Misurata: A Market Town in Tripolitania

G.H.Blake

Research Paper Series No. 9 (1968)
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

Contents

Illustrations

Fruit and vegetable sellers on market day. The fish market (left) and covered fruit and vegetable market (right) can be seen.

Maidan Nasser on market day, showing the wool market and typical shops.

MISURATA: A MARKET TOWN IN TRIPOLITANIA

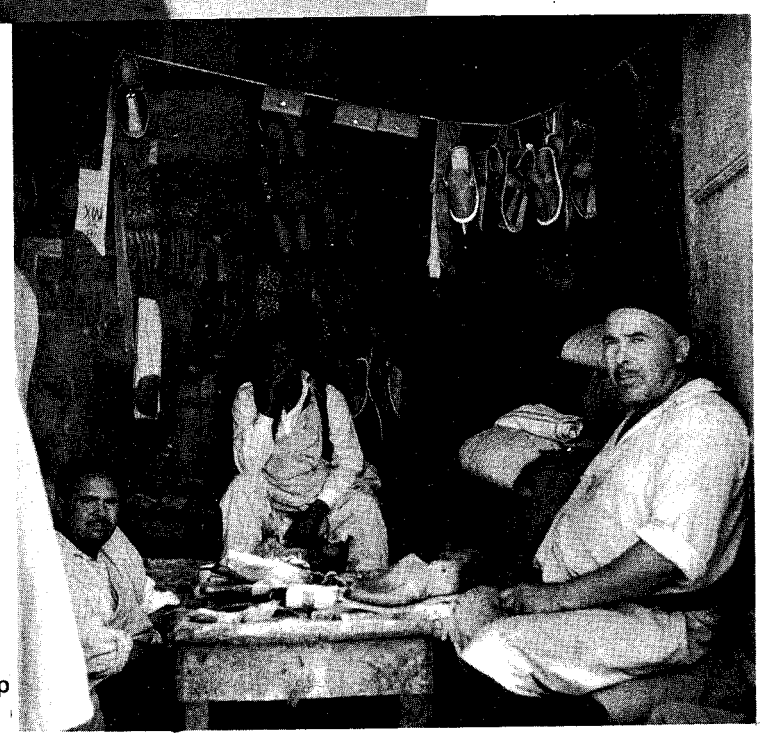
1. Introduction

The small towns of the Middle East and North Africa have received so little attention from geographers hitherto that there is a need for case-studies of this kind if only as prologomena for intensive future investigations. Several factors combined to permit little more than a superficial study of Misurata in the summer of 1966; the paucity of statistics, the lack of large scale maps and air photographs while fieldwork was being carried out, and above all the limited time available. In spite of these difficulties an attempt was made to examine the functions and morphology of a market town which is still strongly traditional in character, with a high proportion of the population deriving their living from the sale of goods and services in the market. Some of the results of this work are presented in the following pages. While there may not be much that is methodologically exciting, it is hoped that its publication will be fully justified by its timing, for in 1966 it was already clear that the cultural ethos and economic functions of Misurata are on the threshold of great changes.

Libya's immense oil revenues have touched every aspect of national life and in Misurata have resulted in a spate of public and private building which is beginning to transform the ancient skyline of minarets, palm trees and low, flat-roofed houses, bringing into being an essentially European-type architecture and ground plan. In the next few years the town will develop from being a regional market to a genuine regional centre with significant functions in serving through traffic. The projected North African highway will pass nearby; Casr Ahmed is to be revived as a naval and military base; and there are plans to develop and settle the vast ex-Italian estates to the south and west. The people of Misurata are famous for their commercial enterprise and will not be slow to make good use of the opportunities thus presented, just as they have been quick to establish light industries in response to the building boom.

The promise of rapid modernisation makes Misurata a town of particular interest since it epitomises the problems of renewal and development in larger cities of the Middle East which similarly posess the dual inheritance of Islamic and Western cultures. It remains to be seen whether the Master Plan of the town, now being prepared in Rome, will succeed in preserving what is good in the old while creating a town capable of discharging its ever-growing social and economic responsibilities to the surrounding region.

Shiara Jama Sheikh, looking east. Two-storey buildings (right) are rare in old Misurata.



A typical leatherworker's shop in Suk al Attar.

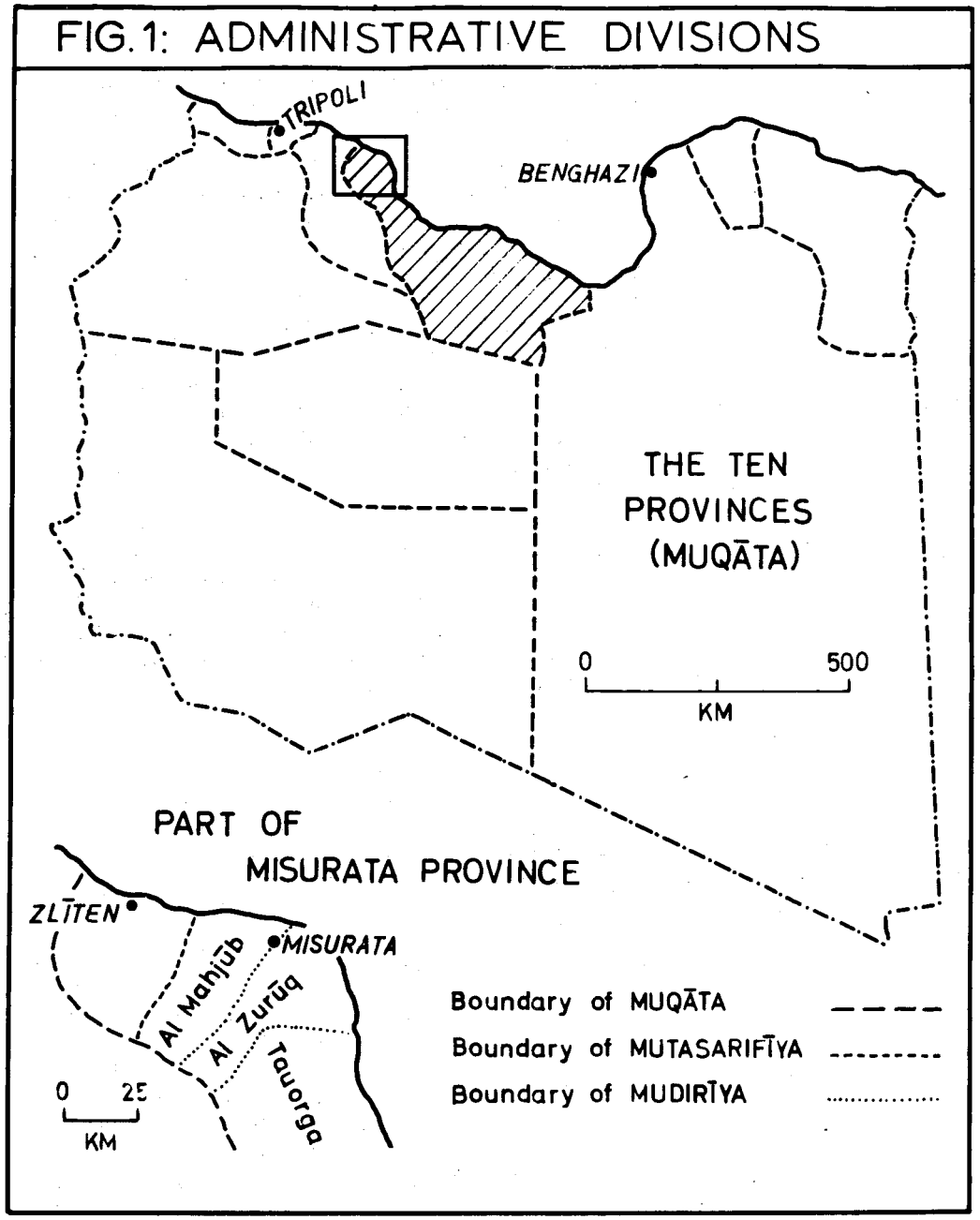
2. Site and Location

Misurata oasis is the easternmost of a series of coastal oases in Tripolitania which owe their existence to a phraetic water table which can be tapped by quite shallow wells. Although the coastal zone is relatively well watered, annual precipitation is generally too low and unreliable to sustain sedentary agriculture and, in areas where the phraetic table is absent or at great depth, permanent settlement has rarely occurred. The oasis itself occupies part of a Quaternary lowland with negligible diversification of relief. One must go twenty kilometres to the south-west to find hills of even 90 metres; elsewhere the topography is mostly subdued or totally flat. An impressive exception is the belt of coastal sand dunes, which rise to heights of over 30 metres, and in the case of one massive dune four kilometres north of Misurata to over 60 metres. The effects of the dune belt on the microclimate of Misurata require investigation but a subjective impression is that it moderates the beneficial effects of sea breezes by day. In other respects the climatic characteristics of Misurata are similar to neighbouring Homs and Zliten, all of them enjoying the stabilising effect of proximity to the sea both in the hottest month (August mean 32.2°C) and the coldest (January mean 12.5°C).

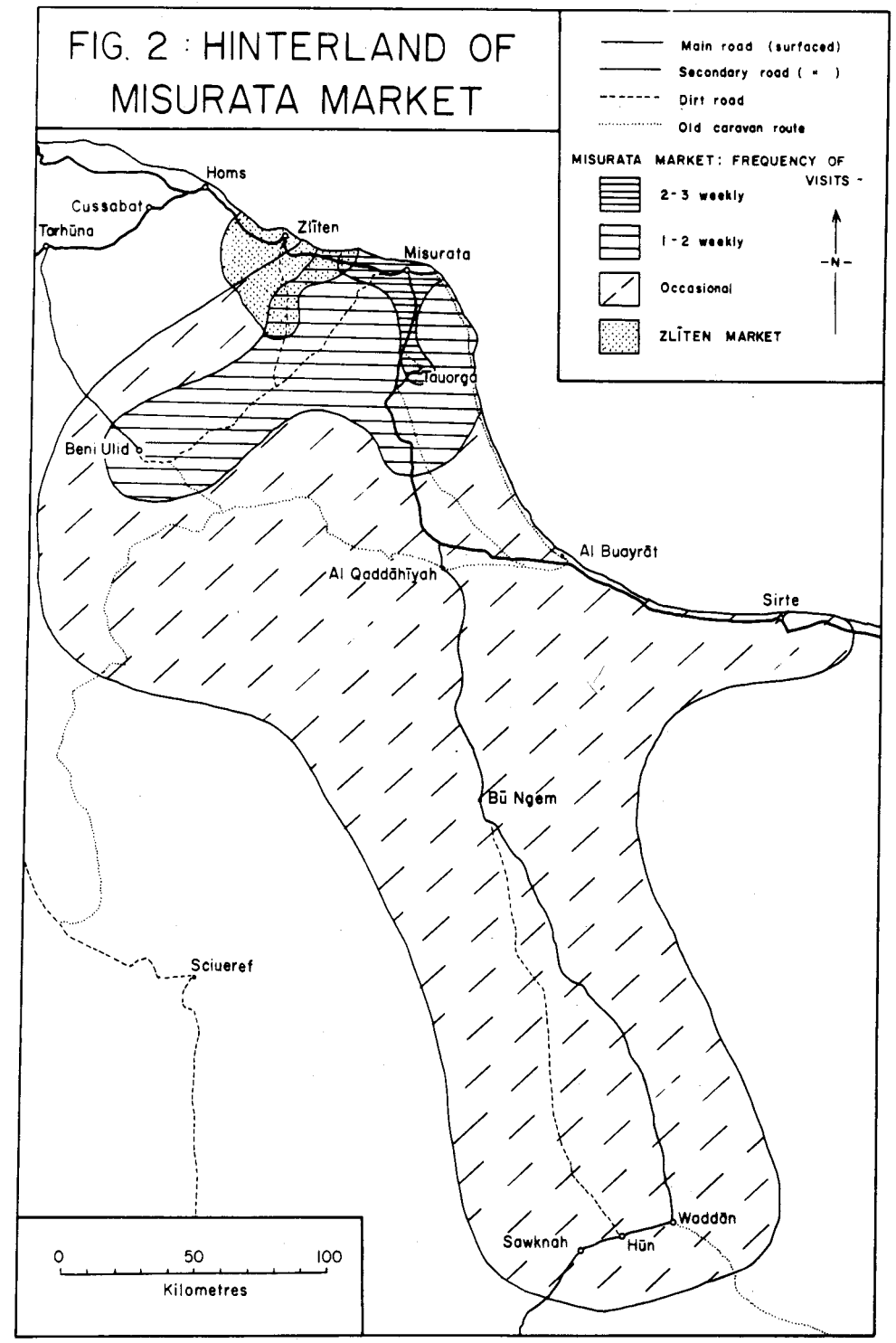
The present-day function of Misurata is primarily that of a market town both for the oasis of which it is the geographical centre and for an extensive region to the south and east.. (Fig. 2). Historically, its role as a local market was sometimes overshadowed by more sophisticated commercial activities associated with the caravan trade. The origins of this trade lie in the location of Misurata on the northern fringe of the Sahara Desert where caravan routes from the south and south-east made contact with the east-west coastal caravan route. The latter ran very close to the sea along the western edge of the Gulf of Sirte, thus avoiding the Tauorga Sebkha before passing westwards through Misurata oasis where fresh water was available from perennial wells. The extensive dune encroachment west of Misurata exerted a powerful influence on the alignment of the caravan route, forcing it inland through the heart of the oasis. Unlike the present Italian-built road the traditional route ran due west from Misurata until it reached the dune formation and then struck south-west along its margins. Indeed, a line drawn from Casr Ahmed avoiding the sebkha in the east and the dunes in the west inevitably passes near the site of Misurata.

