problem, however, is that some tobacco growers cannot afford to buy enough of the dry fish, which is essential to produce good quality tobacco. If the dry fish is not sufficiently applied, then a bundle will not bring more than DH.100, or DH.150, at most. Significantly, the price of gashia has also increased in the last ten years by up to 150%. The following example my show the cost and income of one of the farms, whose holder has not been able to use gashia.

Income and Expenditure of a Tobacco Farm. In mid-July 1987, immediately after the evening prayer, Said bin Mubarak, of the Bani Kaab tribe and a part-time tobacco grower, went to meet the wali in his majlis. After he had a few cups of coffee, he asked the wali about the possibility of his getting a tobacco farm. He said: "Haj Ahmed bin Salmin returned his farm to you last week. The poor man Haj Ahmed cannot see properly any more, may God help him. But I can take his farm. I cannot sit without growing tobacco this season. It is shameful for a man like me to sit and watch the other men working." After listening to his case, the wali agreed to give Said the farm, but he challenged him to grow good quality tobacco that year.

Thus in late July 1987 Said bin Mubarak received the farm, which is a small plot of half an acre, to cultivate it so as to improve his income. The following table shows the cost for the Said farm that season:

Table no. 9
The Farm Expenditure of Said bin Mubarak in 1987-88 Season

Item	Cost in DH
12 Sacks of dry fish	600
3 Loaded pick-ups of manure	1500
10 Sacks of chemical fertilizer	500
Wages of full-time bidar	3600
Cost of building a new warehouse	1500
Maintenance to water channels	250
Total Cost	7950

Source: Author

Said grew a good crop in the winter season of 1987- 88, but was unable to buy enough dry fish, because it was too expensive. The result was that Said received DH.9,975 from the tobacco trader for the 95 bundles of tobacco his farm produced, i.e., DH.105 per bundle. The same plot could have brought DH.250 per bundle if the crop had received a sufficient quantity of dry fish. Had Said used sufficient dry fish, he could have earned DH.28,500 from his tobacco. As far as the buying and selling of tobacco is concerned transactions between the tobacco grower and the trader (*tajir alghalyun*) are based on a pre-agreed contract. The trader offers a loan (*silfa*) in advance and in return guarantees the whole season's crop. Some tobacco traders offer their cultivators loans which take the form of goods, such as sacks of dry fish, rice and coffee, but the majority of traders offer money as a loan.

The price of the crop is not decided at the time of the contract being agreed, but is established by the market. Thus none of the cultivators can bargain during the contract loan about the price of their crop, nor can they predict precisely their earnings. Said bin Mubarak, whose case has been mentioned above, estimated that his income would be about DH.150 per bundle of tobacco. However, in the market Said earned only DH.105.

Irrigation System

As mentioned earlier in this study, Wadi Ham, as elsewhere in the Hajar region, is part of the arid zone environment.⁽²⁵⁾ This means that the average rainfall is very low. Consequently, the water resources in the region are very poor, if not scarce. Rainfall records in the Hajar over a 16-year period (1970-86) show that the average annual rainfall is 131 mm. This scarcity of rain is reflected in a dominant cosmological belief among the Hajaris, which states that the scarcity and abundance of rain in their wadis occurs in a cycle of 14 years. Thus, according to this belief, there are seven years of drought (*mahil*) and seven years of plenty (*khasab*). The seven years of drought may be either in succession, or interspersed with the abundant years. Such a cosmological belief reflects the infrequency and unreliability of rain in the region. Eight of the 16 years, for example, had an average rainfall of below 100 mm (Table no. 10).

Essentially, the wet period in the Hajar falls between December and March. The rain during this period falls in intensive showers, sometimes once a month and only for a few hours. Thus, as the catchment area in the wadis are narrow, a strong flood (*syal*) can easily occur, particularly in a good year of rain. Such floods, relying on heavy rain, are usually unpredictable. Those that do occur, as I observed in December and March 1988, can reach 20 ft. in height. Usually, the flood does not last more than 24 hours, but in these hours the flood will

(25) It is worth comparing the form of irrigation system in the Hajar region, as the case here from Wadi Ham seeks to illustrate, with other irrigation systems in Arabia and neighbouring countries. Such comparisons will allow us to see the influence not only of the ecological system operating in each region, but also of the influences stemming mainly from other systems, such as the political, economic, social and religious ones. For such comparisons, see for example: Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification: A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town*, 1971; Maktari, *Water Rights and Irrigation Practice in Lahj*, 1971; Serjeant, "Some Irrigation Systems in Hadramawt", 1970; Fernea, *Shaykh and Effendi: Changing Patterns of Authority Among the El-Shabana of Southern Iraq*, 1970; Wilkinson. (1977), *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia: A Study of the Aflaj of Oman, The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, 1987.

be strong enough to cause great damage to the gardens, and will spoil most of the winter crops.⁽²⁶⁾

Most of the wadis in the Hajar are characterized by a very steep and narrow catchment area. As a result these wadis suffer from a high erosion rate, due to the washout, and also a high rate of run-off. Nevertheless, a good year of rain can be sufficient to increase the water storage in the wadi enough to provide the villages with three years of reasonable cultivation.

Such conditions lead the villages in the wadis to rely directly on the rain to irrigate their summer crops as well as their winter. The irrigation system depends on the rain from previous years, whereas the rain of the current year will only increase the underground water-storage for the following year.

There are two methods of irrigation; namely, the *falaj* (underground tunnel) and *tawi* (well) systems. Approximately, two-thirds of the irrigated land in the wadis depend on the falaj system, while one-third relies on the tawi system. Every village uses both falaj and well systems to provide the village with its water requirement.

