"Patronage in Libyan Rural Development"

William Dalton

PATRONAGE IN LIBYAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

by William G. Dalton

This paper, while not dealing with "managed development" and thus avoiding the moral, ethical, and political concerns of the applied social sciences, does engage a situation of development and describes the nature of local participation in that process. It is a point of this paper to stress the incredible complexity of the local context (Geertz's "thick description"), the uncanny adaptability of a rural population, and the political cunning of some of its prominent citizens. The description found here points to the simple fact that those who plan to do, for whatever reason, do so at their own peril if they fail to come to terms with the context in which a transformed political economy is emerging; and that the "context" can only be understood through difficult, painstaking, research by those who deal in the analysis of the relationship between social relationships.

Here, I attempt to analyze continuity and change, during the Idrissi period in Libya, in the political structure of Sawknah Oasis, a community located in the Fezzan Region of Libya. The population of 2,100 persons is divided between two groups: 1. THE SAWAKNAH, a people of Berber origins whose livelihood was gained from cultivation of irrigated gardens and date palm plantations; 2. THE RIAH, an Arab tribe of camel herding nomads whose 13,000 square miles of territory includes Sawknah Oasis. The two groups have a long history of symbiotic relationship; Bedouin have exchanged meat, wool, and dairy products with the sedentary people for dates and other agricultural products for many centuries. While some Sawaknah own a few animals, many Riah tribesmen own date palm plantations, house sites, and even a few irrigated gardens, a fact which further complicates the relationships between the two populations. Elsewhere (Dalton 1973; 1978; 1985), I have analyzed the changing political structure of the Riah tribe, as it became more involved in village politics. Here, I wish to limit myself to the Sawaknah and analyze the impact of the oil-rich Libyan economy on their political life.

Traditionally, the social system of Sawknah was hierarchically organized. Distinctions between status groups in this system were based, in part, upon differential ownership of the means of production. On the basis of these distinctions three categories of persons would be discerned: landowners, small farmers, and tenant agriculturalists. Land-owning families dominated the sedentary community both politically and economically. They owned the major share of the village agricultural property, but rarely worked the land themselves. Tenants worked the land and were dependent upon the landowners for their subsistence. The economic ties between tenants and landowners bound both groups into a series of well defined, enduring relationships.

Small farmers, or Fellah, formed the second major group in the oasis community. They could be distinguished from the landowners economically in that they usually worked their own gardens. Few, however, had sufficient agricultural property to maintain complete economic independence. Some of these men worked in the gardens of the landowners in addition to working their own lands, while many others also worked as artisans. The village builders, donkey carters, smiths, and bakers are all drawn from this category as are some of the small shopkeepers.

The major distinction between small farmers and landowners is one of wealth. Status differences are not rigidly defined at this level. Through the factors of inheritance or marriage a person may rise or fall in the status system. It follows that in the larger descent groups agnates are often members of different status groups. Hence, the stratification system cross-cuts the bonds of agnation emanating from common descent.

Together these two status groups, landowners and small farmers, are referred to by the Riah tribesmen, neighbouring villagers, and the third status group in the village (tenant agriculturalists), as the Sawaknah. The Riah tribesmen regard them as distinct, stressing the Sawaknah's Berber origins as well as minor differences in culture and life style, as symbols of a wider political cleavage between themselves and the villagers.

The third status group in the village, tenant agriculturalists, is distinct from the other two groups in a number of ways. Most own little agricultural property and earn their living as sharecroppers for the wealthy families. Most tenant gardeners are Negroes (said to be descended from slaves). They are called "Swasheen" or "Abid" (slaves).

The economic parameters of this system of organization began to crumble in the late 1950's as a result of the development made possible in Libya through oil revenues. After the discovery of oil in the 1950's the Libyan economy began to grow rapidly, and jobs and posts became available in the coastal cities of Tripoli and Benghzai, as well as in Sebha, the capital of Fezzan province. Nearly forty percent of the local population emigrated. By 1963 this process began to slow as the service institutions of government proliferated at local level providing jobs and posts for many more persons. Some of the spoils of the oil wealth were being administered at local level through government channels in the form of patronage while government spending encouraged the private sector as well.

