

Social Change and Agriculture in the West Bank 1950-1967:

Aspects of Sharecropping and Commercialisation

By

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To my mother who cultivated in me the love of knowledge

## ABSTRACT

The thesis examines agrarian change in the West Bank from 1948 to 1967, when it was under Jordanian rule following the partition of Palestine. It focusses on practices of sharecropping during a period of extensive commercialisation of agriculture, and suggests how sharecropping contributed to this process through the expansion and/or formation of enterprises oriented to specialised commodity production. The major finding that different forms of production in agriculture (simple commodity production, small and larger scale capitalist commodity production) operated through sharecropping and generally employed wage labour, shows that sharecropping in itself does not constitute a determinate form of production, nor relation of production, nor is it indicative of any single process of differentiation of agricultural producers.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This thesis deals generally with the impact on the agricultural economy of the West Bank of its partition from the rest of Palestine in 1948. The West Bank was the part of Palestine least endowed with fertile agricultural land, and yet had to adapt itself to changed conditions and experienced a growth in agricultural production in the period considered here, 1948 to 1967 (when it was occupied by Israel).

Before 1948, the agricultural production of Palestine was largely concentrated in the coastal areas and their hinterland plains. The largely unirrigated farming of the West Bank was relatively much less commercialised, and oriented primarily to subsistence.

The West Bank, as demarcated by the boundaries that came into existence in 1948, lost much of its fertile land to the state of Israel. This loss was combined with demographic pressure as a result of the influx of refugees, who intensified the pressure on land resources. From 1948 more land was brought under cultivation in the West Bank; on one estimate the area of cultivated land expanded by over one-third in the 1950s and 1960s (Hilal, J., 1974, p.41).

The following chapters attempt to show the changes that occurred in West Bank agriculture, especially through the role of sharecropping as a mechanism of access to land and a condition of establishment of different types of units of production in the context of a marked commercialisation of agricultural production (1950-1967). Within these broad lines, several central issues have emerged.

One is that differentiation of agricultural producers cannot be explained only in relation to distribution of landownership. Differentiation in the West Bank has to be related to various forms of production undertaken in different farming enterprises. For example, practices of sharecropping and labour hiring were very widespread, and cut across different strata of the agricultural population. Moreover, from interviewing sharecroppers (both landless and landowners), landowners leasing out on sharecropping, and commission agents, I realised that sharecropping itself contributed in important ways to the process of commercialisation.

The main purpose of chapter three is to put into focus the historical background of land and landholding in Palestine before 1948, and to demonstrate the effects of categories of land tenure inherited from the Ottomans, of which the complex miri tenure was the most problematic. By the period of my study, miri land was treated increasingly as de facto individual ownership, although the inherited categories of land tenure could and did still lead to uncertainties and disputes.

The chapter also shows how large landownership was established during the latter part of the Ottoman period, and to some extent reproduced during the British Mandate. While small peasant ownership was the prevalent form, because of the inability of some peasants to pay taxes to the government, they surrendered all or part of their land, voluntarily or through coercion, to tax collectors and local merchants. The British Mandate government made some attempts to secure tenancy rights for peasants and small owners, but had little success, constrained as it was by the association of the government apparatus with large landowning families, inherited from the Ottomans, and by its preoccupation with Zionist politics (including land settlement and colonisation).

In considering forms of tenancy that were prevalent during the British Mandate, I discuss two studies by Issam Ashour and Yacov Firestone that present contrasting images of sharecropping in the British period. Ashour's main argument is that sharecropping (metayage) hindered the development of agriculture and its commercialisation while Firestone's study depicted a much more 'positive' role for sharecropping in agricultural development.

Chapter four considers the immediate effects of the partition of 1948 for the economy of the West Bank, and agriculture in particular. Problems centred around the loss of fertile land to Israel resulting from the armistice line agreement, and the massive influx of peasant refugees from Western Palestine. These new pressures led to an

expansion of land under cultivation, and in many cases an intensification of agricultural production (above all on irrigated land).

For example, the Western Jordan Valley, sparsely populated and cultivated before 1948 underwent a major process of expansion and commoditisation of agriculture. The most important condition of this process was the influx of refugees who were skilled farmers, and whose labour power could be mobilised through sharecropping and/or their recruitment as agricultural wage labourers. These refugees were important to the growth of agriculture in the northern plain as well as in the Western Jordan Valley. The rapid growth of population in 1948 also stimulated the production of agricultural commodities for the internal market on the demand side, as well as the supply side where fairly labour intensive cultivation was required given the terrain of much of the West Bank and the lack of mechanisation.

Chapter five looks at land distribution, although this is severely limited by the lack of adequate official or other studies. The great majority of farmers in the West Bank were small landowners (49 dunums and below) and/or sharecroppers.<sup>1</sup> The result of two censuses in 1953 and 1965 suggest a growth in the number of smallholdings, and perhaps some consolidation as the total number of holdings (and especially large holdings) declined. Certainly the prevalent picture of West Bank agriculture was of small peasant farming (Bull, Vivian, A. 1975, p.66; Hilal, J., 1974, p.157; Amiri, Anan, 1981, p.71).

This chapter also discusses irrigation and machinery as other important means of agricultural production. Irrigation was limited in the West Bank as a whole, but did expand during the period to cover 8.15 per cent of cultivated land by 1965, mostly in the Western Jordan Valley and the northern plain. The ownership and use of agricultural machinery (tractors, mechanical harvesters, etc.) was very limited.

Chapters six, seven and eight are based largely on my own fieldwork (which is described in chapter two). In chapter six I present a description of sharecropping arrangements in relation to the types of inputs provided and share entitlements of both parties in sharecropping contracts. One useful and interesting finding is that sharecropping arrangements tended to vary with the kind of crop grown (e.g., grains, vegetables, olives, vines). Further, sharecropping emerged as a highly flexible means of allocating (and reallocating) land to labour in agricultural production.

I attempt to assess the extent of sharecropping from official statistical data (which were not very helpful), and from my own fieldwork (despite the inability to construct a systematically random sample). Sharecropping was largely practised in the production of vegetables, grains, olives and grapes. With the exception of cereals (grown largely for subsistence with small, mostly local, sales) the other crops were quite specialised commodities for the domestic market and export.

Bananas and citrus were the two major crops not grown through sharecropping. They were produced mostly by large and medium landowners in the Western Jordan Valley and northern plain, who possessed some capital and were able to hire wage labour. They were relatively more profitable than other crops because of the value of bananas and citrus fruits as export commodities. While they yield only an annual crop unlike vegetables which can provide two or even three crops a year on well irrigated land, they are also less labour intensive. Moreover, the refugees who became available as a source of cheap labour, were often experienced in banana and citrus cultivation from the original areas in coastal Palestine.

Thus, banana and citrus production was concentrated in plantations run as capitalist enterprises. To a lesser extent, some vegetable growing was run on a capitalist basis, especially in the south of the Western Jordan Valley and in the vicinity of Jericho, where refugee camps provided a regular source of cheap wage labour.

Chapter seven shows that all crops grown through sharecropping (with the exception of cereals) were highly commercial crops. The process of commercialisation of agriculture is illustrated with reference to growing specialisation of production in terms of agro-economic zones (described in chapter two) and of units of production, and to the growth of the internal market.

Specialisation occurred through bringing new land into cultivation for

particular commercial crops, the intensification of production (e.g. with the expansion of vegetable growing), and the spread of crops new to the area (e.g. citrus which was introduced largely after 1948).

Farmers owning small plots of land who wanted to expand their commodity production, rented in additional land through sharecropping or cash tenancy. Farmers owning land in the hills where they grew olive and other tree crops (interplanted with grains and pulses) rented in irrigated plots in the plains for commercial vegetable growing (this was largely in the northern plain).

The growth of commercial agriculture, while some of it was for export, was associated with the expansion of the domestic market.

'(the) "home market" grows as a result of the conversion into a commodity of the production of commercial, entrepreneur farming, on the one hand, and the conversion into a commodity of the labour power sold by the badly-off peasants, on the other (Lenin, V.I., 1977, p.72).

In the case of the West Bank, commoditisation expanded across various forms of production (simple commodity production, and small and larger scale capitalist production; see chapter eight). Sharecropping as a mechanism of allocating land was important in this process with 'capitalist' as well as 'peasant' sharecroppers renting in land for specialised commodity production, much of which depended on the availability of cheap wage labour in the countryside (widely employed by small and medium, as well as large, farmers).

This chapter also explains the role of merchant capital, above all in the form of commission agents (who often advanced credit on production expenses) in linking the circuits of production, circulation and realisation of agricultural commodities.

Chapter eight attempts to analyse sharecropping in its entirety taking the 'form of production' as the theoretical object of analysis and 'units' of production as the concrete object of analysis. With this focus, it is possible to examine different conditions of existence, and structure, of the three basic stages of any production process: the assembling and combining of means of production, the immediate process of production, and the realisation and distribution of the product (in this case, in the form of agricultural commodities).

Taking this approach, it emerges that sharecropping as a mode of access to land (a form of tenancy) is compatible, and can be incorporated, with diverse forms of production. For example, farming on sharecropped land may be done with family labour only, or with family labour combined with wage labour (whether casually, seasonally, or permanently employed), or with hired labour only (including salaried managerial labour). The types (and combinations) of labour utilised is, in fact, a major criterion in the characterisation of forms of production as simple commodity production, or small or larger scale capitalist production.

While chapter eight represents a further stage in the analysis of the fieldwork data, chapter nine summarises the main findings and the issues they raise, relating those to some wider debates about sharecropping and agrarian change.

#### Notes

1. 1 dunum = one tenth of a hectare.

## CHAPTER TWO

## FIELDWORK: LOCATION AND METHODS

2.1 The Geography of Palestine

Palestine lies on the western edge of the continent of Asia, at the eastern extremity of the Mediteranean Sea between latitude  $20^{\circ} 30'$  and  $33^{\circ} 15'$  North, and longitude  $34^{\circ} 15'$  and  $35^{\circ} 40'$  East. It is bounded in the north by the Republics of Lebanon and Syria, on the West by the Mediteranean Sea, on the south by the Egyptian Province of Sinai and on the east by the Kingdom of Jordan.

Geographically the country may be divided into four land types.

- a) The plains which include the coastal plains extending from Ras-el Nakura in the north (on the Lebanese border) to Gaza in the south (on the Egyptian border). The coastal plain possesses the most fertile land with an abundance of underground water and plentiful rainfall. To the south east of Haifa a broad plain runs down to the Jordan valley, which includes part of one of the West Bank agro-economic zones, the northern plain.
- b) The hill country comprising the hills of Galilee, Nablus and Jerusalem and which includes the highland agro-economic zone of the West Bank.
- c) The Jordan Valley extending from the Syrian frontier south to the Dead Sea. The northernmost section was considered as a separate area, known as the "Hula Basin".

- d) The Negeb, an immense triangle with its apex at the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea, and covering nearly half the land area of Palestine. It is mostly very arid and unsuitable for agriculture except for small areas suitable for patch cultivation when there is sufficient rainfall.

Palestine as established by the boundaries of the British Mandate was estimated to be 10,435 square miles of territory, of which 271 square miles are water. The water area consists mostly of Lake Hula, Lake Tiberias and the Dead Sea.

## 2.2 Agro-Economic Zones of the West Bank

To investigate the issues raised in the introductory chapter, fieldwork was needed to establish and understand the different practices in the organisation of agricultural labour and the organisation of the production process during the period of my study (1950-1967).

The West Bank, an area of 2,350 square miles or about one fifth of all Palestine, can be divided into four agro-economic zones: the northern plains, the highlands, the Western Jordan Valley and the eastern slopes. These agro-economic zones are incorporated within three administrative districts: Jerusalem, Nablus and Hebron. Jerusalem and Nablus districts encompass parts of all four agro-economic zones. Hebron district covers part of the highland zone and part of the

eastern slopes. (See map 2.1 and map 2.2 at the end of the chapter which show the boundaries of the West Bank agro-economic zones and administrative districts.)

#### 2.2.1 The Northern Plain Agro-Economic Zone

The plains in this zone are an extension of the coastal plains of Palestine extending eastwards. This zone includes Jenin and Tulkarem subdistricts which are part of the Nablus district. This area is regarded as relatively well served by rainfall, and is also amenable to irrigation. A wide range of produce is grown (grains, pulses, vegetables, citrus, melons, etc.), but only a tiny percentage under irrigation (e.g. 1.5% of cultivated area in Jenin sub-district).

The general pattern of land ownership in the northern plain zone is small to medium holdings, with a few large landholdings.

#### 2.2.2 The Highlands Agro-Economic Zone

This zone, as the map 2.1 shows, covers the largest part of the West Bank. It includes Hebron district, the major part of Jerusalem district (the Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah subdistricts), and Nablus subdistrict. The hilly landscape has prevented both mechanisation and irrigation of agriculture.

The major commercial crops are olives and grapes, olives traditionally being the major crop of the West Bank. Other crops are winter cereal and grain, some vegetables, and fruit trees such as apples, pears and

almonds. Fruit orchards and vineyards are found largely in the southern part of the highlands, in Hebron district.

In Hebron (including its towns and villages) 326,000 dunums are under cultivation out of one million dunum, under one third of the land area, the rest of which is rocky and rugged or suitable only for pasturage (which is largely in the southern part of the eastern slopes).

The general pattern of land ownership is small due to the nature of the terrain and fragmentation. A figure of approximately 10,000 households in Hebron district gives an average holding of 32.6 dunums. Large holdings are concentrated among very few families in Doura town (Hebron district) and its khirabs<sup>1</sup> (hamlets, plural of khirbeh).

### 2.2.3 The Western Jordan Valley Agro-Economic Zone

The southern part of the Western Jordan Valley falls within Jericho subdistrict (Jerusalem district); the northern part of the Western Jordan Valley coincides with the eastern flank of Nablus.

While the soils of the Western Jordan Valley are alkaline, they are not uniform in this respect, and continuous irrigation helps wash away alkaline deposits. This zone contains the bulk of irrigated land and is the most intensively cultivated area because of the relative availability of water (pumped from the Jordan river, some streams and artesian wells). Winter vegetables are grown here more than elsewhere

in the West Bank. However, there remain areas of unirrigated land as well as those only partially irrigated (due to the sharing of irrigation water; see chapter 5).

According to an UNRWA study in 1954 62.1% of cultivated land was fully irrigated, 43.2% partially irrigated and 5.7% unirrigated. This was on a total gross cultivated area of 77,333 dunums and a total net cultivated area of 69,669 dunums, the difference being calculated from a double cropping estimate of 11% (UNRWA 1954, p.9).

Small and medium ownership predominated as in the other zones, although in the Western Jordan Valley the weight of large landownership (200 dunums and above) is greater. Large landownership is largely concentrated in families from Jerusalem, Nablus, Jenin and Tubas and a few sedentarised bedouin.

#### 2.2.4 The Eastern Slopes

This area lies between the highlands and the Western Jordan Valley. This zone is used for pasturage area and some collection of wild plants (e.g. herbs). It is not cultivated, and will not be considered in the analysis that follows.

### 2.3 Village Fieldwork

Field work was conducted in several villages in the West Bank from January to August 1982. Given the political situation prevailing in

the West Bank during this period, it proved difficult to organise and plan, and to carry out, fieldwork as effectively as I hoped. Various sources of fear and suspicion meant that I sometimes came up against a blank wall, even though I am a native of the West Bank. For example, in the course of one interview I was asked "who are you working for, the Jordanians or Israelis?" (as I was asking about the Jordanian period, but at the time of the current Israeli occupation). Generally I tried to make it clear that I was undertaking research because of my academic interest in peasantry, about which I would be writing a thesis.

Because of the circumstances, then, in practice I had to rely for contacts on acquaintances and their familiarity with villages where they have friends, who could help me in conducting interviews with landowners and sharecroppers. This was one limitation on the villages where I could carry out research. Even in some of the villages I was directed to, it proved impossible to conduct interviews for reasons best left unstated here.

On the other hand, in villages where access did prove possible, in addition to interviews about individual circumstances, I tried to acquire as much information as I could on the village as a whole with respect to patterns of ownership and sharecropping arrangements. (In fact, I was to learn as interviewing proceeded that sharecropping arrangements for different kinds of crops were practically the same all over the West Bank, with some slight differences - see chapter 6.)

Another practical difficulty limiting interviews over a wider area was lack of independent means of transport. Often I had to travel by taxi.

In some villages I stayed for four to five days, during which I managed to undertake a good number of interviews. Even staying in a village for several days was not easy. Being a woman, and a Palestinian Arab woman, on my own was not easily understood by the villagers. For this reason (as well as others), I had to be very cautious in every respect. For example in Al-auja village where I stayed five days with an elderly couple, one night I was late in coming back. The wife came looking for me, being worried about me, a woman on my own with a young man who was taking me to different households to carry out interviews (I was considered a 'daughter' by this couple).

### 2.3.1 Topics in Interviews

Interviewing was conducted informally (rather than by questionnaire) in various villages in the three main agro-economic zones with landowners (urban, sedentarised bedouin, peasants), sharecroppers, tenants and a few wage labourers, and was structured around three main topics: patterns of ownership, the organisation of agricultural production, and the marketing of agricultural commodities.

In relation to patterns of ownership, first I tried to ascertain the extent of ownership in terms of small, medium and large. In one of

the early interviews I did, with a sedentarised bedouin landowner in Al-auja village, I learned how to be tactical in asking about landownership.

First, I asked this landowner quite boldly 'how many dunums do you own?'. This made him suspicious, and he immediately asked me why I wanted to know? (I discovered that direct questions on the extent of ownership were immediately understood in relation to land confiscation.) I explained that if he did not want to tell me there was no need, as I did not want to antagonize him. However, in the course of interview, I asked him if he leased all his land to sharecroppers, or if he leased out some plots, and on other plots hires wage labour only. In response to my answer, he said that first I had to know how many dunums he owned so as to know how many were leased out for sharecropping and how many dunums were worked with wage labour. Eventually, he told me how much land he owned. This interesting incident taught me how to proceed in drawing out information about the extent of land ownership without antagonising informants by too direct an approach.

A second issue concerning ownership which I was interested in was whether the land was registered officially in the name of the owner or not, not all land was registered because of the complex issue of the status of miri land (see chapter 3, chapter 5).

The second main topic was organisation of agricultural production. Here relevant questions included who cultivates the land (family

labour only; family labour and casual wage labour; hired wage labour only; or worked by sharecroppers and/or cash tenants). Also relevant here was whether the kind of crop grown was a determinant factor in the method of labour organisation (for example, I learned that vegetable growing was largely on land leased out through sharecropping, while citrus was worked with wage labour).

As sharecropping was widely practiced in West Bank agriculture, a second set of questions was related to sharecropping. I was concerned with arrangements between the sharecropper and the landowner, that is, the contribution of inputs and other costs by each party; with the process of production, and particularly the organisation of labour (is labour supplied by the sharecropper and his family alone? Is family labour supplemented by regular or seasonal wage labour? Is land sharecropped in worked exclusively with wage labour?).

I also wanted to learn, of course, how the crop is divided after harvest, i.e. how it (or its value) is shared between sharecropper and landlord when the crop is sold to commission agents. If sharecroppers receive credit advances in cash or in kind from commission agents during the period of cultivation, how is such credit repaid? What is the relation between the sharecropper and the commission agent? Similarly, I wanted to find out about the conditions and rates of cash tenancy of land, where applicable.

The third topic was related to the marketing of agricultural commodities. When the crop is sold to commission agents and/or

merchants, how is it marketed and through whom, whether bound for the internal or external market. To obtain information on marketing, I interviewed several commission agents, and also several large landowners who are involved in marketing.

### 2.3.2 Fieldwork Villages

In the northern plain agro-economic zone I visited Anabta town, Arrabeh village and Kafr Labad. Administratively they are in Nablus district, Anabta and Kafr Labad in Tulkarem subdistrict, and Arabeh in Jenin subdistrict.

