

HANA TARAGAN

ARCHITECTURE IN FACT AND FICTION: THE CASE OF THE NEW GOURNA VILLAGE IN UPPER EGYPT

In 1946, the architect Hassan Fathy (1900–89; fig. 1) was commissioned by the Egyptian government to plan and build a new village for the inhabitants of Old Gournā, who for generations had lived directly above the rock-hewn tombs in the cemetery of Thebes on the western mountain side of the Nile, near Luxor (fig. 2). The purpose of the project was to put an end to the villagers' age-old livelihood of robbing antiquities from the Pharaonic tombs and offering them up for sale to archaeologists, tourists, and anyone else who set store by these treasures.

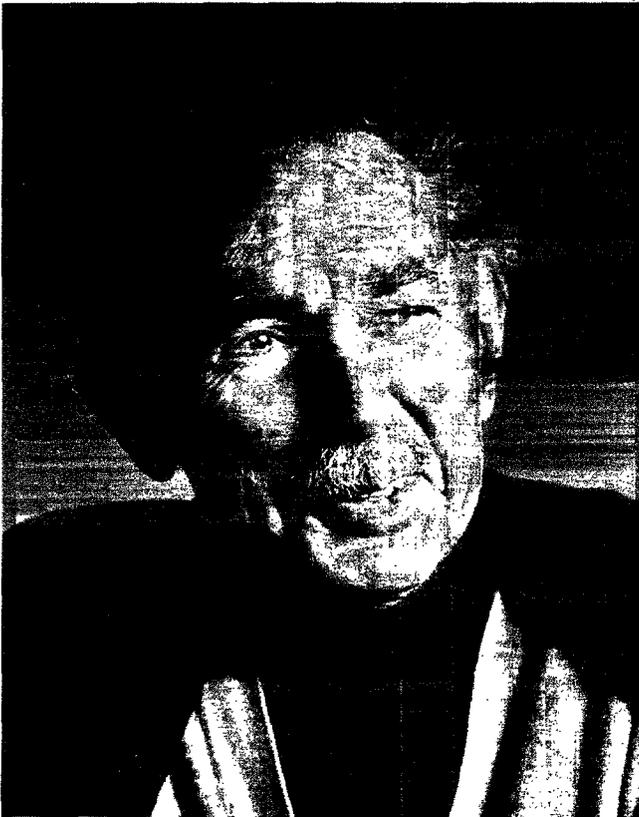


Fig. 1. Hassan Fathy in 1984. (Photo: Christopher Little/Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Geneva)

The planning and building of the new village took about three years; when it was finished art historians, anthropologists, and sociologists, mainly in the West, extolled the inventiveness of Fathy's design and his extraordinary sensitivity to climatic problems, local materials, and traditional Islamic architecture. The villagers on the mountain, however, sullenly resisted the government's offer to relocate them and would not consent to move to Fathy's model village.

Official reports and articles published in Egypt and in the West, as well as the book written by the architect himself in 1969, *Architecture for the Poor*,¹ ascribed the refusal of the Gournā community to red tape, failure to supply alternative sources of income, and other problems,² and presented a one-sided view, largely in the form of value judgments that did not reflect the open and more especially the hidden conflicts between the authorities and the villagers.

The case of New Gournā, ostensibly a story about the social cohesion of a community of villager grave robbers refusing to give up a lucrative livelihood and holding their own against the establishment's professed endeavor to effect a major improvement in

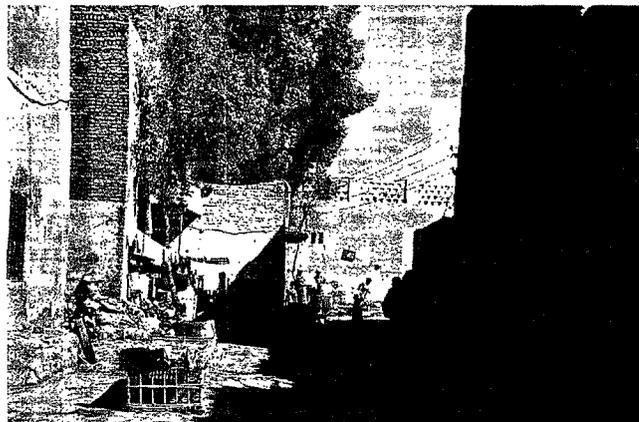


Fig. 2. Typical street in Gournā. (Photo: Hasan-Uddin Khan)