Although in 1963 Libya changed its form of government from a federation of three states to a United Kingdom, many of the trappings of federation remained during my field work. Sawknah along with Hon Waddan Zillah and Al Fogha were part of the administrative district of Al Jufrah (Hon was the administrative capital). These villages competed among themselves to elect a single candidate to the National parliament. During the federal era, the Al Jufrah region was part of Fezzan province, which was ruled by the Saif Al Nasir family. Each of the villages of Al Jufrah had an elected or appointed representative in the Fezzan parliament, each rivalling for a greater share of local patronage. After federation was legally abolished, the influence of the Saif Al Nasir in the region was diminished and it became one of several national factions vying for power. Hon and Waddan joined two different national factions, while Sawknah remained in the Saif Al Nasir camp. Although competition between the villages of Al Jufrah was a manifestation of rivalries taking place at a higher level in the political system, the national factions did provide a structure in which local competition took place.

Emigration of large numbers of sedentary families from Sawknah to the cities in the 1950's, and expansion of national government hegemony at village level beginning in the early 1960's posed the possibility of radical changes in the traditional stratification system of Sawknah oasis community. This meant that most persons were able to find paid wage labour, and no longer had to rely on agriculture as a means of livelihood. Here I analyze those sets of structural relationships which supported the traditional stratification system and perpetuated the dominance of the

land-owning power group; then I turn to the ways in which some of these relationships were adapted to meet the changing economic and political situation in Al Jufrah in 1965.

The traditional stratification system in Sawknah oasis was based upon control and exploitation of agricultural resources. Most irrigated gardens and date plantations were owned by a few wealthy families, who formed the dominant "power group" in the oasis. Patrilineal descent played an insignificant part in the organization of the land-owning group. Most named groups were no larger than extended families, and when in a few cases genealogies of more than three generations in depth were kept, they were merely an historical record and were not the basis for a corporate group organization.

I was struck, when in the field, by the marked contrast between the nearly all-pervasive importance of descent group organization among Riah tribesmen, and the near absence of descent as an organizing feature of village social life. While Riah tribesmen organized most of their political relationships through descent group structures, there were few clearly defined functions that I could attribute to descent groups in the sedentary population. In only a few cases were binding linkages maintained between members of Sawknah descent groups, and in these groups, corporate property interests usually were not continued when the senior male of an extended family died. In only a few cases were first cousins owners of joint estates, and beyond that range of affiliation, common property interests were not usually maintained.

One indication of the differential importance of agnatic descent groups in village and tribal organization is reflected in the contrast between my census material collected in 1965-66 and material gathered by the Italian sociologist Agostini in 1917 (Agostini 1917: 203). While the six of seven descent group names collected by Agostini for the Riah tribe had not changed between 1917 and 1966, only four of fourteen names of Sawknah descent groups had remained in use. It was only after probing that I discovered that many descendants of Sawknah groups recorded in 1917 were still resident in the village. In one case, the agnates were distributed among all three status groups in the village, some as landowners, others as small farmers, and a few (who had become impoverished) as members of the tenant status group. There was no indication that the fact of common descent was a meaningful linkage between these families. (See my "Some Sociological Implications of Saharan Oasis Organization" in Davis, J., ed. Oasis Organization, forthcoming).

Marriage was one social linkage which maintained the stratification system, as all three status groups were nearly endogamous. Where differences in wealth developed between the individuals in the same descent group, members were pulled into the orbit of different status groups, and marriages were usually contracted with status equals rather than with members of one's agnatic descent group.

Thus, descent group organization became subordinated to the system of stratification. Marriage was one important relationship which ensured that the major share of agricultural resources in the oasis was maintained by a few wealthy families. These families had broken linkages with poorer agnates in favor of forging linkages with families of similar status.

Basically, the two processes (emigration and inequities in inheritance between heirs to an estate) ensured that a few families in the oasis would continue to own the major share of resources. Descent groups in which the members maintained the

same social status were less likely to segment than those in which, through fragmentation of estate, members demonstrated radically different degrees of wealth. In Sawknah, therefore, the traditional stratification system was based upon differential control and exploitation of agricultural resources. Occupation, wealth and status-group membership were correlated.

Two important social mechanisms which insured continued control of the majority of village agricutural resources in the hands of a few landowning families were endogamous marriage and emigration. Endogamous marriage restricted the outflow of property from landowning families to the other two village status groups. Emigration of landowners diminished the possibility that large holdings would be fragmented through the division of an estate among legal heirs.