- a) Anabta (February and April, 6 interviews) is considered a relatively developed town. The informants' response was very good; they gave me all the information I needed without any hesitation.
- b) In Arrabeh (August, 3 interviews) the response was similar except for one informant who was a wakil (agent) of some large holdings in the village that belong to a large landowning family resident in the town of Jenin. He was somewhat reluctant in giving me information.
- c) Kafr Labad (April, 1 interview) is an example of a village where unanticipated local political conditions prevented me from conducting the number of interviews I had hoped to do.

In the highlands I went to the villages of Zababdeh, Saffa, and 'Ain Siniya, the small towns of Doura, Halhoul, and Khirbet kreiseh (a hamlet).

- a) Zabadeh village (May, 7 interviews) is in Jenin subdistrict of Nablus district. It is on the border of the hills and the plain but has more of the characteristics of the highland zone. In this village, in addition to information on land ownership and agriculture during the Jordanian period, I was able to obtain some historical information on the village before 1948 (see chapter 3).
- b) Saffa village (June, 3 interviews) falls in the west of Ramallah subdistrict of Jerusalem district. Saffa was a frontier village which lost land to Israel with the new boundaries (see chapter 4).
- c) 'Ain Siniya village (August, 1 interview) is also in Ramallah subdistrict though in its eastern part. In this village I had one interview with a large landowner from Jerusalem city residing in 'Ain Siniya. In addition to information about his landholding, he gave me information on the village as a whole.
- d) Doura, Halhoul and Khirbet kreiseh are in Hebron district. In each I did one interview: in Dura with a large landowner in February, in Khirbet Krieseh with a large landowner in April, and with a medium landowner in Halhoul in May.

In the Western Jordan Valley I went to Jericho city, Al-auja village, Nweimeh Al-Tahta, Aqbat Jabr refugee camp, and Froush Beit Dajan.

- a) Jericho (January and May, 6 interviews) is a city with citrus and banana plantations and vegetable and cereal growing. It possesses large landholdings, on which capitalist enterprises are prevalent.
- b) Aqbat Jabr (April, 2 interviews) is a refugee camp in the vicinity of Jericho, and provides the large landholdings of Jericho with a

reservoir of cheap labour whether as wage labour or sharecroppers. Adjacent to Aqbat Jabr is a large landholding of 20,000 dunums, of which 10,000 dunums were continuously cultivated. I interviewed one of the heirs to this land who also manages it. I also interviewed one of the sharecroppers who leases in land from this holding. At the same time he is employed as a wakil (agent), for recruiting both labour to work on the citrus and banana plantations, and sharecroppers for vegetable and cereal growing (i.e. all within this single massive holding).

- c) Froush Beit Dajan (June, 1 interview) is in the east of Nablus subdistrict. Ownership of land in this small village is divided between a family from Nablus city which owns a large tract of land, and small-scale ownership by the peasants from the village.
- d) Nweimah Al-Tahta (February, 2 interviews) is in Jericho subdistrict of Jerusalem. It is a small village of which half is owned by a Jerusalemite family, and the rest by sedentarised bedouin smallholders.
- e) Al-auja village (April, 18 interviews) is also in Jericho subdistrict. It was here that I was able to do most extensive and intensive interviewing (see chapter 4). In addition to the eighteen interviews with Al-auja owners (sedentarised bedouin and urban) and refugee sharecroppers, I did another three interviews with sedentarised bedouin landowners from the Zor area (Zor area is on the Western Bank of the river Jordan. After 1967, Israel evicted landowners from Zor and made it a military zone. Some of the Zor landowners after 1967 came to live in Al-auja village and

undertook sharecropping.) Interviewing them, I obtained further information about agriculture before 1967.

As pointed out, in the very difficult conditions of fieldwork, the selection of places for interview and the distribution of interviews between places, was largely dependent on personal contacts through acquaintances and relatives with sharecroppers, landowners and labourers who they knew. However, I did try to cover as far as possible villages and towns in the three different zones. Also, in villages where I was limited to one interview, I used the occasion to obtain information about patterns of ownership, and methods of cultivation and marketing, for the village as a whole.

Generally, responsiveness and reliability of those I interviewed was very good, with a few exceptions noted above. Being introduced to sharecroppers and landowners by people who they know made them more relaxed and ready to provide me with information. Some sharecroppers I contacted introduced me to others, whom they thought would be able to give me additional useful information. Interviews lasted from one to three hours; the longer interviews tended to be with those who had more detailed historical knowledge. Interviews were conducted in people's homes in the late afternoon or evening, when agricultural work for the day was finished.

## 2.4 Other Data Sources

### 2.4.1 Other Interviews

In addition to interviews with landowners, sharecroppers, tenants and wage labourers, I interviewed a number of other relevant individuals, commission agents and officials dealing with agriculture.

In Jericho city, I spoke at length with a group of agronomists in the Department of Agriculture, who provided me with information on the agricultural development of the Western Jordan Valley in the 1950s and 1960s, including its pattern of landownership, methods of cultivation and marketing. In Jericho I also went to the Jericho cooperative marketing society for agricultural commodities. This was established before 1967, and its founders and first members were large producers of bananas. Here I obtained information about the society's functions before 1967.

In Hebron city I interviewed the head of the agricultural department for the district, who was a useful source on landownership and agricultural organisation in the district generally. In Hebron city there is a factory for tomato canning and I interviewed its manager about the factory's activities.

The information obtained from these sources is incorporated in the following chapters of the thesis.

#### 2.4.2 Official Data Sources

Finding and using official data was not as easy as I thought it would be. A main reason is that my research deals with the Jordanian period 1950-1967, prior to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. I had expected to find sufficiently good statistical data to build up a general picture of the West Bank during my period of study, concerning population, landownership, agricultural practices, the extent of agricultural wage labour, trade data (agricultural imports and exports), and so on. This, however, was both very time consuming and frustrating for various reasons.

I was able to find some official data in a research centre in East Jerusalem called the "Arab Studies Forum". What I could not find there I tried to get in Amman, through the Jordanian Department of Statistics and the Agricultural Ministry.

In the Department of Statistics I was given a Report on Agricultural Census for the year 1965 that they had extra copies of. Also I worked in their library, looking for more data which turned out to be of little use because most data for 1950 to 1967 aggregated the West and East Banks of Jordan. Some statistical data on the West Bank alone which I found, I had to sit and copy out because the photocopy machine was not working during the time I was in Amman, and I was not permitted to borrow anything from the library for photocopying elsewhere. In the Agricultural Ministry, I was able to buy the Agricultural Atlas of Jordan which has information on the West Bank

between 1961 and 1967 concerning the types, land areas and distribution of crops grown.

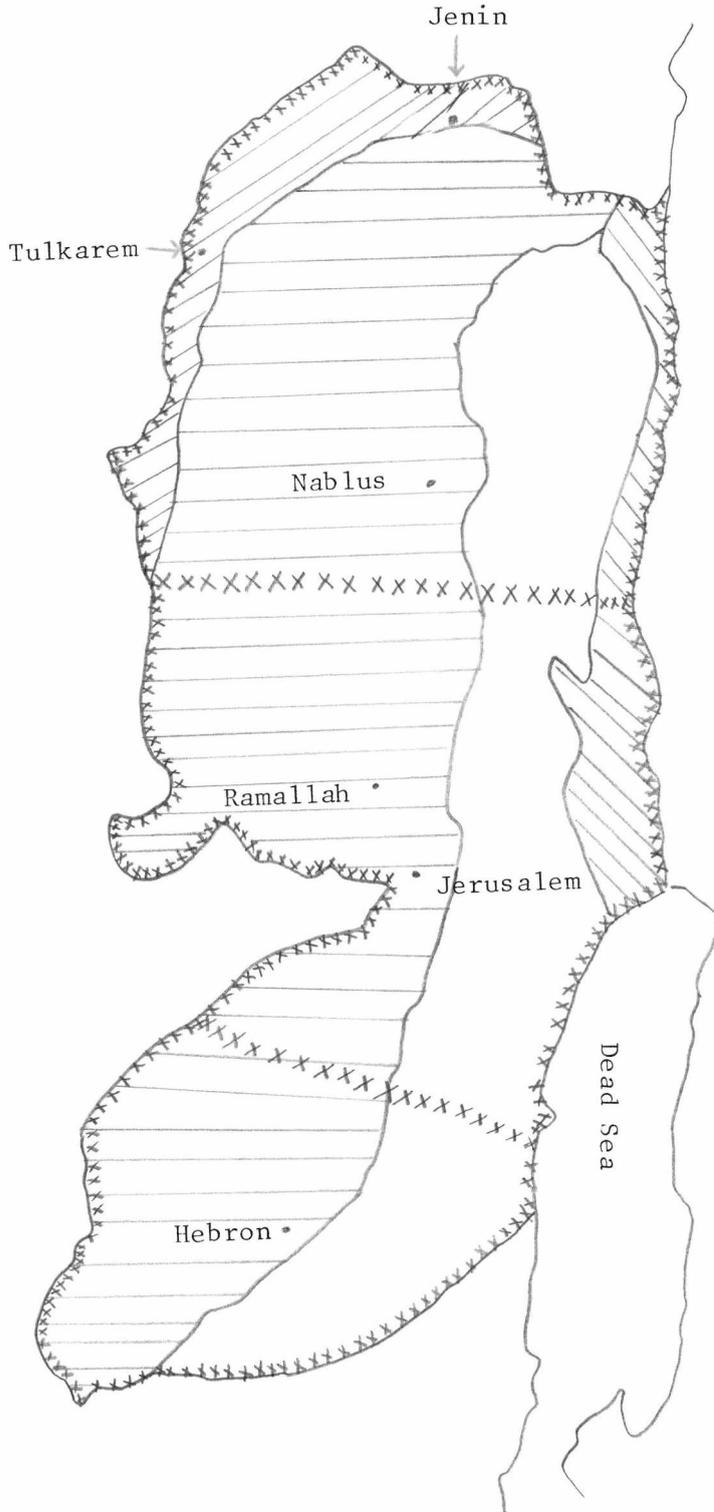
Generally, however, the official data were not of much help as will be seen below. Even when data were available they had many problems, for example, statistical categories and terminology for various categories of land and land transactions were very imprecise and confusing, and there were commonly major discrepancies among the figures presented. It is also very likely that significant data such as those on land sales suffered from under-recording or mis-recording.

In the course of the thesis where I try to use some of these official data, their problems and limitations are indicated.

#### Notes

1. Interview with the head of the Agricultural Department of Hebron, March, 1982.

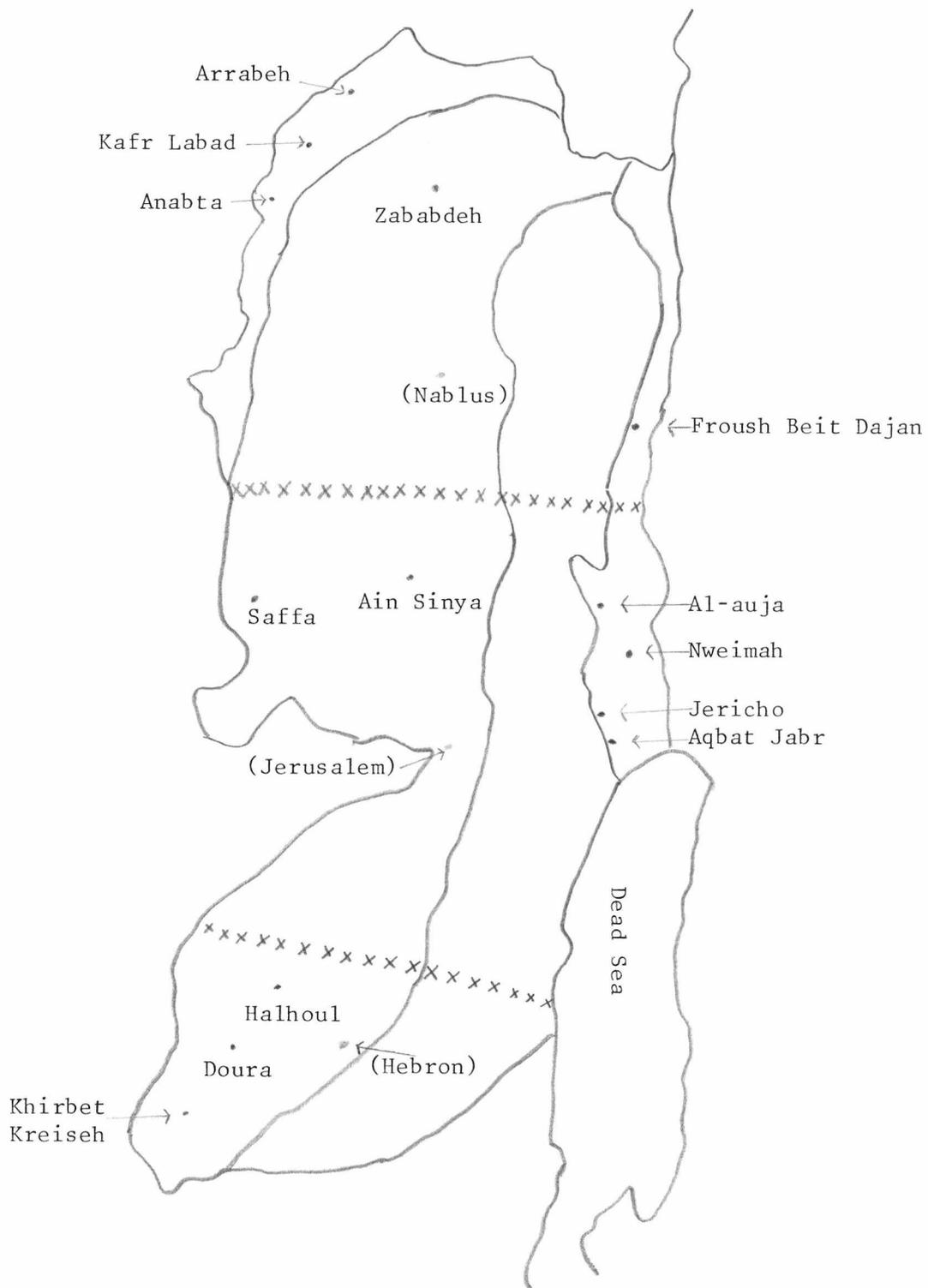
Map 2.1 Administrative Districts and Agro-economic Zones



- Code:    xxxxx    District boundaries
-  Northern Plain
  -  Highlands
  -  Western Jordan Valley
  -  Eastern Slopes

Source:- Numbers on W.B. agriculture; Shehadeh Dejani, March 1980.

Map 2.2 Fieldwork Villages



Administrative and Zonal Boundaries as in Map 2.1

Appendix 1 : Agro-Economic Zones, Districts, Sub-Districts, Fieldwork Villages

| <u>Agro-economic Zones</u> | <u>District</u> | <u>Sub-district</u> | <u>Fieldwork Villages</u>                  |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--|
| Northern plain             | Nablus          | Jenin               | Arrabeh                                    |
|                            | Nablus          | Tulkarem            | Anabta,<br>Kfar Labed                      |
| Highlands                  | Nablus          | Jenin               | Zababdeh *                                 |
|                            | Nablus          | Nablus              | -  |
|                            | Hebron          | -                   | Halhoul, Doura,<br>Khirbet Kreiseh         |
|                            | Jerusalemn      | Jerusalem           | -  |
|                            | Jerusalem       | Ramallah            | Saffa, Ain Siniya                          |
| Western Jordan Valley      | Jerusalem       | Jericho             | Jericho **<br>Nweimeh, Al-auja<br>Al-Tahta |
|                            | Nablus          | Nablus              | Froush Beit Dajan                          |

\* Zabadeh spans the border of the northern plain and the highland zones

\*\* Some farming takes place within the boundaries of the town of Jericho

## Appendix 2 : Agricultural Calendar for Crops largely grown on Sharecropping

| Months               | Ploughing   | Sowing/Planting   | Weeding   | Harvesting                                       |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|
| November<br>December | Preparatory ploughing<br>(after the vegetable<br>(harvesting)for winter<br>cereals          |   |   | Harvesting of second<br>rotation of vegetables   |
| December<br>January  | Ploughing   | Sowing winter crops   |   |  |
| January<br>April     |   | Growing period of winter<br>and summer cereals<br>(considered light on<br>the soil and does not<br>affect fertility of soil |   |  |
| February             | First preparatory<br>ploughing for summer<br>crops: sesame and<br>durra                     |   |   |  |
| March                | Second preparatory<br>ploughing for summer<br>crops   | Sowing chick peas   | Weeding among cereals<br>- preparation for<br>vegetable growing |  |
| April                | Third preparatory<br>ploughing for sesame   | Sowing durra -<br>vegetables are<br>planted   | Weeding goes on   |  |
| May                  |   | Sowing sesame   |   | Harvesting barley and<br>some pulsees            |
| June<br>July         | Ploughing the land<br>after cereal<br>harvesting in<br>preparation for<br>vegetable farming |   |   | Harvesting of wheat<br>and some other pulses     |
| August               |   | Another rotation<br>of vegetable growing  |   | Durra harvesting<br>and vegetables               |
| September<br>October |   |   |   | Sesame harvest,<br>threshing durra<br>and sesame |
| October<br>November  |   |   |   | Olive harvest                                    |

## CHAPTER THREE

### LAND AND LANDHOLDING BEFORE 1948

Palestine has undergone various political, social and economic changes in the course of the last two centuries or so, which greatly affected the organisation of agriculture and the structure of agrarian society. These changes resulted from successive conquests and administrations by the Ottoman Turks (1517-1917) and the British Mandate (1917-1948).

Palestine like other parts of the Middle East was characterised by forms of land tenure resulting from the different conquests that the region has experienced since the early Islamic period (640-1099 A.D.), when Islamic law structured the land system. The discussion here of the Ottoman period and the British Mandate period will focus on land tenure categories, land distribution and forms of tenancy and their effects for the organisation of agricultural production.

#### 3.1 The Ottoman and British Periods

##### 3.1.1 Earlier Ottoman Period 1517-1839: A Brief Outline

The establishment of Ottoman rule following continuous conquests had several limited functions; externally it was confined to the defence of the provinces and the further expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Internally, Ottoman administration was concerned with maintaining order, levying taxes, and organising a judicial system. These

functions were carried out by the army giving the state a military-bureaucratic character. The state thus had to maintain the livelihood of the military groups and other state employees, which it did through grants of land as the major source of revenue and income.

The state considered itself the owner of land, possessing the right to levy taxes on the Empire's property. The state apportioned some of the agricultural land to its officials, both military and civilian, in exchange for the services they provided. This is not like European feudalism, as these Ottoman officials were not given the right of ownership to land, but the right to levy taxes from peasants cultivating the land. The latter's right to cultivate the land was recognised as long as they paid the taxes to the fief holder (Musa, Saber, 1979, pp. 75-76).

Later many of these officials or sipahis (originally: Cavalrymen) tried to transform their fiefs into private property, particularly when they started to lose some of their military importance because of the introduction of fire arms. At this stage the government started to take back many of these fiefs, some of which were granted to courtiers, in return for bribes or payments, or were leased out to tax farmers.

Moreover, multazims (tax farmers), were assigned by the state to collect taxes from all peasants in Palestine. These tax farmers retained anything over and above the amount of tax fixed by the state which they could extract from the peasants. Tax farmers were

recruited from the most powerful families in villages, where "lands for example were not registered to individuals but to communities that were considered the basic administrative units. Within these communities, modes of mutual aid and communal interaction developed to offer some limited means of protection to the individual" (Migdal, S. Joel, 1980, p.10).

However, this means of protection was not necessarily secure. "Rural shaykhs (chieftans who usually inherited their positions) formed alliances with the Ottoman rulers in order to gain authorisation to collect taxes within the village. Such an authorisation enabled resourcefull shaykhs to wield considerable power in the Palestinian countryside, often with private armies" (ibid, p.11).

### 3.1.2 Later Ottoman Period 1839-1914 (Tanzimat Period)

This period witnessed administrative reforms leading to the establishment of definite boundaries for the provinces, and the establishment of districts and municipalities with local representation (Badran, Nabil, 1972, p.123).