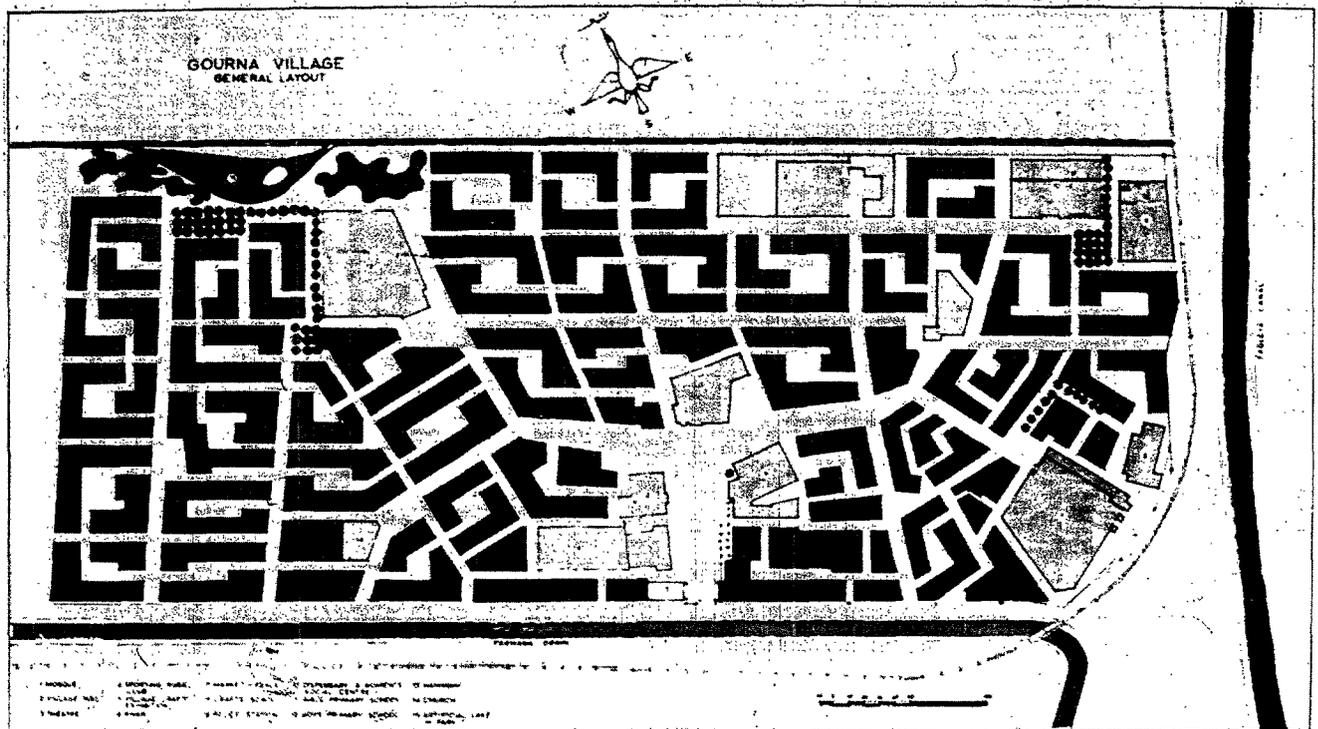


Fig. 3. New Gourna Village. General plan. (Plan: courtesy Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Geneva)

their lives encapsulates another story, another field of significance, which raises questions about the ability of visual representation—an architectural project, in this instance—to reconstruct and preserve an authentic culture. Here we will deal with the question whether Hassan Fathy's model village, universally acknowledged to be a masterly reconstruction of an authentic experience³ from the strictly architectural point of view, was genuinely attuned to the mental state and life patterns of the population for which it was planned.

On the face of things, the answer is yes. In his design Fathy stayed close to the Nubian tradition, using mud brick, its characteristic building material, Pharaonic architectonic elements,⁴ such as unsupported arches and vaults; and, in particular, upholding the traditional values of Islam, answering the fundamental and all-encompassing need for observance of the Muslim mores, and demonstrating coherence between structural and sociological needs.

The underlying organizational principle of Fathy's plan is a physical manifestation of the balancing of the needs of the Islamic social system, with its clear separation of private life, as reflected in the tradi-

tional roles of men and women, from participation in the economic and religious life of the community. Throughout the project, the architect was guided by this paradigm of seclusion versus exposure, as conveyed by the three-tiered hierarchy of spaces—public, semi-public, and private—in the village structure (fig. 3).⁵

The public space was composed of the main street, the central square, and the buildings opening onto it: a khan, a mosque, a theater, a village hall, etc. The streets were wide, well lit and airy, and allowed for an easy flow of traffic (fig. 4). The semi-public space consisted of narrow, intimate, shaded lanes winding their way towards the small squares at the center of clusters of houses linked by extended family relations (*badana*)⁶ (fig. 5). The private space took the form of a building with a central open courtyard, enclosed by a fence, modeled on the *qa'a*, the medieval Cairo dwelling.⁷

The public space was designed for the men, the private space for the women, the family, and the livestock. The semi-public space linked the two. The private space spilled into the semi-public space on



Fig. 4. New Gournā Village. Central square. (Photo: Chant Avedissian/Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Geneva)



Fig. 5. New Gournā Village. Cluster of houses inhabited by related families (*badana*). (Photo: courtesy Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Geneva)

festive and solemn occasions; it could also be used for storage, etc. Women could walk around freely in this precinct; it was off-limits to strangers.

Fathy's village plan, a replica of the medieval Muslim city, was directly modeled on Cairo. Incidentally, in 1987, forty years after the planning of New Gournā village, the anthropologist Janet L. Abu-Lughod attacked Western scholars for "imposing" on the medieval Muslim city plan a grid of streets meeting in the center and thus representing the ideal of cosmic order embodied in the Western city plan. The Muslim city or village plan in contrast, Abu-Lughod maintained, must be coherently structured on the social concepts of Islam.⁸ As we have seen, Hassan

Fathy had already set out to implement those concepts in the 1940's.

Ten years after the village was built, the Egyptian writer and journalist Fathi Ghanim (b. 1923) published a novella, his first work of fiction. In it he questions the architect's project (the designer is referred to throughout simply as "the engineer," without a specific name) and reexamines the concept of authenticity and its representation in art (i.e., architecture) and literature.