The irrigation system in the oasis, or village communities of mountain or coastal areas have rarely been examined ethnographically. This study believes that an examination of irrigation systems in southern Arabia will provide an interesting ecological, as well as social and cultural aspects of the structures which dominated the history of the region, and which also still affecting the lives of the people who inhabit the Hajar. This examination will also allow a further opportunity to discover the variation of forms which the falaj system has taken within the Omani and Emirates communities.⁽²⁷⁾

(26) Most of the early years of 1990s showed a serious period of drought. No single wadi in the Hajar reported to have been experiencing any form of flood, as a result the Hajaris faced severe problems in their agricultural activities.

(27) For more detailed examination of the falaj system in Oman, see Wilkinson's magnificent work: *Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia*, 1977. As for the Emirates' experience in this regard, see Heard-Bey. (1982), *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*. Heard-Bey, in particular came across some forms of economic and social involvement of the falaj system in the social structures of Emirates society as a whole and from a historical perspective.

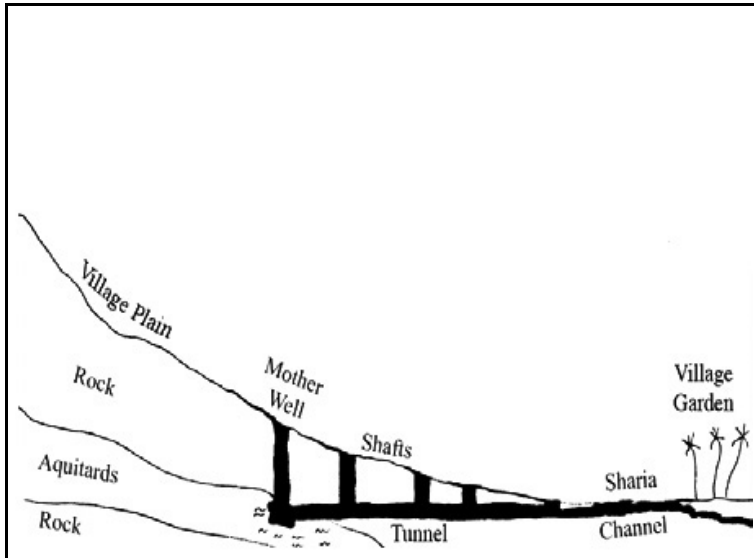
Table no. 10
Annual Rainfall in Wadi Ham

Year	Rainfall (mm)	Year	Rainfall (mm)
1970-71	0.3	1978-79	80.8
1971-72	155.3	1979-80	132.6
1972-73	67.6	1980-81	104.2
1973-74	17.0	1981-82	309.4
1974-75	149.0	1982-83	350.0
1975-76	214.0	1983-84	76.0
1976-77	132.3	1984-85	22.8
1977-78	80.2	1985-86	72.0

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery Annual Reports 1970-86.

The Falaj System. The falaj systems in the Hajar can be divided into two types. The first is known as *thigab falaj* and is based on a method of transporting and elevating underground water from the wadi-basin to the surface through a network of *qanat* (tunnels). This type of falaj begins with an underground mother-well (*umm*) situated on a level of a plain higher than the village's gardens and farms (Fig. no. 3). This mother-well is connected to a horizontal tunnel which runs for a long distance until it gradually reaches the surface of the earth in an area near the village's gardens. The tunnel is drilled by a sequence of shafts (*thigab*) to allow the villagers to carry out maintenance work.

This sort of maintenance work is done during the drought period and after each flood. Every *thigab falaj* in a village has an open channel which runs for a few metres before entering the village's gardens. This open channel is known as *sharia*. Every *sharia*, or open channel, is considered to be a communal source of water. It is left uncovered for the village's use as a watering place. The largest part of the uncovered falaj channel system is in the area of the gardens and farms.



Source: Author

Fig. no. 3 - Thigab Falaj in Cross Section

The second type of falaj system is known as *habisa*. The *habisa* is a small weir, less than one metre in height, and built across any flow of water which is relatively permanent. The *habisa* collects the water and then it is directed to the plots through a network of channels.

Thigab Falaj. The thigab and *habisa* falaj function side by side in most of the villages. In Bithnah of Wadi Ham, for instance, there are two thigab falaj situated in the mainstream of the wadi-basin. One is located on the northern edge of the village. This falaj cuts across the basin from east to west and is known as *Falajbin Abud. Bin Abud* is the name of the ex-landowner of the garden irrigated by this falaj. The second thigab falaj is situated in the southern part of the village, and is also named after the ex-owner of the gardens it irrigated, *Falaj al-Misaria*. This falaj has an open channel for a watering place that runs for 25 m., and has seven shafts. The distance between one shaft and the next varies from seven to 15 m. The length of the underground tunnel and the open channel measures 115 m. Although this falaj is known by the name of the ex-owner of the gardens, at present it irrigates gardens owned by four different owners.

Comparison of Bithnah village of Wadi Ham with villages of other wadis may show some variation. In Wadi Furfar and Wadi Imduk, there is a thigab falaj in Furfar known as *falaj al-Kaab*, and a similar one in Imduk known as *falaj imduk*. Both falaj are situated in the mainstreams of the two villages. The Furfar and Imduk falaj are typical examples of an underground falaj system. The Furfar falaj cuts across the villages' wadi-basin from its mother-well, near the northern hills, to its last end, in the south where the villages' gardens are located. Similarly, the Imduk falaj cuts across the small canyon of Imduk village from its foothills in the west, and runs steeply towards the lowest part of the streambed on the eastern side of the village. Unlike the Bithnah falaj, the Furfar and Imduk falaj have longer tunnels which run for hundreds of metres, and have many shafts.

Habisa Falaj. The largest weir (*habisa falaj*) in the wadi is the one situated in Bithnah village. It lies in the mainstream-bed of the wadi at the foothills where the village fort is located. The bar of this weir is 53 m. in length, stretching from the eastern to the western bank of the wadi. The width of the weir, when completely full, can reach to 27 m. The weir, however, is not deep, and because of its rocky bed there is a limit to any dredging work. When it is full, however, it can be as deep as four feet. The water from this weir is diverted through two main channels which irrigate the terraces of the eastern and western banks of the wadi.