I have been dealing with a limited number of variables in my argument thus far. My concern has been to analyze the major structural principles which account for stratification in Sawknah oasis. The facts of social change have been marginal to my analysis. In so doing I have followed the necessary steps of first describing the structure in static terms and now, in Bailey's words, I shall attempt to "describe the Structure in action", by analyzing the impact of social change (1960: 197). Three areas will be analyzed in the following pages: 1) the present day organization of agriculture, 2) wage labour as it affects the village status structure, 3) the position of landowners (both recent emigrants and villagers) in the expanded field of government bureaucracy.

In 1961 agricultural census recorded 105 arable hectares of land in Sawknah divided into 90 separate gardens. In the same year, however, there were only five hectares of land under cultivation. These were distributed among thirty gardens which were being partially worked, providing little more than vegetables for the table of the owner and those persons who worked them.

Census data which I collected in 1966 indicated that twenty hectares of land were under cultivation. While there was no increase in vegetable cultivation, fifteen hectares of land had been committed to the cultivation of alfalfa. This crop was used as fodder, and the increase in production indicates a change in garden use. Many pastoralists who had become sedentary saw the advantage of keeping livestock in the gardens and had negotiated leases with owners. In many cases, landowners had given the gardens rent-free simply to insure that palm trees planted within the irrigation grids were watered. There were thirty-two gardens being partially cultivated in 1966. Only ten agricultural laborers and eight small farmers counted agriculture as their major occupation. In only one case was the agriculturalist middle-aged or younger. All of the rest of the men who worked in agriculture were in their late fifties or over, and most had sons who were working for wages. Seventeen gardens were being worked by groups of four or five poor men on a part-time basis to provide vegetables for household consumption and/or fodder for their animals. Locally grown vegetables were usually absent in the shops as most agriculturalists produced little surplus. Many villagers bought their fresh produce from the market in Hun or from itinerant traders who brought produce in trucks from the coastal regions.

The failure of the agricultural system in Sawknah was caused by the growth of spending by the national government. This policy, I have argued, contributed to heavy emigration from the village to the cities in the 1950's and widespread wage employment at the local level in the 1960's.

The diminished importance of the oasis agricultural system to the economic life of Sawknah could have undermined the dominance of Sawknah landowning families within the village, but in fact this is not the case. There has been a transfer of regime to the governmental employment structure.

The government bureaucracy has become the mechanism through which landowners have perpetuated their position of dominance in the village. In Table I (p. 58), I list the number and type of government posts held by the members of various status groups in the village. The figures indicate that the landowners control the majority of government posts and occupy the most influential positions in the bureaucracy.

For purposes of clarity, I make an additional distinction in the table between householders and single males of working age. Twenty-eight of thirty-six householders and all eight employable single males in the landowning group have government positions. Small farmers are not as well represented in the employment structure. Thirteen of thirty-two householders and three of nine single males in this group have government positions. Tenant agriculturalists' representation falls somewhere between the two other groups, with over half of the employable males (eighteen of thirty-four householders and eleven of twenty-one single males) working for the government. While all three status groups in the village have members working for the government, clearly the landowners have a proportionally larger number employed and, as a group, they hold the better positions.

The first two categories of employment - government administrator and education official - are controlled by the landowners. Three of the administrative posts are the traditional positions of village headman (mudir) and two assistants (shaikhs), who are responsible for administering sections of the village. Four other administrative posts are newly-created positions which have resulted from government expansion in the Al Jufrah area. Two of the three posts in education also fall into this latter category. Posts which suggest a measure of authority are held by the landowners.

The category of religious official, the only other category with suggestions of general authority, is a bit of an anomaly. All three status groups have religious officials who are paid by the government, but there is a great difference between them. Religious knowledge is an ambiguous phenomenon in the Middle East. A man can inherit religious knowledge or saintly status; he can claim this position through individual scholarship; or he can be said to have religious knowledge through being thought to possess baraka (goodness). In the case of the category of the religious official, all three factors apply. The agricultural laborer's religious official is said to be descended from a man who possessed saintly qualities, and he has been given a stipend by the government as custodian of a small mosque in Sawknah. Two of the small farmers are similarly remunerated, both are accepted as Koranic scholars. In evaluating the position of the three landowners who fall into the same category, we must make a distinction between the possession of religious knowledge and the position held in the bureaucracy administering religious institutions. The positions of the three landowners are as follows: one is the Imam of the major mosque in Sawknah, a second is the head of the Sanussi Lodge in Sawknah, and the third is Director of Religious Affairs in Al Jufrah. The important positions in the religious bureaucracy are thus held by landowners.