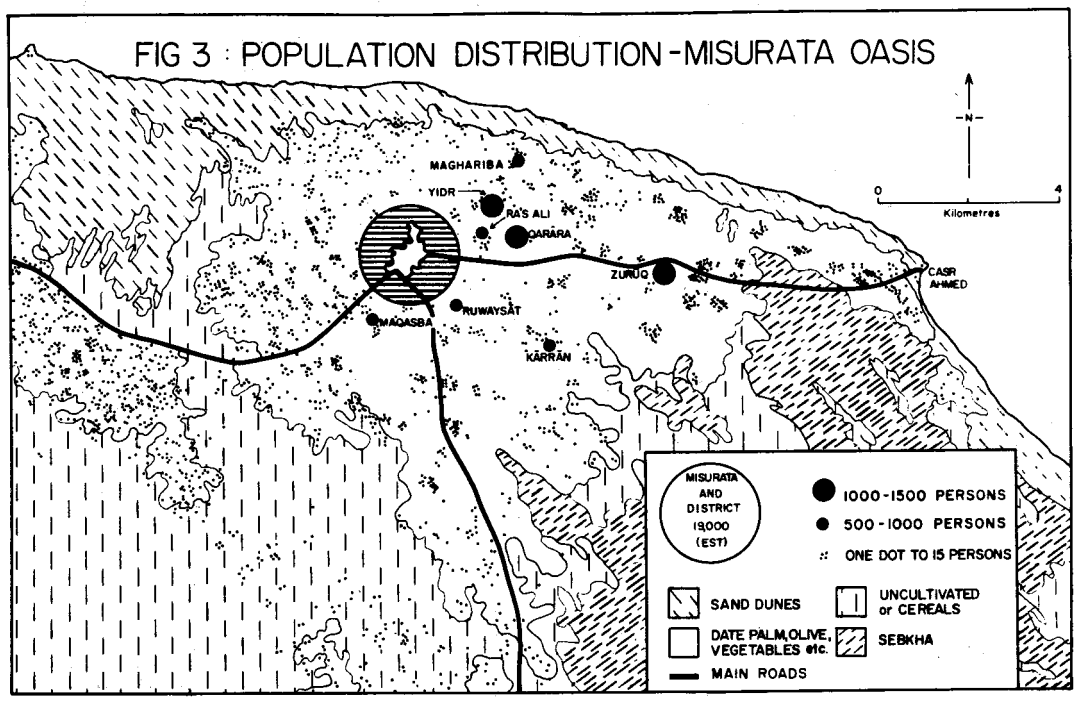
The prosperity of the town today depends largely upon the flow of goods to and from the surrounding countryside. The symbiosis of town and country is so manifest locally that the concept of Misurata as an urban entity is not always recognised. To the countryman 'Misurata' has a regional connotation sometimes wholly synonymous with the Mutasarifiya, but more often approximating to the hinterland of the market. The town itself on the other hand is frequently referred to simply as 'Suk' or market. Official statistics do not distinguish between Misurata town and the Mutasarifiya of the same name; thus the urban population of 19,000 (1966) quoted in this paper is no more than an informed guess. If correct it would mean that Misurata is the fourth or fifth largest town in Libya. The population of Misurata Mutasarifiya was officially put at 72,985 in 1965.

The locational advantages enjoyed by Misurata through the centuries both as a market centre and for entrepot trade still apply today though proximity to the sea is not important since Casr Ahmed is no longer used by shipping. The coastal caravan route has been replaced by a modern Italian road and the town stil offers goods and services to travellers between Tripoli, 220 kilometres away, and Benghazi 820 kilometres away. In terms of its function as a market, Misurata is not only situated somewhere near the geographical centre of its hinterland (Fig. 3) but also draws



people in comparable numbers from all directions. It has in fact achieved the status of the largest and most frequented market in Eastern Tripolitania partly because of the absence of any serious rivals. The significance of its location as an exchange centre within the oasis is discussed more fully below, but it is worth mentioning here that until recent times when sedentarisation has become almost complete, Misurata stood more or less between those tribes to the west who practised some cultivation and those to the east who did not. The quality and quantity of groundwater, the better soils, and even the skill of the people as arable farmers today all strongly suggest

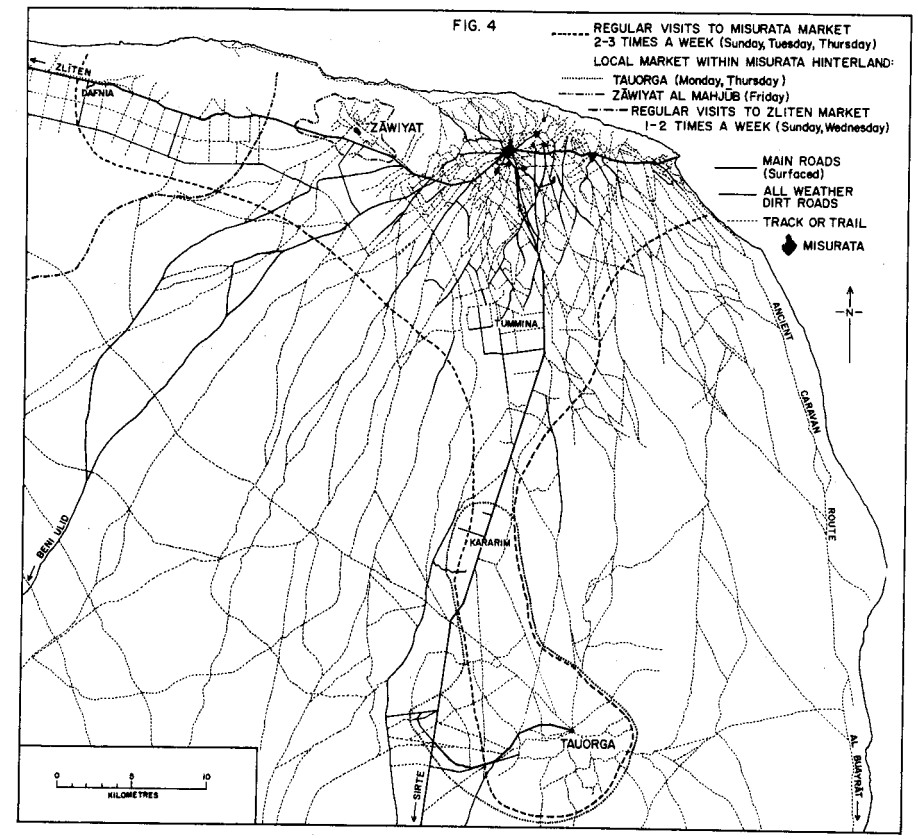




that cultivation took place west of Misurata while to the east pastoralism was dominant. It may be relevant that even today in the west footpaths seem to converge on the twon whereas to the east they are unmistakably desert-oriented, (Fig. 4). Moreover, Agostini classified several of the tribes immediately surrounding Misurata and to the west as Cologhli (i.e. of mixed blood but chiefly Turkish and Berber) and many of those in the south east and east as 'original' Arabs and Berbers, which strengthens the view of Misurata as an exchange centre between chiefly pastoral and chiefly arable economies.

The universal availability of groundwater resources throughout the oasis of Misurata is reflected in the remarkable dispersion of population (Fig. 3). The map includes a few farms in the south established by the Italians after their discovery of artesian water in the 1930's but these do not obscure older patterns within the oasis itself. The utility of the phraetic water table diminishes towards the south east where the aquifer comes into contact with the water body of the sebkha and is therefore somewhat salty. Traces of salt are found in well water throughout the oasis but in the west salinity is appreciably lower and yields of water higher, which accounts for the greater density of population west of Misurata and around Zawiyat al Mahjub(2). Misurata is sited at a point where supplies of water were moderate both in yield and quality, so that it would be wrong to conclude that its origins and survival owe much to particular advantages in this respect. In recent years the surface layers have become exhausted and since 1960 the town's water supply has been piped from seven artesian wells fourteen kilometres away at Sikt.

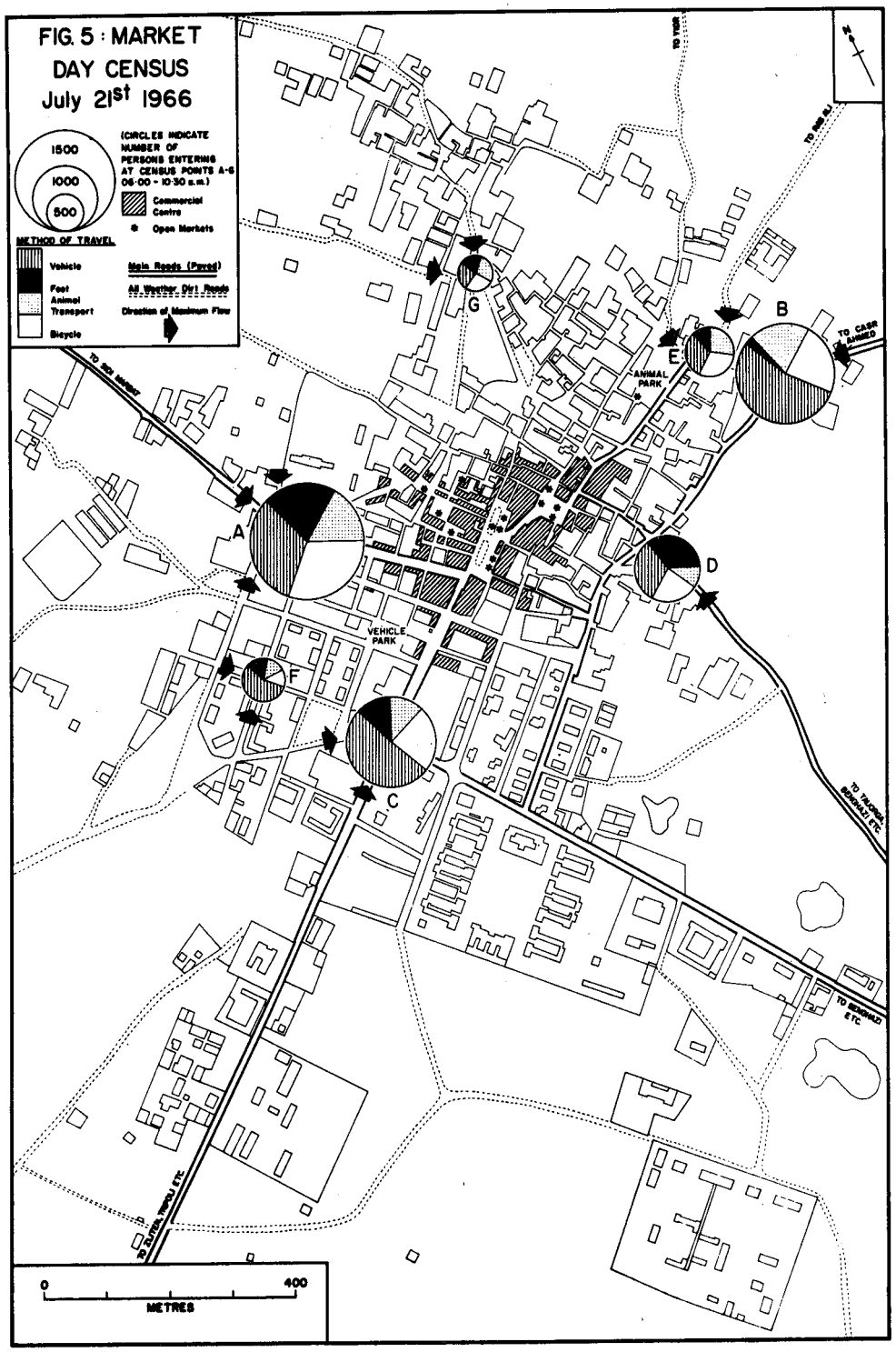
The recent expansion of Misurata and the prospect of further development have highlighted the precarious state of the town's water supply. The wells at Sikt yield 1,200 cubic metres a day, sufficient for a population of 24,000 assuming an average per capita consumption of 50 litres(3). This means that at most another 5,000 inhabitants can be supplied from existing sources. Additional water could be piped either from Tauorga or Dafnia but in both cases large quantities are earmarked for irrigation projects. Thus the allocation of water resources must take a com-



prehensive view of development in the region.

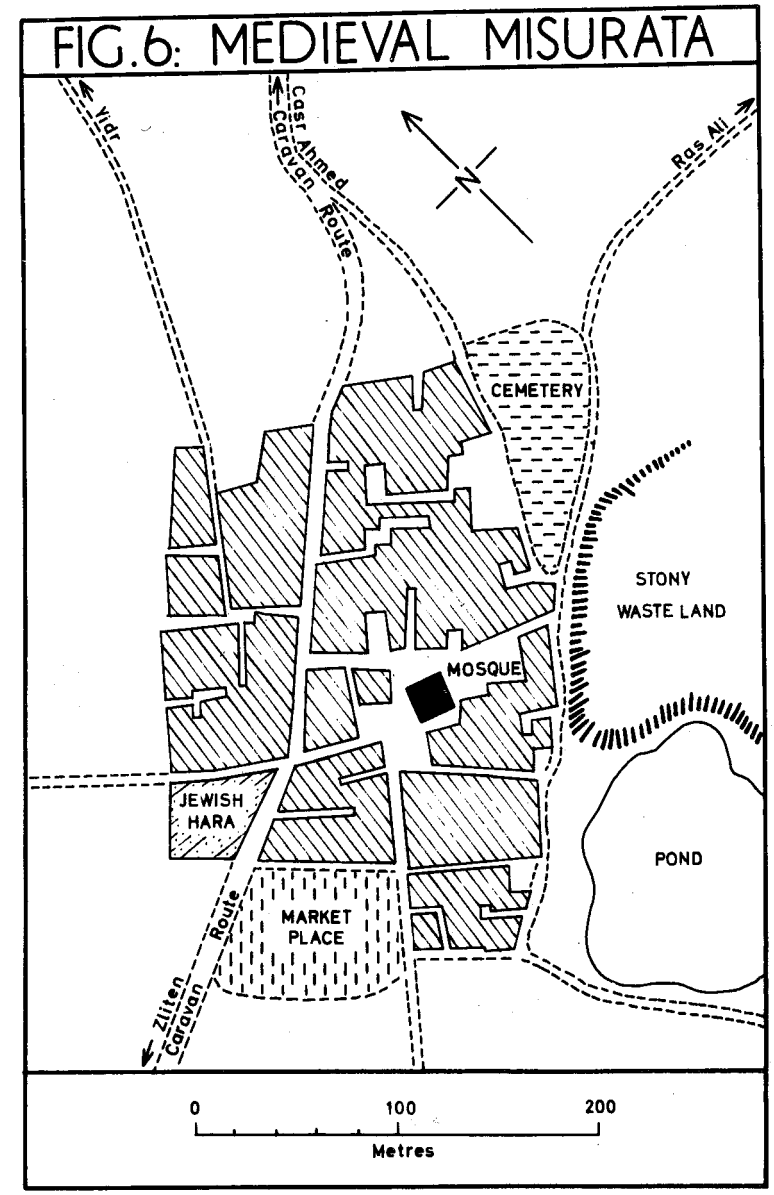
It is said that most of the oldest houses in Misurata posessed their own wells, but it proved impossible to check how far this was the case. These wells are not likely to have tapped the phraetic layer but small 'perched' water tables resting on hard pan at depths of perhaps twelve to fifteen metres. Perched tables of this kind are fairly common in Misurata oasis and can provide useful supplies of household water particularly in winter. Their occurrence would undoubtedly have influenced the siting of individual groups of houses and this could explain why much of old Misurata appears to have been built in a hollow which renders it liable to flooding once or twice during the rainy season from October to January in most years.