Weir systems are also found in all the other villages. Bilaidah village and the small hamlets in Ghugah and Qinaw (Map no. 3), for instance, depend largely on this method of irrigation. In addition, some of the Furfar and Imduk terraces in the very tiny canyons rely heavily on this technique. Normally, the water in these weirs is stored for some hours during the day or night, until the weirs are full, and are then channelled to the plots of the shareholders in the weirs.

The villagers differentiate the small weirs from the larger ones by using the term *habut*. Two methods are used for measuring the quantity of the shareholding in the water. The method of measuring the share in the water depends upon the size of the plot. One of the methods is carried out by making use of the stars' movement (*naim*)

and the other by using an identical marked-stone fixed in the middle of the weir with different marks on it, showing the level of the water in the weir and thus the share of each shareholder. The stars' method is used mostly in the thigab falaj and the large habisa falaj, whereas the marked-stone method is used generally in the case of the small-size weirs of the habisa falaj (*habut*).

Shareholding in a Falaj. A long established system of shareholding in water (*saham al-may*) exists, which varies from one village to another according to the technique of irrigation and pattern of land holding. Two cases are presented here, one from Bithnah and another from Furfar to show the different practices of falaj shareholding, or water division, in each village.

Furfar Falaj. The water in Furfar falaj is divided between six landholders, each according to the size of his plot or holding. The system of shareholding in Furfar is called *rubu'* (quarters). This means that the 24 hours of each day are divided into eight quarters, with each *rub'* (one quarter) consisting of three hours. According to their size, some plots get three quarters, while others receive from eight to ten quarters. In total there are 47.5 quarters, i.e., there are 177.5 hours of irrigation which are divided between six landholders. The following table shows the number of shares per landholder.

Table no. 11
Shareholding in Furfar Falaj

Plot Name	Holder's Name	No. of Shares
<i>al-Dwahir</i>	Salim bin Abdullah	14.5 Rub
<i>Arba</i>	“ “	“
<i>al-Misharib</i>	“ “	“
<i>al-Hamila</i>	Ubaid bin Saif	10.0 Rub
<i>Walim al-khat</i>	Khalfan bin Abdullah	8.0 Rub
<i>al-Rafa</i>	Muhammad bin Saif	5.0 Rub
<i>al-Bada</i>	Khalfan bin Salim	7.0 Rub
<i>al-Ziriba</i>	Ali bin Said	3.0 Rub
Total		47.5 Rub

Source: Author

According to (Table no. 11) each shareholder (*sahib saham*) receives his allotted share at a different time and on a different day from his last share. This means that his share can take place at any time and on any day of the week. Hence, watering a plot can continue throughout the day and night, until the number of shares are completed. For instance, the shareholder at the top of the table, Salim bin Abdullah, holds 14.5 quarters of shares in the water (= hr. 43.30). On Friday (1st Jan. 1988) and at 5 a.m. Salim opened the falaj to start his weekly share, and by Sunday 3rd at 12.30 p.m. his turn was over and he went to close the falaj. Thus it took Salim three days to irrigate his plots. The following timetable shows in more detail how the water was divided in the above mentioned week. (Table no. 12).

Table no. 12
Timetable of Fufar Falaj Period

Shareholder Nam	From	To
Salim bin Abdullah	Fri. 5.00 a.m.	Sun.12.30 p.m.
Ubaid bin Saif	Sun. 12.30 p.m.	Tue. 6.30 a.m
Khalfan bin Abdullah	Tue. 6.30 a.m.	Wed. 6.30 a.m
Muhammad bin Saif	Wed. 6.30 a.m.	Wed. 9.30 p.m.
Khalafan bin Salim	Wed. 9.30 p.m.	Thu. 6.30 a.m
Ali bin Said	Thu. 6.30 a.m.	Fri. 2.30 p.m.
Total		177.5 hr.

Source: Author

The measurement of one quarter is still counted according to the movement of the stars and sun. The main stars identified and used by the Hajari in the irrigation system are profiteer (*thiria*), libra (*mizan*), scorpio (*aqrab*) and canopus (*suhayl*).

Bithnah Falaj. The garden and farm plots of Bithnah village are divided by the mainstream wadi-bed into ones situated on the eastern bank of the wadi and some others on the western bank. In Bithnah, the main habisa falaj is responsible for irrigating most of these plots. Those plots which are not irrigated by the habisa falaj rely on their own wells.

The numbers of the western and eastern plots in refer to the plot names and holders shown in (Table no. 13).

The water in the large weir of Bithnah village is also divided among the shareholders, but the shareholding is based on a system different from that of the Furfar falaj. Here, the quarter share system is not applied. Instead, each plot receives on a certain day of the week a fixed amount of water according to the size of the holding. A date garden plot of one hectare, for example, will require 6 hours to be fully watered. The rotation of irrigation (*sigi*) is decided by a system called *al-sabia* (theseventh). This means that each plot will receive the prescribed amount of water-share once every seven days (Table no. 13). The *al sabia* rotation is only applied during the good years of abundant water. During the drought years, however, each plot will have only one turn every 20 days. Table 13 illustrates the weekly timetable of water rotation, in which it shows how the water is divided between the mentioned holders throughout the seven days of the week.

Unlike Furfar falaj, Bithnah falaj must be closed every day after the late night prayer (around 8 p.m.). By early morning, at about 6 a.m., after the dawn prayer, the one who starts his share will open the weir again. When his plot is fully irrigated he closes the sluice (*suwar*) of the channel which passes into his garden or farm. The peasant who is last on the timetable must close the main sluice (*firia*) of the weir.