TABLE I

Government Posts and Jobs Held by Sedentary Residents Sawknah Oasis

Where employed:		Land Owners		Small Farmers		Tenant Agriculturalists		Total
		Within Village	Outside	Within Village	Outside	Within Village	Outside	
Job Held								
Gov. Admin.	H*	6	1	0	0	0	0	
	S	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Ed. Official	H	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	S	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
Teacher	H	2	0	2	0	0	0	
	S	1	2	0	0	0	0	7
Clerk	H	2	0	2	0	0	0	
	S	0	3	0	2	0	6	15
Relig. Off.	H	3	0	2	0	1	0	
	S	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Police	H	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	S	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mechanic	H	2	0	0	0	0	0	
	S	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Driver	H	0	0	2	0	0	0	
	S	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Off. Servant	H	7	0	3	0	4	0	
	S	0	0	1	0	1	2	18
Unskilled	H	2	0	2	0	13	0	
	S	0	0	0	0	1	0	18
Pension	H	2	0	0	0	0	0	
	S	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total By Class		30	6	14	2	20	9	81
			36		16		29	

Landowner householders	N = 36		Small farmer householders	N = 32	
Single males working	N = 8		Single males working	N = 9	
Single males in school	N = 6		Single males in school	N = 9	
	14			18	

*H = Householder
S = Single male

Tenant householders   N = 34
   Single males working   N = 21
   Single males in school   N = 4
                                 25

Two other categories of employment which should be elucidated are the positions of office servant and unskilled labourers. There is a major distinction to be drawn here. "Office servant" covers a wide range of posts, but generally applies to positions in which the incumbent has light office or custodial tasks. This job is easy and preferable to unskilled labour. It is significant here that landowners hold seven of the sixteen custodial positions available, while the peasants hold by far the greater number of labouring jobs. The position of members of the three status groups within the government wage structure broadly reflects the prior distinctions between the groups based on land tenure. Landowners control the bureaucracy, and the other two groups are employed in positions which carry little authority.

The figures presented in Table I suggest that the government employment structure reflects the traditional stratification pattern in Sawknah Oasis. There is, however, another dimension to government patronage. The Sawaknah not only control some areas of village administration, but also many have positions in bureaucracy outside the village structure.

There is a major distinction to be drawn between posts in village administration (such as Headman, Imam, Shaikh, etc.) and positions outside the village held in regional administration and agencies of the government (such as public works, agricultural extension utilities, etc.). In the former category, positions traditionally have been open to village residents only. It is for posts in the latter category in which there is no tradition of local level participation that intense competition takes place on an inter-village level. Persons in these administrative positions are important to local political groups, for they are able to make patronage jobs available to villagers (sometimes as many as forty or fifty temporary labouring positions at one time). One way in which landowners maintain their position in the community is through controlling such blocks of patronage. In turn, the local power group allocates jobs to individual villagers. Without these strengths in the wider system, it would be impossible for Sawknah landowners to maintain their dominance in village affairs.

The actual mechanism by which landowners perpetuate their political power cannot be adequately analyzed without introducing facts concerning emigrants. Rather than add another table, let me simply state that twenty-four of the thirty-three emigrant householders of the landowning families have government positions. Furthermore, five individuals in this category have relatively important positions in government ministries. One individual is the Secretary to the Minister of Religious Affairs in Libya and another was Minister of Education in Fezzan during the federal era. Since positions at this level in bureaucracy are in part political appointments, these individuals take great interest in Al Jufrah affairs, and consciously participate in the political dealings of villagers at the local level. As we shall see, this is one reason why "affinal alliances" among landowners have continued to be important in the changing situation. Men in the village will petition their affines in urban areas for jobs for their sons, themselves, or friends. Some of these men are in business partnership with affines residing in the urban areas. Wealthy villagers invest in building, commerce and transportation enterprises organized by emigrants. Perhaps the most important aspect of affinity as it affects the continued dominance of the landowners in village affairs is the fact that some of these urban dwellers are able to protect the political interests of the village power groups from the Riah tribal leaders at one level, and, at another level, from the encroachment of rival political groups in the neighbouring villages. Affinal alliances (originally the product of a marriage pattern which had the latent function of protecting landowners' interests in agriculture) have become crucial politically as they now link political groups which