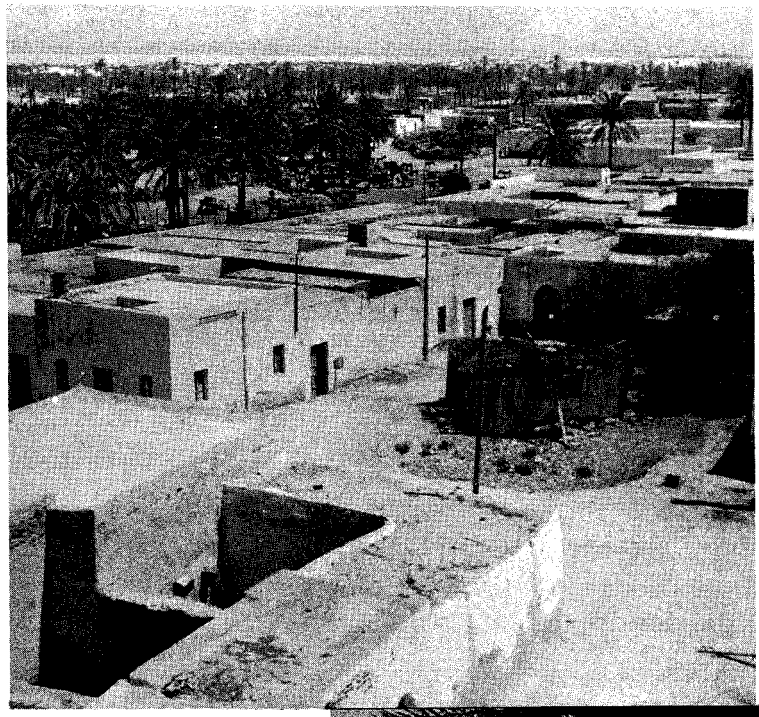
Although the location of Misurata has advantages, its site leaves much to be desired. No contour map has been produced, but it can be observed that the highest ground lies to the north and north-east, falling away gradually towards the south east, so that much of the old town is on low ground, the lowest part being in the vicinity of the markets where the elevation is less than five metres. Outside the town in the south east is a large pond with an elevation of about one metre above sea level. After heavy rains extensive areas of the old town are flooded sometimes to a depth of half a metre or more, (Fig. 14). The worst flood of recent years was in October 1963 when it took two weeks to pump the floodwater away from parts of the town. The flood problem is made worse by the nature and alignment of the roads into Misurata, particularly from the north. Farmers like to erect small earthdyke boundaries between their fields and the roads, causing rainwater to flow along ditch-formed routes into the town. A British firm is at present preparing to construct a



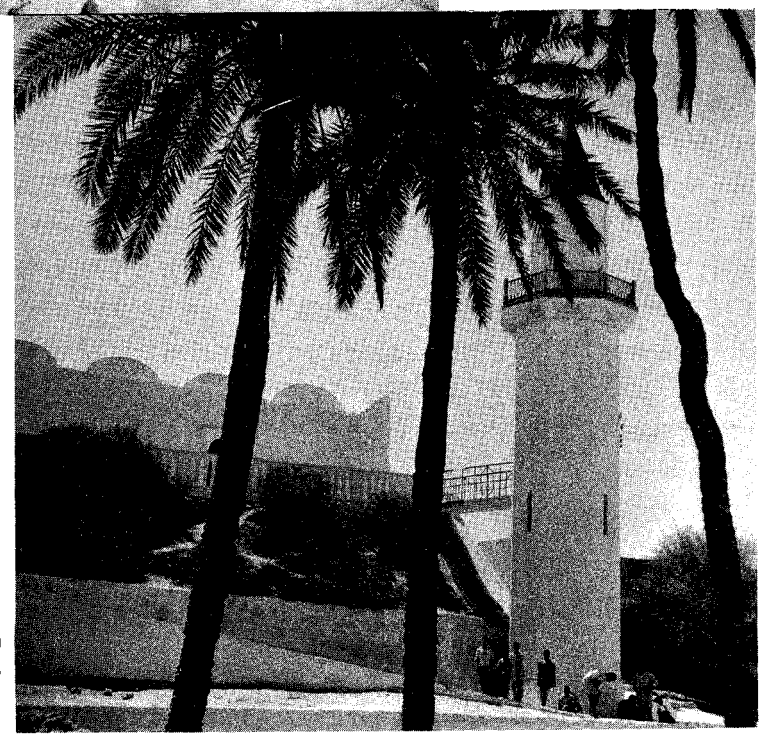
sewage system for Misurata; one obvious difficulty to be overcome is disposal of waste water since the dune belt affords no natural outlet to the sea.

While houses in the old town may have been sited in a natural shallow basin to facilitate well sinking, the market area has undoubtedly been lowered over the years by the combined action of animals and men breaking down the soil and rendering is susceptible to deflation. When the Beecheys passed through Misurata in 1821 they noted that the market place 'like most others in this country' was half occupied by a pool of 'green and stinking water'(4). The pool of water has gone, but the problem of flooding awaits the installation of a proper drainage system.





Part of old Misurata looking north-east from mosque Al Ali. Coastal sand-dunes can be seen in the distance.



View of the Fourteenth Century mosque Al Ali. The minaret is a more recent addition.

3. History and Morphology

Berber cultivators almost certainly maintained some form of settlement near the present city of Misurata before the first Arab invasions of 642-643 A. D. Four centuries later (1051-1055) when the Beni Hilal and Beni Suleim tribes swept into Tripolitania sedentary agriculture was certainly well established in the coastal oases. How many of these were abandoned as a result of the invasion is uncertain but small groups of Arabo-Berber cultivators apparently survived here and there while true sedentary farming was widely replaced by a form of semi-nomadism in which the coastal oases were utilised for cereal cultivation while the peripheral pastures to the south became the mainstay of the tribal economy. According to local tradition Misurata was a focal point for semi-nomadic tribes during their brief summer sojourn in the oasis, and a permanent community of cultivators may have existed to supply the tribesmen with food and other goods which they were unable to produce for themselves[5]. And this core of permanent population may have been located on or near a through route of growing importance.

From the time of the Hilalian conquest until roughly the end of the nineteenth century the oasis of Misurata was an entegral part of a pastoral economy, sedentary cultivation being practised only by a minority. Permanent settlement of the Cabila was prevented both by common land ownership and by frequent periods of insecurity which discouraged investment in wells, houses and trees. For eight hundred years or so Misurata existed in an economic environment of semi-nomadism, and although it benefitted from the seasonal ebb and flow of the tribes, summer markets alone would probably never have attracted merchants engaged in non-agricultural activities but for the emergence of other trading opportunities.

It seems probable that Misurata began to engage in inter-regional trade as early as the Twelfth Century. Tombstones with Hebrew inscriptions dating from 1142 have been found near Misurata,[6] and the existence of a Jewish community strongly suggests non-agricultural activity of some kind. The oldest Jewish community may have been in Yidr, a village less than two kilometres away whose history and functions have always been bound up with neighbouring Misurata. By about 1380 Misurata had a Moslem poulation sufficiently large to justify the construction of a mosque capable of accommodating seventy men at prayer, (Plate 3b). During the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries the town became of increasing importance as a commercial centre because of its proximity to the coast at a natural focus of caravan routes. Under its Medieval name of Thubactis, Misurata enjoyed flourishing trade relations with Venice and Genoa and several North African ports. Wool, olive oil and salt were exported through the port at Casr Ahmed and silk and general merchandise were imported for barter as far away as Ethiopia and Numidia[7]. At the beginning of the Sixteenth Century Leo Africanus noted that the 'province of Mesarata was excessively rich on account of...the attention bestowed upon commerce,'[8] possibly suggesting that townsmen and tribesmen cooperated in promoting commerce. If so, this confirms a local tradition that cabila around Misurata and along the coast took to the protection of caravans as a source of revenue when access to certain traditional pastures was denied them by other groups at about this time[9]. Security of transit along the coast must have brought trade to Thubactis which might otherwise have by-passed it in favour of shorter desert routes.

Medieval Misurata cannot be reconstructed with any certainty, (Fig. 6). Dwelling houses and market place would have been within muezzin - call of the town's oldest mosque, with the caravan route passing near the market. The north-east to south-west orientation of the main road through Misurata today is clearly related to the alignment of the old caravan route from Casr Ahmed to the west. The oldest market in the town is thought to have been on the site of the present live-

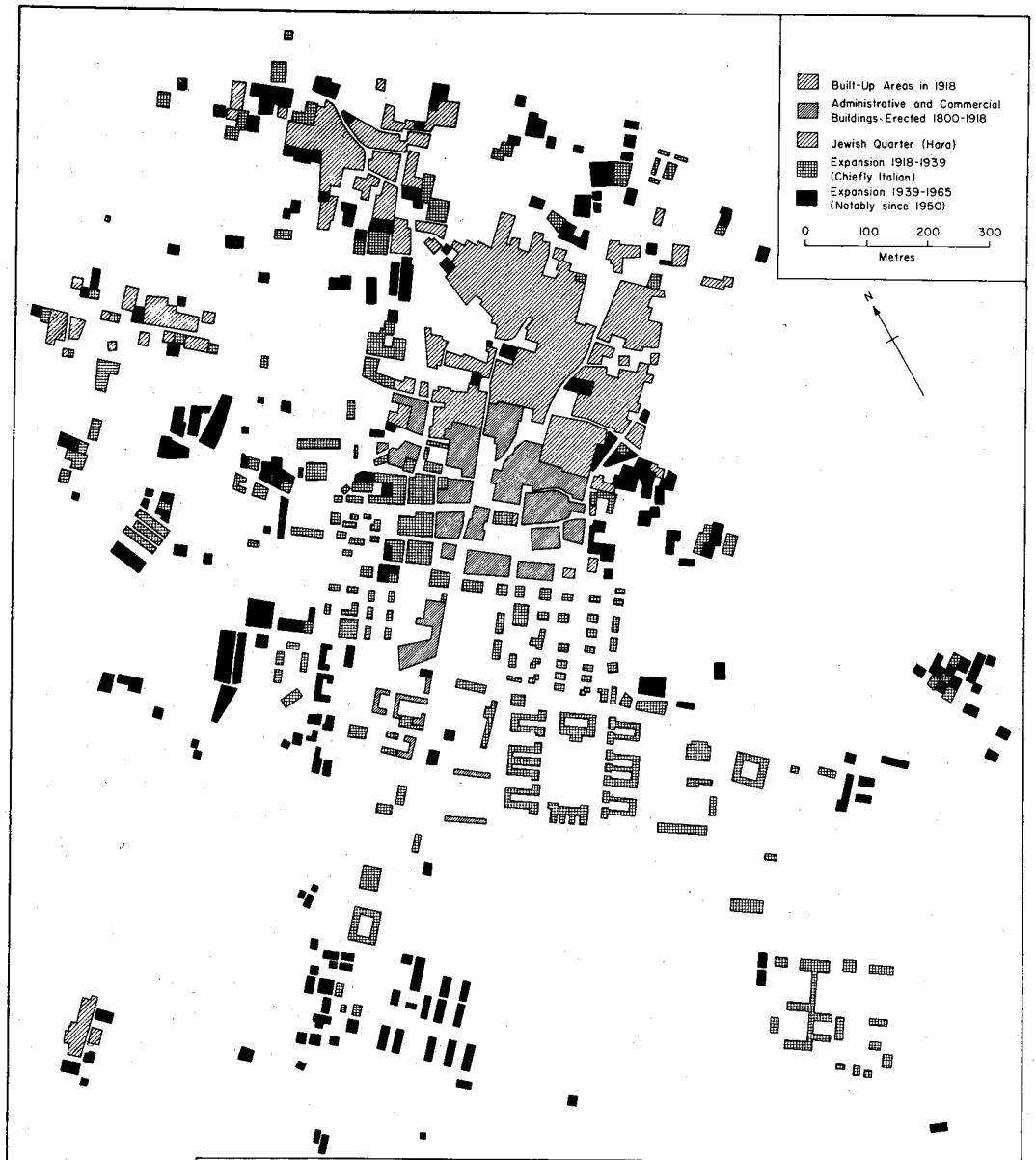


FIG. 7 : EXPANSION OF MISURATA 1918-1966

stock market, which in medieval times may well have been on the fringe of the town just as markets are frequently found outside villages and small towns in Tripolitania today. It has been mentioned that there was a Jewish community in Misurata in the Twelfth Century, and the Jewish hara would have been a distinct though not necessarily physically isolated part of the Medieval town, located perhaps west of the caravan route, thus forming a nucleus for the hara of modern times (Fig. 7). Expansion of the medieval town was limited in the south-east by a cemetery and pond, and between them by an area of stony ground whose slightly greater elevation would have discouraged well sinking.

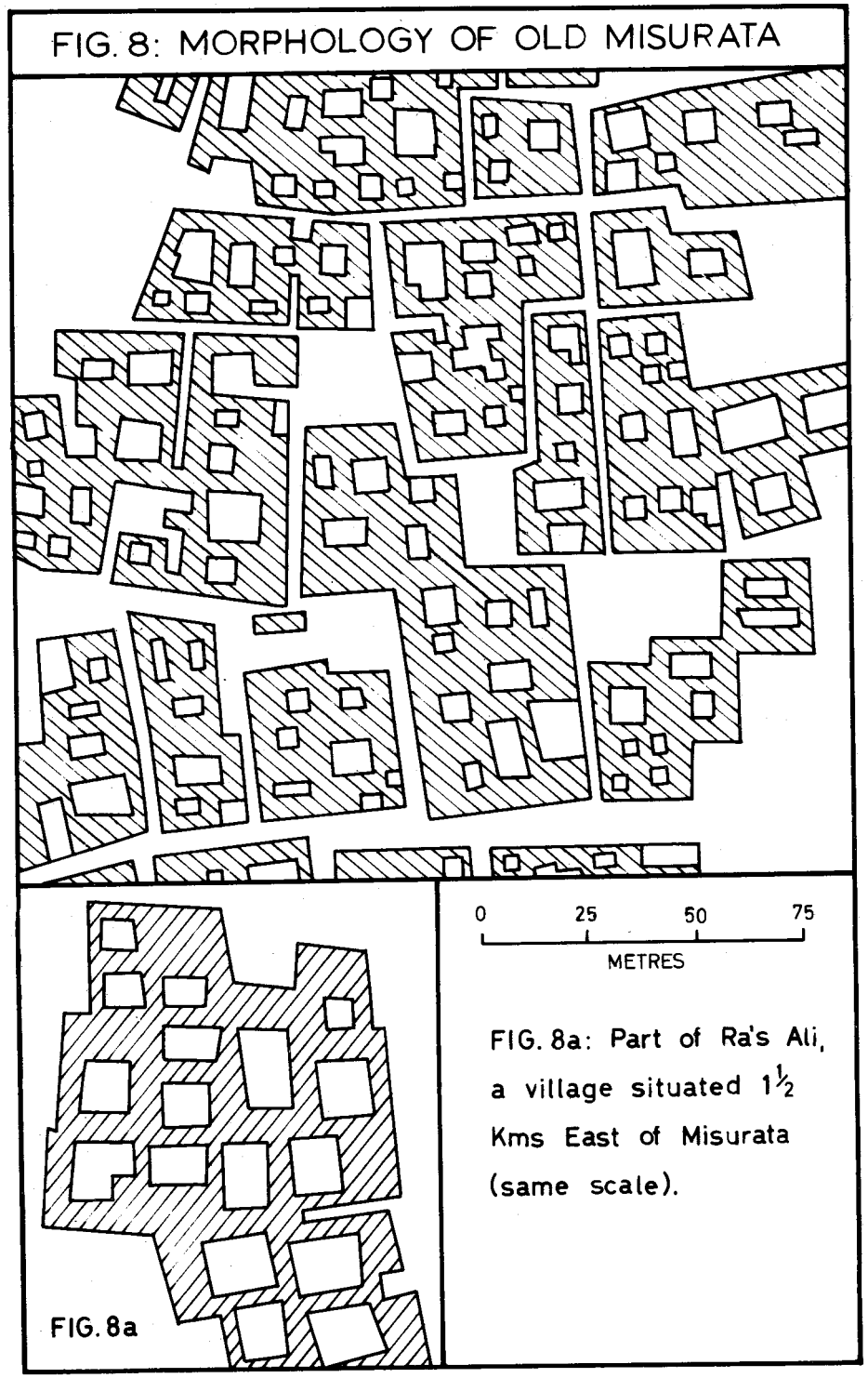
By comparison with the great trading centres of the Mediterranean world, Thubactis was neither wealthy nor powerful and its population probably never exceeded two thousand. Its commercial prosperity depended upon transit trade, and when the fortunes of Venice and other trading partners began to decline, Misurata reverted to the obscurity of an oasis market, so much so that when the Turkish occupation of Tripolitania occurred in 1565 Homs rather than Misurata was made the headquarters of a Mutasarifiya. There is even evidence that a small garrison was posted in neighbouring Yidr, though it probably exercised little control over the local cabila. For some time after the Turkish occupation economic life in Misurata sank to such a low ebb that it seems to have been known merely as a stopping place for pilgrims, a function said to be commemorated in the town's alternative name of 'Matin' which was commonly used until the last century(10). During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries however there was a revival of trans-Saharan trade, particularly in slaves, and Misurata found itself highly favoured by merchants as a collecting centre since Turkish control was less effective than nearer Tripoli and taxation more easily evaded. The presence of a class of moneyed merchants stimulated the growth of local craft industries, notably the manufacture of 'farsha' and 'Kalim' carpets for which the town is now well known.