Fathy's novella, *al-Jabal* (The Mountain),⁹ was based on the author's own experiences in the late 1940's, while serving as superintendent of investigations in the Egyptian Ministry of Education. In it, the author-narrator is dispatched by the authorities to find out why the Gournā inhabitants had refused to move to their new model village. He does so through an account by the architect and the reactions of two Gournā elders, the traditional Egyptian village leader (*'umdah*), and Hussein 'Ali. The story is presented through the eyes of the narrator. At the end of the inquiry, the narrator returns to Cairo and resigns from his post. The investigation file remains empty. The author, like the architect, had come to the mountain as an emissary of the authorities. He, too, is an intellectual, a university graduate, a Cairene, a representative, in this context, of high culture, of progress, of enlightenment. However, over the course of his journey to the mountain, he undergoes a profound change in attitude. Unfolding the story of the conflict between the Gournā villagers and the architect, he gives a detailed account of their way of life, portraying them as poor, ignorant, shrewd but loyal, simple, genial and warm—authentic Egyptians:

In the pale light after sunset, I saw on the horizon the massive silhouettes of two groups of figures, men and women, separate and at a distance from one another, all squatting on the sands. I clearly distinguished the two silhouettes and could not believe my eyes. They are relieving themselves; they are using their mountain privies. I couldn't restrain myself and asked the *'umdah*: "umdah, what are they doing?" And the *'umdah* answered simply: "Come, my son, let us join them and have a good time." (pp. 81-82)

In other words, the reality of the architect-planned village is confronted with a fictional reality that seeks to undermine the premise of Hassan Fathy's quasi-authentic ideas, which the author regards as half-baked fantasies about authenticity, originating in

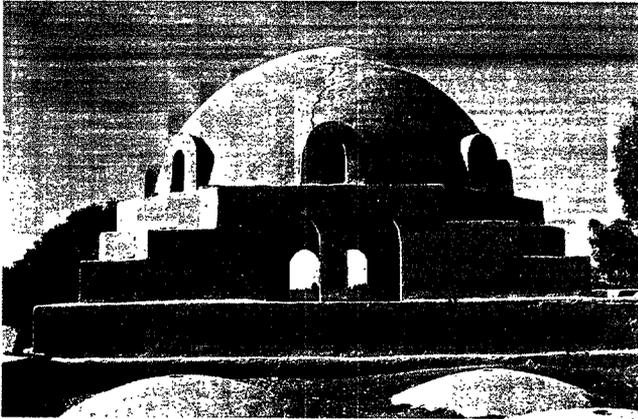


Fig. 6. New Gournia Village. Dome of mosque, exterior view. (Photo: Hasan-Uddin Khan)

a Western concept of the welfare and comfort of the individual tacked onto the local tradition. "A wide chasm," Fathi Ghanim maintains, "divides a crude, primitive and awkward humanity from a prosperous culture, superficial and restless. . . . The mountain villagers are humane; the city dwellers are hollow and lacking in feeling" (p. 95).

This duality is intriguingly exposed in the element of the dome. Hassan Fathy uses this architectonic component in a variety of ways. On the functional level, he tops all the village houses with domes as a means of regulating the temperature and ventilating the houses of the New Gournia village, in combination with traditional ventilation methods such as the *claustrum*, the *malqaf*, and the *mashrabiyya*.¹⁰ In this way, he attempts to solve problems pertaining to the flow of hot and cold air; shading of sun-drenched roofs; calculation of the amount of radiation on a given convex surface, air holes, and so forth.

On the aesthetic level, to avoid a monotonous, standardized appearance, Fathy joins to the domes and vaults on the roof a square, gallery-like space which casts shade on the opposite dome. Here the architect juxtaposes rows of simple circles and squares, creating an attractive silhouette of forms carrying on a "dialogue" and emphasizing the undulating skyline of the dwelling houses rather than the uniform building materials.

He uses the dome for illumination, especially in the mosque (figs. 6-7), where windows inserted along the sides of the dome as well as on the drum and between the squinches, as in the Mamluk domes of Cairo, focus the penetrating rays of light on elements

of special importance. Another function of light, as Fathy explains in his book, is "to make a building that should have that sober and calm air that leads to quiet meditation and prayer."¹¹ In medieval architecture, light, in addition to being perceived as a symbol of divine unity, also served a decorative function in shaping and modulating architectural ornamentation.¹²

On the symbolic-iconographic level, Fathy drew inspiration from Mamluk and Ottoman Cairo, and especially from the Suhaymi and Jamal al-Din al-Dhahabi houses, both of which are still extant.¹³ Technically the domes are connected to the buildings by means of squinches, both in Cairo (fig. 8) and in Fathy's buildings (especially in the mosque; see fig. 9). But the most interesting aspect of his use of the dome is the cosmic significance he attaches to it:

... it certainly gave a symbolic value to the house, which was considered to be a model or microcosm of the universe. In fact, the metaphor was extended further to the eight sides of the octagon that supports the squinches, a dome symbolizing the sky; these eight sides were held to represent the eight angels who support the throne of God.¹⁴

The narrator of *al-Jabal* tells us that the Old Gournia villagers do not understand the architect's extended use of the dome, "When the lorry reached the hillside, we saw before us the caves dotting the slope and the lone dome of a tomb. Probably the tomb of a sheikh gracing the al-Gournia village" (pp. 53-54). And further:

His wife joined the conversation. I was struck by her aesthetic critique of the engineering of the houses of the model village. She's not happy about the domes the architect superimposed on the buildings since, in her view, only the tomb of a holy man is topped with a dome—but that's a tomb! Why does the architect insist on housing them in graves? She's not dead yet, so why does she have to enter a house with a dome. No, she'll stay right here and go on living in her cave. If the government wants to move her to the engineer's house, it can take her corpse after she dies and bury it in one of the houses. She won't object to the model village being used as a cemetery for the mountain villagers. (p. 67)

Finally, the story views the dome from another, unexpected, if not entirely astonishing, angle, when a Frenchwoman (the onetime mistress of Auguste Ro-

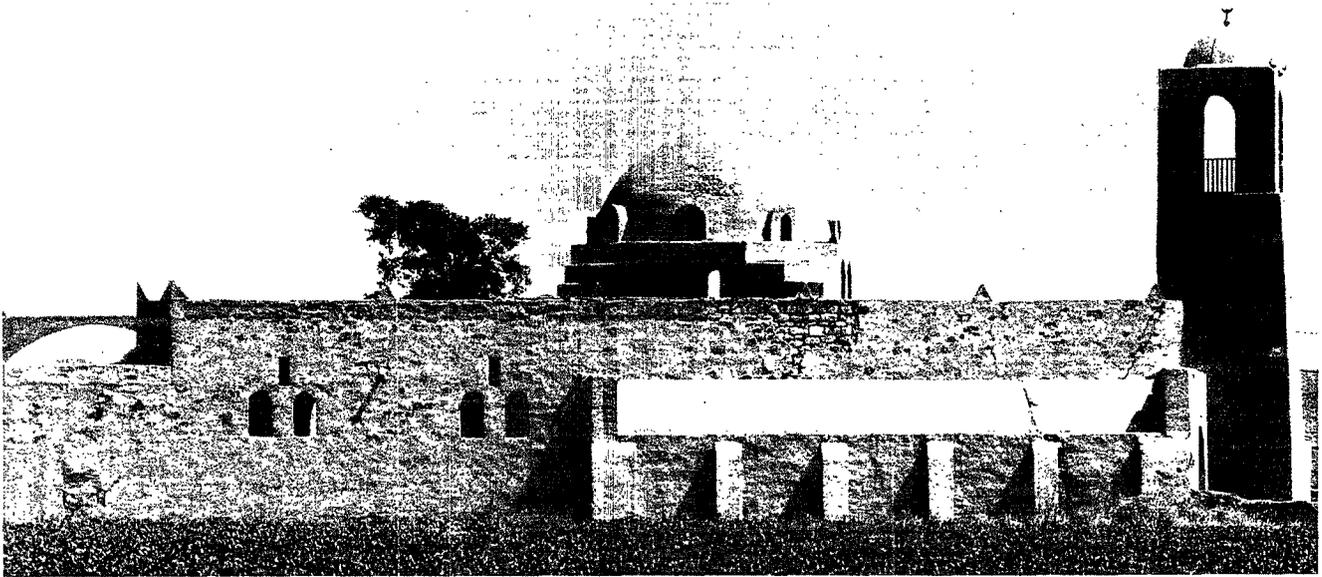


Fig. 7. The mosque. South façade. (Photo: Christopher Little/Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Geneva)