One of the main reforms during this period was the Ottoman land code of 1858 (during the second phase of Tanzimat reforms). The main purpose of the land code was that every piece of land should be registered and a title deed issued to the holder. Warriner points out that

"a study of the development of the land code in the course of the nineteenth century suggests that these divisions of land really had an important purpose - the collection of revenue. The real purpose of the code was to tax every piece of land, and therefore to establish clearly the title to it by registering its legal owner as a miri owner. The state's claim to ownership really meant only that the state did not recognise ownership unless the title was registered and the land therefore taxable" (Warriner, D., 1966, p.73).

In Froush Beit Dajan a village to the north west of the Jiftlik, during the Ottoman period (and possibly predating it) the lands of the village were not intensively cultivated by the villagers. In years of good rainfall the villagers cultivated a shkara (a small piece of land) for their subsistence.

Towards the end of their rule the Ottoman government started collecting taxes on agricultural land which the villagers of Froush Beit Dajan could not afford. This being so, lands were registered in the name of the Jiftlik ma'amur (a turkish governor) so that peasants could avoid paying taxes (i.e. indirectly lands became state land). At some point the inhabitants of a nearby village Beta, with the help of the Nablus ma'amur, seized these lands by force. The villagers of Froush Beit Dajan eventually stood together against Beta and regained their lands.

To continue cultivating the village land, which was registered in the name of the Jiftlik ma'amur, the peasants had to pay him taxes but it appears these were only nominal. This indicates that the Ottoman government was not strong enough, but they were interested only in securing revenue for the state.

The above case sheds some light on the complexity of the issue of land tenure and the confusion that it led to in later periods.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the main concern in decreeing the land code of 1858 was to ensure more revenue, to meet the debts that the Ottoman state had accumulated. This debt problem was increasingly accentuated by pressure from the European powers as the Ottoman social formation was incorporated into the capitalist economy. In trying to increase revenue, the Ottomans wanted to eliminate the multazims (tax farmers), and to assign government officials to collect taxes more directly from the peasantry. They also encouraged the formation of large landed estates with the hope of developing more commercialised agriculture (Tamari, S., 1983, pp.29-30).

The land code of 1858 promulgated as part of the Tanzimat was of little benefit to Palestine's peasantry. The Fellahin of Palestine

"rightly fearing that the tax collector and army recruiter would make effective use of the new registers and hardly understanding the enormous importance of the new records and deeds to their own future, when the implementing regulations of the code began to be applied, they evaded massively and stubbornly. The least harmful course a peasant could take was to register the land in the name of a fictitious or long dead individual" (Reudy, John, 1971, p.124).

The Fellahin moreover, allowed local merchants (of whom some were tax farmers) to register whole villages in their own names. In fact, during this later period of Ottoman rule, peasants tended to shift

their allegiances from the shaykhs to form alliances with city dwellers.

"Tax-farming, with collection rights now going to the highest bidders instead of automatically to the shaykh, was increasingly in the hands of urban forces, and war powers and judicial powers were also passing from the hands of the shaykhs. The new position of mukhtar (village leader) was mandated, creating weaker and more accountable village chiefs" (Migdal, Joel, 1980, p.11).

Land came to be possessed by city dwellers (merchants and/or tax farmers) who registered large tracts of land in their names, due to the ignorance of the peasants and their fear that tabu (land registration) meant that their male children would be recruited for military service. (In registering land information about all family members had to be given.) Another reason was the inability of peasants to pay their taxes, in which case they could be dispossessed of their land. Thus, some peasants preferred to sell their land to city merchants, continuing to work it as sharecroppers and tenants, in which case the new owner was responsible for payment of tax (Badran, Nabil, 1972, pp.123-124).

According to the land code, land could not be registered communally but should be partitioned and registered individually (village land had been largely under masha'a or communal tenure). The process of division and registration was too costly for most peasants. Merchants and/or tax farmers offered to buy the land or part of it and bear the expenses of partition and registration.

Further,

"unregistered lands were reclaimed by the Ottoman authorities, who auctioned them off at incredibly low prices to urban notables. Where peasants had jointly registered their lands under the name of a single elder, they often found that the elder's heirs later claimed full ownership, thus changing the peasants into mere tenants. Powerful notables also turned peasants into tenants, and religious foundations absorbed lands into their other holding" (Migdal, Joel, 1980, p.13).

However, some peasants seized their land and tried to pay the taxes by any means they could find, for example, by cutting down trees, mainly olive trees, and selling the wood in the cities, where there was strong demand for timber (Badrag, Nabil, 1972, p.124).

The purchase of land by merchants and tax farmers did not make the life of the peasants better. On the contrary it deteriorated. Now sharecroppers and tenants, their shares were very low and they had to borrow money from money lenders (some of whom might be the new owners of the land). Thus thousands of peasants from the 1870's onwards lost their minimal rights of tenure, becoming increasingly subject to control by landowners who were often landlord, tax collector, and moneylender combined (Reudy, John, p.124). These conditions facilitated a combination of absentee landlordism and sharecropping (Tamari, S. 1983, p.30).

### 3.1.3 British Mandate Period (1917-1948)

With the advent of the British Mandate, Palestine became a separate entity, from Greater Syria, of which it formed part during the Ottoman Period. It was largely a rural society, with 71 per cent of the

Palestinian population living in the countryside (Miller, Ylana, N., 1980, p.127).

The main interest of Britain in Palestine was in relation to the protection of its trade route to India via the Suez Canal. However, since the advent of their Mandate their purpose was also to establish a Jewish population and state in Palestine.

In the latter period of Ottoman rule (1858 onwards), as mentioned earlier, the social basis of Ottoman administration shifted from the shaykhs towards urban merchants (cum landowners). The British, in seeking political alliances to facilitate their rule, maintained the Ottoman policy and allied themselves with the leading urban families.<sup>2</sup> One major effort of British Mandate government was thus to intensify and further institutionalise many of the patterns begun in the Ottoman period.

A landowning family whose status was strengthened by the British Mandate government was the Hussayni family, one of whose members was appointed President of a newly constituted Supreme Muslim council (1922), which had wide control and discretion in the use of considerable funds (Migdal, p.20).

"Links between the Hussayni clan and a pyramidal structure beneath it tied even the smallest Palestinian villages into political life. Leaders in small villages attached their clans to those in larger villages, and the latter were tied directly to major city families" (Migdal, p.21).

Another large landowning family, also from Jerusalem, was in competition for influence and established links with villages in Hebron, Haifa and Acre, while the Hussayni's network was most extensive in the districts of Jerusalem, Jaffa and Nablus (Migdal, p.21).

The important issue here is that these notable families, while competing with each other, were gaining additional influence through their political alliances with the British Mandate government. At the same time, "they still maintained their major basis of power and social control-ownership of land" (Migdal, p.21). Their ownership of land was historically rooted in the Ottoman period when they had usually been major tax farmers.

At the end of the Ottoman period, landownership and land tenure were in a state of confusion as a result of the chaotic conditions of land registration in the late nineteenth century. First of all, no cadastral survey was ever conducted. Second, as observed, the fellahin of Palestine often failed to register their land, or either sold or otherwise disposed of land in the face of tax burdens they could not sustain. In the face of this confusion, the British Mandate government closed the Land Registry offices in 1918, declaring all transactions in land null and void (Stein, Kenneth, W., 1980, in Migdal, p.238).

In 1920, the Land Registry offices were re-opened by the Land Transfer Ordinance of 1920, following the establishment of the Civil

Government. The main objectives of the Ordinance were: "to reduce speculation in land, to assure the intent of a person or company to cultivate a holding, and to maintain the small owner and tenant on the land he worked. To oversee the implementation of these objectives, it was legally required for the district commissioner to give his consent to all land transfers" (ibid, p.239).

Restrictions in this Ordinance included a prohibition on sales of land exceeding 3,000 Egyptian pounds in value or 300 dunums in area. Also, the transferee should start cultivating the land immediately, and the transferee, if in possession, or the tenant in occupation should retain land which is sufficient for the maintenance of himself and his family (Palestine, Government of, 1930, "Hope-Simpson Report", p.35). This was not favoured by Arab landowners, "regarding it as having been introduced to keep down the price of land and to throw land which is in the market into the hands of the Jews at a low price ..." (ibid, p.35).

This Ordinance was amended in 1920-21 when the Director of Land was given the authority to grant permission for dispositions of land, if satisfied that the transferor had a title, "provided that, in the case of agricultural land which is leased, he shall also satisfy himself that any tenant in occupation will retain sufficient land in the district or elsewhere for the maintenance of himself and his family ..." (Hope-Simpson, p.35).

This Ordinance in fact remained a dead letter, as it was easily circumvented. For example, landlords who wanted to sell their land evicted tenants, or the landlord or purchaser paid compensation to the tenant to withdraw (Hope-Simpson, p.35).

In 1939 another Ordinance was enacted with the aim of

"protecting the cultivator who has been at least two years in a holding, by requiring the landlord to give him a full year's notice before the tenancy can be terminated or before the rent may be increased, and by providing for compensation for the tenant for disturbance and for improvements, which he has carried out himself. It provides further that where the tenant has cultivated a holding for five years or more, the landlord shall pay him as additional compensation a sum equal to one year's average rent" (ibid, p.36)

Hope-Simpson also noted that "there is no record of tenancies in Palestine, as there is, for instance, of agricultural tenancies in India" (p.36).

The British Government thus attempted to provide some protection for tenants. However, the effectiveness of their measures in this respect was impeded because of the generally complicated politics of Jewish settlement and the moves towards establishing a Jewish state.

### 3.2 Land Tenure Categories<sup>3</sup>

The Ottoman land code of 1858 mentioned five categories of land: mulk (privately owned land), miri (state owned land), waqf (under the supervision of religious institutions), metruke (abandoned land), and

mawat ("dead" or uncultivated land). Of these, ultimate ownership of miri, metruke, and mawat is vested in the hands of the state (Grannot, 1952, p.87). Miri land

"was the most important from the point of view of extent; up to this day it includes by far the larger portion of the landed property of Palestine, and amongst them some of the fertile land. Under this head come first and foremost the lands in the plains and valleys, which at various times were transferred by the state to whole villages, and sometimes also to individuals; that is to say, they were handed over to them to be cultivated in return for payment of the tithe. The same applies to most of the properties in the Sharon, in the Valley of Jezreel, and in other valleys in the country, which up to this day are registered as miri land. There was a great deal of miri land in the hills also" (Grannot, 1952, p.88).

Concerning the extent of miri land Grannot was referring to the British Mandate period and even after. In fact, even during the Jordanian period not all lands in the West Bank were registered with the Land Registry office. Land started to be surveyed for the purpose of issuing title deeds to the occupiers, but by the end of Jordanian rule only 40 per cent of the owners of land had acquired titles and a further 10 per cent were in the process of registration. However, the claimants to land as yet unregistered could acquire a document (hujah) stating that they have been cultivating the land and paying taxes).

In relation to the practical status of miri land, it is worth quoting Warriner:

"The owner of the land on miri title, in theory a tenant of the state, is really in just the same position as the owner with the mulk title, since he pays no rent to the state and his title to the land can be inherited by his legal heirs; he can also sell the land. There are no restrictions on the way the land is farmed, with the one exception that if miri land is left uncultivated for five years the owner's title lapses" (Warriner, D., 1966, p.73).

Grannot puts the status of miri land thus:

"In its legal aspect miri land is looked on to this day as a kind of gift, the transfer of rights as a sort of favour. On this theory the right of ownership remains with the state, only the right of usage and the right of transfer - apart from the transfer by will - are reserved to the owner of the property, as long as he tills the grounds" (Grannot, p.90).

The principal point, then, is that miri land was treated as de facto individual property, whether cultivated by peasant 'owners' or used by landlords through sharecropping or tenancy, or through the hire of wage labour.

"The land is passed from one generation to another according to Muslim law. If the land remains uncultivated for a period of five years, or if there are no heirs, the land can be declared Mahlul, meaning state-controlled, with the intention of redistributing it. This process has never occurred during the Turkish or the British occupation of Palestine" (Zureik, E., 1979, p.40).

Two other important forms of landholding, which affected the organisation of agricultural production were Masha'a (land held communally) and Waqf (land owned by religious institutions).

Masha'a was the largest category after miri land.<sup>4</sup> Miri and Masha'a were two of the original basic forms of land tenure in Palestine, the third being mulk land. Masha'a is communally or jointly held but not necessarily jointly or communally cultivated. Masha'a land, which existed mainly in villages was distributed among all villagers but not necessarily in equal portions. Masha'a land originated so long ago that it is unknown exactly when

"land of a village was divided into a number of shares (ashum), one or more of which was assigned to each male member of the village. Very possibly these shares were let out by Shaykhs or Headmen in return for a portion of the produce. On the death of the assignees, his heirs inherited his sahm, each being entitled to a fraction of the sahm determined by the number of heirs. In each succeeding generation the process was repeated. Sometimes by purchase or other means two or more shares might be amalgamated. Hence at the present time a man may be entitled, for example, to 1/17 of 3/23 of 2/9 of a sahm. It is said that the full denomination of such a fraction sometimes contains ten figures" (Doukhan, M., 1938, p.91).

Masha's could be redistributed from time to time, usually between every two to five years, if the co-owners felt this was necessary.

"Masha'a ownership represents a stage of transition between the completely communal property system of the semi-nomadic tribe on the desert borders and the completely divided property system which exists in the settled zone along the coast line; and it is limited to the rain-fed cereal zone. Its basic idea, the communal ownership of land, is clearly tribal in origin" (Warriner, D., p.75).

Under Masha'a every individual in the community, or more precisely every family gets a share over which it has the right of hak el muzara'a, (right of sowing or cultivating i.e. right of usufruct). As Warriner pointed out, the shares do not have to be equal and the family can sell its share to somebody else, although what is sold is not a specific plot of land but the right of using a definite proportion of the communal land. On Masha'a land the individual holders have to pay taxes to the state.

The last form of land tenure is Waqf. "Where a waqf is made of property", we are told: "the proprietary right of the grantor is

divested and it remains thenceforth in the implied ownership of the Almighty. The usufruct alone is applied for the benefit of human beings and the subject of the dedication becomes inalienable and non-heritable in perpetuity" (Doukhan, M., 1938, p.87). As this statement implies all land under waqf is held by Moslem religious institutions. Literally speaking waqf means to cause to rest, to halt, to bring to a standstill. Thus when land becomes part of the endowment of a particular institution, the original owner gives up his rights of ownership but may remain as a manager or supervisor who takes responsibility for its cultivation. He does not have the right to sell it. At his death, the management of the land remains within the family, by inheritance. If there was no one to take over the responsibility, the 'Institution of Awqaf', as it is called, assigned somebody else to manage and supervise the property. All land under waqf, originally, had belonged to the category of mulk, miri or masha'a. It may be pertinent to point out here that much of the property was transferred to waqf because the owners wanted to avoid the payment of taxes, or from fear that the property might be confiscated by the state if they could not meet the payment of the taxes.

"Immovable waqf property of all kinds had been leased from time immemorial, and the relation between the waqf and the person occupying the land had been that of landlord to lessee or tenant" (Grannot, p.149). This form of waqf is mainly found on lands previously owned by peasants who had transferred it as an endowment to the waqf, and who became tenants on it. As tenants they had to pay both the tithe

(tax) to the state and rent to the waqf. The agricultural waqf land is leased for three years at a time because of the fear that if the period was longer, then by customary law the right to the holding of cultivated land could be resumed by the tenant as his own. It should be noted that waqf lands were much less extensive than miri and mulk. Tenancy on waqf land was much less favoured than tenancy on miri land because of its much shorter term.

### 3.3 Land Distribution<sup>5</sup>

The lack of reliable historical data on landholding has been pointed out; the Mandate government stated " ... that with the Occupation of Palestine there existed thirteen District Land Registers, the records of which were in a state of complete chaos as regards names of owners, areas and correct definition of boundaries. Indeed many of these archives were removed or destroyed" (Palestine, Government of 1945, p.41).

From the 1860s onwards large estates owned by individuals and families were being formed. The latter were wealthy city dwellers who bought up land from peasants, who tended to remain on the land as tenants of the new owners. A single family sometimes owned an entire village.

These large absentee owners leased their land to tenants on various terms, sometimes under the supervision of overseers. If lands were left uncultivated, landowners took precautions to prevent the land being confiscated, and acquiring the status of mahlul, for example, by

giving the land a superficial ploughing a season before their claim on it would have been jeopardised (Grannot, pp. 40, 78-79).

In respect to peasant ownership, the majority of sources suggest that it was very small. In 1907, an agronomist Hubert Auhagen estimated that in Palestine (and Syria) only about 20 per cent of land in Galilee was owned by peasants, and in Judea about 50 per cent. However, these estimates are unconfirmed by any enumeration or census (Grannot, p.38).

In 1909 according to official Turkish data

"in the three sanjaqs of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre there were 16,910 families occupied in agriculture, tilling between them 785,000 dunums - that is to say, 46 dunums on an average to a family. The great majority of the fellahin in the sanjaqs of Jerusalem and Nablus - 67 per cent in the Sanjaq of Jerusalem and 63 per cent in that of Nablus - were in possession of plots of less than 50 dunums to a family, and such an area was reckoned at that time only as a small holding" (Grannot, pp.38-39).

The extent of concentration of ownership by relatively few landowning families in the early twentieth century is shown in the following table (from Grannot, p.39).

Table 3.1 : Concentration of Landownership (c. 1912)

| Administrative Area  | Number of Owners | Area owned (dunums) |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Jerusalem and Hebron | 26               | 240,000             |
| Jaffa                | 45               | 162,000             |
| Nablus and Tulkarem  | 5                | 121,000             |
| Jenin                | 6                | 114,000             |
| Haifa                | 15               | 141,000             |
| Nazareth             | 8                | 123,000             |
| Acre                 | 5                | 157,000             |
| Tribeias             | 6                | 73,000              |
| TOTAL                | 116              | 1,131,000           |

During the British Mandate Period several partial surveys were done centred around agricultural conditions, the farmers' situation and agricultural landownership.

In 1930, a study of 104 villages in various parts of Palestine revealed a total of 1,169,326 dunums under cultivation and another 78,255 dunums of uncultivated but cultivable land (together 1,247,581 dunums). Of the cultivated land 797,529 dunums were owned by 15,530 peasant families (245,275 dunums were owned by absentee landlords, and 126,522 dunums leased in from other villages). Leaving aside land leased in, this gives an average holding of 56 dunums per family, which was regarded as insufficient for the maintenance of an average

family (Palestine, Government of, 1930).

In another survey of 322 villages made in 1936 it was found that 71,789 holdings occupied 3,252,735 dunums, with an average size of 45 dunums. At the time these 322 villages also revealed the remarkable concentration of landholding.

"Among the large holdings there were no fewer than 150 occupying more than 1,000 dunums each, 58 of more than 3,000 dunums each, 20 of more than 4,000 dunums each, and 13 of even more than 5,000 dunums each. The land occupied by this last class alone was 624,435 dunums or 19.2 per cent of the whole area, while all the holdings of 1,000 and more dunums each covered 895,124 dunums or 27.5 per cent. This means that the large landowners, the number of whose holdings did not exceed one fifth of one per cent of the total number of holdings, owned more than a quarter of the whole of the land. The position was not much different with regard to the medium holdings of from 100 to 1,000 dunums each: 5,706 holdings with a total area of 1,163,062 dunums or 8 per cent of the number of all the holdings occupied 35.8 per cent of the area of all the villages surveyed, whereas 65,933 holdings extending to less than 100 dunums each, i.e. the smallholdings, which made up 91.8 per cent of the total number of holdings, were spread over 1,194,549 dunums or 36.7 per cent of the total area (Grannot, p.41).

#### Zababdeh Village; A Resume on the Nature of Ownership<sup>6</sup>

Zabadeh village was owned principally by the Jarrar Family from Jenin (though land was also held by another prominent Jenin family, that of Irshaid). The Jarrar family established its claim during the Egyptian phase of Ottoman rule in the first half of the nineteenth century, when it allied itself with the Egyptian Mamluke administration.

The present villagers of Zababdeh were not originally from the village, they came at different times during the Ottoman period. They

came to Zababdeh for different reasons. One of the main reasons was that they fled their original villages because of blood feuds.