Why Casr Ahmed did not expand at the expense of Misurata at this time requires some explanation. It had all the advantages of being a port astride the coastal caravan route, on a most agreeable site by the sea. Possibly much of the commercial activity attributed to Misurata was actually carried on in Casr Ahmed and for a spell it may have been found there. The most likely explanation lies in the location factors which enabled Misurata to weather the changing fortunes of external trade through the continuation of seasonal and weekly markets for local produce, while Casr Ahmed had no productive hinterland of its own.

Although Casr Ahmed never recovered its medieval importance it was often used by ships in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, again bringing revenue to Misurata as a caravan staging post. The British diplomat Simon Lucas for example, described a journey he made in 1789 in the company of merchants who found it cheaper to send their merchandise by sea to Casr Ahmed than to hire a caravan. Once in Misurata however they hired numerous camels, Lucas himself being told that he would need 120 to achieve his journey to the interior.(11)

With the final decline of Saharan trade in the latter half of the nineteenth century Misurata began to lose its importance as a caravan centre. Instead the market became increasingly important as sedentarisation gained momentum and regular sale of crops began to supersede the seasonal exchange of goods. This great social and economic revolution resulted in a shift of emphasis from a predominantly pastoral economy to a predominantly arable economy and in the production of a greater variety of crops. Methods of cultivation were still far from intensive and the use of irrigation was limited compared with today. Many cultivators continued to work land far to the south of the oasis just as some still do, but conditions were being created in which Misurata would become primarily a regional market dependent upon wealth generated locally rather than on transit trade. The last camel caravan reached Misurata in about 1911.

It would be wrong to imagine that Misurata became the unchallenged regional market from the nineteenth century. For reasons which are obscure the Turkish administration apparently deliberately encouraged the market at Yidr. Yidr market lay nearly one kilometre north of the historic caravan route which passed directly through Misurata, but in spite of this disadvantage it constituted a serious rival to its neighbour. Until the early years of this century markets were held twice weekly (Tuesdays and Thursdays) in Yidr, and once a week in Misurata (Sundays), which may be evidence of the economic ascendency of Yidr at some time in the past. The



area occupied by the market place and attendant shops can still be traced near Yidr and its impressive size suggests a market of considerable importance. The supremacy of Misurata in the long run was pretty well guaranteed when the Karamanlis made it the headquarters of a Mutasarifiya in the nineteenth century, but it was the Italians who delivered the final blow to Yidr by introducing three market days a week in Misurata as part of their master plan for the region.

When considering the expansion which took place during the Turkish hegemony (1565-1911) a distinction must be made between building which was essentially Arab and local in character, and building whose nature and inspiration was derived from the Turkish and Karamanli administrations. Most of the former was domestic building north and west of the pre-Turkish town, and the latter commercial and administrative building to the south and south-west. (Fig. 7)

The sequence of expansion north and north-west in Turkish times was subject to three major controls; the site of a cemetery; the advantage of low land for well digging; and the existence of the small village of Maqawba north of the town. The earliest building was probably in the vicinity of the mosque Al Shaikh and then in a block east of the cemetery, outwards towards Maqawba. In the nineteenth century Misurata and Maqawba were still separate but subsequent growth of both town and village has resulted in the physical and functional assimilation of Maqawba.

During the nineteenth century a spate of building took place south west of the existing town. Misurata's growing function as a regional market led to the development of several streets of shops and workshops around Maidan Ghardabiya, and to the construction of a covered fruit and vegetable market. Building adjacent to Maidan Nasser occurred about a hundred years ago and included several small suks such as Suk Az-Zait and Suk Al-Attara. Later in the century other large blocks of shops were build adjacent to what was to become the Italian town. By the turn of the century, commercial activity was already highly concentrated around Maidan Nasser. Residential building outside the Arab town was not extensive, though some houses of Turkish style appeared among the commercial developments. The administrative building of the Mutasarif, a small barracks and the municipality building were all constructed in the nineteenth century after Misurata had become the headquarters of a Mutasarifiya.

The Italian conquest of Libya began in 1911 but it was not until 1922 that Eastern Tripolitania came under effective Italian rule. Tripolitania was now divided into two provinces with capitals at Tripoli and Misurata. In addition to proclaiming it a provincial capital the Italians also intended Misurata to become the regional economic and social services centre for huge new estates developed at Dafnia, Kararim and Tummina after 1937, a function it was ideally located to fulfill. Thus within a very short period impressive developments occurred embracing the new functions of the town; social (hospital, schools, hotel, cinema etc.), economic (banks, slaughterhouse, electricity station), and administrative (barracks, offices, PWD. etc.). A small European quarter appeared, complete with its own church; new buildings were added to the market, and a paved road was built to Benghazi by-passing the old town, while Casr Ahmed was once more briefly revived as 'Misurata Marina'. Strenuous efforts were made to create a town worthy of the status of provincial capital. A pleasant public garden was laid out, pavements in the new town were tiled, and the roads were lined with pink, white and yellow flowering oleanders. Sadly and predictably, most of these developments, including improved water and electricity services did not benefit the old town; yet the Italian interlude was significant not only because of its impact on the townscape but because of the fresh economic perspectives it gave the region at a time when it was entering a period of relative decline.

The immediate post-war years were a time of stagnation in the region and it is

FIG. 9 : CABILA OF MISURATA OASIS

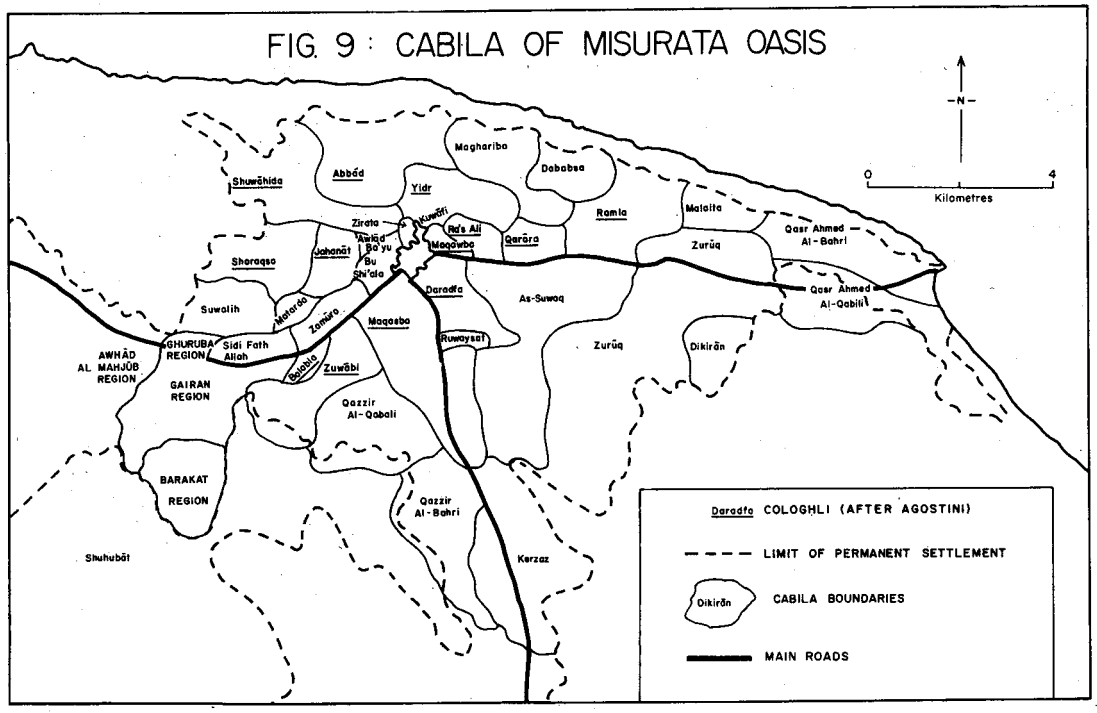


FIG. 10 : DOMESTIC INDUSTRIES - MISURATA OASIS

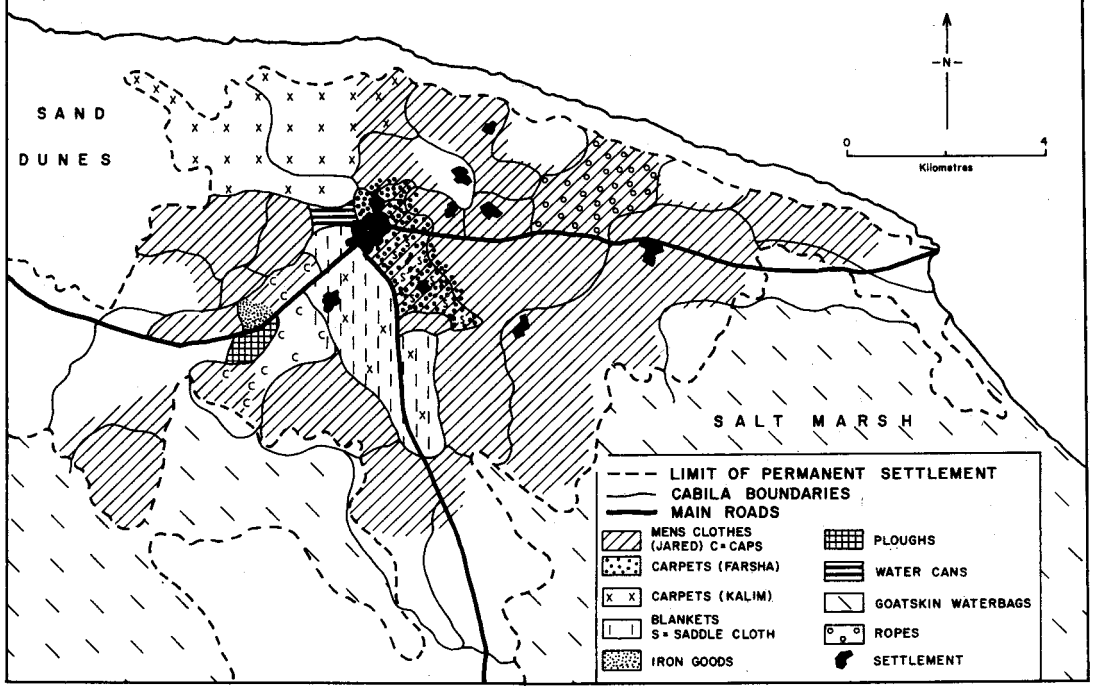


FIG. 11 : LAND USE

(See also Figures 12 and 13)

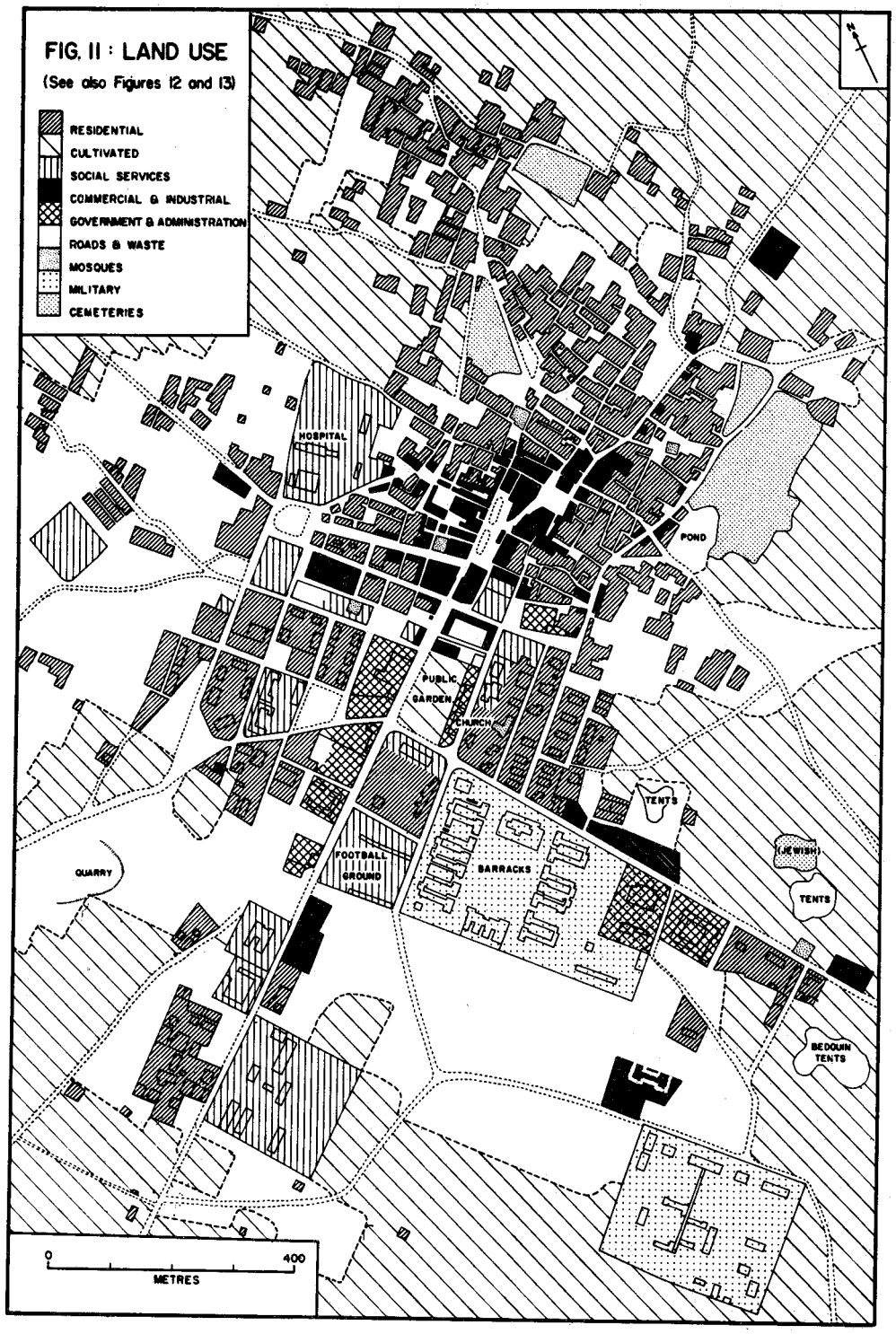


FIG. 12
PUBLIC BUILDINGS

- MOSQUES
- LOCAL GOVERMENT OFFICES
- SCHOOLS:-
  - (1) Primary
  - (2) Boys Secondary
  - (3) Boys Secondary (New)
  - (4) Girls Secondary (New)
  - (5) Religious Secondary