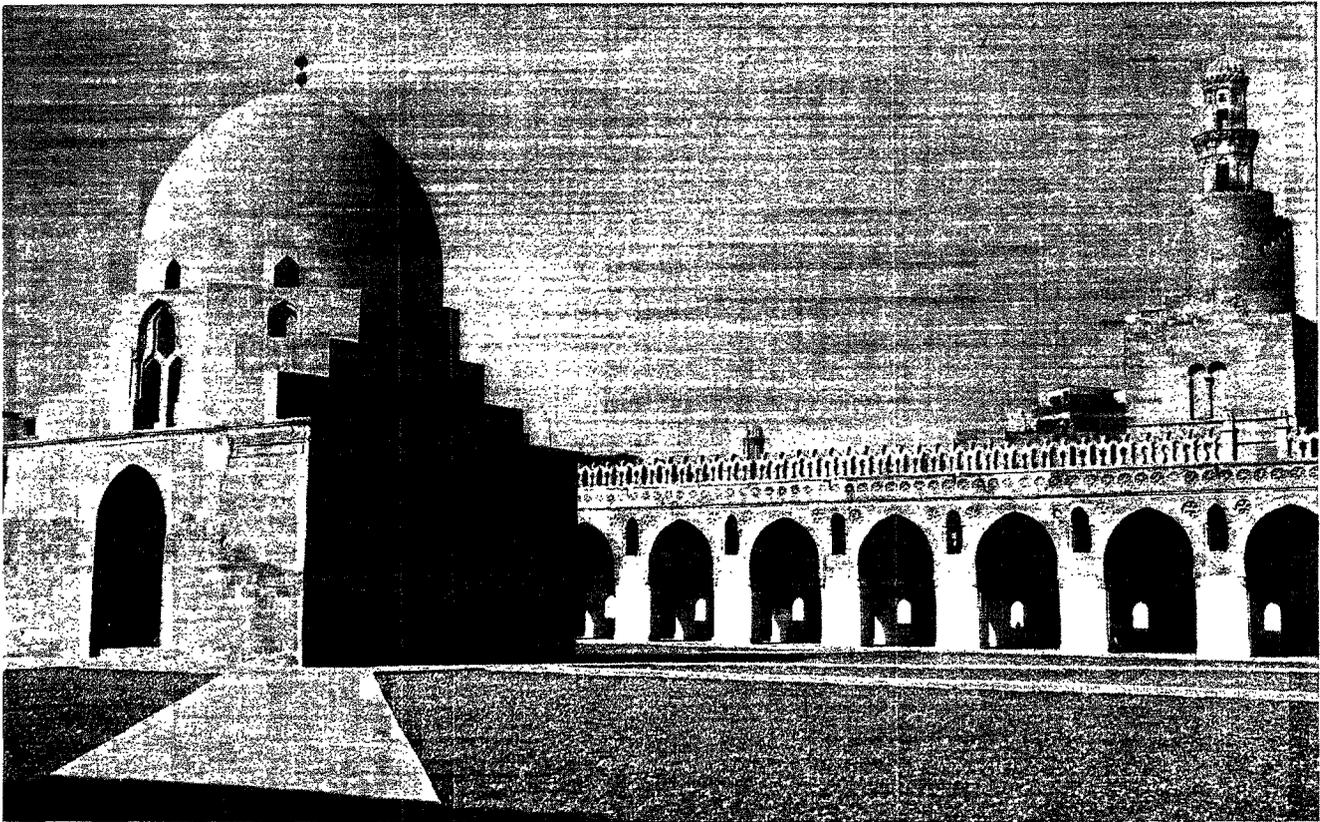


Fig. 8. Cairo. Mamluk dome of ablution fountain (13th century) in the courtyard of the Mosque of Ibn Tulun. (Photo: Hasan-Uddin Khan)

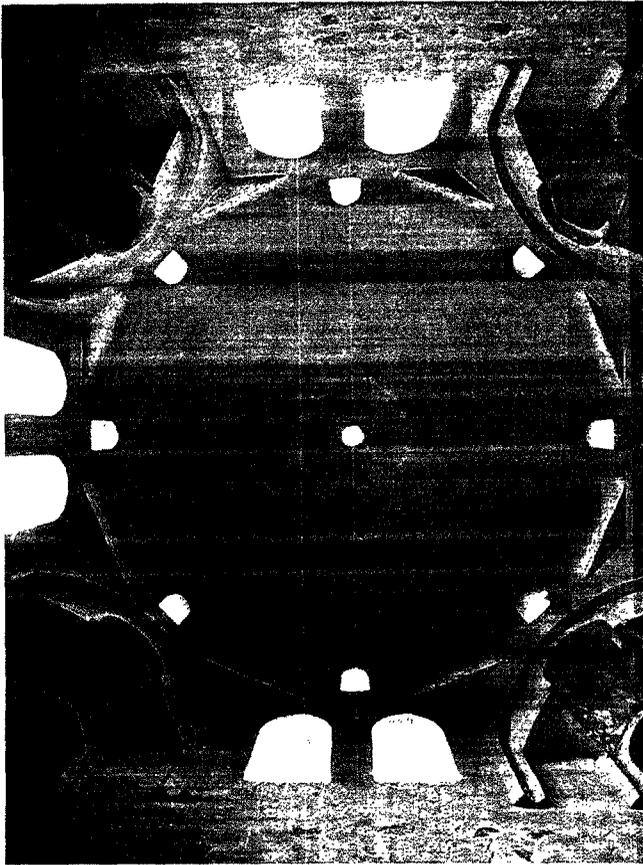


Fig. 9. New Gournia Village. Dome of mosque, interior view. (Photo: Chant Avedissian/Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Geneva)

din), who is the architect's guest, meets the narrator in the prospective village and argues in defense of its planner: "He's a great artist; look at this house, did you see the domed ceilings of the rooms? Did you notice the windows . . . you won't see anything like them anywhere else in the world. It's all so Egyptian. You Egyptians should all live in houses like that. You're wrong in saying that you imitate us" (p. 32). This last argument, of course, raises the problem of the biased outlook of Westerners, as indeed it was raised by the author, and adds to the story of the village a hidden dimension of cultural values and codes that fall beyond the scope of this discussion.¹⁵

The points outlined above provoke the following questions: Is it at all possible to detach the dome from the archaic symbolic conventions that adhere to it—for example, by using it as a means of ventilation? This question is further complicated by the fact that Fathy also uses the dome to establish a link to Mam-

luk Egypt, thus adopting its medieval forms and significance. More specifically, could the architect really expect to integrate the shaykh's domed tomb, the ultimate signifier of popular Muslim culture—although it had been censored by orthodox Islam as a deviation from the norm—with the needs of the model village? The question demonstrates that the tension between different interpretations of visual-artistic symbolism—the dome, in this particular instance—accentuates the problem of the multivalence of artistic representation and brings up the larger question of the ability of any artistic representation to reconstruct a culture. But beyond these theoretical issues, the story of the dome, the planned village, and the author's journey to the mountain addresses real social tensions: between progress and tradition, between civilization and nature, and especially between a paternalistic experience and the authenticity and integrity of the village population.

From the outset, Hassan Fathy planned and formulated his ideas for the village on the basis of two concepts which put him in the position of the "knowing mind": one was the effort to cultivate and educate the fellah, rather blatantly expressed in the architect's desire "to build a village where the fellaheen would follow the way of life that I would like them to."¹⁶ The second was to inculcate concepts of beauty and aesthetics, more apologetically formulated: "If the architect is to offer any excuse for his arrogance in dictating what his fellow men shall live in, that excuse must be that he can surround them with beauty."¹⁷ These concepts found expression in his design of the dwelling in the model village (figs. 10-11): "The household services—cooking, washing, and latrines—were grouped around the central courtyard, which had a loggia where the family could eat. Also on the ground floor were the guest reception room and the cattlesheds. Upstairs were the bedroom and the fuel storage bin."¹⁸ In other words, Fathy proposed a distinct and functional spatial organization.