Like the Furfar and Imduk falaj, the Bithnah falaj is the collective responsibility of all those who hold shares in the water, but the administration of the falaj lies in the wali's hands. Each shareholder must look after the part of the channel which traverses his plot. The general maintenance of the falaj and disputes over water are handled by the wali. After each flood, and towards the beginning of summer, the wali must order his labourers to clean the weir and the tunnels of the other falaj of any obstructive sands and soil left by the flood.

The Tawi System. The second method of irrigation is the well system (*tawi*). In all villages, and wherever habisa and thigab falaj do not exist, a tawi system replaces the falaj. The flow of water is very low in the tawi compared to the falaj, and the amount of work and expense is also

higher than that of falaj. In general, the depth of the well can range between 10 and 30 ft. The water is first collected in a small tank (*habut*), before being diverted to the plot. Some of the villagers in the Wadi Ham used the water-wheel (*yazira*) until the early 1970s. Recently, however, the number of wells have increased due to the availability of water-pumps and the developed technique in well digging. Nowadays, to dig a well of 30 ft., for instance, will cost the landowner approximately DH.30,000 and three months of continuous work. On the whole, the increasing number of wells has expanded the amount of cultivated land; but on the other hand, it has decreased water-storage in the wadi and has thus created more disputes over water.

Table no. 13
The Weekly Timetable of Water Rotation of Bithnah Falaj

I. The Western Bank of the Wadi

Plot No.	Plot Name	Holder Name	Day	Time
1	<i>al-Khuba</i>	Haj Said al-Hamar	Sat.	6 a.m.-9 a.m.
2	<i>al-Misyad</i>	Mutawa	Sat.	9 a.m.-10 a.m.
3	<i>al-Duhirah</i>	Ali bin Abdullah	Sun.	2 p.m.- 7 p.m.
4	<i>al-Hiraga (i)</i>	“ “ “	“	“ “ “
5	<i>al-Hiraga (ii)</i>	Haj Hamad Musabih	Wed.	6 a.m.-12 noon
6	<i>Hamid</i>	“ “ “	“	“ “ “
7	<i>Yail Sawaf</i>	““““	“	“ “ “
8	<i>Nakhal Amun</i>	““““	“	“ “ “
9	<i>al-Bisa</i>	Said bin Rashid	“	12 noon- 2 p.m
10	<i>al-Saba</i>	Abdullah bin Ali	Thu.	6 a.m.-12 noon
11	<i>al-Qaba</i>	Said bin Salim	Fri	6 a.m.-12 noon
12	<i>al-Mazra</i>	Ali bin Abdullah	Every day	2 p.m.
				7 p.m. except Sun.*

Source: Author

* Because at this time of day the water will be less and the flow is very low as compared to the morning period. Therefore, this large plot which consists of several gardens and farms is watered every day in the afternoon.

II. The Eastern Bank of the Wadi

Plot No.	Plot Name	Holder Name	Day	Time
1	<i>al-Khanadiq</i>	Ali bin Abdullah	Sun.	6 p.m.-9 p.m.
2	<i>Sabit bin Nasif</i>	Muhammad al-Muqani	Sun.	9 p.m.-2 p.m.
3	<i>al-Jarahi (i)</i>	“ “	“	“ “
4	<i>Bin al-Hamidi</i>	“ “	“	“ “
5	<i>Sabit al-Jat</i>	“ “	“	“ “
6	<i>al-Ablid</i>	“ “	“	“ “
7	<i>Sabit Muza</i>	“ “	“	“ “
8	<i>Sabit al-Yasm</i>	“ “	“	“ “
9	<i>al-Jarahi (ii)</i>	Qasib al-Zuyudi	Mon	6 a.m.-2 p.m.
10	<i>al-Sarim</i>	Muhammad al-Aud	Tue	6 a.m.-12 noon
11	<i>al-Misyad</i>	Mutawa	Sun.	2 p.m.-4 p.m.

Source: Author

Animal Husbandry:

Husbandry is the second major economic activity widely practised in Wadi Ham. Pastoralism, indeed, constitutes the main occupation of the *shawawi* people of the wadi, and part of the occupation of the settled villagers as well. During my stay in Wadi Ham, I managed to examine very closely six shawawi camps. These camps were scattered on the small plains (*sih*), and are usually set up close to narrow canyons where there is enough water to dig a small well, and where reasonable pasture is available for the herd. A shawawi camp possesses, during winter, a herd which ranges between 250 and 300 goats, and between 20 and 30 sheep.

The shawawi livestock consists largely of goats (*hwush*) and sheep (*yaid*). The sheep usually comprise the minority of the herd, about 10% of a shawawi household's herd. Among the sedentary villagers in the main plains, goats also constitute 70-80% of the entire household's stock, but other animals, such as cattle (*bugar*), sheep and camels (*rishab*) are also raised.

A large shawawi household, which usually consists of a father and his sons' families, lives in a single separated camp (*aisha*). In the camp a fold (*zarib*), of about 2500 sq. ft, is always built attached to the main hut so as to watch the herd closely. For the purpose of grazing, the goats and sheep are separated from each other and divided into two flocks. Sheep and goats are never herded together. Each flock is divided into smaller flocks and kept in a separate fold or hat (*ania*). The billies (*aniz*), nannies (*twus*) and kids (*sukhul*) will be penned separately during the night. The same also applies to the sheep. The young kids and lamb are always penned in the camp until their mothers come in the afternoon.

In general, the responsibility for the herd is taken by the women, who do all the herding, milking and feeding. Among the Hajari, the ritual and beliefs entail that a "good man" is not expected to be involved too much with the business of the herd, and never milks a goat or a cow. Men are responsible for taking the decision to settle a new camp, for making commercial transactions, for searching for a lost goat and, sometimes, collecting firewood. Besides raising their herds, the shawawi also take some of the villagers' flocks for a year or two on a contract basis. According to this contract (*wida*) the shawawi receive half of the newborn kids, while the rest are given to the owner.