DIAGRAM I

AFFINAL ALLIANCE
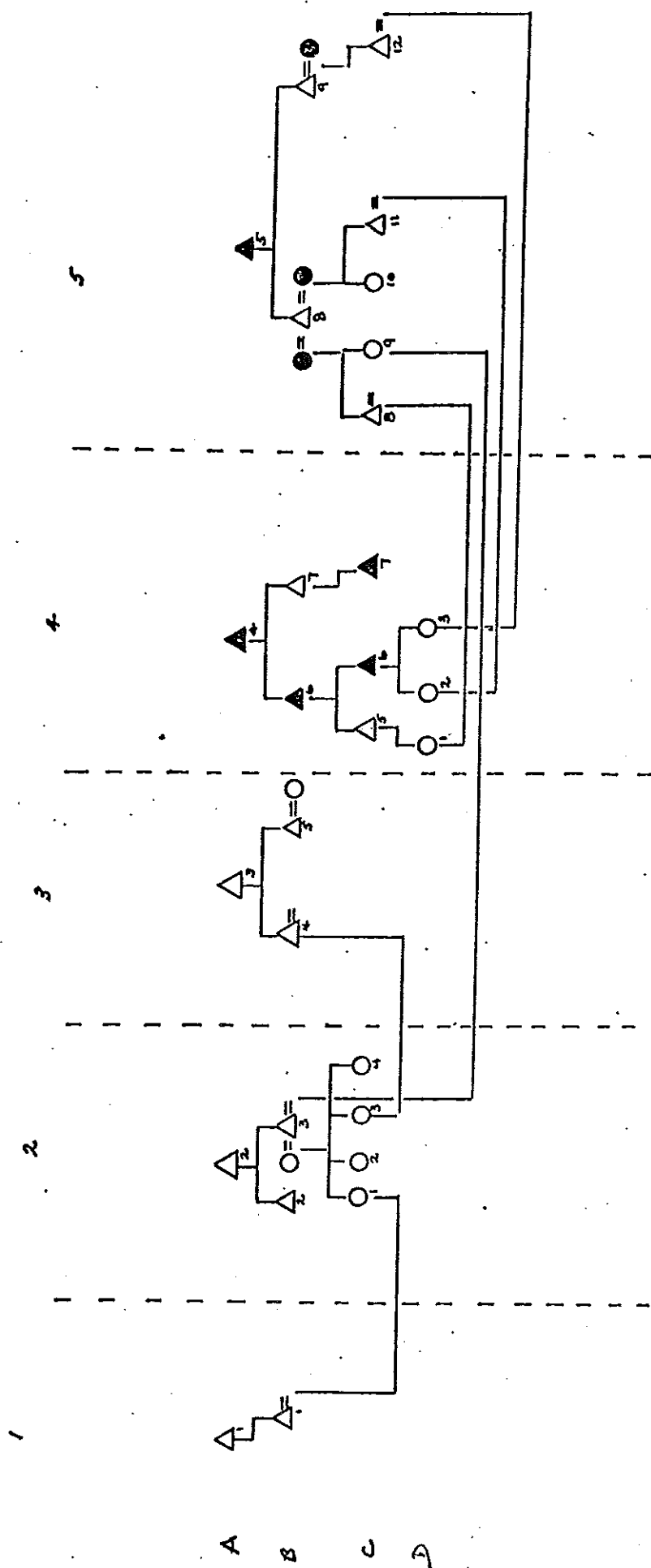
have a base in both the rural and urban areas. I now develop some of these arguments through case material.

In Diagram I, I depict one section of an affinal alliance which connects members of some of Sawknah's landowning families. Each of the five families depicted could be represented as part of a larger agnatic group, but at the level of action, I do not feel that such a representation would depict reality. Not all the members of the alliance are resident in Sawknah and those who live outside have moved away since 1950. B2 of Family 2 lives in Tripoli and little contact between him and B3 is maintained. Although each brother has children of the appropriate age and gender, there is no interest on the part of B3 in allowing B2's son to marry one of his daughters. B4 of Family 3 resides in Sawknah while his brother, B5, lives in Tripoli. The males of Family 4 do not reside in Sawknah. C11 and C12 of Family 5 live in Sawknah, although C12's occupation requires that he spend a good deal of time in Sebha. C8 lives and works in Sebha. Although males in Family 4 live in Tripoli, two women of the group live in Sawknah and a third lives in Sebha.