This defined and specific division of space is striking, since, unlike the European dwelling, the interior spaces of the rural Muslim house—in Egypt, in our case—are not organized according to functional criteria. They are, rather, polyvalent spaces, viewed through a social, hierarchical, gender-defined, seasonal prism. It is not by chance that the rooms of these traditional dwellings are devoid of furniture such as beds, chairs, and tables, which tend to define a space and its function.¹⁹



Fig. 10. New Gournia Village. Courtyard of a house. (Photo: Christopher Little/Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Geneva)

We can learn more about the broader implications of an imposed architectural definition of domestic spaces in Upper Egypt from a concrete “historic memory” of the period of the khedives in the early nineteenth century, who commissioned French engineers to plan model villages (for example, Kafar al-Zayat in the Nile Delta, built in 1846). In their plans for these buildings, the engineers divided the space up in meticulously measured units to allow the authorities to calculate the number of inhabitants and livestock that each unit could contain. However, the fellahs, like the Old Gournia villagers, refused to move to the villages assigned to them.

Henry Ayrout, a Jesuit stationed in rural Egypt in the first part of the twentieth century, admits that these organized village houses had the appearance

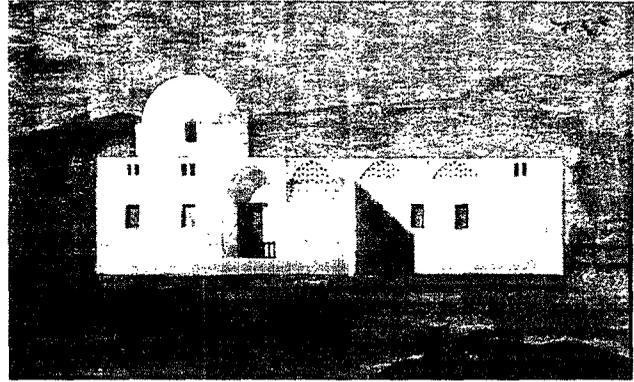


Fig. 11. Idealized courtyard house façade. Gouache by Hassan Fathy, ca. 1950. (Courtesy Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Geneva)

of a “geometric jail,” and asks rhetorically, “Is the fellah to be fitted to the house or the house to the fellah?”²⁰ The answer was clear: the villagers were to be educated before the houses would be allotted to them. “We must work from the inside out,” he concludes.

However, anthropologists and scholars like Timothy Mitchell²¹ and Michael Gilson,²² claiming objectivity by virtue of their scholarly vocation, regarded the building of these villages essentially as just another manifestation of colonial domination of the Egyptian peasant population, undertaken in order “to supervise, inscribe and enforce . . . the life of the village and peasant,” and to exploit the fellahs as a controlled work force producing cotton for the European market, and as army recruits.

We do not know if Fathy was aware of this anthropological analysis of the model villages of the nineteenth century, or whether he, too, consciously sought to supervise and dominate the Old Gournia villagers by the rational design of the new dwelling units he planned for them. Several questions arise, however: did the architect really believe that he could forge a new culture by means of a building project? Did he presume to sell the villagers an aesthetic? Did he not realize the impossibility of creating a new village that did not respect the bonds linking the inhabitants to their fathers and grandfathers, to their “old village square,” as it were—to their past? Did it not occur to him that it might be wiser to preserve something of the accustomed clutter of forms dotting the mountainside in the Old Gournia village? Was he not rather more concerned with constructing a monument to his own talent and imagination than with the real

needs of the villagers, bolstering his creative ego at the cost of obliterating their identity?

Unlike the architect, the author of *al-Jabal* reads the situation with great sensitivity. The houses he describes are always those of Westerners or westernized locals, and they are described according to the functional definition of the spatial units: the prosecutor from Cairo, for example (who uses Atkinson's aftershave and wears woollens of exclusive British make), lives in a house with two rooms and a dark kitchen, one room occupied by a bed (p. 22). The house of the French-speaking engineer (i.e., the architect) boasts both a toilet and a bathroom, as well as a spare room for guests (p. 37). The furniture is sometimes described using attributes that turn an ordinary object into the conveyor of a message: the engineer's table is laid (p. 37); the house of the *khawajaiyya*, the Frenchwoman from Paris, contains a "stylish settee" (p. 109), etc. The description of these fictional houses is in striking contrast to that of the actual dwellings of the mountain villagers:

His cave was unadorned by paintings, but the walls were decorated with attractive and colorful wickerwork plates. I saw his wife, dressed in black, and beside her a young girl wearing an embroidered *gallabiyeh*, standing outside the cave and watching us in silence. It contained nothing but those wickerwork plates, a stone bed above the stove, a basket in a corner of the room and a large wooden chest of uncertain origin. My hosts and myself sat on this chest while his wife prepared tea. I was startled by the sight of a little boy who entered the room accompanied by a donkey which was greeted with much ado. The girl tied the donkey in a corner of the cave and hurried to bring it fodder. The donkey was like a member of the family, living among them, eating and sleeping under the same roof. My host looked from the donkey to me and started to explain that the engineer of the model village wanted them to keep the animals away from their houses. He added excitedly, "All of us sleep with one eye open and keep the other on the donkey or cow. How could I sleep with the donkey far away? Who'd watch over him? The engineer? By the life of Allah! The donkey would have been stolen the very first night." (pp. 66-67)