Among the settled villagers, on the other hand, almost every household keeps a herd of goats, sheep and a few cattle in a pen attached to the house. Some households also keep part of the herd in another pen on their farms. A peasant household usually keeps between 30-150 goats, 10-30 sheep, 2-5 cows and 2-3 bulls in the village. In addition to that, a household which raises camels usually retains a herd consisting of 5 to 10 camels.

As with the shawawi women, the peasant women in the village are totally responsible for the household's flocks and cattle. Normally, the number of livestock is liable to increase as the eldest woman in the household becomes less involved in housekeeping and childcare, since her daughters-in-law will look after the housework and also assist with the livestock and cattle. She takes the herd for pasturing, and works

most of the day in preparing the cattle food. Women, at this age, always try to maintain their right to keep the income from the livestock separately from their husbands’.

On the other hand, if a household keeps a herd of camels, it will be the man’s responsibility to look after it. A camel is ritually believed to be superior to cows and goats because it is considered to be pure and intelligent; whereas cows, goats and sheep are thought of impure and stupid. Working with camels brings honour to the man, giving him social prestige among his fellow villagers. Men keep their camels separately and take full responsibility for looking after them. They do not ask their women to take any responsibility towards their camels. Men usually free their camels in the early morning, and pen them again before sunset in a special stall (*azba*) on the village outskirts.

With regard to the breeding and productivity of the livestock, goats in the wadi breed twice a year, each time producing 2-3 kids each. Sheep, because they are less adapted to the mountain environment, breed less often. Camels and cows produce, on average, one calf per year.

There are frequent religious and social occasions in the village, such as wedding parties, circumcisions, religious feasts, births, banquets, and offerings for a dead or sick person. All these occasions, and others, entail that each household should keep a sufficient stock of goats, sheep and ghee so as to feed their guests. The consumption of meat and ghee is very high in the wadi, and this makes husbandry, in addition to its other activities, an important aspect of the Hajari economy. In the wadi, there is a network of commercial transactions which involves the shawawi and the villagers in daily transactions. For instance, goats, sheep, and date are either exchanged or bartered throughout the year. Some of these barterers cover the shawawi or villagers’ previous debts and loans. In addition, some of the villagers, particularly those who have frequent contact with the town market, play the role of middlemen traders between livestock owners and some traders in the towns. A

transaction, for instance, involving the reselling of a goat in the town market by a middleman can make him a 16% profit.

Herdsmen and herdswomen in the villages make a good income by herding other villagers' flocks. As with the shawawi contracts, the newborn flock will be divided in half between the herdsman/woman and the owner, otherwise the fee will be paid in money. Today, a herdsman/woman will charge DH.5 a month per head.

In general, livestock is sold once the animal is a year old. The new ewes and nannies will be retained in their flocks as capital stock, whereas the new billies and rams will either be taken by the village middleman trader, or sold directly to customers. The most profitable commercial transactions take place a few days before the Islamic feasts, such as *id al-hajj* and *id ramadan*. A one-year-old kid usually costs DH.460-500, while a one-year-old lamb costs DH.300-400. At feast times, the same kid will be sold for DH.600-800, and the lamb will be sold for DH.400-500. A one-year-old bull (*ayil*) or six-months-old camel (*quwd*) will fetch a good price. At times of feasting or wedding, a young bull can bring as much as DH.1500. If it proves to be a good breed, a young camel can cost over DH.15,000. Such a camel, however, would be sold in the town and used for racing. In contrast, a young camel sold for meat, especially if it is a lesser breed, will make only DH.2000-4000.

Both the shawawi and the peasants make a reasonable profit by processing milk and selling it, either as ghee (*samin*), or as dry cheese (*bithith*). Ghee is sold nowadays in bottles and costs DH.100 for three pints. Cheese, on the other hand, costs DH.7 per kg, and is usually sold in a small cloth bag. In addition, most peasants use either their cattle and livestock manure for their own farms, or sell it during the winter season when demand for manure for tobacco is high. A full loaded pick-up truck of manure is valued at around DH.500. The shawawi, for instance, exchange their livestock manure with the villagers for fresh and dry dates.

In general, the Hajaris make a reasonable income from their livestock. This is offset by the many occasions when there are tragic losses in the herds. In the last six years (1982-87) large numbers of

goats and sheep were either lost because of the long drought, which lasted more than six years, or the frequent epidemic diseases which may wipe out most of the herd within a few days and leave the rest too weak to survive. Ironically, such diseases most often occur in mid-winter when the flock is just about to profit from the winter pasture.

The Social Context of Production:

Having said this much about the agricultural and pastoralist practice, it is time now to turn and show the effect of this pattern of ecological system and economic organization on certain aspects of the social organization other than that mentioned at the beginning of this study. It is true to say that Hajari society and culture kinship, as a system, has played an important role in uniting the Hajari tribesmen, but nevertheless the Hajari lineage system has remained divided. Its division, as it was explained earlier in this study, was due to the structural segmentation of the lineage system itself. As a result the Hajari continued to distinguish himself and the group to which he/she belongs from another one by the descent line of the group to which he/she belongs. This fact is demonstrated among the Hajaris by several descent groups, that is the several tribes and lineages which make up the entire social structure of Hajari society.

Apart from this feature of the Hajari social structure, there exists another feature but in its case we believe the social differences are not a result of the kinship system. On the contrary, they are the result of the ecological and economic mode of production which produces social categories that are unique to Hajari society and culture. This mode of production in the Hajar region has produced several social categories, among them: the shuyukh, the ahl al-bilad, the ghurbtyah, the khidam, the zutut, the bayadir and finally the shawawi.⁽²⁸⁾ For reasons of space we will concentrate on the last two social categories, since we think

(28) These terms are quite common in south-eastern Arabia. The shuyukh, however, means the ruling clan; ahl al-bilad for native villagers, ghurbtuah for outsider tribesmen; khidam for slaves or ex-slaves; and zutut for an artisan Baluchi.

they are a consequence of the ecological system and the economic mode of production more than the kinship system.