An informant told me that his great grandfather had killed a man in his village of Taybeh (Ramallah sub-district). After the killing he fled with his family to various other places, before eventually settling in Zababdeh which was then a khirbet (hamlet), where they were granted refuge by the head of the Jarrar family. Other families also settled in the village by asking for refuge. The Jarrar family on offering refuge, allocated each family land to clear and cultivate, of which the family retained a plot for its own use. The size of the holding allotted to each family depended on how much it was able to cultivate. Some took a feddan which amounted to 21.5 dunums, others one and a half feddan.

In the course of time some villagers unable to pay taxes to the government fled the village. Some of them returned later, and without land worked as sharecroppers, tenants, labourers and carpenters. A few families were able to augment their original holdings by purchasing land.

Until the Jordanian period, these lands were not yet officially registered in the Land Registry office. Nevertheless, every landowning family possessed a hujah certifying that they have been cultivating the land and paying taxes. By 1952 lands were surveyed by the Jordanian government, and registered officially as individual property with the issue of title deeds.

An interesting story about ownership told to me by an informant from the same village, concerns a Christian priest who was riding his horse among olive trees in Sanur, a village near Zababdeh also owned by the Jarrar family. While he was horse riding, a guard assaulted him and he fell off his horse. The priest complained to the Jarrars about the insult suffered during this incident. As compensation, he was granted one hundred dunums in the place where he was attacked. The (Palestinian) priest distributed the land among members of his family.

#### 3.4 Forms of Tenancy<sup>7</sup>

In the section on the latter period of the Ottoman rule, it was shown that large landownership was consolidated through the loss of land from the fellaheen to tax farmers, merchants, and urban notables, giving rise to absentee landlordism and sharecropping.

Large landowners leased their agricultural land to sharecroppers and tenants on various terms. Large holdings were leased to a tenant contractor, who worked the land with the labour of fellaheen or further sub-leased it. In addition, a number of medium landowners also leased their land (Ashour, I., (a), 1948, p.32).

The predominant form of sharecropping was the Muraba<sup>8</sup> system (also practiced in Syria where large landownership was even more concentrated than in Palestine and Lebanon). The Muraba system was the commonest way of organising agricultural labour, in which the landowner hires a cultivator, providing him with the means of

production and other expenses which might be needed. The cultivator is paid with a one-quarter share of the produce.

The Muraba system took specific forms depending on the crop cultivated. Muzar'a ("co-cultivation") was practiced on the staple crops of wheat and barley, where the sharecropping agreement was usually a yearly contract (AqdHarth i.e. ploughing contract). This could be abrogated by the landowner or his wakil (manager) before the agricultural season was over, because there was no document defining the relation between the owner and the murabi (sharecropper).

A second form was the Musaq'a in the case of plantations of olives, and of fruit trees. Here arrangements varied according to whether the land was planted with mature or young trees, or the murabi undertook to plant trees. In the latter case, the two parties to the contract would agree on conditions to reassure the rights of both, and regulate rotations between them. This form of Musaq'a is referred to as Mugharasa (co-plantation).

The agreement between the landowner and the murabi depends on the economic conditions in the particular area, and whether the land leased is marwiyeh (irrigated) or Balyeh (dry; i.e. rainfed). The share of the landowner on irrigated land was generally greater than his share on rainfed land. In the coastal plains of Palestine where water is pumped from wells with machinery belonging to the landowner, his share was two thirds. In the case of water provided by a third party, who might be an owner of a nearby orchard, he would receive one

third of the share. (This custom was disappearing in the period under consideration, and cash payment for water was increasingly used.) On unirrigated land the owner's share of the product was one third.

In these two forms of Muraba (Musaq'a and Muzar'a) the distribution of shares also depends on the provision of other inputs in addition to land and water (e.g. seeds, fertilisers, and animals for ploughing). In Beer Sheba, for example, under muzar'a, the owner's share was in accordance with other expenses contributed. If he put in two thirds of the expenses, his share would be two thirds. If cultivation expenses were shared equally his share of the product would be one half. If he provided land only his share would be one quarter of the product. In other parts of Palestine (for example, Acre), ploughing expenses were shared equally between the landowner and the murabi.

Musaq'a in Palestine was practiced in olive groves, although it was disintegrating as landowners hired wage labour to do all the work needed. Generally shares received by both the landowner and the murabi is changeable in accordance with the nature of trees and expenses they need. For example in Lebanon (Saida, Sur and Tripoli), the sharecropper's share is one sixth on fruit trees. On olive groves the sharecropper's share is sometimes one third and even a half.

In Musaq'a the contract is a longer term one depending on the kind of trees grown and the location of the plot. The most basic factor was if trees were to be planted or were still very young (vines, say, up to four to six years, olives up to seven to eight years, mulberry

trees up to three to five years). At the termination of the contract the murabi acquired property rights in some of the trees, and sometimes the land they stood on as well (Ashour, I., (a), 1948, pp.33-43). In musaq'a/mugharasa, the murabi could thus become a landowner, and this contributed to the formation of a category of small landowners (Ashour, (a), 1948, p.44).

In the muraba system generally, the distribution of shares depends on a couple of major variables: the availability of cheap labour power, and the influence and authority of the landowner. This latter variable implies a "feudal" characteristic, suggested by Ashour. He saw the material and ideological dependence of particular sharecroppers on particular landowners as a condition of "feudal" type exploitation, through the payment of feudal rent disguised as muraba (Ashour, (a), 1948, p.48).

The muraba system, Ashour argued is an impediment to mechanised agriculture, holding back both the expansion of cultivated land and the production of cash crops, on the assumption that the murabi preferred to grow staple crops for self-consumption (Ashour, (b), 1948, p.60) (this argument is not consistent with my own findings on sharecropping in the West Bank after 1948, as will be demonstrated in chapters 6 to 9). However, an important issue is raised within his analysis of the muraba system; namely variations in the division of crop shares, depending on whether land is irrigated or unirrigated and the kind of crop cultivated. These practices were confirmed in my study of sharecropping in the West Bank between 1948 and 1967.

Firestone in his two part study of cropsharing economies in Mandatory Palestine (covering the plains of Jenin and the hills of Nablus, Arrabeh and Zar'een) depicts a very different situation from Ashour.

Firestone perceives sharecropping as "partnership" or "quasi partnership" in cultivation.

"Basically, Firestone constructs a schema to illustrate the progressive devolution of the landlord's control over his land in favour of the cropper, resulting from the intrusion of market forces into the peasant's subsistence economy. The form that this devolution took was partnership and "quasi-partnership" compacts in land, based on share-tenancy arrangements between peasant smallholders (and occasionally landless tillers) and landlords in the Jenin and Nablus district" (Tamari, S., 1983, p.150).

In cropsharing (Firestone's term) the contributors of each of four basic factors of production - land, labour, seed and ploughing stock - were entitled, in principle, to a quarter share of the product. The person who provides the ploughing stock and seed is referred to as shadad (farmer). Sometimes irrigation is considered as another factor of production. Regarding these factors, each party will get a share in proportion to what he had contributed. That is to say, if one party provided land, ploughing stock, and seed while the other party contributed the labour, the shares would be three-quarters and one-quarter. Sometimes the ploughing stock was divided into two factors, animals and equipments. In this case the one who has provided the land, ploughing stock and seed would get four fifths of the product and the one who contributed labour one fifth (Firestone, Y., (a), 1975, pp.4-5).

In Nablus and the plains attached to it there was a category of people referred to as harrath (ploughman - sharecropper). The harrath worked on landlords lands and was remunerated with one quarter of the yield against his wife's working with him. A harrath will not be hired unless he brings along with him a woman worker (qa'ima), whether his wife, sister or a female relative. The woman's job includes feeding and watering the livestock, planting and thinning the summer crops, helping the hired women in weeding, preparing food for the harvest hands, sifting grain at the threshing floor, and so on (Firestone, pp.8-9).

On a large landholding there is usually more than one cropper.

"In principle every farm had one cropper per feddan. A feddan was a team of plough animals and hence the amount of land that one team could plough the required number of times in the course of the ploughing season: once for the plots to be put under winter crops and two or preferably three times for those ear-marked for summer or rotation crops" (Firestone, (a), p.8).

However, the term feddan did not denote any fixed unit of area, for example, in small holding areas in the hilly lands of Arrabeh, the number of teams varied from one year to another and one place to another depending on the strength of the animals, the terrain, the area under cultivation that season and the disposal of the cultivated parcels (Firestone, p.8).

The category of harrath disappeared towards the end of the British Mandate. Within the overall institution of muzara (co-cultivation),

other forms of tenure became more prevalent. Landowners employing harrath started moving to towns to undertake different business activities or because of their involvement in politics or simply for social advancement (Firestone, (a), p.11). This made it difficult to continue cultivating the land with sharecroppers whom they supervised regularly or occasionally. Absentee landowners switched from previous modes of sharecropping to "joint farming".

In joint farming "the capital owner could be the landlord or a share rent farmer; the joint farmer could himself be the cropper, or perform the work through his family, or have it done by croppers" (Firestone, (a), p.12).

In other words, the landowner, if he is not the joint farmer himself, would delegate supervision of cultivation to an agent whose share came from contributing means of production such as oxen and seed. In this situation, the share would be one quarter of the crop (divided on the threshing floor); the share of the cropper would be one quarter, and the remaining half of the product would be divided between the landowner and the joint farmer in proportion to their shares in the capital.

Joint-farming was a stage, where the landowner retained some management of their properties leasing the land to more than one share-rent farmer. However, when their connections with the village grew tenuous, they leased the land to a single farmer.

In share-rent farming, the landowner provides only the land, while the renter provides the whole 'working capital' (landowner fully absentee) for which he got a rent-share of the crop, which was a quarter of the crop (at the turn of the century it had been one fifth). The renter could take on joint-farmers or sharecroppers or sub-farm out the land. In the case where the renter sub-farmed part of the land, he had to remit to the landowner the whole of the rent-share he had collected, acting more as the landowner's trustee than as a middle man (Firestone, (b), pp.175 and 183).

This contrasts with cash-rent leasing, when the tenant could sublet the land at a profit, in which case "full market relations run their due course" (Tamari, p.151).

Firestone refers to share-rent as an association in partnership and 'partnership in land and work'. He prefers these terms to describe the share-rent relationship to concepts like sharecropping and share tenancy given these latter terms "connote an inferiority of status that did not always apply" (Firestone, (b), p.183). Arguing this he writes

"In Arrabeh for instance, during the exodus to town that began in the 1930's villagers of all classes rented out their land on shares, and among the takers were not only landless peasants but also prosperous farmers seeking to expand their operations who were often wealthier than their landlords" (Firestone, (b), p.183).

No doubt Firestone's finding, in respect to what he prefers to conceptualise as 'partnership in land and work', is significant and an important corrective to Ashour's view of the muraba system as 'feudal'. However, Firestone's association of share tenancy and sharecropping with 'an inferiority of status' between the two parties is unnecessarily restrictive, and it will be shown below that they can be combined with different forms of production under different circumstances.

In pursuing the idea of 'partnership', Firestone also contrasts share-rent farming and cash-rent leases. Cash-rent leasing started to take place in Arrabeh from about 1935 as another consequence of landlords leaving to reside in urban centres.

All this suggests that there was a tendency of expansion of cultivated land, and together with increasing commercialisation of agricultural production and rural social relations. Further, Firestone indirectly indicated the development of a market in land, in recounting how a member of Abdul Hadi's family (a large landowning family in Arrabeh) reconstituted a large part of the family's estates by buying back land that had been sold by other members of the family (Firestone, p.3). This further shows that there was an earlier trend in purchasing land for agricultural purposes.

Notes

1. Information obtained from a landowner in Froush Beit Dajan.
2. British policy in forming political alliances with leading urban families in Palestine, and cleavages and conflicts among the different clans during the Mandate period, affected the national politics of the Palestinian Arabs. On this and the putative alignments among peasantry of Palestine, see Tamari, S. 1982, also Tamari, S. 1983.
3. See Doukhan, M. (1938) and Grannot, A. (1952) for further discussion of the different land tenure categories.
4. Masha'a land was largely abolished during the 1950's.
5. During the Ottoman period, there was no cadastral survey and all figures are estimates. During the British Mandate several surveys were done but no comprehensive survey. My main concern in this section on land distribution is to draw a general picture of ownership, showing that small scale ownership was prevalent among the peasantry. Figures given do not coincide with figures for the West Bank after 1948 because of its partition from the rest of Palestine. The drastic changes in boundaries will be demonstrated in the following chapter.
6. Information derived from fieldwork.
7. On the forms of tenancy, I will be considering the two works by Isam Ashour (1948) "Murabaa System in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine" (Arabic), and Firestone, Y. (1975) "Crop-sharing Economics in Mandatory Palestine".

8. The word muraba is derived from the word four because the murabi (sharecropper) receives one quarter of the crop. The landowner receives three quarters of the crop.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## 1948 AND ITS EFFECTS

The 'West Bank' has never been an independent political, economic, social or demographic entity. Prior to 1948, it was part of Palestine (historically part of Greater Syria), with which it was integrated politically, economically and socially. As a result of the 1948 war more than three quarters of Palestine was incorporated in the state of Israel.

The war in Palestine between the Palestinians and some Arab states on one side, and the Israelis on the other, began in 1947. On the 29th of November 1947, the United Nations adopted a resolution partitioning Palestine into two independent states, one Arab and the other Jewish, linked together by an economic union.

The resolution was not realised as intended, the Israelis acquiring and occupying territory beyond the border as envisaged in the partition plan. As a result of the 1949 Armistice agreement between Israel and the Arab states involved "the land lying west of the Demarcation line passed into Israel's control. The resulting dislocation and deprivation was tremendous: Arab villages were cut in two, families were split and the landholders compelled to surrender a large part of their fertile soil which was now on the Israeli side.

The villagers along the new border were thus left with stonier, more arid lands" (Plascov, A. 1982, p.203).

A second major effect of the 1948 war was the influx of refugees from all over Israeli occupied Palestine into what came to be known as the West Bank. This was the result of continuous Zionist attacks on Palestinian villages and towns "culminating in the massacre of 250 men, women and children in Diryasin on 9th April, 1948, which precipitated the flight of the Moslem and Christian population from areas within the range of the Zionist forces" (Hadawi, S. 1957, p.21).

As a result of the war the West Bank thus had to confront dramatic changes in its circumstances. New boundaries were created without the West Bank achieving any sovereignty, as in April 1950 it was annexed to Trans-Jordan to create the Kingdom of Jordan.

#### 4.1 Loss of Lands

The territory that has come to be known as the West Bank covers an area of 2,222 square miles out of Palestine's total area of 10,435 square miles, Israel having incorporated the rest with the exception of the Gaza strip. Apart from the Negeb, the West Bank was the area of Palestine least endowed with natural resources and good agricultural land. The loss of fertile land to Israel from the frontier villages, created as a result of the new boundaries was thus particularly serious.

"These frontier villages were ancient settlements situated on the top of rocky hills, which, in earlier days, had acted both as a natural protection for the village and its source of water as means of utilising all cultivable land. Some villages, especially in the southern area of eastern Palestine, built extensions to the west called khirbas. These consisted of poor shacks which later developed as seasonal dwellings. They were often situated near water sources and inhabited by shepherds and peasants who left their mountain village homes to plough and sow the land or to live there during the harvest season. Some parts of these khirbas were gradually turned into permanent homes in the form of 'daughter villages'" (Plascov, 1982, pp.203-204).

This happened towards the end of the nineteenth century when conditions were sufficiently secure to allow such isolated residences. These khirbas (hamlets) were close to western Palestine in which industrialisation and modernisation were taking place as a result of Jewish immigration to the coastal plains of Palestine, which also created employment opportunities for the Palestinians of the eastern region (Plascov, p.204).

Prior to 1948 the majority of villages in eastern Palestine were not developed agriculturally, and agricultural production was insufficient to meet the needs of their growing populations. This was especially so in the southern region where hilly land and sandy soils limited cultivation. This area exported a principally landless migrant labour force to the developing citrus plantations of the coastal areas.

The effects of the 1948 war in terms of both the loss of land (especially more fertile land) and the loss of employment in the west thus intensified the pressures on the precarious rural economy of much of the West Bank (Plascov, p.204).

The following table shows the areas and proportion of land lost.

Table 4.1  
Land Lost to Israel From Frontier Villages in 1949

| Area      | No of<br>Population <sup>1</sup> | Area in<br>Dunums | Land<br>Lost | Land<br>Lost as % |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Jerusalem | 7,230                            | 31,107            | 9,434        | 30.3              |
| Bethlehem | 6,230                            | 30,741            | 9,999        | 32.5              |
| Ramallah  | 2,850                            | 28,647            | 5,760        | 20.1              |
| Nablus    | 7,500                            | 327,912           | 22,029       | 6.7               |
| Jenin     | 10,260                           | 311,110           | 197,102      | 63.3              |
| Tulkarem  | 39,020                           | 267,424           | 158,271      | 59.2              |
| Hebron    | 34,630                           | 709,699           | 219,143      | 30.9              |
| Total     | 107,720                          | 1,706,640         | 621,738      | 36.4              |

1. This population number indicates the frontier village population only.

Source: Hilal, Jamil 1974, West Bank: economic and social structure (1948-1974) p.22.

Table 4.2

Number of Villages and Hamlets of the West Bank  
Affected by the Demarcation Line

| Subdistricts | No. of villages<br>and hamlets<br>affected | Total No. | %<br>affected |
|--------------|--|-----------|---------------|
| Jerusalem    | 19   | 29        | 65.5          |
| Bethlehem    | 9  | 15        | 60.0          |
| Ramallah     | 18   | 77        | 23.4          |
| Nablus       | 8  | 35        | 22.8          |
| Jenin        | 18   | 55        | 32.7          |
| Tulkarem     | 22   | 42        | 52.4          |
| Hebron       | 12   | 23        | 52.2          |
| Total        | 106 <sup>1</sup>                           | 276       | 38.4          |

1. Plascov's number is 111.

Source: Adapted from Plascov, Avi. 1982 The Palestinians of Jordan's Border p.205.

Table 1 shows that Jenin and Tulkarem occupying the most fertile land of the northern plain, suffered the greatest losses. The table's overall figure of 36.4% of land lost tends to understate the true extent of the loss as much of it was land of above average quality, including fruit plantations and irrigated land (Hilal, J. p.23).

In table 2 on the number of villages affected, the two most affected areas were Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Both are in the highland agro-economic zone, in which agricultural lands are not as fertile as in the northern plains. Even in the northern plain a significant proportion of villages lost land.

The following table shows that of land remaining in the West Bank frontier villages nearly 60% was unsuitable for cultivation.

Table 4.3

Distribution of Land Use in Frontier Villages after Partition<sup>1</sup>

| Area                   | Total land remaining in dunums | Area of olive and fruit trees | Cultivable land | Uncultivable land | Uncultivable as % |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Jerusalem <sub>2</sub> | 21,673                         | 3,163                         | 5,771           | 12,739            | 58.7              |
| Bethlehem              | 26,742                         | 9,287                         | 6,187           | 11,268            | 42.1              |
| Ramallah               | 22,887                         | 4,660                         | 10,045          | 8,182             | 35.7              |
| Nablus                 | 305,883                        | 16,407                        | 88,810          | 200,666           | 65.6              |
| Jenin                  | 114,008                        | 9,262                         | 30,436          | 74,310            | 65.1              |
| Tulkarem               | 109,153                        | 36,133                        | 57,158          | 15,862            | 14.5              |
| Hebron                 | 490,556                        | 12,473                        | 155,965         | 322,118           | 65.6              |
| Total                  | 1,090,902                      | 91,385                        | 354,372         | 645,145           | 59.1              |

1. Hilal includes 'Ramleh' which was incorporated in Israel and not part of the West Bank. In the table above I did not include it.

2. Land remaining in Bethlehem area in Hilal's table is 20,742 when I have added the figures they turned to be 26,742.

Source: Hilal, Jamil. 1974, West Bank: economic and social structure (1948-1974) p.23.

Table 3 shows that the average area of cultivable land per person in the frontier villages was reduced to 4.1 dunums (area of cultivable land remaining was 445,757 dunums divided by a population of 107,720, as shown in table 1) and 20.7 dunums per family assuming a family is five persons. This is much less than what a family needs to sustain itself, which is considered to be 95 dunums (see below). Considering that a large number of the population of that area were entirely dependent on agriculture, land remaining inside the frontier villages was sufficient for only 23,460 persons from a total of 107,720 (table 1), under one quarter of the frontier village population.

