

The remaining eight villages in the sample of fifteen lack a formally instituted market place. Here marketing is parceled among the economic functions of the village shop, the flour mill, and the oil press as well as the roles of assemblers and crop-buying agents living in the village and outside.

In choosing a small sample of marketing centers for intensive research it was desirable to represent as much variation as possible; but it was also important, because only one vehicle was available to the project,<sup>54</sup> to coordinate the market research with the farming production and household economy study. The latter was being carried out in three villages--el-Kharta, el-Geifil and Umm Ramad--which were selected as representative of different soil types, rainfall patterns, agricultural practices and community services. Fortunately, from the viewpoint of marketing these three villages showed a lot of the diversity we were seeking. Umm Ramad has a rather large market place and its crop market operates on the mizaan (weight) and dalaala (auction) system.<sup>55</sup> El-Geifil is a small marketing center struggling against competition from neighboring markets, owing to its location on the boundary of two administrative districts. Unlike Umm Ramad, el-Geifil crop market is not operated on the basis of weighing crops but instead the weight and value of the crop for purposes of assessing taxes is estimated. This system is called shiishna (estimation).<sup>56</sup> It does not entail the use of an auction procedure. El-Kharta differs greatly from both Umm Ramad and el-Geifil. It has eight shops scattered among its households and there is a flour mill and several cisterns where water is stored for sale. Although it lacks an identifiable market place, el-Kharta is an important marketing center for smaller neighboring villages. To understand why this is so, one needs to realize that the headman of the village owns a market lorry and his sons and grandson are merchants and crop buyers.

These three villages give a good indication of many of the variables that have to be dealt with in studying rural markets in the el-Obeid region, but still lacking in this sample is a big rural market with both a crop market and a livestock market. The need for a marketing center of this type has been filled by selecting Abu Haraz as the fourth village in the sample. Abu Haraz is one of the largest rural markets in the area. During the rainy season it is visited by great numbers of nomads who migrate north from South Kordofan. Moreover, the Abu Haraz crop market exercises hegemony over crop prices in Umm Ramad. Umm Ramad is within the rural council district of Abu Haraz. Merchants from Abu Haraz make "raids" on Umm Ramad crop market and are able to bid prices which are uneconomic for Umm Ramad's local merchants.

Another reason for limiting our study to only four market villages was to develop rapport with our informants, the merchants. As a general rule,

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<sup>54</sup>We later solved this problem to some extent by using market lorries as transportation.

<sup>55</sup>This system is described below.

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