The Bayadir:

Whatever sort of confusion the word *bayadir* (sg. *bidar*) may create, especially the different contexts in which the Hajaris have been using it, the sheer fact remains that this word is used to refer to an occupational group which consists mainly of landless peasants. Thus if we exclude the landlords and landowners, the word *bayadir* will encompass all sorts of landless people who work as farm labourers. But what makes the word *bayadir* so baffling is the fact that the Hajaris also use this word in certain situations to include landowners who happen to sometimes work as share-croppers. So my own conclusion is that the word *bayadir*, while it is used by the Hajari to refer to an occupational group consisting largely of farm labourers, is also used in other contexts to refer to the share-croppers. During my stay in the valley I never came across an independent local term which refers to the share-croppers. However, before we go further, it is important to ask: who are these *bayadir*?

The *bayadir* category in the Hajar range consists first of a group of people, some of whom belong to *ghurbityah* tribes and some of whom belong to the *khidam*. The *bayadir* who belong to *ghurbityah* and *khidam* are the most permanently settled peasants in the valley throughout the agricultural seasons. The second group of *bayadir*, who are fewer in number, are a few members of *ahl al-bilad*'s men who, because they have less or no landowning work to do, work as *bayadir*, in other words as share-croppers. It is very rare however, to find a tribesman of *ahl al-bilad* working as a farm labourer (*bidar*). The third group of *bayadir* are the migrant labourers. This group is numerically larger than the previous groups and consists mainly of foreign labourers who do not permanently settle in the valley. The nationalities of these labourers have changed over the years. For as long as the Hajaris can remember, the Arabs of the *Dhahuriyin* tribe of *Rus al-Jibal* of the far northern region, and the Arabs of the neighbouring country, Oman, used to come to the valley every agricultural season

until as recently as the early 1970s. Some Baluchis of the Bashkar tribes also used to come in the 1950s and 1960s, but since the early 1970s the Bashkar Baluchis have stopped coming. Since the early 1970s however, these migrant bayadir have been replaced by Pathans, migrants from Pakistan, and a few Bengalis. Today, in Ham valley alone, there are 121 labour migrants in the valley working as farm labourers.

From a numerical point of view the bayadir as a social group can increase or shrink according to purely physical environmental factors. Thus, drought and scarcity of water can bring the number of bayadir down to its lowest level. During the severe drought years the native bayadir will remain in the valley while the majority of the migrants will leave the valley and stop coming. From a political point of view, the foreign bayadir are less important and are of no political significance in comparison with the local bayadir. The political significance of the local bayadir is highly important by virtue of their existence in the valley and their descent- they increase the number of the tribe's, and eventually the confederation's, followers.

As a result of their work in date and tobacco cultivation, the bayadir have constituted a source of increasing the wealth of the landlords and landowners. The bayadir are also a good source of power for increasing the landlord's or owner's reputation as a good tobacco grower, especially in a society such as the Hajar which places high value and prestige on those who grow and deal with tobacco. As a result, and over the years, tobacco growing in the valley, as elsewhere in the Hajar region, has occupied a very significant role in social, political and economic life. Undoubtedly this tobacco business has allowed the landlords and some of the landowners to institute themselves as local patrons for many of the bayadir. As clients of their patrons, the local bayadir receive social, political and economic support. The commitment between the bayadir and their patrons can go on for years, but the bidar is also free to choose his own patron. Competition among the patrons to attract the most reputable bayadir in the valley is very keen.

Although there is a clear social distance between the local bayadir- especially the tenant or share-cropping bayadir- and their

patrons, nonetheless some of the patrons do not mind marrying their daughters to bayadir who are share-croppers, particularly if their bidar belongs to the ahl al-bilad or ghurbityah tribes. But it is also undoubtedly true to say that the social distance between the patrons and their farm labouring bayadir (whether local or non-local bayadir) remains wider, and thus no marriage ties exist between them. One will also notice that the relations and social distance between the local bayadir and the other social categories, and occupational groups, are also varied. For instance the relationship between the local bayadir and the shawawi is one that is complementary and contradictory at the same time. On the one hand, the tenants bayadir for example need the shawawi's goat dung in order to grow good tobacco, and the shawawi also need the bayadir's fresh and dry dates as a source of family consumption and rich food for their herds. But despite those mutual needs the bidar still perceives and treats the shawi (sg. of shawawi) as inferior to him.

The social distance between the Hajari bayadir and zutut artisans is also very wide and there are no social or marriage ties whatsoever between them. The bidar, of course, sees himself as superior and will consider it a great insult to be put on the same level as the zutut. The bidar despises the zutut and looks down on them so much that he will never invite a zuti to his house, and will only meet him at his workplace, where the zuti carries out his craft work.

Finally, within the bayadir there are various differences between one sub-category and another. For instance, there is a broad social distance between a native bayadir and a foreign bayadir. The former see themselves as superior because they are the fellow tribesmen of their patrons and because of their seniority as native villagers of the valley. Thus, it is quite possible for a native bidar to become a share-cropper, whereas a foreign bidar can never compete with a native bidar in this respect. The native bidar who works as a farm labourer, still sees himself as superior to any foreign bidar. Being a client for his local patron, the native bidar will see himself as superior because he has more rights and respect from his patron than the foreign bidar who has no tribal descent or patron.