In addition to lands lost by inhabitants within the new boundaries of the West Bank, other land fell within a zone of 'No Man's land' demarcated by the armistice agreement, and which was to be left uncultivated by both Palestinians and Israelis. Sur Bahr village (south of Jerusalem), for example lost 75% of its cultivable area to the zone of 'No Man's land' after its people returned home from their wartime shelter (Plascov, p.205).

Many of these who lost their lands but retained their homes and other possessions, were not considered refugees by UNRWA, and did not qualify for any relief and services it provided (Hilal, p.23).

As has been demonstrated population pressure on land was very intense as a result of the loss of land. However, the measure presented of 95 dunums necessary for the maintenance of a family of five (Hilal, p.23)

is a crude one, on two levels. First, it is not weighted for different types of land fertility. Secondly, it is not weighted for household composition (adults and children) as it is simply a multiple of 19 dunums per person. Nevertheless, it is broadly indicative of the increase of pressure on land for the original population, and without taking into account the influx of refugees.

#### 4.2 Other Economic Losses

The partition of the West Bank from the rest of Palestine by the 1949 boundaries disrupted the previously integrated regional economy of Palestine, and cut off West Bank inhabitants from employment in western and northern Palestine. J. Hilal has summarised the effects on employment as follows:

- 1) the loss of jobs and income by those who had worked in the various administrative offices of the British Mandate government;
- 2) the loss of jobs and income by those employed on the Palestinian land that came under Israeli occupation. The majority of these were urban workers, especially in western Jerusalem, but there were also workers on citrus plantations and in the oil refinery in Haifa;
- 3) the loss of jobs and income by the West Bankers who were working inside the West Bank, losing their jobs as a result of the partition of the West Bank from the rest of Palestine;
- 4) loss of jobs, property, business and investments by some wealthy middle class people and other social classes. For example, a

number of big merchants in the import-export trade were directly affected by losing access to transport and ports on the Mediterranean coast. This group managed to find other channels to employ their capital in the East Bank of the Jordan and particularly in Amman. Some went into import-export trade through Jordan, as commission agents and brokers for foreign companies (Hilal, pp.21-23 and 37).

#### 4.3 The Influx of Refugees

Considering the loss of land and loss of employment in the already over-populated conditions of the West Bank, the influx of refugees initially placed additional strain on the economy of the West Bank, even though they eventually constituted the major part of a 'reserve' of cheap labour power.

Refugees from western and northern Palestine fled to the West Bank, East Bank, Lebanon, Gaza and Syria. The largest number of refugees - 363,689 - fled to the West Bank (Hagopian, Edward and A.B. Zahlan, 1974, p.51).

"According to UN figures, around 80 per cent of the refugees were farmers, unskilled workers, and their dependants. The remaining 20 per cent were business and professional men, skilled workers and owners of property and their families, most of whom became self-supporting and integrated in the countries they moved to. But it was the first and larger category of refugees that was helpless and completely at the mercy of the host country where circumstances had led them" (Hagopian and Zahlan, p.55).

4.3.1 Land Pressure in West Bank as a WholeTable 4.4Population of the West Bank 1931, 1944, 1948 (without refugees)

| Subdistricts | Population according to<br>the old boundaries |         | 1944 estimates<br>inside new<br>boundaries | May 1948 |
|--------------|---|---------|--|----------|
|              | 1931  | 1944    |  |          |
| Jerusalem    | 78,071  | 14,775  | 96,760                                     |          |
| Bethlehem    | 16,731  | -       | -  |          |
| Ramallah     | 39,061  | 47,280  | 38,990                                     |          |
| Jericho      | 3,085   | -       | -  |          |
| Nablus       | 68,312  | 89,200  | 90,160                                     |          |
| Tulkarem     | 45,646  | 71,240  | 67,940                                     |          |
| Jenin        | 41,406  | 56,880  | 55,720                                     |          |
| Hebron       | 65,487  | 89,570  | 87,400                                     |          |
| Total        | 357,799                                       | 501,920 | 436,970                                    | 475,400  |

Source: Hilal, Jamil. West Bank economic and social structure (1948-1974) p.18

Taking the estimated population of the West Bank by May 1948 as 475,400 this was swollen by the influx of refugees to become 839,089. By 1952 the population of the West Bank, including refugees, was 742,289 (Table 5), the reduction being due to migration to the East Bank and to other neighbouring Arab countries.

Table 4.5

Population in 1952 and Rural-Urban Distribution

| Districts | Total   | Rural<br>Population | Rural<br>Population % | Urban<br>Population |
|-----------|---------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Jerusalem | 301,402 | 153,747             | 51                    | 147,655             |
| Nablus    | 315,236 | 238,202             | 75.6                  | 771,034             |
| Herbon    | 125,651 | 89,668              | 71.4                  | 35,983              |
| Total     | 742,289 | 481,617             | 64.9                  | 260,672             |

Source: El-Amiri, Anan. 1981. The Palestinian Agricultural and Industrial Development 1900-1970 A Statistical Research p.89.

In the early 1950s it was estimated that 3,300,000 dunum were suitable for cultivation in the West Bank as a whole (Hilal, p.24) with a rural population in 1952 of 481,617, this gives an average figure of 6.85 dunums of cultivable land per person. Using the crude indicator cited above of 19 dunums per person necessary for subsistence in prevailing land and farming conditions, this means available land was sufficient to sustain only 35,000 rural households from the (approximately) 96,000 there were.

This extends the broad index of population pressure on land applied above to the frontier villages to the whole of the West Bank. This was manifested in the rapid expansion of the cultivated area after 1948, largely in the Western Jordan Valley and to a lesser extent in the northern plain.

#### 4.4 1948 and Its Effects in The Western Jordan Valley

With all the problems inflicted on the West Bank from the loss of land, other economic losses, and the influx of refugees bringing about additional demographic pressure, the Western Jordan valley has experienced the greatest expansion of agriculture.

Before 1948, the Western Jordan Valley was sparsely populated, mainly by sedentarised bedouin combining cattle raising with the cultivation of winter cereals (mainly wheat and barley) and summer crops (mainly sesame, sorghum and maize).<sup>1</sup> These different crops were grown

substantially for their own subsistence and for feeding their cattle. However, any grain surpluses were sold to nearby villages in exchange for vegetables.

Sesame seed was largely sold to merchants in Nablus for the purpose of processing it into oil in traditional factories in the city. In the 1930s the bedouin started growing some vegetables on a very small scale for their own consumption.

The Jordan Valley generally possessed an undeveloped agricultural potential, with its availability of water and of cultivable land. However, there were reasons that delayed its settlement and development until the demographic pressure after 1949 made its impact.

"The harsh climatic conditions, the high salinity in the soil and the control of the area by tribal settlements hostile to outside intrusions made it difficult for sedentary peasants from the highlands to cultivate the region except for the fruit plantations around the urban centres of Jericho and Shuneh" (Tamari, S. 1983, p.274).

After 1948, the Jordan Valley came to be settled by a large number of refugees, as the following table shows.

Table 4.6

Rural Population of the Western Ghor (Western Jordan Valley 1954)

|          | Total Population | Refugees | Refugees as % |
|----------|------------------|----------|---------------|
| Number   | 84,606           | 59,290   | 70            |
| Families | 15,439           | 11,661   | 72.5          |

Source: Adapted from Jordan Valley Agricultural Economic Survey (UNRWA, 1954), p.17.

These refugees in the Western Ghor formed the bulk of the cheap labour power employed to bring large tracts of land under cultivation. These

"landless peasants who found themselves settled in camps in the proximity of the Valley became sharecroppers and agricultural workers in the farms and orchards of Wadi Far'a, Al-Auja, Jericho, etc. Other refugees, who had more funds and skills, eventually acquired title deeds and became small holders. Even fewer succeeded in becoming landlords, leasing tracts of their land on a share basis to less fortunate refugees" (Tamari, p.275).

For example, in Jericho one of my informants (a pharmacist) who is originally from Lod and who came to the West Bank in the early 1950s bought 300 dunums of land. He used this land purely for agricultural production with wage labour hired largely from Aqbat Jabr refugee camp in the vicinity of Jericho.

With large tracts of land brought under cultivation, agricultural commodity production took off first for the internal market, and subsequently for the external market. This encouraged landowners to purchase more land and to introduce commercial agriculture such as citrus orchards, and fruit and vegetable plantations to some extent compensating for the fertile land lost by the frontier villages.

While the major expansion of cultivation was in the Western Ghor, it also occurred in the norther plain. In Qalqilya (Tulkarem subdistrict)

"Uncultivable land was tilled and new citrus tress planted to compensate for the tremendous loss of the groves left on the other side of the new border. Melons were grown and some 40 artesian wells dug to ensure a water supply, thus supplementing the relative high average of rainfall the Nablus region enjoyed in comparison with the Hebron region. Within a few years, Qalqilya had managed to export oranges to the Gulf countries and, according to its inhabitants, their hard work resulted in the production of a bumper crop in the mid-1960s" (Plascov, p.215).

As in the western Ghor, this process was made possible by the cheap labour power provided by the 'peasant refugees'. (The processes indicated here of the development of a market in land and the commercialisation of agricultural production are discussed in chapters five and seven respectively.)

The influx of refugees into the Western Ghor also had effects for land tenure and practices concerning access to land for cultivation. Sharecropping, for example, was introduced in the Western Ghor largely

after 1948 (while in the other agro-economic zones and in particular in the northern plain its incidence increased as did that of cash tenancy).

This can be illustrated in more detail in the case of Al-auja village. The area of this village had been occupied by sedentarised bedouin since the Ottoman period, under El-Himayeh (or, 'protection') as they told me (see further, chapter 5 below). According to their account, the protection system operated as follows. On the arrival of their ancestors in the area of Al-auja, there was land that was not cultivated nor were there any private ownership claims to it. Each hamula (clan) took possession of a piece of land and protected it from seizure by others. On their settlement each hamula knew the boundaries of its own and other clans' lands. (These lands were subsequently registered by the land registry office in 1953).

In addition to Bedouin ownership, some urban Jerusalemites own large tracts of agricultural land in Al-auja. I was told by some landowners that their lands were bought as early as the late nineteenth century by their grandfathers and used for wheat and barley cultivation. One of the Jerusalem families owns 1200 dunums, part of which was bought by the informant's father in 1910. The other part was inherited by his mother from her father. The 1200 dunums were registered as privately owned land in 1942.

This is not the only case of Jerusalemite ownership in the village. There are five or six families from Jerusalem which own agricultural

land in the village. Another example is a family whose senior male has the title to 5000 dunums acquired at different times. Part was bought in the late nineteenth century from the settled bedouins who were cultivating it (miri holders had the right to sell land, as shown in chapter 3). With the death of the informant's grandfather, his land was distributed among his heirs. Eventually, the informant's father bought some of the land of the other heirs, and also additional land from other owners, totalling 5000 dunums which he registered in 1950. He is the largest landowner in the village.

Bedouin - or as they call themselves Muwatinin (literally 'natives') - engaged in cultivation as a subsidiary activity to cattle and sheep raising, as noted above. The crops grown on the land of urban-based owners were largely the same as those grown by the bedouin (grains, cereals and sesame seed). These landowners leased out their lands on Muraba basis (see chapter 3) to sedentarised bedouin and/or to peasants from the neighbouring hills.

What was cultivated on the land leased out was sold to merchants of Nablus (sharecroppers kept their shares for their subsistence, given that cereals and grains were distributed on the threshing ground). In addition to merchants from Nablus, big merchants from Jaffa also bought grains and cereals from this area, some of which was exported to Europe (this development occurred during the British Mandate period).

Thus, while there was some commercial agriculture in the area of Al-auja before 1948, it was very limited in scale and intensity, and much land remained underutilised. It was very much a 'sideline' for those urban-based landowners who were concerned more with urban business, and some of whom had more lucrative landholdings in coastal areas as well. After 1948, with the influx of peasant refugees, landowners (both bedouin and urban) started utilising their lands for more intensive agricultural production, including the introduction of new crops of which citrus and vegetable farming were the most significant.

Citrus plantations were almost absent in Al-auja and the Western Jordan Valley (with very few exceptions). Citrus growing was introduced as the cheap labour power of peasants and refugees was mobilised intensively in clearing rocky areas for planting with citrus. Vegetable growing had begun in the 1930's, but it was on a very small scale and for subsistence only. With the influx of refugees the quantity and the variety of vegetables grown increased as more land was brought under cultivation, and double and even triple cropping was introduced.

The majority of sedentarised bedouins I interviewed told me that most of the land was brought under cultivation after 1948, as they moved from their previous emphasis on livestock to agricultural production. This reflected the combination of, on one hand, the expansion of demand for agricultural commodities from the internal market (given

the loss of land on the frontier and the increase in population) and subsequently from the external market, and, on the other hand, the availability of cheap labour power from refugees. These circumstances provided the incentive and the means for the bedouin to expand agriculture on their land. Urban landowners who controlled two thirds of land in Al-auja likewise extended and intensified cultivation on their land.

The development and growth of agriculture after 1948 was thus not simply a correlation between loss of land and influx of refugees. It was the availability of underutilised land in this area that enabled those with claims to it to take advantage of the cheap (and often agriculturally skilled) labour power of the refugees to intensify production to meet the demands of the internal (and external) market. This expanded commercialisation of agriculture occurred through a number of forms of production, as will be seen.

#### Notes

1. The UNRWA study, 1954, "Jordan Valley Agricultural Economic Survey" identifies wheat and barley as winter cereals and sesame, sorghum and maize as summer grain (p.6). On another occasion they identify wheat, barley, durra (sorghum) and maize, as well as sesame as fieldcrops, also defining sesame as an oil seed which I would use.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## DISTRIBUTION OF LAND

5.1 Land Tenure, Conditions of Ownership and Land Disputes

The main land tenure category which was (and remains) the most problematic was miri land (see chapter three). At the partition of the West Bank, the majority of agricultural land was miri. However, it was cultivated by those who possessed a hujah (a document of tax payment receipt). Waqf land (see chapter three) was largely, though not exclusively, on property other than agricultural land. Where there was waqf land it often raised problems between owner-cultivators and the Awqaf institution leading to litigation. In the mulk category of tenure, lands were registered in the name of the owner with tapu title deeds; less agricultural land was considered mulk than under any of the other tenure categories.

The ratio of miri to other categories of agricultural land in the West Bank is not apparent from official data. The majority of agricultural land referred to as miri was, in fact, cultivated by owner-occupiers and inherited by one generation from another, as long as the land was cultivated continuously and land tax was paid (see chapter three).

With the annexation of the West Bank to Jordan, the government started surveying land for the purpose of giving tapu title deeds to

owner-occupiers. During the Jordanian period about 40% of the total area was surveyed, and another 10% was in progress in 1967 (Tamari, S. 1983, p.126). During my fieldwork, I came across landholdings which were not yet fully registered (1982).

A landowner in the Jiftlik area of the Western Jordan Valley told me that land surveys started there in the 1950s. Following the survey of land boundaries, the owner-occupier had to pay two kinds of fees: Badl misl fee (purchase of title), that is, a price paid on the unimproved capital value of the land, which was three Jordanian dinars per dunum, and a nominal registration fee. A third payment depended on whether the landholding was irrigated (two dinars per dunum) or unirrigated (one dinar).

Despite the complicated legal status of miri land, it was striking that farmers I talked to considered miri land as their own private land. Their attitude was "this is our land, it has been cultivated by our ancestors, and we are still cultivating it".

While the formal registration of miri land to individual title holders started after 1948, waqf land gave rise to some disputes. In Al-auja village, although all land was considered miri and appropriate for registration, the waqf department laid claims to some section of land that were contested by those occupying and farming them. (Land disputes in this areas between the waqf department and individual farmers - termed 'private owners' - were noted in UNRWA, 1954, p.5.)

One of the largest hamyel (plural of hamula = clan) of Al-auja was in dispute with the waqf department over what it claimed as clan land. The case was submitted to court in the early 1950s which finally ruled that 40 per cent of the land belonged to the hamula (Njoum), and 60 per cent to the waqf department.

The waqf department also entered into disputes with the government over the status of certain lands, whether they were waqf or miri. From the government's point of view miri land was a source of revenue through registration payments.

Land disputes also occurred between landlords and tenants. In Barmaeen<sup>1</sup> (a small village in Ramallah subdistrict in the highland zone), the whole of the village land was disputed between the villagers and the Husayni family (a large landowning family from Jerusalem). The inhabitants of Barmaeen had not been able to pay their taxes to the Ottoman government and the land they cultivated was seized by tax-collectors (the Husayni family was prominent during the administration of the late Ottoman and Mandate periods, and included tax collecting among its activities). The peasants of this village thus became sharecroppers and tenants on what they considered their own land. In 1964, the villagers took the case to court and regained one quarter of their land.

## 5.2 Extent of Landownership

Official data on land distribution are extremely inadequate, both in themselves and from the viewpoint of providing indication of functioning enterprises in agriculture. Most of the discussion here will be based on my own fieldwork observations and interviews.

Table 5.1

Distribution of Holdings by Size Group in the West Bank Districts 1953

| Size Group<br>in dunums | Jerusalem |     | Nablus |     | Hebron |     | Total  |     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|
|                         | Number    | %   | Number | %   | Number | %   | Number | %   |
| 1 - 49                  | 15,476    | 70  | 18,721 | 60  | 8,116  | 74  | 42,313 | 68  |
| 50 - 199                | 5,438     | 25  | 8,255  | 29  | 2,269  | 21  | 15,962 | 26  |
| 200+                    | 1,055     | 5   | 1,885  | 6   | 535    | 5   | 3,475  | 6   |
| Total                   | 21,969    | 100 | 28,861 | 100 | 10,920 | 100 | 61,750 | 100 |

Source: Adapted from Amiri, Anan (1981) Palestinian Agricultural and Industrial Development 1900-1790 Statistical Research, p.27.

Table 5.2

Distribution of Holdings by Size Group in the West Bank Districts 1965

| Size Group<br>in dunums | Jerusalem |     | Nablus |     | Hebron |     | Total  |     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|
|                         | Number    | %   | Number | %   | Number | %   | Number | %   |
| 1 - 49                  | 15,963    | 87  | 21,763 | 81  | 8,612  | 88  | 46,338 | 84  |
| 50 - 199                | 2,190     | 12  | 4,787  | 18  | 1,053  | 11  | 8,030  | 15  |
| 200+                    | 166       | 1   | 394    | 1   | 150    | 1   | 710    | 1   |
| Total                   | 18,319    | 100 | 26,944 | 100 | 9,815  | 100 | 55,078 | 100 |

Source: Adapted from Report on Agricultural Census, Department of Statistics, Jordan 1965, p.86.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate a trend towards the consolidation of small ownership in terms of the rising number of smallholdings from 1953 to 1965 when the total number of holdings declined with the number of medium holdings halved, and the number of large holdings declining by almost 80%. Unfortunately, there are no data on area of land occupied by holdings in each size category, but it is possible that in some localities at least the average size of smallholdings also increased through consolidation i.e. through land purchases. This could well be an effect of commercialisation, but unfortunately there are no data available to test this.

One factor contributing to this trend of small ownership might have been the division of land that was previously communally owned. The latter was land in the category of masha'a (see chapter three) which was rapidly disappearing in the 1950s for reasons noted by UNRWA:

"a) the fact that each of the joint owners has no defined part of the parcel or parcels which he could call his own means that no attempt will be made on his part to upkeep the fertility of the soil.

b) this situation is a potential cause for fragmentation, since the only way out of such a situation is the breaking up of the parcels into as many plots as there are people owning the parcel or parcels" (UNRWA, 1954, p.13).

The Land Department was aware of this, and attempted to persuade villagers not to insist on dividing up their communal holdings. It succeeded only to the extent that some masha'a lands were divided into two or three plots rather than into a possible ten or eleven. More generally, holdings were divided as a result of multiple inheritance, and of land sales, and this applies to medium and large holdings as well.