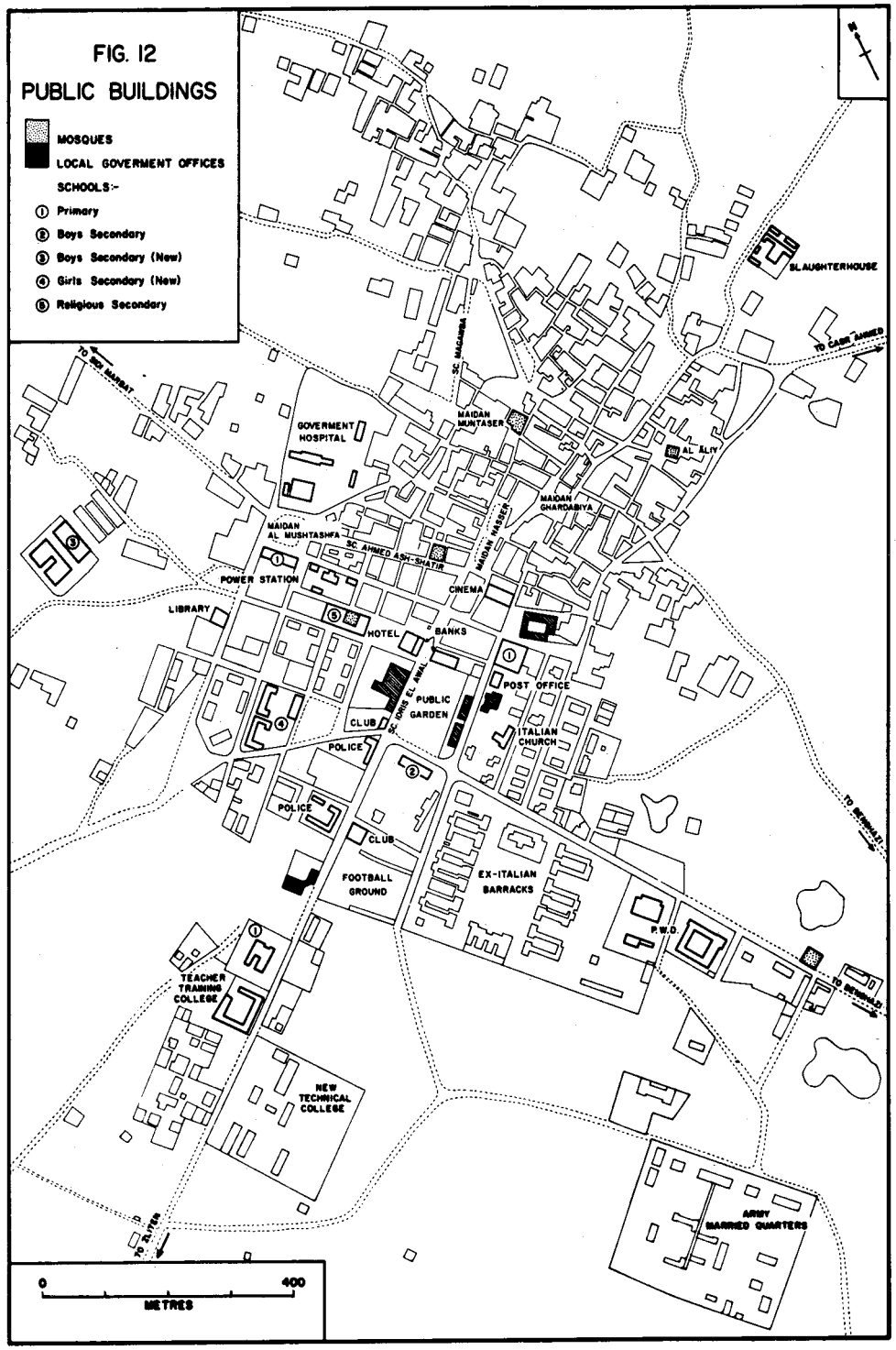
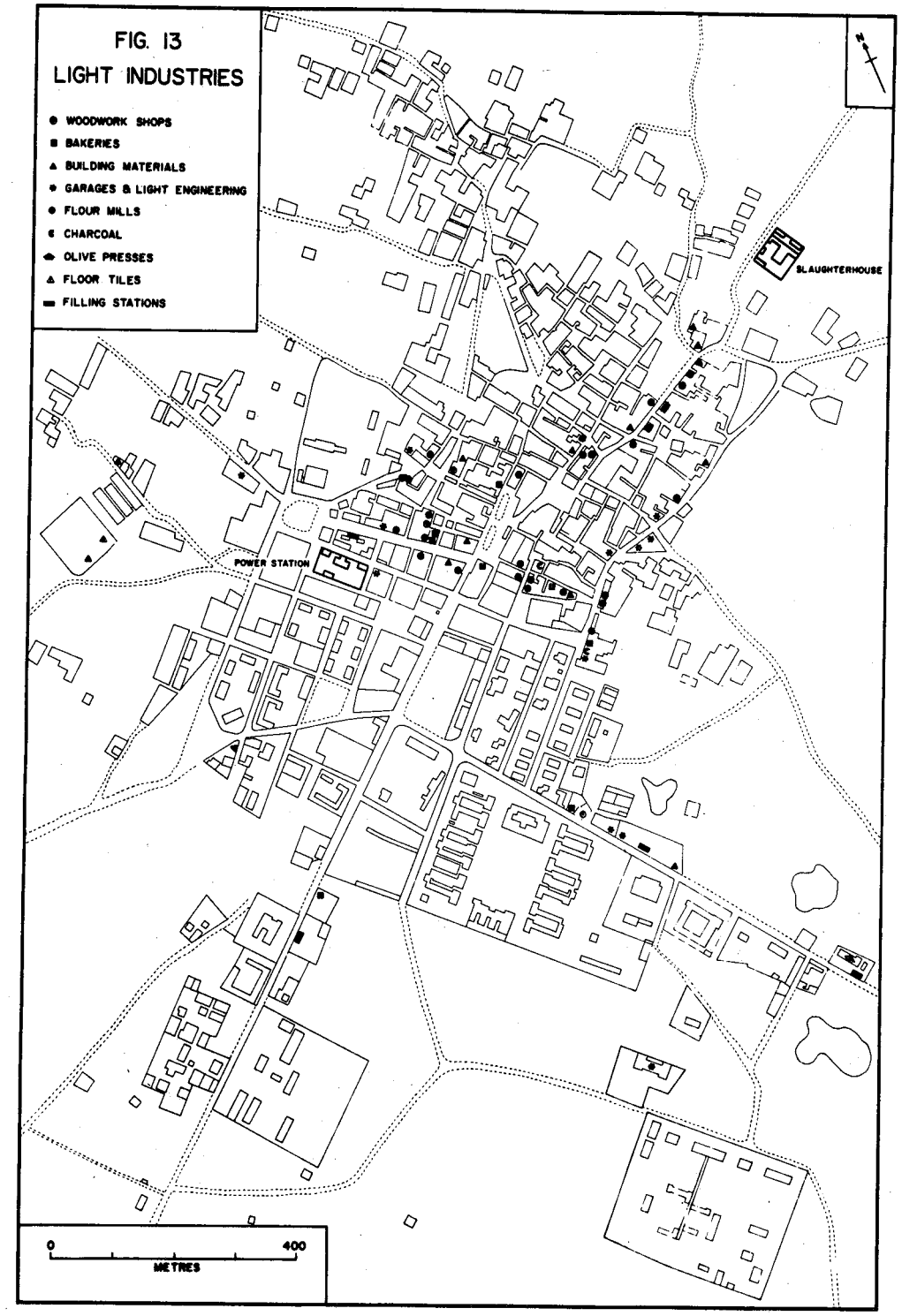


FIG. 13
LIGHT INDUSTRIES

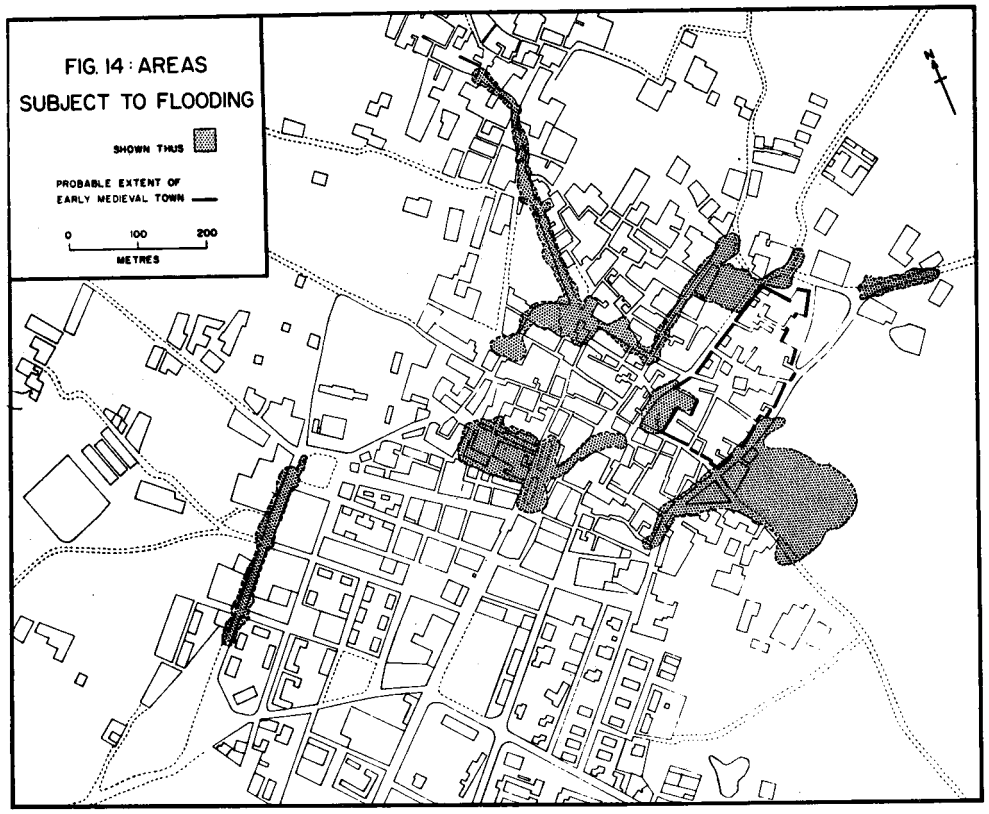
- WOODWORK SHOPS
- BAKERIES
- BUILDING MATERIALS
- GARAGES & LIGHT ENGINEERING
- FLOUR MILLS
- CHARCOAL
- OLIVE PRESSES
- FLOOR TILES
- FILLING STATIONS



highly likely that the population of the town gradually fell until the late 1950's. The Jewish population which numbered 912 at the beginning of 1949 had left by the end of the year(12), and migration of Arabs to other parts of Libya and North Africa undoubtedly continued at an unusually high level. When Libya became independent in 1951 Misurata was made the administrative headquarters of only one of five Muqata in Tripolitania (Fig. 1), thus losing its pre-war importance when it was the administrative counterpart of Tripoli itself.

Since the early 1960's however, Misurata has once again begun to enjoy economic prosperity largely as an indirect result of Libya's enormous oil exports. These have transformed the national economy and affected everyday life in a multiplicity of ways. A building boom is in progress both in the form of Government investment in schools, army quarters, and a technical college, and private investment in houses which have risen at the rate of almost one a day since 1964. Both local and outside capital have gone into light industrial premises and the new petrol filling stations have been erected in response to demands created by the vast increase in through road traffic. The impact of these developments on the townscape is not yet very noticeable since one characteristic of recent building is its dispersed nature (Fig. 7). But with increasing use of pre-stressed concrete and breeze-blocks which have almost entirely replaced traditional building techniques, the disappearance of time-honoured forms cannot be far away. A handful of two-storey houses have already appeared in the old town, and even a small block of flats appeared near the livestock market in 1965.

The layout and construction of houses in the old town has not changed over the centuries. The basic unit is the 'haush', which in one form or another is found throughout the Arab world, with its characteristic internal courtyard, flat roof and



scarcity of windows. The haush may accommodate several related families, its design permitting privacy on the one hand and social intercourse in the cool of the courtyard on the other. Neighbouring houses, often owned by relatives are attached to one another resulting in a cubistic, cellular structure throughout the town (Fig. 8). The more generous courtyards noted in the village of Ras Ali (Fig. 8a) may indicate the extent to which traditional building patterns have been modified by rising land values in an urban environment. Streets in old Misurata are narrow, reflecting the one-time importance of pack animals rather than wheeled transport, together with a desire perhaps to obtain both shade from the sun and security as well. Significantly, streets in the hara are the narrowest of all, but otherwise the houses appear the same as in the surrounding Arab quarter. The closely-knit form of the town persisted until the beginning of this century when a number of isolated houses and groups of houses began to appear on the outskirts. Since then the compact morphology of Misurata seems to have been marked by progressive disintegration.