The cave is not divided into defined spaces: the stone bed by the stove is not just for sleeping, but serves as well for storing cooking utensils, and the wooden chest doubles as a bench if the need arises. But above all, the cave dwellers and their animals live side by side. The principles of sanitation, hygiene, and "aesthet-

ics" set down by the engineer in his house plan that led him to separate the bedrooms from the cattle sheds²³ are challenged by the villagers' solidarity, their faithfulness to nature, and their integrity. This dichotomy between "house" and "cave" is accentuated by the words of the character who represents the author, Hussein 'Ali:

He jumps to his feet to remove himself from the strange house. What does he care about houses? He is a cave dweller. Strange things go on in those houses. The *khawajaiyya*, the engineer, and the tourists live in houses. He detests the ceiling, the walls, the chair, and the table with a pile of money on it, the bed in the other room. He must stop the dizzy feeling in his head, must go back to the mountain. (pp. 125-26)

Eventually Fathi Ghanim arrives at a conclusion not unlike Mitchell's criticism of the aforementioned "model villages" built a hundred years earlier: "The government acts like a police force seeking to evict them forcibly from their caves to get rid of them . . . its only concern is how to control them" (p. 156).

This discussion has pondered the definition of cultural authenticity through artistic representation—an architectural project for a model village—and a narrative about a fact-finding expedition to an autochthonous mountain community. However, this is not only a theoretical, and certainly not an essentially phenomenological, discussion. It is anchored in a specific cultural context and forms an inseparable part of the historical, political, and cultural history of twentieth-century Egypt. For what, in the final analysis, does Islamic culture have to do with such concepts as authenticity, the fellah villager viewed as a "noble savage," and "model villages" designed for "individual comfort"—those household words of Western discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is well known that for 1,200 years, Islamic art and literature dealt exclusively with the *khassa*, i.e., with rulers and courtiers, and that it was only in the twentieth century that the needs of the *'amma*, the common people, the people of the Rif and the fellahs, were addressed as well.

Preoccupation with the fellah is one manifestation of the attempt to define the Egyptian national identity in the course of the twentieth century, and especially in the wake of the individual's crumbling identification with the local structure (the village, the ethnic community, the nuclear and extended fami-

ly), which traditionally afforded him a sense of belonging and pride. During World War I there were already contacts between the rural and urban population, when the rulers "descended to the people" of Egypt to solicit political support, and the fellah became the object of sociopolitical agreements and figured in fiction and in the writings of political leaders and intellectuals (see, for example, Salame Musa and Ahmad Amin) as "the crowning glory and secret weapon of Egypt, like a sole truth in the world remaining unchanged for six thousand years."²⁴ But the real change in the way the intelligentsia referred to the Egyptian Rif and its problems—a change which also brought far-reaching agrarian reforms in its wake—came with the 1952 July Revolution of the Free Officers led by Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser. Those who wanted to bring a new message to Egypt inscribed on their banners the liberation of the fellahs from the landowners and from their ignorance, declaring, "The village is Egypt, with its Arab population, its roots and its simplicity." In other words, the people are the fellahs, the indigenous population of the Nile Valley, rather than the educated, Westernized citizens: the "Egyptification" of Egypt will be effected not only through the expulsion of foreigners and the eradication of their world view but, first and foremost, through the fellah. For the fellah represents the people—the primeval, the authentic, the intuitive and spontaneous.

The narrative about the confrontation between the architect and the author on all its levels tries to furnish a combined artistic and documentary vision of the basic components of Egyptian society and how it grapples with problems of identity. However, it seems to me that this apparent confrontation is nothing but a mirror image of that same paternalistic, even "Orientalist," pretentiousness that divulges the otherness of both the architect and the author. For if the architect in effect silences the voice of the mountain villagers, the author aims—but in effect fails—to claim it.

The architect designs the village according to the rules and to his own "enlightened and reformist" outlook. The author, in turn, tries to present the crude reality of the Egyptian village as authentically as possible, interspersing literary Arabic with the colloquialisms of Sa'id, the dialect of Upper Egypt spoken by the Old Gourna villagers.²⁵ He is not entirely authentic from the perspective of literary criticism, however: in point of fact, he largely complies with the pro-

grammatic genre of the village novel, fifty-two of which were written in Egypt between the 1920's and the 1980's.²⁶ That appears to be the reason why Fathi Ghanim employs the dialectic of a "foregone conclusion" to the resistance of the Old Gourna villagers, assuming the role of a social theoretician of the reformist school. Furthermore, the use of fiction sublimates the social issue. To my mind, the device of presenting all the characters through the eyes of the protagonist, who combines the roles of narrator and omniscient author, obscures or misses the real drama unfolding between the villagers and the architect.

The author returns to Cairo in the end. "I am not one with the village and it only remains for me to go back to the world I came from. The truths of my weariness, of the pain in my ribs, and my declining strength wail within me. I must return to my world" (p. 153). The author may have undertaken an imaginary journey, but the Old Gourna villagers—the authentic, intuitive mountain dwellers, the proud object of the revolution—remain where and as they were, poor, ignorant, and trapped in their fate.