In terms of the distribution of holdings by size between zones, there was a relatively higher concentration of smallholdings in the highlands than in the plains and the Western Jordan Valley, as the data for Hebron for 1953 and 1965 suggest. This impression was confirmed by the head of the Agricultural Department of Hebron (see chapter two). The highland pattern of small holdings imposed by the nature of the terrain also applies to parts of Jerusalem district, and in particular Ramalleh subdistrict. In Saffa village (see chapter two), virtually all landholdings fell into the category of 49 dunums and less. In this village before 1948, the Nashashibi family from Jerusalem had owned large tracts of land which they had bought very cheaply during the Ottoman and British Mandate periods. In the years after 1948, most of their land was sold either to the villagers of Saffa or to people from the surrounding villages, thus providing one example of the break-up of a large holding.

A case of large landholding in the highlands is provided by the village of 'Ain Sinya, where almost half of the land (1000 dunums) was

owned by a member of the Husayni family who had bought it before 1948. The Roman Catholic church also owned some land (some of which was sold before 1948). The inhabitants of 'Ain Sinya owned very little land in the village, as most of the rest was owned by people from surrounding villages (Silwad, 'Ain Yabrud, Birzeit and Jifnah).<sup>2</sup>

While all these zones contained more or less the same proportion of large holdings, these holdings seemed to be more relevant in terms of production in the northern plains and the north of the Western Jordan Valley. That is, they were wholly or partly used for larger scale capitalist production, especially in the form of citrus and banana plantations (see chapter eight).

Just as small ownership was relatively more concentrated in highland areas, medium ownership was relatively more concentrated in the northern plains, as the data for Nablus in 1953 and 1965 suggest.

What those admittedly very inadequate data indicate is that the distribution of land - or at least access to land for smaller farmers - was not as unequal in the West Bank as in many parts of Latin America and Asia. The very large holdings historically associated with Ottoman administrative and taxation practices (and to some extent continued under the British Mandate) were often divided up into many units of production through sharecropping. The total number of holdings of 200 dunums or more declined from 3,475 in 1953 to 710 in 1965, not all of which were very large 'traditional' rentier holdings

as some were single capitalist farming enterprises of 300 and 400 dunums (see chapter eight).

### 5.3 The Development of a Market in Land

The following table gives data on land sales for selected periods between 1957 and 1966 by subdistricts. These data, as with other official statistics, cannot be regarded as very reliable. In the first place, there are grounds to believe that land sales are not distinguished sufficiently clearly from other forms of land transfer (e.g. inheritance, division of land under communal tenure). Second, it is likely that some land transfers, including by sale, escaped the attention of the authorities. Nevertheless, these patchy data do show the existence of a substantial market in land (even if they are insufficient to trace definite trends over time).

Table 5.3

Land Sales in the Sub-Districts of the West Bank in Dunums (1957-1966)

| Sub-district | 1957<br>June | 1958<br>Jan-May | 1959<br>2nd Quarter | 1959<br>3rd Quarter | 1960<br>Whole year | 1965<br>4th Quarter | 1966<br>3rd Quarter |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Jerusalem    | 76           | 51              | 13                  | 17                  | 745                | 195                 | 455                 |
| Ramallah     | -            | -               | -                   | -                   | -                  | 599                 | 1279                |
| Jericho      | 1            | 732             | 1668                | 2185                | 3649               | 678                 | 308                 |
| Nablus       | 54           | 346             | 674                 | 854                 | 3487               | 753                 | 730                 |
| Tulkarem     | 68           | 224             | 156                 | 326                 | 1267               | 283                 | 234                 |
| Jenin        | 86           | 228             | 669                 | 955                 | 4447               | 1927                | 7678                |
| Hebron       | -            | 56              | 2                   | -                   | 197                | -                   | -                   |

Source: Jordan Government of Transfers of Property of Agricultural Land by Sub-Districts, Ministry of National Economy Department of Statistics, Quarterly Bulletins, Amman.

Moreover, the data suggest that more land was changing hands through sale in subdistricts where agriculture became relatively more commercialised in the period under consideration, and where the conditions for commercialisation included previously unused arable land, actual or potential irrigation facilities, and the influx of a population of refugees with agricultural skills who could provide cheap labour power for expanded agricultural production.

The subdistricts of Jericho and Jenin, together with parts of Nablus, were principal areas of the commercialisation of agriculture after 1948 for both the internal and external markets. By the mid 1960s the West Bank was providing almost half of the vegetables, 60 per cent of the fruit, and 80 per cent of the olives and olive products being traded in the Jordanian markets (comprising both the East and West Bank areas).

#### 5.4 Distribution of Other Means of Production

The other major means of production in agriculture after land are irrigation and agricultural machinery.

Although irrigated land in the West Bank in 1965 was only 8.15 per cent of total farmed land (Report on Agricultural Census 1967, for the year 1965), irrigation had played an important role in bringing more land under cultivation (and more intense cultivation) in the Western Jordan Valley and the northern plain. Irrigation was mostly from

springs and streams coming from the Jordan river, and also from artesian wells.

In the Western Jordan Valley the main source of irrigation was the river Jordan. Also there were perennial valley (or wadi) streams and springs, such as Wadi Fara'a, Auja and Qilt.

"The water from these springs and streams is distributed in units of time called "fasl" while the rotational period varies from 24 hours to one month depending on the number of "fasl" (units) required to give each one his share of the water. The fasl entitles each holder of a water right to take the whole flow of the water channel for a certain period of time" (UNRWA, 1954, p.8).

Another study states that

"The 'fasl' entitled each holder of a water right to take the whole flow of the water channel for a certain period of time (normally it is for twelve hours though sometimes it is for six hours and sometimes for three hours). In some cases the whole channel is divided into two main canals (as it is the case in Wadi Rama and Wadi Auja) (and) ... the "fasl" entitles each holder of a water right to take the whole flow of one canal for the agreed upon period" (UNRWA, 1956, p.17).

This was what happened in Au-auja village. All the landowners in the village had shares in the water from the channel that ran through the village.

Before 1948, the distribution of water among shareholders was one fasl every thirty days or even every forty days. This depended on the

number of those with rights to water from each canal (the main channel being divided into two canals). If thirty people had these rights each got water for a given time once in thirty days.

During the Jordanian period, each owner of 'water rights' counted the units he bought (a unit is twelve hours, twenty four hours is called a night), and water started to be distributed every week, for units of three or four hours. Not every 'owner' had the same number of hours of water flows. Those who needed more water to irrigate their land than their entitlement, might borrow some hours of water flow from another who was in 'surplus' for that season. The borrower returned the hours of water flow from his share in the next season.

During the Jordanian period administration of the distribution of water was assigned to a Qanawati appointed by the Natural Resources Association in Amman. His salary was paid by the owners of 'water rights'. The Qanawati was in charge of distributing water from the upper Auja canal, while the water distribution from the lower canal was regulated by its owners themselves. Every owner knew how many hours he owned.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the water drawn from these two canals, there were fifteen<sup>artesian wells</sup> drilled by individual landowners on their land.

In discussing irrigation with people in Al auja the concept of 'water rights' emerged. In the Western Jordan Valley rights to water had

been acquired since the latter period of the Ottoman rule. "Broadly speaking anyone who has taken water from perennial stream or any other permanent source for ten years without objection has acquired a right to that water" (UNWRA, 1956, p.16).

In the proximity of Jericho, the Husayni family from Jerusalem owned 20,000 dunums of which 10,000 dunums were cultivated during the Jordanian period. Irrigation on the latter area was provided from the Wadi Qilt. A member of the Husayni family (one of seventeen heirs to the land and the one who managed the property), told me when his grandfather first bought the land the wadi had not been adapted to enable efficient use of the water running through it. In 1929 his grandfather built pipelines from the wadi to his land so that he could draw on its water for irrigation. The informant's formulation was "ownership against usage", in other words the establishment of a usufructory right to water, as noted in the preceding quotation.

Irrigation in the northern plain was largely from artesian wells, which were privately owned either by individual landowners who had established them on their land, or by a group of landowners sharing the expenses of drilling.

A small landowner (of 40 dunums in Anabta in Tulkarem subdistrict) had a good source of underground water in his landholding, but lacked the money to finance the drilling and construction of wells. He sought help from other individuals who were better off and together they

formed a company to sell irrigation water from the artesian wells once they were established.

Agricultural machinery in the West Bank was relatively little used. The majority of farmers still used ploughs drawn by draught animals or by people, spades and other hand tools. However, there was some tractor ploughing (with tractors owned by - or hired from - richer farmers), and even some use of combine harvesters on grain land.

#### Notes

1. Information on this village was obtained from a villager in Saffa.
2. Information from a large landowner in the village from Jerusalem.
3. Information from the Qanawati who was also a sharecropper.

## CHAPTER SIX

## SHARECROPPING AND ACCESS TO LAND

One of the commonest forms of tenancies undertaken on agricultural lands in the West Bank was sharecropping. Sharecropping as a form of tenancy has been practiced all over Palestine since the Ottoman period, including what came to be called the West Bank after 1948 (sharecropping before 1948 was discussed in chapter three).

Nevertheless, sharecropping was not the only form of tenancy practiced. There were other forms of tenancies taking place, cash tenancy being a second form.

Sharecropping and cash tenancy are practiced with different types of labour including family labour and casual wage labour during ploughing, planting and harvesting. Some sharecroppers use wage labour exclusively; they and their families do not work on the land. Further, a farmer owning a small farm might lease in extra land on a sharecropping or cash tenancy basis, depending particularly on the availability of labour and of cash.

Moreover, capitalist production was practiced with the hiring of wage labour, largely on citrus and banana plantations, virtually the only two crops that were not cultivated on a sharecropping basis. The main

crops farmed through sharecropping were cereals, vegetables, ground fruits (melon and water melon), olives, grapes and some other fruit trees.

#### 6.1 Muhasasa (Sharecropping) Contracts

"Sharecropping implies some form of contract, written or verbal. Share contracts refer to circumstances where access to some factor necessary to production is provided by one party, in return for a pre-arranged proportion of the resulting production. Since land is essential to crop production, sharecropping contracts entail the provision of, or access to, land. Apart from labour, other objects and instruments of production (means of production) will be necessary to the activity, and the provision of all or some part of these may also be part of the contract. In general, then sharecropping contracts constitute the provision of the means of production, or some of them, by one party in return for a share of the crop yield. The extent of the means of production provided will vary as will the extent to which other exactions are added to the crop share" (Pearce, R., 1983, p.52).

In the West Bank agricultural sector sharecropping as a form of tenancy possesses certain particularities depending on the kind of arrangement agreed between the sharecropper and the landowner. Such arrangements concern the provision of labour and means of production by each party, and tend to be associated with the particular crop(s) grown on sharecropped land.

In sharecropping contracts two parties are involved: the sharecropper who leases in land and the landowner who leases out land. The sharecropper might be landless or a landowner (whether small, medium or large).

Land is generally leased for twelve months i.e. a full calendar year. However, there is not a fixed time when a sharecropping year starts. The sharecropper can lease in land at any time provided that it is at the beginning of a crop cultivation period. The sharecropper might lease in one or more plots of land from different owners, when those plots are in close proximity to each other.

Given that there is no written contract between the landowner and sharecropper, the latter could stay on the land he leases in as long as he wishes, in principle. Of course, in practice, this depends on the relationship between him and the landowner. As the contract is a verbal one, a landowner could evict a sharecropper any time he wants. However, in the course of my field work I did not come across a single case of eviction.

In addition to the relationship between the sharecropper and the landowner, the kind of crop cultivated affects the duration of sharecropping. For example on vineyards, the duration is ten years, as vines need three to four years from planting to start bearing fruit. The following six years are necessary for both the sharecropper and the landowner to benefit (see section 6.2.2 Vineyards).

Before entering discussion of the forms of inputs and shares, the number of dunums leased in and out should be noted. There are a number of factors that determine the number of dunums leased in. For

the sharecropper, this may be determined by the availability of household labour to work the additional land.

A second factor is irrigation, which may restrict the area a landlord is prepared to lease out. If a landowner and/or landlord possess a citrus and/or a banana plantation, there might not be sufficient irrigation water for the plantation and vegetable growing. In this case the owner would not be willing to lease out the number of dunums asked for, but would rather reserve the water available for citrus and banana as they are good commercial crops (this applies largely to the Western Jordan Valley, where I encountered evidence of this practice in Al-auja village).

#### 6.1.1 Forms of Inputs and Shares

The most general input is the land leased out by a landowner whether a part or all of his holding, whether to one or a number of sharecroppers. A second major input provided by the landowner may be water, if the crop grown requires irrigation. The sharecropper's main input is labour, whether his and his family's, and/or hired wage labour.

While land and labour are the principal elements of any agricultural production process, a third input is other means of production such as tractor ploughing, seeds, young plants, fertilisers, and insecticides. The costs of these are generally shared between the sharecropper and the landowner Bil-Munasafeh (in half). However arrangements for their

provision do vary according to the kind of the crop cultivated and the extent of competition between sharecroppers for land or between landowners for sharecroppers.

Practically all crops grown on a sharecropping basis are sold in the hisbeh (market place) through a commission agent to whom the landowner and the sharecropper are tied by a contract. When the product is acquired by the commission agent, he first deducts his commission which is five per cent of the sale price, after which he deducts advances he may have made to either the sharecropper or the landowner (or both) during the growing season. Sharecroppers usually receive advances from commission agents, either in cash or in kind. The latter includes the provision of seeds, young plants, fertilisers and insecticides (for the role of the commission agent see Chapter 7).

With vegetables, landowners and sharecroppers receive half shares in cash once the crop has been sold. Olives are mainly divided on harvesting on the basis of two-thirds to three-quarters (landowner) and one-third to one-quarter (sharecropper). Cereals (wheat and barley) are distributed on the threshing floor equally between the two parties, each of whom is responsible for the disposal of his share. A distinctive characteristic of cereal production concerns the disposal of the straw after harvest. If the landowner did not share the expenses of providing seeds the sharecropper gets the straw. If the seed expenses were shared the landowner receives half of the straw. Generally, with cereals sharecroppers provide their own seeds from the



previous season's harvest, and consequently maintain an exclusive claim to the straw.

## 6.2 Sharecropping Contracts in the Three Zones

### 6.2.1 The Northern Plains

In this zone, sharecropping with its different contracts and arrangements were not something new. It was practiced almost as early as the Ottoman period. However, practices that were taking place before 1948 have changed.

The northern plain has been largely a cultivated peasant area throughout the past. There were large landowning families as well as small and medium peasant owners. Large landowning families were relatively common before 1948, some owning whole villages. Crops grown in this zone are vegetables and ground fruits, food staples (cereals and pulses), plantation crops (olives and citrus), and other fruit trees.

Vegetables and ground fruits were predominantly grown on a sharecropping basis. A major reason is that they need intensive labour before and during the process of production. Sharecropping contracts on vegetables and ground fruits generally are the same. However, there were slight differences among sharecroppers and landowners in respect to inputs other than land and labour.

The landowner's main provisions are land and water. Water supply is another important means of production on vegetable cultivation when undertaken on A radi Marwiyeh (irrigated lands). In this case if the landowner possesses an artesian well, then water will be provided by him. If the water is to be bought from a third party either its cost is shared between both, or paid for by the landowner only depending on the agreement.

The sharecropper's main provision is labour, and the cost of other inputs are generally shared between the landowner and the sharecropper.

In vegetable growing (unlike cereals) seeds cannot be supplied from the previous season's crop, and seeds or young plants have to be purchased. The sharecropper usually purchases vegetable seeds and young plants from a commission agent (through whom the harvest will be sold). Sharecroppers purchase them on a delayed payment from the commission agent if he owns a store for selling them. Otherwise, they will borrow money from the commission agent for the purpose of purchasing them elsewhere. In some cases the landowner, preferring not to be tied to a particular commission agent will lend the money to his sharecropper(s) on a deferred payment basis. In this case the landowner will sell in the hisbeh to any commission agent who offers the best price for the crop.

Shares range from 50:50 to two thirds to the landowner where he provides irrigation water, especially in areas such as Jenin and

Tullkarem where there was a higher pressure on land (Tamari, S. 1980, p.11).

#### 6.2.2 The Highland Zone

Cereals (wheat and barley) are rainfed crops, so the role of irrigation in determining costs and shares does not apply. In respect to other inputs there were three different types of arrangements.

1. The sharecropper is responsible for ploughing, including paying for tractor services if they are hired. Seeds are also provided by the sharecropper in which case he will get all the straw. Labour for weeding, harvesting and threshing of the crop are provided by the sharecropper. (Sharecroppers and their families used to cooperate with each other in harvesting each others crops, a practice referred to as Nitham Al-awneh.) At the end of the season the cereal crop is shared out 50:50 on the threshing floor.
2. The expenses of tractor ploughing are shared between sharecropper and the landowner, whether the tractor is owned by the landowner or rented. If it is owned by the landowner, the sharecropper will share the cost of the driver's wages only; otherwise the total rent of the tractor including the driver's wage is shared equally. Manual ploughing is provided by the sharecropper. The cost of wage labour, if hired, for harvesting, is shared. The outcome of the crop is divided in half.
3. One informant in Zababdeh village told me that some landowners who preferred to work their land with wage labour, sometimes found, near the beginning of the season, that labour was unavailable. In

this case, they leased out their land to sharecroppers on the basis of a 30:70 division of the harvest.

Olive trees are largely grown on the hills of Nablus and in Ramallah subdistrict. They are often very old, still bearing fruit after hundreds of years. Olive groves are leased out on a sharecropping basis, but due to the nature of the crop, this is on a largely different basis to cereal and vegetable growing. Generally olive trees are not leased out Bil-Munasafeh (on half basis), it is leased out Ala-Hissa (share basis). The landowner's only contribution is the olive grove itself as irrigation is not needed.

On leasing in the olive grove the sharecropper provides the labour for a number of tasks. Ploughing the land is manually done around every tree as tractor ploughing damages the roots of the trees. Ploughing is done twice a year, once in April in preparation for the bearing season, and again in January after the olives have already been harvested.

The second ploughing which is in January is done by the same sharecropper if he is still leasing in the grove. All labour for pruning and harvesting is provided by the sharecropper (his family and/or wage labour). The amount of labour required increases with the size of the yield in a given season, so that a heavy crop increases the demand for seasonal wage labour, the costs of which are borne by the sharecropper.

During the harvesting period large numbers of wage labourers come from other areas of the West Bank, and particularly from Hebron (which has the least olive trees) to Nablus. In particular large numbers of female workers are sought because on the whole they are cheaper, their wages being about half those of male workers.

The division of shares between the sharecropper and the landowner depends largely on the quantity of fruit on the trees. In years when the trees are bearing large quantities of olives the sharecropper's share will be one quarter of the yield because the fruit is easily seen and collected. In years when the fruit is more scarce the sharecropper's share will be higher at one third of the crop.

"Olive cropping is unique in that it is the only crop where the share is still paid in kind, in terms of a portion of the fruit pressed into oil ... although cash tenancies are not rare. (This practice is probably due to the nature of olive oil which has an enduring consistency, this constituting an excellent safe guard against high inflation of currency)" (Tamari, S. 1983, p.144)

Tamari, is referring here to the period after 1967 which has been marked by the continuous and high rates of inflation of the Israeli currency.

Prior to 1967 the share was generally paid in kind. Landowners and sharecroppers used to store the olive oil until its price rose, that is, until sometime after the harvest season.

Cereals were also shared in kind, to be used for own consumption or local marketing. It is more accurate to say, therefore, that olives

and olive oil were the only major commercial product shared in kind. Vineyards are usually leased out for ten to twenty years, because vines take three to four years from planting to start bearing fruit. In some cases, a plot of uncultivated land is made available, that requires ploughing and fencing. A sharecropper will lease such a plot and clear it for planting with young vines. The expression used to refer to the longer term contract involved here is that the sharecropper will eat from the fruit for the coming years. Should a landowner want to evict a sharecropper he has to pay him the value of labour provided for land clearing and other expenses incurred on buying young plants, fertilizers, insecticides, etc. The arrangements for inputs and shares on vineyards are generally the same as those for vegetables and ground fruits, that is, a 50:50 distribution of the costs of inputs other than land and labour and a 50:50 sharing the product (after the deductions by the commission agent).