Like many Middle Eastern and North African towns, Misurata comprises two components; an old, Arab-style town where growth has been organic, unplanned, and slow, and a new European-style town grafted awkwardly on to the old. The formidable task of drawing up a master-plan for the rational development and improvement of the town as a whole is now being undertaken by American and British consultants. A major problem is that of providing services in the old town - electricity, water, sewerage and surface drainage - where the numerous streets are short and narrow. Nevertheless in 1966, 1,300 houses in the old town had piped water compared with 500 in 1964. Another problem concerns the creation of a road network capable of coping with the increasing number of locally owned vehicles and giving them reasonable access to the old town (Table 1). Thirdly, future development

TABLE 1: Vehicles registered in Misurata July 1966

Taxis	20
Commercial Vehicles	549
Private Cars	395

Source: Motor Taxation Department Misurata.

must be planned in accordance with sound social, economic and aesthetic principles. As long as Misurata remained a small market town the rough and ready juxtaopsition of houses, shops, and administration served quite well; distances were short and competition for land was minimal. In recent years however, development has taken place, particularly west and south of the town, which is wasteful of land and sometimes unsightly (Fig. 11). Moreover Misurata is now much more than a small market town. Its industries though small, are among the fastest growing in Libya;(13) its significance as a route centre grows daily with the increasingly heavy traffic on the Benghazi-Tripoli road; and it features frequently as an important regional centre of the future in the National Agricultural Settlement Association's (NASA) long-term plans for reviving the ex-Italian estates. For these reasons, the master plan for Misurata can hardly appear too soon.

4. Commercial Life

The hinterland of Misurata market

The hinterland of Misurata market is surprisingly extensive, taking in most of the inhabited parts of the Mutasarifiya of Misurata (which had a population of 72,985 in 1965), together with the four small settlements of Sawknah, Hun, Waddan, and Beni Ulid, whose combined populations can be no more than 10,000 persons. (Fig. 2) Thus in spite of its impressive size, the hinterland has a total population of around 83,000 of whom 19,000 live in Misurata itself. According to the 1964 Census of Population approximately 75% of this population can be regarded as sedentary, 10% as semi-nomadic and 15% as nomadic.(14)

The frequency of visits to Misurata market is determined by a balance between distance, accessibility, and economic necessity. Figure 4 shows three main categories of frequency each of which corresponds very broadly to three contrasting regions of land use. By far the most important of these is the relatively small, populous, and productive region around Misurata itself in which most farmers visit the market two or three times each week. It includes the oases of Misurata and Tauorga and the ex-Italian estates to the west and south. Here, intensive production of a wide variety of irrigated crops requiring frequent marketing is practised. Beyond this is a zone where shifting cultivation of cereals is widespread, particularly where rainfall is high near the coast. Tree crops (olives, dates and figs) are successful in the vicinity of Beni Ulid. This form of agriculture supports a scanty population and cereals do not require frequent marketing. In the third zone, pastoral nomadism is normal and visits to Misurata are infrequent. At one time camels were brought to Misurata by the nomads themselves but today they are usually sold direct to traders and taken to market by road, after being collected in centres such as Beni Ulid, Bu Ngem and Sirte. Misurata is still visited by the nomads for the purchase of household goods etc.

In attempting to delimit the hinterland of Misurata it is important to distinguish between goods and people since the two rarely coincide. The highly developed trading activities of some Misuratans has created a catchment area for certain goods far beyond that for people. Obvious examples are the purchase of camels in the Fezzan, olive oil in Tarhuna and almonds in Homs, but more astonishing are the truckloads of firewood (Acacia tortilis) contracted for by Misurata merchants which Agnes Newton-Keith encountered beyond Sebkha, over a thousand kilometres away.(15) Similarly, the town's sphere of influence as a social services centre does not conform to the hinterland of the market. Misurata hospital (180 beds and 10 doctors in 1966) is the only one between Benghazi and Tripoli, so that patients come from Fezzan in the south, Sirte in the east and beyond Zliten in the west. More than half the pupils at the secondary school come from outside the town itself, including a number from Zliten which lies beyond Misurata's economic sphere of influence. This disconformity is however insignificant in view of Misurata's comparatively poorly developed function as a social centre.

Two smaller markets fall within Misurata's sphere of influence at Zawiyat al Mahjub and Tauorga (Fig. 4). Tauorga is a small oasis of some 1,200 inhabitants lying 45 kilometres south of Misurata. The market apparently grew up to meet the needs of the oasis itself and to carry on limited trade with nomadic groups in the district. In spite of the possibilities for agricultural development around Tauorga, with its plentiful supplies of spring water, the only economic activities of note have traditionally been date cultivation and the manufacture of mats using reeds (Portulaca oleracea) gathered in the surrounding swamps. Farmers from Kararim therefore visit Tauorga to sell fruit and vegetables. At Zawiyal al Mahjub, the Friday market is considerably smaller than either the Monday or Thursday markets

at Tauorga. Its existence may have something to do with the fact that Misurata is twelve kilometres away, but a more important factor is the high proportion of irrigated crops grown in the Zawiyat region on account of the availability of abundant supplies of excellent well water. Neither Zawiyat nor Tauorga compete significantly with Misurata, partly because of the staggered arrangement of market days which has evolved here as in many other parts of North Africa. Markets are held as follows:-

On Sunday	- at Misurata and Zliten
On Monday	- at Tauorga
On Tuesday	- at Misurata
On Wednesday	- at Zliten
On Thursday	- at Misurata and Tauorga
On Friday	- at Zawiyat al Mahjub

Markets situated on the margins of the great deserts are not characterised by the simple town - country relationship of Medieval Europe in which distance played a decisive role, but in many ways the flow of goods is more akin to that of a seaport. Thus the configuration of Misurata's hinterland is virtually unaffected by competition from other markets except from Zliten in the north-west. Although smaller than Misurata, Zliten market serves an area within a radius of twenty to thirty kilometres of the town. The watershed between Misurata and Zliten markets is largely determined by distance. Mid-way between them the practice seems to be to patronise both markets with equal frequency.

The intensity of commercial activity in a traditional market town like Misurata depends not only on the distribution and density of population within its hinterland but also on the extent to which local specialisation creates a demand for exchange of goods. The exchange of produce between the cultivator and the pastoralist is still clearly important in the economy of Misurata, but it is probably less important than the local specialisation occurring within the oasis itself in the production of irrigated crops. In 1960 there were 6,700 holdings in the Mudiriya of Al Mahjub and Al Zuruq (which constitute Misurata oasis) 3,900 of which were exclusively devoted to the dry cultivation of barley and wheat. The remaining 2,800 holdings had at least some irrigated land, but the proportion engaged in raising any one crop was extremely small,(16) (Table 2).

TABLE 2: Percentage of irrigated holdings in Mudiriya of Al Mahjub and Al Zuruq producing selected irrigated crops (1960)

Sorghum	29.7%	Tomatoes	16.4%
Red peppers	26.3%	Carrots	15.0%
Broad beans	23.4%	Green peppers	13.1%
Melons (various)	18.2%	Maize	9.7%
Fodder crops	17.8%	Groundnuts	2.4%
Dry onions	17.0%	Potatoes	2.2%

Source: Census of Agriculture 1960. Ministry of Agriculture Tripoli (1962) 133-245.

These figures reveal considerable scope for buying and selling agricultural produce among the oasis dwellers themselves.

Crop returns of the Mudiriyas of Al Mahjub and Al Zuruq which lie broadly to the west and east of Misurata respectively reveal the regional specialisation of crop production still further, (Table 3). Groundwater resources are more plenti-

ful and less saline in the west than in the east and crop yields tend to be higher. In Al Zuruq on the other hand camels, goats, and horses, are more numerous because of the rough pastures available in the Sebkha of Tauorga. Besides the crops shown in Table 3 several other specialist crops are grown on a limited scale for sale in Misurata market; lettuce, green peas, egg plants, turnips and radishes are produced near Misurata and peaches, plums, pears and apples are grown on the ex-Italian estates at Dafnia and Tummina.

TABLE 3: Production of selected irrigated crops east and west of Misurata, 1960.

Crop	Al Mahjub (west)		Al Zuruq (east)	
	Quintals	Percent	Quintals	Percent
Fodder crops	1959	36,8	3367	63.2
Melons (various)	1719	34.1	3310	65.9
Sorghum	2395	94.5	137	5.5
Peppers (red and green)	1862	73.8	659	26.2
Carrots	2228	89.8	253	10.2
Dry onions	426	22.2	1491	77.8
Potatoes	737	75.8	235	24.1
Groundnuts	654	97.6	16	2.4
Cucumbers	10	2.0	498	98.0
Maize	442	91.1	43	8.9

Source: Census of Agriculture, 1960. Ministry of Agriculture Tripoli, (1962) 133-245.

The domestic manufacture of goods for sale in the market at Misurata is quite clearly related to traditional specialisations among the different cabila (Fig. 10). Exactly when and how these specialisations grew up is far beyond the theme of this paper, but it is pertinent that goods manufactured in the oasis of Misurata are complementary in character and are generally produced only on a scale to satisfy limited local demands. Apparently manufacture of a particular commodity for Misurata market is a recognised privilege and the question of competition among cabilas does not arise. The best example of complementarity is in the manufacture of ploughs, the wooden framework being made by Balabla and the iron shoe by Hadada who also specialise in making window grills and horse shoes. Such demarcation is interesting because no domestic products except goatskin waterbags and Tauorga mats (not shown on Fig. 10) are made exclusively from locally produced raw materials. Some materials, notably raw wool, come from far away and in large quantities so that Misurata market is not only an exchange centre for finished products but also supplies essential raw materials. Misurata's beautiful red, white and black patterned carpets are the only domestic product sold regularly beyond the hinterland shown on Figure 2; merchants from Tripoli purchase the large 'Kalim' carpets and the smaller 'farsha' carpets in considerable quantities.

Apart from the limited range of locally produced goods, virtually all manufactured goods and processed foodstuffs come from Tripoli and are distributed through wholesalers in Misurata. Most of these goods are imported into Libya from an extraordinary variety of countries. The inventory of a small general store revealed the following examples:-

Ceylon (tea)
Chinese Republic (talcum powder)
Czechoslovakia (shoes)
Greece (detergent)
Holland (yeast)
Italy (candles)
Japan (sardines)
Poland (toffees)
Spain (rope)
United Kingdom (hurricane lamps)
U. S. A. (flashlights)
U. S. S. R. (paraffin stoves)

Market-day census, Thursday July 21st 1966

There were several problems associated with carrying out a census of the number of people entering Misurata on a market day. First, it was impossible to cover every minor approach road and a number of persons undoubtedly entered the town unobserved. Secondly, an unknown proportion of those entering the town were commuters not primarily interested in the market; many of the cyclists who arrived between 6.30 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. can be assumed to come into this category. Thirdly, since the most common form of motor transport was closed Peugot vans it was difficult to estimate the number of passengers with complete accuracy. Nevertheless the results of a census held on Thursday July 21st 1966 deserve some comment.

The number of persons recorded as entering the town at or near one of the seven major census points between 6.00 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. was 6,887, (Fig. 5). In addition, about 130 fruit and vegetable sellers arrived before 6.00 a.m. to secure the best pitches in the open market. The total number of visitors therefore exceeded 7,000, approximately 11% of the total population of Misurata's hinterland outside the town and a far higher proportion of the total adult male population. Since Thursday and Sunday markets are better attended than Tuesday markets, and summer markets than winter markets, the figure may be above average but it still provides impressive evidence of the continuing importance of Misurata market.

Table 4 shows the relative importance of different methods of travel. By far the largest number travel by motor vehicle, chiefly in the Peugot vans which operate a cheap taxi-type service between the town and surrounding areas. They are used for both passengers and goods. A bus service operates on the Zliten-Misurata road but three buses arriving before 11.00 a.m. were by no means full. The growing popularity of motor vehicles, largely at the expense of animal transport is helping Misurata retain its traditional importance as a focal point at a time when social motives for going to market are becoming less and less significant. In the past, the market was an essential medium for the exchange of news and the transaction of social business but today the younger generation see market day much more as a commercial activity which would not justify frequent visits if the only method of

TABLE 4: Persons entering Misurata 6.00-10.30 a.m. July 21st 1966

Census point	Method of travel				
	Motor vehicle	Foot	Draft animal	Bicycle Bicycle	TOTAL
A	613	381	304	540	1,838
B	712	31	259	297	1,299
C	644	159	160	316	1,279
D	271	275	85	192	823
E	199	89	153	201	642
F	325	85	88	70	546
G	124	83	103	128	438
Total	2,888	1,103	1,152	1,744	6,887

(See Figure 5)

travel was by donkey or horse. Motor transport provides a swift alternative which appeals to progressive-minded farmers, and the alignment of the Italian-built road along the axis of the most populated regions east and south of Misurata has encouraged its use in recent years. It is still true however, that older men tend to go to market more frequently than younger men. This could be a matter of family convenience since an ageing parent is probably better employed buying and selling than working on the land, but it may also be a sign of the declining social significance of market day.

The first big influx occurred before 6.30 a.m. and consisted largely of motor vehicles bringing people with goods to sell. After 7.00 a.m. a second larger influx occurred with other forms of transport becoming important and including buyers and sellers. By 10.15 a.m. however, incoming traffic had virtually ceased. The return flow of people on foot was noted as early as 8.30 a.m.; the first draft animals left at about 9.00 a.m. and by 9.45 a.m. vehicles were returning to the country. By 11.30 a.m. the exodus of people was in full swing and by early afternoon the commercial life of the town was almost the same as on a non-market day. This remarkable ebb and flow of people within a period of seven or eight hours is largely explained by the desire to complete the return journey before the hottest part of the day. (Table 5).

TABLE 5: Temperature (^{o}F) and Humidity, Misurata 21st July, 1966

Hours G.M.T.	00	03	06	09	12	15	18	21
Temperature (^{o}F)	77.0	75.2	74.7	89.6	103.1	103.1	82.4	80.6
Humidity	81	76	78	44	21	30	78	83

Maximum Temp. 107.6^{o}F Minimum Temp. 71.8^{o}F

Source: Meteorological Department, Tripoli.)

Two features of the census seem to confirm the overwhelming importance of local trade to Misurata. First, the relatively small proportion approaching Misurata from the south suggests only a moderate yield of people and goods from the extensive desert hinterland which lies beyond Tummina, at a time of year when nomadic groups tend to be nearer the coastal zone. Secondly, all those travelling by bicycle (25.3%) or on foot (16.0%) and most of those using animal transport of some kind (16.7%) can be assumed to originate within the oasis of Misurata and not beyond. Although nearly 42% arrived in motor vehicles, many of these lived near enough to be picked up by a few Peugot drivers operating a shuttle service.

It was interesting to note that the proportion arriving in vehicles dropped gradually as the day wore on, while the same was true of cyclists except during the first hour of the census when relatively few arrived. The number of pedestrians however, increased steadily until 9,00 a.m. and then fell rather sharply. Animal transport, usually in the shape of a donkey or mule and cart showed two peaks, one very soon after 6.00 a.m. consisting of farmers with goods to sell, and another after 8.00 a.m., presumably consisting of those more concerned with buying than selling.