Members of this alliance control a great deal of wealth in the village and have political influence in the wider field of regional politics. In addition, they act as "brokers" in the allocation of government patronage posts to certain sectors of the community. Finally, they are members of a wider, more powerful group of village notables drawn from the landowning families.

The members of Family 4 own over 3,000 palm trees in Sawknah and one large garden belonging to them is still being worked. The male members of Family 5 have some claim to that estate through their wives' inheritance. D2 and D3 have received their inheritance, but control of their property by their husbands is not secure. In fact, there is a public joke among villagers that C11, a weak man, has to weigh the dates from his wife's tree in her presence at harvest time and purchase them from her before he can even so much as eat one of them. Members of other groups in the alliance have large agricultural holdings in their own right, but their holdings do not approach in size those held by Family 4.

C12 acts as the steward of C5's estate; he oversees the various tasks which have to be carried out during the year. Although this position might have been of great importance in the past, it is only marginally important today. Rather, the responsibilities that he undertakes for C5's agricultural property can best be understood in relation to other political and economic links between them which are of greater importance. This latter area has specifically to do with the control of areas of the government patronage system which are used to enhance the position of these men politically.

C5 is an influential member of the Fezzan's ruling faction under the Saif Al Nasir family. Under the federal system of government in Libya, Fezzan was a semi-autonomous state. C5 was Minister of Education for a time in Fezzan. He used his influence to acquire positions for Sawknah residents. In return, he had a say in how the village would vote at election time.

C5 aided C12 in acquiring a post with the Antiquities Department in Fezzan. In 1965, C12 was appointed head of construction for the Antiquities Department. C8, a young man, was also aided in a similar manner and in 1965 was head administrator in the Fezzan offices of the Antiquities Department. C5 and C6 were also instrumental in appointing another man, not in the group, as head of an excavation gang working to uncover archaeological ruins in Southern Fezzan. For a time in the

early 1960's, many labourers from Sawknah worked on these projects.

B4 and B5 are the only persons residing in Sawknah who are accepted as being of "Shorifa" origins; that is, descendants of the prophet Muhammad. B5 is Director of Religious Affairs in Al Jufrah and his brother, B4, is Director of Religious Affairs for Fezzan Province. It is their membership in the Sawknah landowning group rather than their rank as descendants of the Prophet which account for their government appointments. Several hundred people living in a neighbouring oasis claim Shorifa rank, too. An ally of C5, a wealthy property owner in Sawknah, is currently secretary to the Minister of Religious Affairs in Libya. Informants said that he was responsible for the appointment of B4 and B5 to their posts.

B3 is a counsel in Al Jufrah (i.e., a position instituted by the Turks and retained by King Idris). Holders of this office are supposed to collect seditious information and report it to the government. It is largely an honorific title, but the government does pay a stipend. B3 is important to members of the alliance because one of his daughters (C2) is married to the captain of Saif al Nasir's bodyguard thus linking that person to two other members of the alliance.

With half of the landowners living outside the oasis and with most of them employed in government ministries, some in important positions, it would be possible to annotate the connections for nearly every landowning householder in this fashion. Here I have attempted to demonstrate the connections that exist between some members of the landowning group. It can be seen that the relationships are kept active over great geographical distance, that there is a pattern to the allocation of government positions, and that this pattern gives some villagers greater influence than others in government administration. More important, I have described some structural relationships that continue to link villagers in a new social field. These relationships serve to give continuity to the village as a political community even though the character of the social field is in a "fluid state". It is the ability of landowners to structure relationships in the wider system that allows them to maintain their control of part of the government patronage system against neighbouring villages at one level, and against encroachment on the part of Riah tribal leaders. Their ability to influence the allocation of patronage is the means by which landowners maintain dominance in the village. The following case demonstrates that local political groups must have influence at various levels in the political and administrative systems if they expect to continue to control patronage at the local level. Some of the participants in the case are members of the affinal alliance described above.

In May of 1965, construction of a new rest house was begun in Hun. The responsibility for construction of the building came under the Department of Antiquities and an official of that Department, C12 (a Sawknah landowner), was appointed in charge of construction. C12 hired a crew composed entirely of day labourers from Sawknah and contracted the service of a Sawknah truck owner, Abdullah, to haul construction materials.