### 6.2.3 Western Jordan Valley Agro-Economic Zone

Sharecropping as a form of tenancy in the Western Jordan Valley was largely introduced after 1948, except for cereals (practiced on a small scale before 1948). Sharecropping was given a new impetus after 1948 by the influx of peasant refugees (see Chapter 4).

Urban landowners I interviewed who have land-holdings in the Western Jordan Valley told me that during the Jordanian period the form of labour organisation was not fixed. Some landowners preferred to hire wage labour for vegetable and cereal cultivation, as well as for citrus growing, given the abundance of cheap labour power provided by

the refugees. Nevertheless, sharecropping was widely practiced for vegetable and cereal cultivation.

"Sharecropping and wage labour, it must be added, tend to be complementary in the Jordan Valley. Although thousands of refugee families do not have access to any land (leased or owned), those who are sharecroppers release some of their household members to work for citrus and banana plantation owners after the end of the winter vegetable picking season, when the pressure for work on the farm decreases" (Tamari, S. 1980, p.12)

Sharecropping contracts on vegetables and cereals were largely the same as those undertaken in the other two agro-economic zones.

#### The Case of Al-auja Village (Southern Valley)

In Al-auja village, all sharecroppers were landless and, being skilled farmers, could only gain access to land through sharecropping. The land leased in was cultivated all year round with different crops, mainly cereals and vegetables.

In sharecropping contracts in Al-auja village, the landowner provides land, and water in the case of vegetable growing. The sharecropper's main provision is labour, his and his family's and/or wage labour. Sharecropping contracts were generally the same as elsewhere, with some slight variations.

Until the early 1960s the costs of seeds, young plants, fertilizers and insecticides were provided by the sharecropper alone, after which time the landowners started to pay half of these expenses.

In Al-auja the number of peasant refugees was very high in ratio to those who owned land. According to one of my interviewees (an urban landowner), the number of peasant refugees was about 6000, in relation to a sedentarised bedouin population of about 3000, and four or five Jerusalemite large landowners. The cultivated area expanded to 30,000 dunums in the 1950s and 1960s, of which we can estimate that 20,000 were given to sharecropping. This would, if equally distributed, give only 25 dunums or so to each refugee household. (It should also be remembered that the amount of land available for cultivation fluctuates seasonally with the availability of irrigation water.)

This situation then, was one of competition between sharecroppers for land, in which they might have to accept tougher conditions from landlords.

From the early 1960s however, large numbers of people embarked on labour migration to the Gulf countries. This changed the balance of advantage between sharecroppers and landowners, who now had to offer better contracts including sharing the costs of other inputs.

The majority of sharecroppers I interviewed in the village, told me that there was a difference in their treatment by the urban landowner and by the sedentarised bedouin landowners. Some of the urban landowners shared the expenses of other inputs, seeds, fertilizers and insecticides even before the changed conditions of the 1960s. However, the cost of tractor ploughing was borne entirely by sharecroppers. The only exception in this village was one

Jerusalemite large landowner who shared the expenses of tractor renting with his sharecroppers. Later, when he bought a tractor he provided ploughing services to his sharecroppers without charge.

The bedouin landowners apparently treated their sharecroppers more harshly, refusing to contribute towards the latter's costs apart from those incurred in transporting crops to the market. Sharecroppers referred to the sedentarised bedouin as Fatah Fardeh (an expression among sharecroppers meaning that these landlords open their hand for money when the crop is sold in the market i.e. their attitude is a grasping one).

The only 'benefit' sharecroppers received from bedouin landlords was a half share of the straw after harvest. Even then, the sharecropper had to transport the landlord's share of the straw to the latter's storehouse.

### 6.3 Various Cases from the Three Agro-Economic Zones

#### Northern Plains - Arrabeh Village

A landless refugee sharecropper came to Arrabeh in 1948 and settled with his family. On their arrival they started renting in land through both sharecropping and cash tenancy, altogether between 100 and 200 dunums (of which the larger part was sharecropped). Crops grown were all kinds of vegetables, cereals (mainly wheat), pulses, and also kirsaneh (vetch).

Sharecropping arrangements were much the same as described above, with some variations as follows. When leasing in land for lentils (a pulse) and kirsaneh (vetch), the sharecropper's share was two thirds and the landowner's share one third. This was because lentils and kirsaneh are more labour intensive than cereals (i.e. they are more like vegetable cultivation). The crop of pulses and kirsaneh is shared out on the threshing floor, as is the case with cereals.

A further point from Arrabeh is that one sharecropper interviewed was able to acquire land through planting olives. This originally landless sharecropper rented in 30 dunums of uncultivated land on which he planted olives, by arrangement with the landowner. The sharecropper provided the young trees and the labour for planting and maintaining them. When the trees started bearing fruit, after ten to fifteen years from planting, the sharecropper would become the owner of one third (i.e. ten dunums) of the land and trees. The sharecropper told me that this agreement is contained in a written document signed by witnesses, and that several other sharecroppers had entered into this kind of arrangement.

By the time of the interview in 1982, the sharecropper's portion of the thirty dunums had still not been registered as his land title. The sharecropper continued to work the whole olive orchard of thirty dunums, but because of his arrangement with the landowner received half of the harvest each year (i.e. a larger share than is often the case with olives).

The Highlands: Zababdeh Village

1. A medium landowner owned ninety six dunums, of which six dunums were purchased and the rest inherited from his father. This land was his main source of income, together with milk, yoghurt and cheese from cattle and sheep he owned, that were largely sold to villagers.

Of the ninety six dunums forty two were planted with olive trees, thirty four were cultivated in a seasonal rotation of grains and pulses (with double cropping) and the remaining twenty dunums were planted with water melons.

The landowner told me that during the period 1950-1967 there was no fixed method of cultivating his land. In some years, he leased out some of it for sharecropping; in other years he worked all the land himself with family labour and wage labour. In the 1960s, however, he regularly rented out land for vegetable cultivation, because of a relative shortage of labour. He did not rent out his olive orchard on a sharecropping basis, maintaining it with family and wage labour, although harvesting was often carried out through the practice of daman (see Chapter 7).

2. A landless sharecropper, rented in land from the largest landowning family in Zabadeh and the surrounding villages, the Irshaid family. He rented in between 100 and 150 dunums a year, on which he double cropped cereals and vegetables in rotation. The sharecropping arrangement for cereals was as noted elsewhere, but on vegetables the sharecropper had to provide all the inputs. The only contribution to

costs by the landowner was sharing the cost of transporting the crop to the market.

This sharecropper also rented in another 170 dunums of olive trees Ala-Hissa (on a share basis). In the early 1950s his share of the harvest was only one fifth though this subsequently improved to one quarter.

#### The Highland: Doura (Hebron District)

Four brothers owned 200 dunums, which was considered as one substantial landholding. Forty dunums were planted with grapes and other fruit trees (apricots, almonds, pears and apples), and twenty dunums of irrigated land were planted with vegetables. Irrigation came from pools fed by underground springs, from where it was piped to the vegetable plots. The other 140 dunums of dry land were planted with cereals, pulses, and vegetables. The whole 200 dunums were sharecropped out to ten sharecroppers residing in the vicinity, on much the same basis as noted for elsewhere.

#### Western Jordan Valley

In Al-auja village, a landless refugee sharecropper rented in 100 dunums on which vegetables and cereals were cultivated. In some years when more water was available, he rented in up to 200 dunums. The land rented in belonged to a sedentarised bedouin, and was fragmented in different scattered plots. On each plot the sharecropper grew a different kind of vegetable, apart from the largest single plot which he reserved for cereal cultivation.

As in other areas, the sharecropper initially provided all inputs, the landowner sharing only the cost of transport to market. From the early 1960s the landowner began to contribute to other production expenses. The sharecropper hired wage labour throughout the year for ploughing, planting, harvesting and threshing. Like other sharecroppers, he relied on a commission agent for advances in kind or in cash.

Aqbat Jabr is a refugee camp on the outskirts of Jericho, that provided a major source of cheap labour during this period for agricultural production in the Jericho area. Adjacent to this camp a Jerusalemite family had a landholding totalling 20,000 dunums, of which between 8,000 to 9,000 dunums were under continuous cultivation. 2000 dunums were used for vegetables, 800 dunums were occupied by a banana plantation, and cereals were grown on 6000 dunums. The remaining area was not cultivated because of the lack of water.

Uncultivated land was involved in the rotation of bananas which are uprooted every five years or less and the land left fallow, while a new planting is done on other land. Until 1963 800 to 900 dunums were under bananas at any one time, after which the area was reduced to 400 dunums. The banana plantation was run solely as a capitalist enterprise, using wage labour recruited from the camp, while cereal and vegetable cultivation was undertaken by between thirty and fifty sharecroppers.

In the case of vegetable growing, the landowner bore the costs of the first ploughing after the cereal harvest, while the costs of the second ploughing after the vegetable harvest were shared between the landowner and the sharecropper (i.e. there was double and sometimes even triple cropping). All other production expenses were met by the sharecropper, drawing on credit provided by a commission agent.

#### Summary

Several important points have emerged from the different cases presented.

- a) Sharecroppers are not necessarily landless, but can be drawn from different strata of peasantry (see further Chapter 8).
- b) Different crops involve different demands. Vegetable growing is both significantly more labour intensive than cereal cultivation, and involves certain cash outlays e.g. on seeds and seedlings (as seed cannot be retained from a previous crop), which tend to tie farmers into credit relations with commission agents.
- c) Apart from those arable crops, the very different conditions of olive and vine growing are reflected in special types of sharecropping arrangements.

#### Cash Tenancy

Cash tenancy (Ala-Daman) was largely confined to the northern plain and the northern part of the Jordan Valley (i.e. the East of Nablus district), and was found on land where cereals, vegetables, and olives were grown. Being a straightforward monetary transaction, cash

tenancy does not involve any special arrangements, or their negotiation, between landowner and tenant covering production and marketing expenses, all of which are borne by the tenant. Rent was charged per dunum, with a ratio of 3:2 for irrigated to 'dry' land and might be paid in advance or at the end of the agricultural season. Tenants might farm the land rented themselves with family or hired labour, or even lease it out to sharecroppers.

In the case of olives, either an orchard is rented out for cash, or only the harvest for a given season which is akin to the crop being sold while still on the tree. In rare cases, an olive orchard or harvest was rented in kind, that is, the tenant agreed to provide the owner with a quantity of olives or olive oil equivalent to an agreed monetary value.

#### 6.4 The Extent of Sharecropping

##### 6.4.1 The Extent of Sharecropping from Official Data

It proved impossible to construct any thorough and reliable picture of the extent of sharecropping from official data, for several reasons. One difficulty is that data were compiled on the basis of administrative units (districts and subdistricts), whereas the agro-economic zones, with which data on sharecropping are more usefully correlated, cut across administrative boundaries. Another difficulty is that sharecropping was sometimes practised on certain parcels of land on a seasonal basis. Even assuming accuracy of

recording by agricultural survey enumerators, their data could be affected by the time of year when the survey was conducted. Similarly, results could be affected by the year in which the survey was conducted, as some land was sharecropped out in some years and worked by its owners in others. In any case, there was likely to be considerable error as a result of confusing or complex categories of enumeration, of misleading answers given, for various reasons, by farmers interviewed, and of lack of skilled field staff to collect survey data.

With all these qualifications in mind, I will try to interpret data from two agricultural surveys carried out in 1954 and 1965. The data for 1954, covering the town of Jericho and four villages in Jericho subdistrict, and their villages in Nablus subdistrict, are presented in the following table.

Table 6.1

Distribution of Holdings by Ownership and Type of Rent in Selected Villages of Jericho and Nablus Sub-Districts, 1954

| <u>Jericho</u><br><u>Subdistrict</u> | Total | Owner<br>Cultivator | Cash<br>Rent | Share<br>Rent | Other | Total<br>Rented | Part-owned<br>part-rented | Share rent as<br>% of total<br>holdings | Share rent<br>as % of total<br>rented | Part-owned<br>part-rented<br>as % of total<br>rented |
|--------------------------------------|-------|---------------------|--------------|---------------|-------|-----------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Jericho                              | 359   | 266                 | 33           | 52            | 8     | 93              | 14                        | 14                                      | 56                                    | 15   |
| Nweimeh                              | 69    | 23                  | 1            | 37            | 8     | 46              | 15                        | 54                                      | 80                                    | 33   |
| Djouk                                | 106   | 77                  | 3            | 25            | 1     | 29              | 18                        | 24                                      | 86                                    | 62   |
| Nabi Mousa                           | 97    | 4                   | 8            | 85            | 0     | 93              | 0                         | 88                                      | 91                                    | -  |
| Auja (Zor<br>of Maleh)               | 168   | 33                  | 2            | 107           | 26    | 135             | 44                        | 64                                      | 79                                    | 33   |
| <u>Nablus</u><br><u>Subdistrict</u>  |       |                     |              |               |       |                 |                           |   |                                       |  |
| Tubas                                | 527   | 161                 | 8            | 41            | 317   | 366             | 363                       | 8                                       | 11                                    | 99   |
| Fasayel                              | 9     | 2                   | 0            | 7             | 0     | 7               | 0                         | 78                                      | 100                                   | -  |
| Fara'a                               | 179   | 32                  | 4            | 118           | 25    | 147             | 13                        | 66                                      | 80                                    | 9  |

Source: Adapted from the Jordan Valley Agricultural Economic Survey (1954)  
Appendix B, Table 4 (p.6)

In this survey, a "holding" is used to mean "all land that is used wholly or partly for agricultural production and is operated, directed or managed by one person, alone or with the assistance of others, without regard to title, size or location. It may consist of two or more parcels, even if widely separated, provided they form a part of the same technical and economic unit". In practice, this is likely to be sufficiently similar to the definition of unit of production used in my analysis (see chapter 8), although it is possible that an economic agent may organise production in more than one unit (or enterprise).

From the table it is clear that sharecropping was widely practised, even if unevenly so. It does reinforce the position maintained in this thesis that sharecropping was the dominant form of tenancy (column 9). The only exceptions to this are the case of Jericho town, and the village (or small town) of Tubas in Nablus subdistrict. The interesting feature of Jericho is the exceptional number of cash tenancies, over one third of all holdings with rented land. This was due, probably, to the highly commercialised character of agriculture in and around Jericho, itself the major mercantile and commercial centre of the Western Jordan Valley. The case of Tubas appears quite anomalous due to the predominant weight of the category 'other' forms of rent arrangement than cash or share rents (covering 87% of all holdings renting in land). The category of 'other' is fairly insignificant in all the other places shown in the table (as is cash rent everywhere else than Jericho town). Assuming that 'other'

signifies farming on land typically owned by relatives with whom no formal tenancy agreement is contracted (its usage in the 1965 Agricultural Census), it becomes a little less mysterious, although as I did not do fieldwork in Tubas the question of why this category of holding was so concentrated there (or, at least, reported in this way) remains.

It does suggest at first sight that Tubas was more a village of peasant proprietors with by far the lowest proportion of holdings involved in sharecropping in land (column 8 of the table), and by far the highest proportion of holdings "renting" in land to add to land owned (column 10). As the profile for Tubas is so dominated by the size of the residual 'other' category of rented land, this point is perhaps better illustrated by considering D<sup>y</sup>ouk in Jericho subdistrict. In this village, most holdings were cultivated solely by their owners, and of those renting in land a fairly high proportion (62%) were adding land rented in to land they owned already.

By contrast with this picture of peasant proprietorship augmented by sharecropping, the villages of Nabi Mousa in Jericho, and Fasayel (with only 9 holdings recorded) and Fara'a in Nablus, appear to be almost purely sharecropping villages based on landless sharecroppers. This is inferred not only from the proportion of holdings sharecropping in land (88%, 78%, 66% respectively), but from the evidence in column 10 that in Nabi Mousa and Fasayel all these holdings, and in Fara'a 91% of them, consisted exclusively of rented

land. This degree of reliance on renting land, above all through sharecropping, is characteristic only of certain areas of the Western Jordan Valley and their settlement by refugees after 1948, as the case of Al-auja among my fieldwork villages has demonstrated.

The two other villages not mentioned so far occupy a more intermediate position with respect to peasant proprietorship plus sharecropping on one side, and landless peasant sharecropping on the other. Nweiw<sup>m</sup>eh is closer to the former with 55% of 'holdings' or farming units on land wholly or partly owned (calculated from columns 2 and 7 of the table), while Auja is closer to the latter with 46% of holdings on land wholly or partly owned by those who farm them.

Needless to say, the designation of holdings in the 1954 survey 'without regard to ... size' or their recruitment and organisation of labour does not reveal whether they were worked as simple commodity, or smaller or larger scale capitalist commodity producing enterprises - issues of the forms of production practised in agriculture, whether on land wholly owned, wholly rented, or part-owned and part-rented, are taken up in chapter 8.

The only other source of official data on the extent of sharecropping was from the 1965 Agricultural Census, where it is measured not by the number of holdings employing different kinds of arrangements, but by the area of cultivated land farmed by owner-proprietors and under different kinds of tenancy arrangements. If anything, the reporting

(and 'guesstimation') of land areas is likely to be even less accurate than that of numbers of holdings, but the following table summarises the distribution from the Agricultural Census data.

Table 6.2

Distribution of Cultivated Land Area by Type of Holding, 1965 (%)

|                                  | Jerusalem<br>District* | Nablus<br>District* | Hebron<br>District |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Owner-cultivator                 | 82.1                   | 67.8                | 80.9               |
| Cash rent only                   | 0.3                    | 0.7                 | 0.1                |
| Sharecropping only               | 2.8                    | 7.3                 | 3.7                |
| 50% or more of<br>holding owned  | 7.7                    | 14.4                | 5.6                |
| 50% or more of<br>holding rented | 4.7                    | 8.1                 | 6.3                |
| Other                            | 2.7                    | 1.9                 | 3.4                |
|                                  | 15.5                   | 30.5                | 15.7               |

\* Exceeds 100% due to rounding

Source: Adapted from Report on 1965 Agricultural Census, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Department of Statistics, 1967, p.86

The table shows that holdings established on wholly or partly rented land constituted just over 15% of cultivated land area in Jerusalem and Hebron Districts, and just over 30% in Nablus District, where sharecropping was most widespread in both the northern plain and the northern part of the Western Jordan Valley. This is also reflected in the highest figure for Nablus of area of holdings using land sharecropped in exclusively (7.3%). It is not problematic to assume that the major area of land leased in (probably in excess of 90%) by part owned/part rented farming enterprises was sharecropped. The high concentration of sharecropping in the southern Western Jordan Valley (Jericho subdistrict) is obscured by the level of aggregation in the table, as most of Jerusalem District lies in the highland zone.

Figures given in the same source for Jenin subdistrict (Nablus) suggest a greater extent of sharecropping than for Nablus District as a whole. In Jenin, on the northern plain, 10.2% of cultivated area was occupied by exclusively sharecropping holdings, and 45.1% by holdings renting in land wholly or partly. This is probably due to specialisation in cereals and vegetable growing in Jenin, where peasant refugees were eager to sharecrop in cereal land for subsistence production, and both refugees and longer settled local peasant proprietors rented in land for commercial vegetable cultivation.

#### 6.4.2 Fieldwork Evidence on Sharecropping

My fieldwork yielded impressionistic rather than statistical evidence on the extent of sharecropping, due to problems of access that

prevented systematic sampling and extrapolation. However, in very broad terms, the general magnitudes of distribution suggested in the previous table appear consistent with what I encountered in my fieldwork (and given the considerable local variation between villages, even within subdistricts, as indicated in Table 6.1).

Even with this limitation of my fieldwork, my findings considerably enriched the picture of the extent of sharecropping given by official data, in that half of the small and medium landowners I interviewed sharecropped out land, as well as evidence I collected of landless peasants and small proprietors sharecropping in land (see Table 8.1 and chapter 8 passim). Among those I interviewed, renting in land on cash tenancy was as restricted relative to sharecropping as the distribution between the two forms of tenancy given in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 (with the exception of Jericho in Table 6.2, noted above).