Business units in Misurata

Table 6 shows the number of business units in Misurata in 1966. The list cannot be regarded as definitive; some units were almost certainly never discovered while enumeration of general stores, drapers and grocers was highly subjective because of the difficulty of distinguishing between them. Further difficulty was experienced over 'tailors' and 'drapers' since many tailors also sell cloth; but in spite of these weaknesses it is apparent that Misurata posesses a very large number of enterprises

TABLE 6: Business units in Misurata 1966

Retail stores (518)			
General stores	135	Building materials and paint	13
Drapers	65	Cafes and restaurants	12
Grocers (+ 4 wholesale)	45	Motor vehicle accessories	7
Grain and seeds	37	Raw wool	6
Hardware	33	Watch and clock repairs	6
Jewellers	26	Electrical goods and radios	5
Barbers	24	Public scribes	4
Butchers's shops	21	Lamp repairs	3
Carpets and mats	20	Photographers	2
Paraffin and oil	19	Pharmacy	1
Bicycle sales and repairs	18	Stationer	1
Cloths and shoes	15		
Light industries (63)		Craftsmen (65)	
Woodwork	24	Tailors	18
Bakeries	8	Blacksmiths	13
Concrete blocks	8	Cobblers	12
Garages	6	Ploughwrights	7
Engineering	5	Tinsmiths	7
Flour mills	5	Coppersmiths	4
Charcoal	2	Leatherworkers	4
Olive presses	2	Stallholders (95)	
Slaughterhouse	1		
Generator	1	Greengrocers	60
Floor tiles	1	Butchers	35
Total number of business units: 741			

for a town of 19,000 persons. Apart from light industries, a total of 678 retail stores, workshops and stalls were found. Most of these are operated as small family concerns, engaging two or more adult members of the family at some time in the week. Women take no part in buying and selling in Misurata so that the proportion of the active male population of the town involved in commerce on a full or part-time basis is very high. The reason generally given for this is the absence of alternative sources of employment, and the high rate of emigration from the Misurata region supports this theory, but it is not the only explanation.(17) Economic incentives are real enough, many humble shopkeepers hoping to make their fortunes like the few highly successful merchants who can be seen today driving to and fro in expensive cars, but for the great majority, social factors are of equal importance. Possibly as a result of the town's historic role as a trading community participation in commerce, however trivial, bestows prestige on the individual and there is real fellowship in the life of the market place, fostered by the compact arrangement of shops and stores which most merchants seem to cherish as much as brisk trade.

What kind of financial rewards are obtained when so many enterprises co-exist in direct competition with each other? It has been seen that the hinterland of Misurata embraces no more than 83,000 persons, most of them oasis farmers or pastoral nomads with limited purchasing power. A sample of gross annual incomes of oasis farmers in 1959-60 showed that these varied from £L79 to £L301(18). In 1966 local farmers quoted figures between £L100 and £L200 for their net profits, which, if typical, would suggest a theoretical maximum of under £L1 for each family to spend at each market throughout the year. If all 7,000 who entered Misurata

on July 21st were heads of families intent on spending their £L1, maximum takings of £L7,000 might be assumed, but in practice many were members of one family, and others came only to sell. Perhaps £L3,500 changed hands, which would mean average takings of about £L5 per business unit. All this is speculation, but the low level of gross takings which the figures suggest was confirmed by actual figures obtained from selected retail stores and craftsmen in 1966 (Table 7). The examples shown were chosen to represent the most common types of retail store in widely differing locations from Maidan Nasser to the Casr Ahmed road beyond the livestock market. It is however, unfortunate that neither butchers nor jewellers seemed prepared to discuss their incomes because both are numerous. Indeed if stallholders are taken into account butchers constitute the fourth largest category of traders in Misurata (Table 6), a feature of the post-oil era in Libya.

Two butchers were each observed to sell some 150 kilos of camel meat on a market day, which would mean gross takings of £L6-7. Jewellers are assured of a lucrative if erratic demand for the costly silver arm-bands and other ornaments traditionally presented to a bride at the time of her wedding.

Net monthly profits were calculated on the assumption that profits run at about 35% of receipts in retail stores, and at 70% for craftsmen. The average for those stores shown on Table 7 is £L40.6, a modest sum when it is remembered that the industrial census of 1956 showed 715 establishments in Misurata in which persons were gainfully occupied, with an average of 2.2 persons per establishment.(19) As far as can be judged, Table 7 gives a fair idea of the scale and range of profits among typical family enterprises in the town. There have always been a number of traders and businessmen in Misurata who have succeeded in accumulating capital

TABLE 7: Estimated gross receipts and net monthly profits of selected enterprises

Business	Gross income (£L)		Monthly rent (£L)	Net monthly profit (£L)
	Market days	Other days		
1. Draper	15	13	10	104.6
2. General store	15	5	Owner	84.0
3. Hardware	15-20	5-7	25	73.7
4. Grocer	12	4	Owner	67.2
5. Stationer	10	4	6	55.6
6. General store	7-10	5	5	51.7
7. General store	10-12	3-4	10	51.6
8. General store	8-9	4-5	5	49.6
9. Draper	8-10	3-4	3	49.5
10. Draper	7-10	3-4	5	45.9
11. Grocer	6-7	2	5	30.7
12. General store	$2\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{3}{4}$	14.0
13. General store	$2\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{3}{4}$	14.0
14. General store	$2\frac{1}{2}$	Closed	$\frac{3}{4}$	9.7
15. General store	2-3	Closed	$1\frac{1}{4}$	9.2
16. General store	3-4	$\frac{1}{2}$-1	3	7.8
17. General store	3-5	Closed	$3\frac{1}{2}$	7.3
18. General store	$\frac{1}{2}$-$1\frac{1}{2}$	Closed	Owner	4.2
A. Tinsmith	5-10	2-3	Owner	84
B. Tailor	$1\frac{1}{2}$	Closed	3	9.6
C. Coppersmith	$1\frac{1}{2}$	Closed	5	7.6

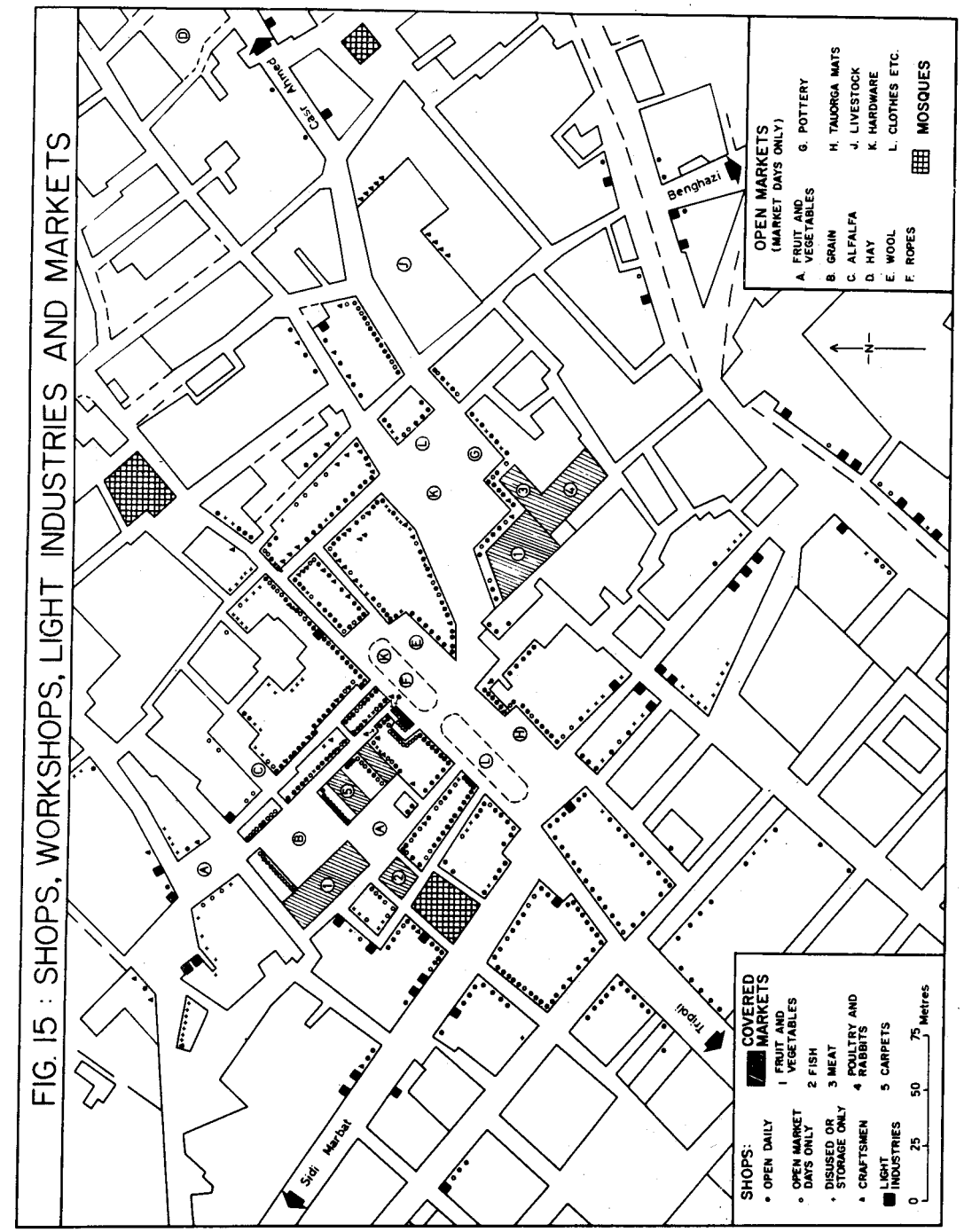


FIG. 15 : SHOPS, WORKSHOPS, LIGHT INDUSTRIES AND MARKETS

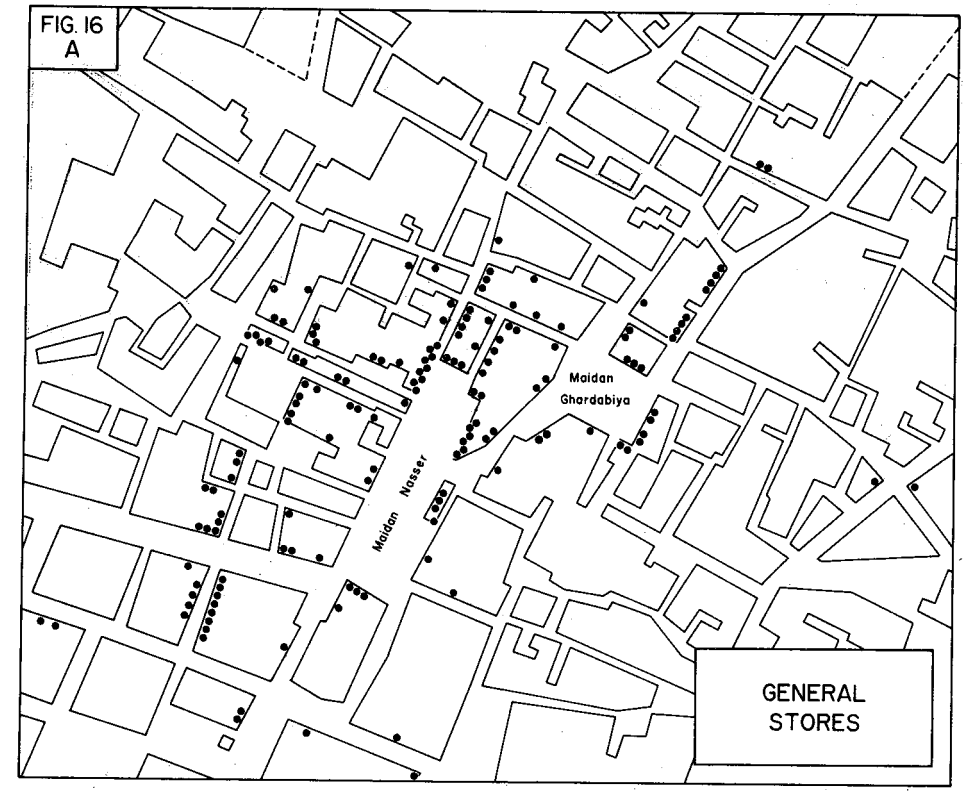
which cannot be absorbed locally and many of these have migrated to other parts of Libya, notably Benghazi, Derna, Tripoli and Tobruk.

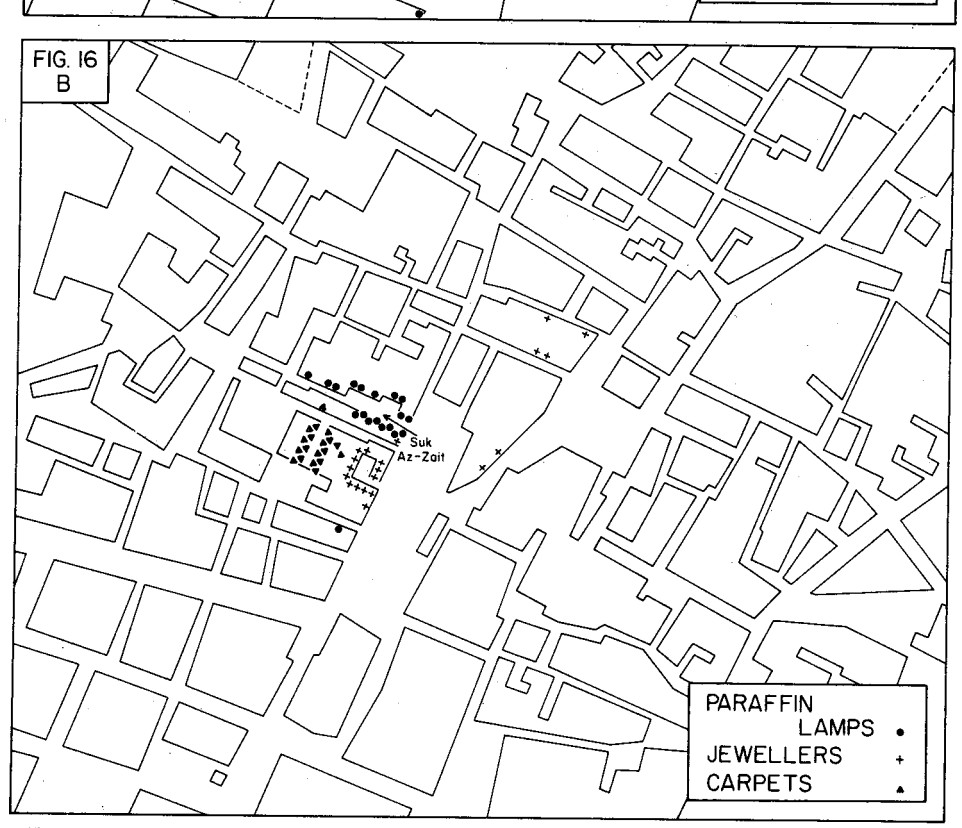
It should be emphasised that an unknown number of enterprises are not the sole source of income for their operators, arable or pastoral farming usually providing an additional source of income. Premises which open only on market days (about 20% of the retail stores shown on Figure 15) presumably come into this category, though it is doubtful whether many carpet-sellers and jewellers have farming interests. Apart from the carpet-sellers and jewellers, most part-time units are poor general stores away from the two main squares, though grain merchants and drapers are represented. The majority of part-time storekeepers and craftsmen live in villages outside Misurata, maintaining premises in town for use on market days, for example the carpenters and blacksmiths shown on Figure 17a. At one time commuting craftsmen were more common than today, cobblers (Maghariba) and tinsmiths (Awlad Bayu) being other notable examples. A few storekeepers were encountered who reside in Misurata but derive most of their income from dry cereal cultivation or stock-rearing, often practised as much as 50 kilometres to the south.