Construction began in Hun with the crew made up completely of Sawknah residents. Townspeople from Hun objected, grumbling that since the rest house was to be constructed in their own town, officials in Hun should direct the project. Besides, they confided, C12 was not knowledgeable enough to direct the project. Telegrams citing these arguments were sent to the Department of Antiquities and to emigrants from Hun in government administration, among them Ali Helba, once headman of Hun, and, in 1965, Director of Public Road Works for Tripolitania and

Fezzan provinces. At first the petitions went unheeded for C12 had good connections at high levels in the government bureaucracy. His wife's uncle (C5), an emigrant Sawaknah, had once been Minister of Education in Fezzan and was still a prominent member of the Saif Al Nasir faction in Fezzan. C12 confided to me that his wife's uncle and other prominent Sawaknah (among them a secretary to the Minister of Religious Affairs) would look after the interest of Sawknah when it came to competitions with other communities in Al Jufrah. Important men in Hun had similar linkages with highly placed government officials. They continued their campaign against C12's appointment as construction boss.

Each morning after the project was under way, thirty to forty labourers from Sawknah traveled to Hun in Abdullah's truck to labour on the rest house. Three weeks after construction was begun, it became public knowledge that C12 had incorrectly built one of the walls of the building. Using this information, notables in Hun renewed their campaign against him. This time they were successful; C12 was sacked as construction boss and replaced by a builder from Hun.

At the building site, the new chief of construction told Abdullah that his services would no longer be needed, but told all labourers from Sawknah that they could continue at their present positions. A friend of the new foreman confided to me that people in Hun were concerned only to have the building constructed soundly in the new building style approved by the government, a style not understood by C12 and the "uneducated" people of Sawknah. It was apparent, however, that there were financial and political motives involved. A truck owner from Hun, a relative of the new foreman, was employed to haul building materials.

In Sawknah that evening the events were discussed at length by C12 and some of the notables. It was decided that no one from Sawknah would continue to work on the construction gang. This was discussed with most of the labourers later that evening, and all agreed to the boycott. The next morning, only one person from Sawknah - a swasheen man - (affine to one of the local tenant families who had moved to the village four years earlier) reported to work. That evening he was publicly scolded by other labourers and did not return to work the following day.

In one day, the whole crew working on the rest house was replaced. Only one person who had worked under C12 returned to work after he was sacked. This was accomplished even though the alternative open to many workers was a period of unemployment or the insecurity of seeking day-to-day employment.

The case illustrates one aspect of the intense inter-village rivalries for control of patronage allocations within the framework of government bureaucracy. The actual position of members of village power groups within the government bureaucracy, to some degree, regulates each group's ability to allocate patronage positions. C12's position as an official in the Department of Antiquities gave him the credentials to supervise construction. But there is much more to it than that; government projects, whether administered properly or by the appropriate official, are subject to political attack from competing village power groups. The control of projects such as the one discussed in this case depends upon the influence which village groups can marshall at higher levels in the system. Frequently, these linkages are to highly-placed emigrant villagers who, although absent from the village, are nevertheless members of village-based power groups. Reasons for the intense political rivalry between these groups have both a political and an economic aspect.

First of all, much government construction results in lucrative side-benefits even

at the local level. C12 hired a Sawknah truck owner to haul construction materials. I do not know whether C12 received a "kick-back" from his arrangement with Abdullah, but it is my impression that in Libya these payments are the rule rather than the exception. Many entrepreneurs earn a great deal of money from government contracts. It is the political connections of village political groups that determine which entrepreneurs are to be chosen to work on projects.

A second category of persons who benefit directly from temporary employment are those people whose major occupation is outside the government employment structure. Village artisans and building labourers, as well as many pastoralists who seek part-time wage employment, fall into this category. Without political links to men outside the area, local power groups would not be able to obtain employment for village labourers, and they would look to other political groups outside the village for patronage. Thus, by providing part-time employment to Sawknah residents, the village power group is able to continue to dominate the village politically.

The political unity of the village was amply expressed by the actions of both leaders and workers in the period after C12 was sacked. The workers showed their solidarity by following the decision of the local power group that no one could continue to work on the construction project in Hun. To my knowledge, there were no sanctions imposed by Sawknah leaders in the situation. Interestingly enough, the one man who returned to work after C12's sacking was sanctioned not by the power group but by the workers, who viewed his actions as an act of betrayal. This example clearly indicates that the village has maintained its political integration in the changing situation, and that the landowners are clearly accepted as village leaders.