Incidentally, I recently learned from the Internet that the Government of Egypt intends to build a new village for the Gourna population.

Tel Aviv University

Tel Aviv, Israel

NOTES

Author's note: I wish to thank my colleagues Dr. Tamar Ya'acobi, Professor Israel Gershoni, Dr. Ami Elad, and Dr. Moshe Zuckermann for the many discussions that led to my writing this paper.

1. Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt* (Chicago, 1973). The book was originally published in Cairo in 1969 under the title, *Gourna: A Tale of Two Villages*; see also *Construire avec le peuple: histoire d'un village d'Égypte, Gourna*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1977–78).
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40; and see also James Steele, *Hassan Fathy* (London, 1985), pp. 74–75.
3. See, e.g., the list of awards bestowed on him, in J. M. Richards, Ismail Serageldin, Darl Rastorfer, *Hassan Fathy* (London, 1985), p. 170.
4. Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, pp. 5–7, 33, 41, 55; Steele, *Hassan Fathy*, pp. 45–47.
5. *Ibid.*, fig. 66, plan of New Gourna. The village was initially planned for about 900 families, but Fathy only managed to complete dwelling units for some 130 families, covering one fifth of the designated area.
6. See Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, p. 58, and Guillermo Maluenda Felipe pich-Aguilera, "Hassan Fathy—Beyond the

- Nile," *Mimar* 33 (1989): 36. The *badana* is a tightly knit unit of ten to twenty extended families with a strong sense of group allegiance. They live in adjoining houses sharing a communal way of life. In a certain sense the *badana* constitutes the basic socioeconomic unit of the peasant.
7. The *qa'a* is a reception hall, the principal structure of a Mamluk residence; see, for further explanation, Doris Behrens Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo, An Introduction* (Leiden, 1989), p. 35.
 8. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City—Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19 (1987): 155–76.
 9. Fathi Ghanim, *al-Jabal* (The Mountain) (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1965); first published in serial form in the weekly *Ruz-al-Yusuf* in 1958, then as a book in 1959.
 10. For Fathy's preoccupation with problems of ventilation, see his book, *Natural Energy and Vernacular Architecture: Principles and Examples with Reference to Hot Arid Climates* (Chicago and London, 1986). A *claustra* is a kind of mud-brick *mashrabiyya* acting as a natural air filter (Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, p. 36). For the way the *malqaf*, or air shaft, functioned, see David A. King, "Architecture and Astronomy: The Ventilators of Medieval Cairo and Their Secrets," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104 (1984): 97–133. King's observation that the type of *malqaf* prevalent in medieval Cairo is not seen at all in the twentieth century (pp. 99–100) highlights Fathy's programmatic use of medieval elements.
 11. Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, p. 74. It is also important to mention the structural nature of the dome, which was constructed without using scaffolding and was thus able to yield the needed span for the prayer hall—an inexpensive alternative to timber.
 12. Dalu Jones, "The Elements of Decoration: Surface, Patterns and Light," in George Michell, ed., *Architecture of the Islamic World* (London, 1978), p. 173.
 13. Caroline Williams, *Islamic Monuments in Cairo* (Cairo, 1993), points out that, despite the fact that the house of Gamal al-Din al-Dhahabi is an example of a seventeenth-century mansion, it was built in the Mamluk style (p. 161). The Suhaymi house was built in 1648 (see *ibid.*, pp. 199–202).
 14. Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, p. 57.
 15. For example, when the Westerner-foreigner not only equates the Oriental with the exotic but also seeks to perpetuate this quality. One instance of this phenomenon is the Frenchwoman, referred to as the *khwajaiyya*, who claims (through the author-narrator) that "she likes the primitive people and wants them to remain primitive so as not to become corrupted" (p. 36). The term *khwajaiyya* is used today in Egypt to refer to a European (*khwaja*). In Mamluk Egypt it referred to a pious functionary.
 16. Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, p. 1.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 72. It is of interest to note that Hassan Fathy studied in the Architecture Section of the School of Engineering at Giza, whose model curriculum was established and promoted by the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
 19. Guy T. Petherbridge, "The House and Society," in George Michell, ed., *Architecture of the Islamic World* (London, 1978), p. 199.
 20. Henry Habib Ayrou, *The Egyptian Peasant*, trans. John Alden Williams, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963; 1st ed. 1938), pp. 128–30.
 21. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 34–95. See also P. Bourdieu, "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed," in *Algeria 1960* (Paris, 1972; English trans., Cambridge, 1979), pp. 133–53.
 22. Michael Gilson, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Middle East* (London, 1990), pp. 164–91.
 23. See Fathy's disdainful and cynical remarks about the fellahs in his book: ". . . for he will say that if a baby dies he can make plenty more free but if a cow dies he must pay to replace it" (*Architecture for the Poor*, p. 92).
 24. I. Gershoni, *Egypt Between Distinctiveness and Unity: The Search for National Identity 1919–1948* [in Hebrew], pp. 179–80.
 25. Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Nature and Functionalization of the Language of Literature under Diglossia" [in Hebrew], *Hasifrut: Quarterly for the Study of Literature* 2 (1967–1971): 286–302 (Hebrew text); 443–46 (English summary).
 26. Ami Elad, "The Village Novel in Modern Egyptian Literature" [in Hebrew], Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1985, pp. 161–70; see also Ami Elad, "Ideology and Structure in Fathi Ghanim's *al-Jabal*," in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 20 (1990): 168–86.