Approximately 80% of the shops and workshops in Misurata are rented from private individuals (60%) or the municipality (20%), the rest being privately owned. There is no evidence of the operation of a system of 'Key money' as in many parts of the Arab world. Monthly rents for premises vary according to their size, condition, and age of the tenancy agreement. Attempts were made to discover whether rents are higher towards the centre of the town and although most traders were well aware of the importance of centrality, location does not account for the considerable rent differentials which exist. If landlords take centrality into account its importance is still slight compared with other factors. At the same time, the largest and more modern premises are near the centre around Maidan Nasser, and in this sense a graded system automatically operates.

Maidan Nasser is unmistakably the commercial heart of Misurata. Its north-east to south-west axis is situated astride internal routes between two broadly complementary sectors of the commercial centre of the town (Fig. 15). A complex of shops, workshops and markets lie to the north-west of Maidan Nasser including the grain market and flour mills, covered and open fruit and vegetable markets, and the fish market. In addition to the usual range of retail stores this sector specialises in carpets, jewellery, paraffin and oil, and alfalfa. Maidan Ghardabiya is the centre of a second complex south-east of Maidan Nasser, containing notably the livestock market, numerous butchers, blacksmiths and hardware merchants, besides another covered fruit and vegetable market and poultry market. Maidan Nasser also lies between several streets of traditional stores and workshops on the fringe of the old town, and several modern specialist shops and services (bicycles, photography, banks, post office, cafes and dispensary) in the new town. On market days the square itself is used for the sale of raw wool, ropes and Tauorga mats, none of which are displayed elsewhere. Thus on market days Maidan Nasser is crossed and recrossed by buyers and sellers more frequently than any other part of the town (Plate 1b). On other days, when it is open to traffic, Maidan Nasser is also a nodal point for east-west and north-south through routes.

The grouping of merchants and craftsmen pursuing similar activities is significant only in the case of jewellers, blacksmiths, carpet sellers, paraffin and oil merchants and ploughwrights, (Figs. 16 and 17). Unlike some of the large cities of the Middle East where the practice can often be attributed to historic factors such as the ancient guild system, grouping in Misurata appears to have been largely a matter of expediency. The jewellers are located in a small suk which could be locked at night for security; the blacksmiths whose main concern is with horses, mules and donkeys find the livestock market ideal for obvious reasons; while carpet sellers





have to be together to bid for carpets when they are brought in from the countryside. The ploughwrights who are members of one cabila do not apparently see themselves as rivals in the usual way, and their grouping is largely for reasons of convenience and comradeship. For similar reasons one imagines, coppersmiths and tinsmiths originally began work together in Suk Az-Zait but these activities gave way first to the sale of paraffin and oil.

The shops themselves are typical of the Arab world consisting of little more than a windowless rectangular room opening on to the street, and equipped with a simple counter, some shelves, and an iron shutter or double doors for security at night. Few have running water and not all have electric light. Sizes vary considerably, but two main types of accommodation can be distinguished. The older shops, possibly mid-nineteenth century, are situated in the vicinity of Maidan Ghardabiya. Most have no more than fifteen square metres of floor space; wooden doors are more common than shutters and earth floors are usual. In the side streets off Maidan Ghardabiya these premises were originally used as workshops, but today only the Balabla ploughwrights remain in any number (Plate 2b). Around Maidan Nasser shops tend to be larger, about 28 square metres of floor space being quite common, except in the tiny workshops of Suk Az-Zait and the jewellers' shops. Concrete floors and shutters are standard.

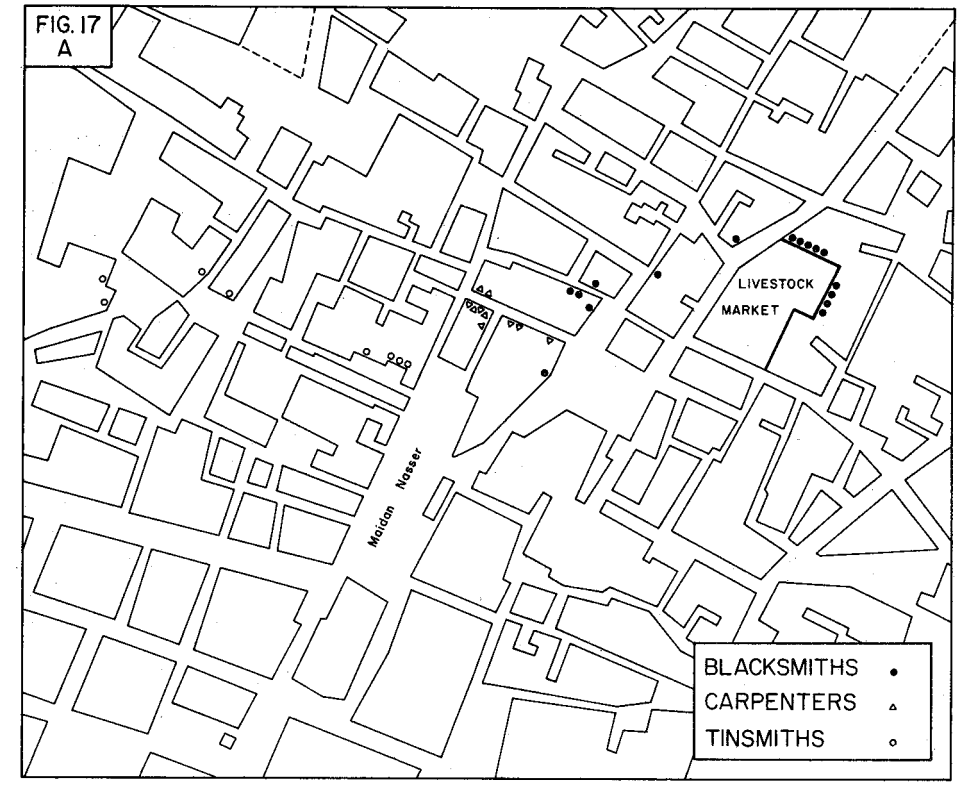
Besides trade carried on in fixed premises and the sale of farm produce in the open markets, a number of other enterprises are carried on in the open air on market days. A list of those observed on a Thursday in July 1966 is given in Table 8, and their location is indicated in Figure 15. It is probable that only those marked with an asterisk are towndwellers, the other enterprises being characteristic cabila specialisations; the grain merchants buy in bulk at harvest time and retail small quantities on market days.

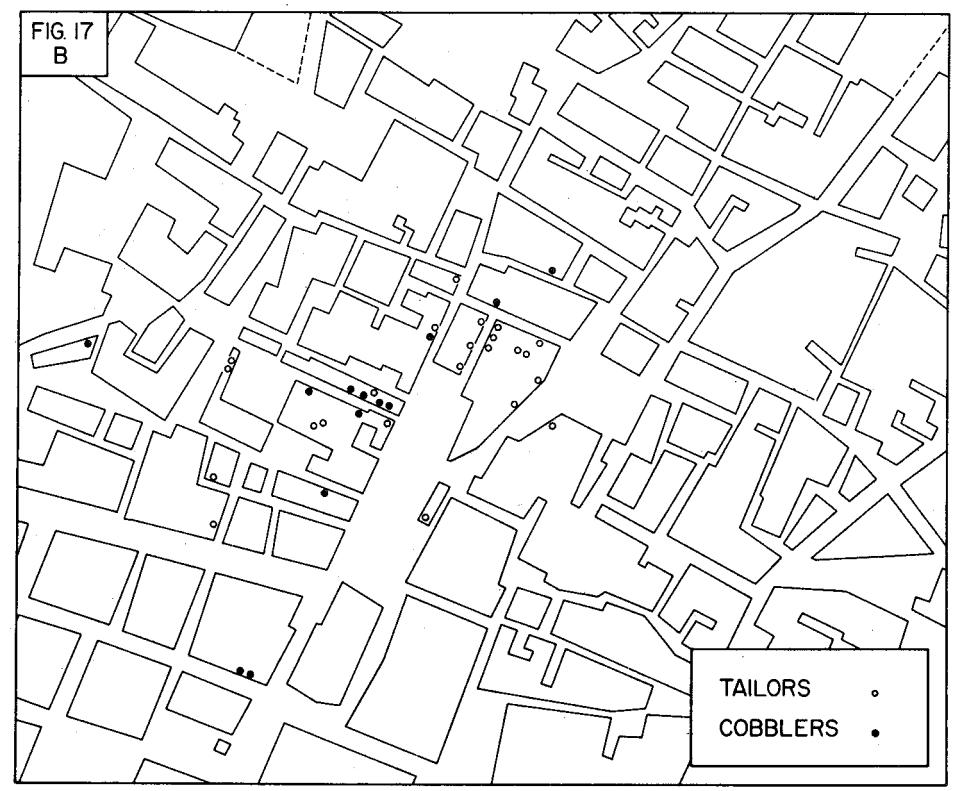
TABLE 8: Open-air traders at a Thursday market

Enterprise	No. of vendors
Raw wool	78
Grain	38*
Tauorga mats	36
Alfalfa	30
Spun wool	15
Ropes and rope cradles	12
European clothes and shoes	12*
Hardware and tools	8*
General merchandise	8*
Caps for men	6
Waterbags for wells	5
TOTAL	248

For locations see Figure 15

The livestock market is one of the most important activities in the commercial life of Misurata and certainly the most evocative. The chief business is the sale of young camels for meat, 70-100 being sold in a typical week. The majority of these come from Eastern Tripolitania but a proportion are brought by lorry from the Fezzan. In the past camels have reached Misurata by road from Niger and Chad. Most of those purchased are slaughtered locally and sold in the meat market and butchers' shops on the same day; others are taken to Zliten, Homs and Tripoli for slaughter. A few are purchased by local farmers for breeding purposes. Prices vary according to the condition and weight of the animal but generally range from





£L15 for a three or four month old calf to £L100-110 for a well covered fully grown camel. A few goats, sheep and donkeys change hands at each market, and occasionally a horse, but each market day more animals enter for sale than are finally sold. Donkeys range from 15 Piastres to £L6 in price, horses from £L12-35.

The possibility of agricultural development in or near the ex-Italian estates remains a real one, whether on the ambitious scale envisaged by NASA, or by means of more modest projects such as that recommended by Durham University for the Tauorga region in 1961.[20] The new farm units engaged in the production of vines, fruit, almonds, vegetables and barley could hardly rely on the freelance marketing of produce which suffices today. New, centralised marketing co-operatives would be required and small food processing plant might be established in Misurata. All kinds of light industry must be encouraged if the economic life of the town is to develop. It would be a great pity if standards of living in future were to depend solely on the age-old market in Misurata, bolstered up indirectly by benefits from the oil boom in the form of transit traffic, remittances from relatives and so on. Historical experience and an environment of limited opportunity have together created among Misuratans an extraordinary commercial acuity which is recognised throughout Libya. It is to be hoped that the technical aid experts from various countries now feverishly preparing to usher Misurata into an age of planned development will find ways of exploiting these qualities. They should also take cognizance of the enormous social significance of the life of the market place in creating and maintaining a coherent community in Misurata.

References

1. **Agostini de E**, *Le popolazione della Tripolitania,* Tripoli, (1917), 168.
2. **Mclachlan K.S.**, *A geographical study of the coastal zone between Homs and Misurata, Tripolitania,* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Durham (1961), 591.
3. **Kiang, H.**, *Sewage system planning, Misurata,* P.W.D. Misurata (1965), 10 (unpublished).
4. **Beechey F.W.** and **H.W.**, *Proceedings of the Expedition to explore the Northern Coast of Africa 1821-22,* (1828), 89.
5. **Mclachlan K.S.**, op.cit., 252.
6. **Slouschz N.**, *Travels in North Africa,* Philadelphia, (1927), 51-53.
7. **Sharif, Abd Al-Aziz**, *Geography of Libya,* Cairo, (1963), 448 (Arabic).
8. **Africanus Leo**, *The history and description of Africa,* Translation of 1600 edited by Robert Brown. Hakluyt Society (1846), 775.
9. **Mclachlan K.S.**, op.cit., 257.
10. **Sifar, Ibrahim**, *Misurata, a regional study of the town and district.* B.A. dissertation, University of Libya, (1963), 27 (Arabic).
11. **Royal Geographical Society**, *Records of the African Association 1788-1831,* (1964), 67-68.
12. **Landschut S.**, *Jewish communities in the Muslim countries of the Middle East,* (1950), 92.
13. **Ministry of Economy and Trade**, Tripoli. *Report of the industrial census,* (1964), 50-51.
14. **Census and Statistical Dept.**, Tripoli, *General Population Census, 1964,* 84.
15. **Newton-Keith A.**, *Children of Allah,* (1966), 166.
16. **Ministry of Agriculture**, Tripoli. *Census of Agriculture,* (1962), 133-245.
17. **Clarke J.I.**, " Some observations on Libyans in Tunisia" , *Les Cahiers de Tunisie,* 21/22, (1959), 93.
18. **Mclachlan K.S.**, op.cit., 713.
19. **Central Statistics Office**, Tripoli. *Census of Employment and production in urban areas,* (1956), 8.
20. **Gilchrist Shirlaw D.W.**, **Willimott S.G.**, et al. *Soil survey of Tauorga, Tripolitania, Libya.* Department of Geography, University of Durham, (1961), 1-64.

Maps and Air Photographs

Air photographs, scale 1:2,000 (approx.) Prepared for McGaughy, Marshall, McMillan and Lucas (1966).

U. S. Army Map Service: 1:50,000 Series (1962) Sheets 2289 I and II, 2389 III and IV.

G. S. G. S. 1·5,000 Town Plan of Misurata (1943).

Governo della Tripolitania: Misurata Citta 1:8,300 (1918).

Line drawing by Messrs. Howard Humphreys and Sons: 1:2,000 (1965), 2 sheets.

Italian 1:2,000 Plano Regalatore della Misurata Citta (1939).