Landowners can sanction the behavior of villagers who break rank individually. If a man changes village political affiliation, it is unlikely that he will be able to obtain a government patronage position. Village power groups are interested in extending their influence into other villages at the expense of rival groups. They usually will award employment to individuals when the political return results in a block of villagers realigning their political loyalties. It is not very often that a man receives a patronage post when the gain for the group awarding the post is simply one more ally. Thus, a man who does not comply with requests made by Sawknah leaders is likely to experience difficulty in finding a job.

An attempt at using patronage jobs as a means of extending the village's political clients can be seen in the above case. C12 used the construction job as a means of employing persons from his own village. In that regard, he had little alternative, since Sawknah leaders would surely have sanctioned him had he attempted to employ persons from other villages. Persons in Hun seized on what they regarded as C12's nepotism, but had C12 extended work to villagers from Hun or Waddan, it is unlikely that it would have been accepted. This principle was demonstrated by the actions of Hun's power group once they had control of the project. They offered employment of Sawknah residents who, however, refused to continue to work on the project even though many were not sure where they might next find wage employment. While one principle of political continuity is to have access to government patronage allocation, a second, equally important principle, is to keep other political groups from successfully winning supporters by offering patronage to them. Village power groups are positioned in the political structure between villagers who depend upon patronage jobs and those individuals and groups who make patronage available. The power group maintains control of the village system by allocating patronage in such a way as not to alienate supporters. It is important to the

continuity of the village power group that no other political groups intersect the linkage between themselves and supporters. Political groups attempt to expand their influence beyond their own village by offering jobs to groups of people from other villages in return for political support. Sawknah has continued as a viable political unit because attempts to break village unity have not been successful. The village power group has been successful in maintaining their position in Sawknah because they are supported at the higher levels by regional political groups.

The effects of government patronage on village political continuity and change are adequately documented when villagers discuss the recent history of neighbouring Al Jufrah oases. Al Fogha, for instance, has received very little government patronage, and what has come their way has come from other villages in Al Jufrah. While Hun, Waddan, and Sawknah vote in elections as unified blocks, individuals in Al Fogha sell their votes to the highest bidder, or in return for promises of government posts. I observed a similar process of fragmentation during the 1965 national elections when various factions in the village of Zillah supported different candidates from one of the unified villages in return for promises of patronage. Politically corporate villages have fragmented, sections of them have become clients of other local level political groups in Al Jufrah, and their political leaders have lost their influence with former supporters. Instead of patronage being administered by local leaders, outsiders have taken over that function and award jobs directly to village residents.

One explanation of why some of the Al Jufrah villages remain corporate politically and others do not, is apparent in the case cited above. Both Hun and Sawknah have influence with high-ranking administration officials and politicians who work at the national level. Both villages have emigrant community members whose own position at higher levels in the system are to some extent dependent on their ability to influence the course of political events at the local level.

A representative elected to national assembly from or with the backing of Sawknah would be an ally for the Saif al Nasir faction; one elected to parliament from Waddan or Hun would be an ally of one of several factions based in Tripolitania. Patronage given in Al Jufrah, although from the central government, is directed through different political factions who seek to control the administrative agencies of government. To elaborate this argument further to include an analysis of national groupings would take me beyond the scope of my data.

One final point from the case does illustrate these tensions. C12's dismissal was interpreted by both villagers in Sawknah and Hun as a blow to the Saif al Nasir faction who had controlled the Ministry of Antiquities in Fezzan. They saw the change in regime at the construction site as an indication that the Saif al Nasir no longer controlled patronage allocations made available through that agency.

Having said all of the above, it seems to me incredibly naive for one to assume that the solutions to problems of rural development are to be found exclusively in the technical realm, and even less imaginative to conclude that expected results can be achieved without considering the organizational matrix into which innovation is to be introduced. In other words, local people - the objects of development forces - do participate in development schemes whether as resisters to agents of change, as members of political factions competing for resources made available, and (when they have lost or never had political power) as marginalized citizens or wards of a state. Like it or not, the outcome of that local involvement, whether it be active participation in, or sullen resistance to, development schemes may be the single most

important factor in the triangle of development, government, and local population. The critical measures here must confront the nature, span and organization of political power for this will influence, greatly, the nature of the initial responses in the economic and social processes linked to development.

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