The second difference among the bayadir is that among the native bayadir themselves, particularly the difference between share-croppers and farm-labourers. The differences between these two groups are based mainly on the type of work and income of each group. The share-cropper earns more and carries out a different type of work on his farm. A farm labourer earns less and does not have a share in the crop. In fact, a farm labourer may sometimes seek a job from the share-cropper and thus become subordinate to him. What also make some share croppers socially superior are their affinity with and tribal affiliation to the ahl-bilad tribes.

The Shawawi:

The *shawawi* are another occupational group, whose status is achieved rather than ascribed. They are fewer in number than the bayadir. In Ham valley their number can increase to as high as 50 and 80 people. The increase in their number would be a result of good years of rain in the valley or inter-tribal disputes in the shawawi's own native homelands. In such circumstances there would be over 30 families distributed in more than 10 camps. The shawawi, today, are about 40 people who constitute 15 families scattered over 6 camps around the mountains which surround Ham valley. Their migratory pattern is very infrequent. As long as there is water and peace the shawawi will remain in the valley.

The shawawi are the only nomadic group among the Sharqiyin tribes. They differ from the desert nomads of the Emirates whose herds consist mainly of camels. The shawawi live in the mountains and their livestock constitutes goats and very few sheep. Over the years the shawawi of Ham valley have come, for instance, from the northern region of Fujairah. They come from powerful tribes, such as the Yamamahah, the Zuyud and the Suriydat. But since they are not native Hajari of Wadi Ham, therefore they are considered as part of the ghurbityah category of people, and as such their rank as ghurbityah is ascribed, but their shawawi status is an achieved one.

The shawawi interaction with the villages is less than that of the bayadir. They are seen during the Friday prayers and the villages'

feasts. They are mostly visited by the villagers. With their tribal background the shawawi's relationships are unique and varied. Like the rest of the ahl al-bilad and ghurbityah categories, the shawawi treat the khidam and the zutut as subordinates, and thus they do not have any kinship or marriage ties with them.

How are the shawawi treated by ahl al-bilad and their fellow tribesmen of the ghurbityah, particularly the bayadir? The relationship of the shawawi with ahl al-bilad and shuyukh is one that takes the form of patron-client relationship. The ahl al-bilad and the shuyukh offer their land and protection to the shawawi in return of services, few taxes, policing the area and support. The relationship between the shawawi and the native bayadir, however, is quite different. It is interesting to describe this relationship in order to see the problem of ranking within these two occupational categories.

Ironically enough, while the bayadir and the shawawi both occupy a lower social status, one is nevertheless considered as superior and the other as inferior. The gap between the bayadir and the shawawi is wide. The bidar who works the land sees himself as superior to a shawawi, even if the shawawi has more annual surplus than the bidar. Why? Because he works land, which is treated ritually as pure as compared to working with animals; he is also settled, with no more wandering in the mountains. A shawawi is inferior to a bidar, because the latter, with the rest of the settled people, considers the business of working with livestock, particularly cows, bulls, goats and sheep, to be ritually impure, and it is therefore assigned and left to the women to deal with.⁽²⁹⁾ Thus it is common to hear a bidar mock a shawawi for accepting women's work. The bidar also accuses the shawawi of being mean and inhospitable. A bidar says that the shawi's meanness and inhospitality spring from the fact that he works with animals, doing women's work, which has brought him to such a lower status. The

(29) But not camel, because a camel is considered and classified among the Hajaris as pure and as one which symbolizes the origin of the Hajaris as bedouin. Thus a Hajari always considers his attachment to camel herding to be an honourable job and a symbol of one's bedouin descent.

reason for the relationship of superiority and inferiority between the bayadir and the shawawi is due to the great value the Hajaris ascribe to one who owns or works land, and the impurity the Hajaris attach to men involved with livestock affairs. As a consequence of such social distance, a local bidar may marry a shawawi woman, but will hesitate to give his daughter to a shawawi man. Consequently, there are not many marriage ties between the shawawi and the bayadir.

Ayal Nasser al-Hafaiti:

Ayal Hafaitat is one of the main lineages which now resides in the main village, Bithnah. Today, the lineage lives in a quarter of its own, and in a chain of dwellings attached to each other. Originally, the lineage used to reside with its Hafaitat tribe in its own territory, Wamm, in the northern region of the Fujairah emirate. In the 1930s, as a result of a blood feud, the lineage was forced to leave the tribe's territory as part of the settlement. Shaikh Hamad bin Abdullah, the shaikh of the Sharqiyin at that time, offered the lineage a small canyon known as Qinaw. The Qinaw canyon, became the small hamlet and thus the new territory of Hafaitat lineage in the Ham valley.

In Qinaw, Ayal Hafaitat owned a large herd, and cultivated tobacco, dates and barley. The lineage, which consists of five large families, continued to live self-sufficiently until the early 1960s when a devastating flood came and destroyed its farms and dwellings. Again, the shaikh at that time, Muhammad bin Hamad, helped the lineage to rebuild its dwellings, and in lieu of its lost farms the shaikh also offered a large date garden of his estate to the lineage under bidarah tenure. Thus since 1960s the Hafaitat lineage's men became the shaikh's bayadir. Haj Juma, the lineage's head, paid three-quarters of the date crop to the shaikh and kept one for his lineage. Of the 100 sacks of dates, today Haj Juma pays two-thirds to the landlord and keeps one-third as his share.

Furthermore, as the families of the lineage are known for their experience in growing tobacco, Haj Juma entered into another bidarah contract with Ayal Obaid, a lineage of the Kunud clans. Ayal Obaid controls two-thirds of the tobacco crop and Ayal Hafaitat one-third.

The total allotment of both lineages is 126 bundles of tobacco. The farm's income for this number of bundles was DH.18,900 in 1987.

