

kind of informant. Some of the case studies are presented below in talking about periodic vendors.

### An Overview of Marketing in the Study Area

A quick grasp on rural marketing is gained from a consideration of the village-level media through which market exchanges occur. In the previous research report only two of these--the merchant's shop and the government crop market<sup>60</sup>--were singled out. Research carried out since the last report was completed leads us to identify a number of important marketing institutions.

#### Village Shop

This category includes, besides the ubiquitous grocery store, the flour mill and the bakery. As the previous report indicated, the village shop is responsible for the day to day provisioning of village households. It is the first-line buyer of many of the goods which are produced by the household. It is also a source of credit to the household, particularly late in the farming season before the grain can be harvested--a period when many farming families lack income to purchase their consumption needs. Of considerable importance to crop marketing is shopkeeper's willingness to accept small quantities of sesame, groundnuts, roselle and gum arabic as payment for goods. Sesame and groundnuts are measured by the mid while roselle and gum arabic are weighed in rootls on the merchant's balance. The farmer who sells his crop in this manner receives less than he would at a government crop market but gains from the convenience of selling only enough of his crop to buy current requirements. There is the added convenience of not having to leave his own village when buying supplies. The merchant collects crops piecemeal in this manner, storing them in sacks inside his shop or burying them in a maṭmuura until he is ready to sell, usually to an urban merchant's agent or directly to a crop agency at el-Obeid. These crop sales are not under the direct supervision of government tax collectors. This poses a serious problem to the rural councils, which depend on the tax revenues from crop sales. The movement of crops directly from the villages to the oil seed agencies in el-Obeid without payment of taxes is believed to be a widespread practice.

A list of commodities that are commonly sold in the village shop was reported in the first research report. Most families purchase foodstuffs from a shop every two or three days, if not every day. The items that are needed for meals every day are tea, coffee beans, sugar, sesame oil, onion and feterita.<sup>61</sup> In Table 20 the comparative prices of these commodities at Abu Jahl (el-Obeid), Abu Haraz, and el-Geifil are listed.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>The earlier report describes Abu Haraz market as typical of government crop markets in the study area. It has since become evident that two major types of government crop markets exist and Abu Haraz market represents only one of these types. See analysis below of the mizaan and shiishna systems.

<sup>61</sup>If the family has stored millet or sorghum from its own production it may, depending on the season of the year, prefer to eat from its own stock rather than purchase feterita from a shop.

<sup>62</sup>Data collected between 1/5/82 and 1/8/82 from one shop selected at each location.