

Hassan Fathy

Architecture
For the Poor

An Experiment in Rural Egypt

The University of Chicago Press

Chicago and London

Contents

Foreword by William R. Polk ix

Preface xv

1. Prelude: Dream and Reality 1

Paradise Lost: The Countryside 1

Mud Brick: Sole Hope for Rural Reconstruction 4

Mud for Roofing, Bahtim: Trial and Error 5

Nubia: Survival of an Ancient Technique of Vaulting 6

The Nubian Masons at Work: First Successes 8

Ezbet el Basry: Iblis in Ambush 12

A Tomb Robbery Begets a Pilot Housing Project 14

Birth of New Gurna: The Site 17

2. Chorale: Man, Society, and Technology 19

Architectural Character 19

The Process of Decision Making 21

Tradition's Role 24

Saving Individuality in the Village 27

Traditional Village Crafts Restored 35

The Use of Mud Brick an Economic Necessity 37

Reestablishment of the "Trinity": Owner, Architect, and
Craftsman 39

Vernacular Architecture of Old Gurna 41

Change with Constancy 43

Climate and Architecture 45

Orientation of Houses Determined Partly by Sun, Partly
by Wind 48

The Malkaf, or Wind Catch 49

Society and Architecture 50

Kinship Structure and Local Custom 54

Socioeconomic Considerations 59

vi Contents

Rural Crafts in Gournā	62
The Plan of New Gournā	69
Public Service Buildings and Amenities	73
The Peasant House	91
Combating Bilharzia	104
Gournā, A Pilot Project	113
The Cooperative System	119
In-Service Training	121
Gournā Not an End in Itself	127
A Stillborn Experiment, Mit-el-Nasara	130
National Program for Rural Reconstruction	134

3. Fugue: Architect, Peasant, and Bureaucrat 149

First Season: 1945-46	150
Second Season: 1946-47	163
Third Season: 1947-48	171

4. Finale: Gournā Dormant 183

An Architect in Search of a Patron	183
Slander Continues	187
Gournā Revisited	192
Gournā in Nabaroh	193

Appendix I: Cost Analysis of Labor and Rates of the Execution of Works 197

Cost Analysis of Materials and Labor Used in Gournā Village	198
Cost of Stone	201
Sand	205
Construction	205

Appendix II: In-Service Training 214

Appendix III: Organization of Work 216

Appendix IV: Foundations 221

Appendix V: Brick Making 224

Extract from Colonel Debes's Experiments 225

Extract from Dr. Mustapha Yehya's Experiments 226

**Appendix VI: Cost Analysis at the Moment when the Project
Was Handed Over to the Ministry of Social
Affairs 231**

Glossary 232

Illustrations following page 233