In the date tenancy, the landlord provides Haj Juma with fuel, diesel, for the water-pump, while Haj Juma provides the man-power. In the tobacco tenancy, Ayal Obaid, as owner of land, provides the manure, the dry fish and the water from their well. In both tenancies, Haj Juma and the owners of these lands pay 10% of the tobacco and date crop as zakat.

Today, the Ayal Hafaitat has increased its income, as Haj's sons have joined the state's federal army and the police, as soldiers and policemen. Haj Juma's brother, Salim, has also become the village's prayers caller (*mudin*). His second brother, Humad, joined the village's police post as policeman. Consequently, the lineage's families became able to reconstruct their farms in their old hamlet, Qinaw, and to start cultivating tobacco again. However, this improvement in the lineage's income did not prevent the lineage from working as share-croppers on other owners' land.

Haj Salim bin Ali:

Haj Salim bin Ali (aged 75 in 1987) is a typical case of a landless peasant, who undertakes a date garden through sharecropping. Haj Salim is the lineage's elder of the Yamamahah clan. He was born in the Tawyain, a village which is part of the Yamamahah tribal territory in the northern region of the Fujairah emirate. His tribe is the largest tribe in the Sharqiyin confederacy. It is a nomadic mountain tribe which still practises pastoralism. Before he came to the Ham valley, Salim was a camel driver (*jammal*), transporting goods from his village to the coastal town of Ras al-Khaimah.

In the 1930s Salim was arrested in a homicide incident. He was eighteen years old when he was deported from his village and jailed in Bithnah's fort for one year. A ransom (*dyah*) was also paid to the victim's family as part of the settlement. However, after one year of prison, Shaikh Saif bin Hamad ordered Salim's release, but his freeing was on condition that he stays in Bithnah to serve as askari in the fort. In two year's time, however, Salim became one of the best askaris in

the valley. Thus his enhanced reputation in the village led the shaikh to send for his wife and brother, Ahmed, to join him in Bithnah. In addition, the shaikh also asked Salim to help the village's headman, the wali, in some of his duties. Accordingly, the wali appointed Salim as tax collector and a messenger for him.

In the 1940s, Salim asked the shaikh to lease him one of the date gardens under a share-cropping contract. The shaikh agreed, and his acceptance became a reward for Salim who also proved in a few years to be a reliable bidar. In the 1950s, Salim's and his brother's families and their joint herd became large enough, and consequently the shaikh agreed for them to build a new camp on the village's outskirts.

Although he had committed a crime against a person's honour and homicide, and continued to work as a bidar, that has not stopped Salim from becoming a leader of his lineage. Salim's lineage alone counted about 45 members. Salim's reputation as a man of honour and trust soon allowed his lineage and his brother's to enter into an alliance relationship with the Kunud. This marital alliance was executed in an exchange manner. Thus, his brother's daughter was married to a notable man from the Kunud; and the Kunud married one of their women to Salim's son, Musabih.

Nowadays, Haj Salim's and his brother's sons serve as personal guards in the Amiree Court. Salim also enjoys the position of a respected elder in the village, acquiring the title of Haj after visiting Mecca twice in the last 10 years. Today, Salim also serves as a man of sinah, and is regularly asked to interfere in disputes among his lineage.

Conclusion:

One would like to conclude by saying that taking the environmental factors of the Hajar into consideration, it soon becomes apparent that the Hajari social and economic system has been powerfully affected by the harsh environment of the region. The lifestyle of the Hajaris as peasants and pastoralists is very much different from that of the hadari people of coastal villages, or the Bedu of the desert. Until very recently, the peasants moved seasonally from summer to winter dwellings, whilst the pastoralist, or the shawawi, still

move from uphill to downhill camps. The two seasons are associated with agricultural produce and livestock productivity.

A winter is symbolized by land and animal fertility, that is, more tobacco and more goats. The summer is symbolized by scarcity, that is, spending the winter savings, the death of livestock, and working through the whole season with one crop only, namely dates. This environment, therefore, has produced a subsistence economy which cannot accumulate a significant surplus. Those few surpluses which are possible to accumulate are used mostly for purposes of social prestige rather than purely economic needs. The scarcity of water resources in the environment has led to the dispersal of Hajaris, forcing them to live in small villages and settlements far from each other. The scarcity of land and water resources has also created instability in the social and economic system.⁽³⁰⁾

Despite these harsh conditions, Hajari men have continued to find various ways to survive and to creatively adapt themselves to their environment. At the political level, tobacco cultivation alone, which as an agricultural practice goes back for more than one century, has created an atmosphere of greater social differences in the Hajari communities: it reinforces the patron-client system and thus enhances its social values, promotes a new path for a chain of ambitious entrepreneurs and hence produces local leaderships.

The tradition of tobacco and date cultivation in the Hajari communities involves, among other things, a perspective of life and cultural knowledge that demonstrates a unique human experience in adaptation with an arid zone environment. Using a short cultivable season, scarce water and small pockets of land, the Hajari managed to introduce a cash crop, like tobacco, which did not only allow them to sustain harsh environment, but also to improve their economic and

(30) For example a tribe can possibly lose its independence once its falaj is wiped out by a drought. Within a few years, members of a lineage can slip from landlords (*hanqarah*) to tenants (*bayadir*). Moreover, the unavailability of water can also make the price of a bundle of tobacco fall from DH.300 to DH.100, whilst a garden's produce of date can also fall from 100 sacks to 10 sacks.

political bargaining power with their neighbouring communities and the central state.

The intention of this study was to provide the social and cultural setting of tobacco and date cultivation and pastoralism; or what has been described by Louis Dumont as: “a social definition of agriculture from the social point of view”.⁽³¹⁾ By doing so, one hopes that the economists of the region will find that such social and cultural backgrounds of a traditional economic activity are sufficiently stimulating to investigate this informal economy a step further.

(31) Dumont. (1986), *A South Indian Subcaste: Social Organization and Religion of the Pramalai Kallar*, p. 95.

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