#### 6.5 Reasons for Sharecropping

Chapter four described the pressures on the economy of the West Bank, and its agrarian economy in particular, as a result of the 1948 Partition. Principally, these were loss of relatively more fertile land to Israel (and the 'no man's' zone of the armistice line) and the influx of peasant refugees. At the same time, these pressures were a stimulus to agricultural production on both the demand side and the supply side. On the demand side was the need, in the first place, to feed a much larger population (stimulus to the growth of the domestic

market). On the supply side was the presence of a large reservoir of labour power that was not only cheap but possessed considerable agricultural skills, some of which were new to the West Bank, for example, experience in banana and citrus growing.

In the period under consideration, the West Bank experienced growth in agricultural production due to extension of the cultivated area into areas that were previously environmentally marginal (parts of the highlands) or socially marginal (parts of the Western Jordan Valley), and to intensification of farming. The latter depended on the availability of cheap labour for multicropping, e.g. seasonal rotation of cereals with labour intensive commercial vegetable cultivation, particularly on irrigated land. While irrigated land was still a small proportion of cultivated land in 1967, it had expanded in the previous period with the construction of new irrigation channels (river and stream fed) and the sinking of artesian wells.

Within this context, the question is not simply why did sharecropping 'persist'?, but, as seems likely, why did sharecropping practices increase? The general answer is the flexibility of sharecropping as a mechanism of allocating land to labour, together with its adaptability to a generally much more commercialised agriculture in the 1950s and 1960s. Flexibility and adaptability can be seen by the widening of options sharecropping made available to those who rented out land, those who rented in land, and those who worked sharecropped land as 'family' labour or wage workers.

Those who sharecropped out land were from all categories of landowners - small, medium, and large. For small and medium landowners, it is likely that in many cases sharecropping out land was determined by lack of sufficient family labour, or a decision to concentrate the uses of available household labour on land planted with commercially more attractive crops. For large landowners, especially those with very large holdings that were underutilised, as in the Western Jordan Valley, the influx of peasant refugees provided an opportunity to realise a greater income from land by renting out at least substantial areas on sharecropping. (At the same time, they often retained some areas for specialised commodity production utilising wage labour, i.e. for capitalist farming enterprises).

The use of sharecropping to bring marginal or underutilised land into cultivation also applied to small and medium owners of plots of hilly and rocky land. The arduous and time consuming work of clearing stony ground so that it could be reclaimed for cultivation was carried out by refugees lacking alternative means of employment, on the agreement that the cleared land would then be available to them for sharecropping. A particular instance of this practice, referred to earlier, and which involved a distinctive long-term sharecropping contract, was the establishment of vineyards.

Among those who sharecropped in land landless refugees, of course, constituted one particular group. There was certainly not enough cultivable land available to settle all refugees as sharecropping

farmers, so that many of them contributed to agricultural growth of the West Bank as farm labourers, whether hired on a daily, seasonal, or more permanent basis. In fact, at least some degree of labour hiring was widespread on agricultural enterprises of all sizes (see chapter 7.4 and chapter 8), given the low level of mechanisation and the relatively labour intensive demands of some field crops and tree crops. This meant that small and middle peasant proprietors could expand the scale of their farming enterprises by sharecropping in additional land and working it with hired labour, whether exclusively or together with family labour, to take advantage of new commercial opportunities.

The third consideration - recruitment and organisation of labour on sharecropped land - was thus of great significance in this context. Land sharecropped in was often worked with hired labour. In some cases, this took a more 'peasant' form in which additional rented land expanded the scale of an existing household enterprise and wage labour was used to supplement family labour at periods of peak demand. But the availability of cheap and skilled agricultural labour also made possible the constitution of petty and even larger scale capitalist enterprises on sharecropped land. Land could be rented on sharecropping as a purely commercial investment, worked with hired labour (including salaried supervisory labour).

The very diversity of this general picture, then, in which wage labour was employed on units of production of all sizes, landowners of all

sizes sharecropped out land, small and medium proprietors and 'commercial investors' as well as landless refugees sharecropped in land, and so on, suggests the flexibility and adaptability of sharecropping - particularly in widening the options, according to their varying circumstances, of those owning any land. It is also relevant to the consideration of flexibility that some small and medium owners might decide to sharecrop out parts of their land in some years, and not in others, or even to use certain plots for their own farming and for sharecropping out on a seasonal rotation.

At a more analytical level, the flexibility and adaptability of sharecropping as a means of allocating land to labour (and even capital) is indicated by the combination of different forms of production with sharecropping (see chapter eight). Of course, for those who were landless and lacked other resources, that is, the great majority of refugees (and excluding those landless 'sharecroppers' who were commercial investors) there were only two basic alternatives within the rural West Bank: sharecropping or wage labour.

(Substantial numbers of refugees did opt for a third alternative of further migration across the Jordan or, increasingly in the 1960s, to the Gulf states.) Those landless refugees who became sharecroppers frequently employed at least some wage labour, like the majority of farmers.

The question of resources other than land was stressed, because sometimes, as with those I have termed 'commercial investors',

sharecroppers had capital to invest in agricultural production that those renting out land lacked. One example was a household in Tulkarem which lost most of its land as a result of the 1948 Partition, and retained only some highland plots suitable for olives only. After 1948 this household leased in 118 dunums of land on the plains through sharecropping. The land contained an artesian well but without a pump and motor as the owner could not afford them. The leasing household had the capital to purchase the necessary equipment, and contracted an agreement whereby their expenditure on buying and running the pump and motor was deducted by annual installments from the landowner's share of the crop.

A small number of refugees from Western Palestine arrived with sufficient capital to buy land and establish themselves as farmers (one such person was among those I interviewed). Generally in the period covered here there was a development of a market in land (chapter 7) and a sharp decline in the number of large landholdings through division by sale and by inheritance (chapter 5). While sharecropping arrangements were broadly similar throughout the West Bank, as shown earlier in this chapter, in some cases contracts for sharecroppers improved in the 1960s in the face of demographic and employment changes. While population data are not very reliable it is possible that the rural population of the West Bank declined during the later 1950s and 1960s, as some of the original refugees from 1948 moved further east across the Jordan, and as labour migration to the Gulf states by Palestinians, both refugees and indigenous inhabitants

of the West Bank, assumed major proportions. To the extent that members of small and medium landowning households participated in this stream of labour migration, it no doubt accentuated the tendency of some small and medium owners to employ additional wage labour and/or to rent out land on sharecropping.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## THE COMMERCIALISATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

The 1948 war and its partition from the rest of Palestine brought about drastic changes in the overall economy of the West Bank, in particular the loss of fertile land to Israel and the rise of population as a result of the influx of refugees (chapter 4). In consequence it was necessary to increase agricultural production in order to feed this rapidly growing population packed into an area of only 5,555 square kilometres (2,222 square miles). In the period under consideration in this study the population of the West Bank increased from an estimated 475,400 in May 1948 (before partition) to 742,289 in 1952 with the influx of refugees, and by 1967 had grown to an estimated 1.1 million.

Following partition more land in the West Bank was brought under cultivation. In the Western Jordan Valley thousands of dunums of previously unused land was brought under cultivation, and in the hilly areas adjacent to the northern plain land was cleared for farming to compensate for the land that had been lost. Moreover, richer peasants and landlords (both natives of the West Bank and well-off refugees) started purchasing land for the purpose of commercial cultivation.

In considering the growth of agricultural commodity production, I shall concentrate upon specialisation in the production of different

kinds of crops by zones, by units of production, and in terms of the development and growth of internal markets.

### 7.1 Increased Specialisation by Zone

Considering how small the West Bank is, climatic conditions vary appreciably from one zone to another. Because of this, there are crops (vegetables in particular) that are grown in all zones in winter and in summer on irrigated and unirrigated land.

In summer vegetables are grown on irrigated land in the northern plain, and also on unirrigated land in the Highlands and the Western Jordan Valley. In winter they are grown on both irrigated and unirrigated land in all three zones with variations as to area under cultivation and quantity of production. Although the data on crops and yields refer to administrative districts rather than agro-economic zones, it is known that the northern plain and the Western Jordan Valley produce more vegetables than the highlands in both summer and winter.

Before 1948 vegetables were not grown in the West Bank on anything like the scale that they have been since 1948. Vegetable growing was hardly known in the Western Jordan Valley, but after 1948 all kinds of vegetables were introduced along with new and different farming practices (brought by the peasant refugees). In Zour, for instance along the banks of the Jordan river, 15,000 dunums of cultivable land were brought under irrigation and were used to grow all kinds of

vegetables (tomatoes, egg-plants, and water melon on double and triple cropping). One hundred artesian wells were drilled by UNRWA and the Jordanian government in addition to those constructed by private landowners. In this area production was largely for export to neighbouring Arab countries, organised by commission agents and merchants.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the Zour area, other parts of the Western Jordan Valley were engaged in vegetable cultivation using double cropping and later triple cropping. More land was devoted to growing vegetables which commanded high prices when exported.

The whole Western Jordan Valley became engaged in the production of agricultural commodities for both domestic and export markets. An UNRWA study reported "Fresh vegetables especially those coming from the Jordan Valley constituted Jordan's main item of export. The export prices are comparatively good since most of these crops are either early or late crops and hence are marketed when such crops are usually out of season. The possibility for further expansion in vegetable cultivation is great" (UNRWA, 1954, p.21).

Staple crops (wheat, barley, sesame, sorghum and maize) still predominated in the Western Jordan Valley, but were not exported to any extent. They were marketed domestically and served as staple items of diet for the Palestinian population. While the area under all staples increased, the rate of expansion of barley, sorghum and sesame was greater than that of wheat (UNRWA, 1954, p.20). The

production of sesame seed, which is the principal source of edible oil in the area, increased considerably, in consequence of the larger area devoted to its cultivation. Sesame seed was purchased largely by merchants from Nablus where there already existed factories which specialised in producing sesame oil and Tahineh sauce. This indicates that sesame seed was already established as a cash crop directed at processing for the local market.

Citrus was also introduced into the Western Jordan Valley after 1948. It is important to note that the cultivation of citrus fruit requires less intensive labour than do vegetables. Citrus plantations were established and worked exclusively by wage labourers as capitalist enterprises. While this is an example of one type of commercialisation of agricultural production, it should not obscure the commercial expansion and specialisation of vegetable production, which occurred more through sharecropping. In any case, in vegetable production under sharecropping an important element of wage labour was employed, largely for weeding and harvesting (see chapters 8 and 9).

Generally, citrus growers were large and medium landowners who had enough cash to employ wage labour. At the same time, they often leased out other land to sharecroppers for vegetable cultivation rather than undertake it themselves. The main reason for this is the labour intensity of vegetable growing as compared with citrus. Vegetables require a great deal of attendance and care: sowing and then transplanting seedlings, careful weeding, more frequent fertilizer application, and so on.

In Jericho and Al-auja areas (ie the southern part of the Western Jordan Valley) capitalist enterprises were prevalent on citrus plantations, given the proximity of these areas to the refugee camps of Aqbat-Jabr and Ein-Sultan. This "facilitated the development of citrus cultivation by providing an infrastructure for irrigation, marketing and acting as a centre for labour recruitment" (Tamari, S. 1983, p.276). In Al-auja village itself there was a refugee camp which provided both wage workers and sharecroppers.

This reservoir of cheap labour encouraged the richer peasants and landowners to purchase land in the southern valley and elsewhere in the Western Jordan Valley. For example in Jericho city after 1948 land was largely bought as an investment in agriculture and especially for growing cash crops. In Al-auja most of the available land had already been bought up. However, agricultural development proper only took place after 1948 when most of the cultivable land was brought into production, depending on the availability of water (see chapter 4).

In the northern plain vegetables and citrus were only grown on any scale after 1948. The stony hills fringing the northern plain were subject to extensive clearance to expand the area of cultivable land. This was only possible given the cheap labour power made available by the refugees for the arduous tasks of breaking rocks and removing them. A significant area was reclaimed in this way in Qalqilya (Tulkarem subdistrict) where citrus plantations were established, as

well as plots for the cultivation of vegetables and water melons for both the domestic and the external market.

In particular vegetables were grown in winter on dry i.e. unirrigated land (bearing in mind that this zone has a higher rainfall than any of the other zones), and in summer on land irrigated from artesian wells. The production of melons was largely concentrated in the Jenin area.

In the highland zone the main two major commercial crops were olives and grapes. Olive growing on the hills of the West Bank dates back a long time into history. Olive growing does not need irrigation nor intensive labour. Olives are an industrial crop, being processed for olive oil, but they are also preserved through pickling. There was a developed trade in West Bank olive oil and (pickled) olives with Damascus and Beirut, and even a small amount of export to some European countries. Some West Bank farmers organised the transport of their olive products to Damascus and Beirut, where they received relatively high prices (West Bank olive oil is known for its very low acidity of about 3%).<sup>2</sup>

Grapes were another important commercial crop grown largely in Hebron district, principally for the internal market and to a lesser extent for export.

After 1948, therefore, there was a marked expansion of agricultural commodity production, both to meet the demands of an internal market

augmented by the influx of refugees, and in response to the new labour force represented by those refugees whose agricultural skills could be employed in the capacities of sharecroppers and wage workers. First, I have indicated how this expansion of agricultural commodity production led to some increase in specialisation in the major agro-economic zones of the West Bank according to their physical and social conditions. Specialisation along with diversification in new (at least in terms of scale) branches of production was most marked in the northern plain where new land was brought under cultivation through reclamation, and the Western Jordan Valley where the rapid increase of people in sparsely populated areas combined with the availability of irrigation was a key factor in the expansion of production.

The Western Jordan Valley was considered the 'backbone' of irrigated farming in the West Bank and contained the most intensively cultivated areas where double and triple cropping were practiced. As Tamari reports:

"The high diversity of crops introduced meant that both men and women (as well as children) were more intensively involved in the new agricultural tasks. Since mechanisation in the fifties was still incipient men spent a substantial part of their time clearing and digging water canals (furrows) and flushing saline soil. Women's and children's labour was much more in demand now during the harvest period" (Tamari, S. 1983, p.280).

Specialisation in agricultural commodity production within zones also led to increased specialisation of units of production in the context of the growth of the internal market.

## 7.2 Increased Specialisation of Units of Production

The growth of agricultural commodity production also had the effect of increased specialisation of units of production in meeting the demand for cash crops.

Unit of production is used here as an analytical term meaning the organisation of agricultural production on a plot of land, and in particular the internal composition of the unit, that is, the forms of production in operation and the external conditions that influence them (this is discussed more fully in chapter 8).

Given that official statistical data and other documentary data are of little use in tracing increased specialisation of units of production I will illustrate this process through material drawn from my fieldwork.

### Northern Plain

Before 1948, the northern plain (as an extension of the coastal plain) was already fairly densely settled, and involved in agricultural commodity production, some of which was directed to the coastal areas of Palestine.

As noted above, expansion of the cultivated area within the northern plain and its fringes, was expanded after 1948 partly to compensate for fertile land lost as a result of partition. At the same time, the production of citrus, vegetables and water melons increased both for

the internal market and for quite specialised export markets in which there was growing demand (mainly the neighbouring Arab countries, and in particular the Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait).

Vegetables and especially citrus crops were often rented on daman (see below) to merchants specialising in particular export markets.

Two cases from Anabta village serve to illustrate growing specialisation. The first is a small peasant farmer who owned thirteen dunums planted with olive and almond trees. Among the trees he grew wheat, barley, and lentils for household consumption. In addition, he rented in a further forty-one dunums as a sharecropper. On this land he grew some grain but principally vegetables and water melons as cash crops. Both plots were largely worked with family labour, including that of the household head, supplemented with female wage labour during harvesting periods.

Another small landowner owned forty dunums planted with olive and almond trees. In addition he rented in another thirty dunums for a cash rent, which were reserved for the cultivation of vegetables. Again, the two plots were worked with family labour supplemented with seasonal wage labour.

Owners of medium and even large holdings also rented in additional land through sharecropping or cash tenancy, for the purely commercial production of vegetables and water melons. It is also interesting to note that because of the commercial importance of citrus fruit,

landowners who did not own citrus plantations tried to obtain some stake in its market by renting the crop on daman.

#### The Western Jordan Valley

In the case of the Western Jordan Valley, the growth of agricultural commodity production and its specialisation is suggested by the growing importance of land registration and sales, and can be illustrated by examples of the complex arrangements concerning land use and the division of its product, and also by the incidence of capitalist enterprises in agriculture.

A large landholding of 600 dunums in Jericho city was bought in 1952 by an absentee landlord (a Palestinian who had lived in Amman since 1936, and who was a businessman involved in industry as well as agriculture). He appointed a manager (living in Jericho) to run the land as a business, which led to its division into several units of production on which different crops were grown under different forms of production.

The manager himself organised one unit of 100 dunums on which a citrus plantation was worked with wage labour. The crop was marketed through the daman system. All the expenses for this plantation were met by the manager, who received all the income from it as part of his agreement with the landowner. The net income accruing from the remaining 500 dunums was shared between the manager (60 per cent) and the landowner (40 per cent).

Of those 500 dunums, 100 were leased to one sharecropper for vegetable growing. The sharecropper in this case did not work the land himself but hired another farmer, who received a monthly salary to cultivate the land with wage labour. The crop was shared 50:50 between the sharecropper on one hand, and the landowner and manager on the other.

During the period 1950-1967 the remaining 400 dunums were mostly worked with daily wage labour drawn from neighbouring refugee camps. In some seasons, however, additional plots from within the 400 dunums (up to 30 per cent of the area) were leased out to sharecroppers while the rest continued to be worked with wage labourers.

Another large landholding of 300 dunums in Jericho was bought by a well-off refugee from Lod (incorporated in Israel). This land was used exclusively for the production of cash crops, with wage labour recruited from the refugee camps. Of the 300 dunums eighty were planted with citrus, thirty with bananas, and the remaining 190 dunums with vegetables. The landowner supervised production himself with the help of three salaried Wukalaa (plural of wakil) who were responsible for recruiting workers, supervising their work, and running the irrigation pumps.

This holding and its organisation provides a clear example in this area of a capitalist enterprise, in which the landowner took an active managerial role and was able to use his technical expertise as a chemist, e.g. in the application of fertilizers. Other cases in this

area point to investment in land for the purpose of commercial production after 1948, with a marked use of wage labour for most crops, and some sharecropping in vegetable cultivation.

In Al-auja village south of Jericho, a major extension of cultivated land and the introduction of new cash crops followed the settlement of peasant refugees after 1948. The majority of refugee households became sharecropping enterprises, specialising in particular in the commercial production of vegetables. At the same time citrus plantations employing wage labour were established.

The change in, and intensification of, land use in Al-auja is well illustrated in the case of one large landholding of 1200 dunums of which 475 dunums were brought into continuous cultivation. The holding was owned by six brothers and sisters who inherited it from their father. Prior to 1948 a very small part of the landholding was under grain cultivation by Marabeen (plural of Marabi = sharecropper). The Murabi provided all the labour needed and the expenses of production for a one-quarter share of the harvest, divided on the threshing floor. After 1948, a banana plantation of forty dunums and a citrus plantation of thirty five dunums were established, which were worked with wage labour. A further 200 dunums for grain cultivation and 200 dunums for vegetables were leased out to a number of sharecroppers.

### 7.3 Organisation of Marketing

The growth of agricultural commodity production after 1948 for both the internal and external markets is also reflected in the expansion of marketing structures and services. Existing central agricultural markets in the West Bank expanded their trade, and new markets were opened, for example the central vegetable market in Jericho. (Before 1948 the principal agricultural market linking producers and wholesale merchants was in Nablus, while the next largest in Jerusalem principally linked wholesale and retail merchants.)

The marketing of agricultural commodities in any quantity was generally undertaken by commission agents. A commission agent usually controlled a section of the hisbeh (market) and had an exclusive claim on marketing the crops of farmers to whom he had extended credit during the growing season.

Tamari identifies four important functions of commission agents:-

- a) they advance the farmer his inputs (seeds, seedlings, fertilizers and insecticides) on credit in kind or cash;
- b) they advance the farmer cash credit if he has no money at the end of summer season;
- c) they supply the farmer with the standard (18kg) boxes which are needed to transport and market the produce;
- d) they act as intermediaries between the farmer and the retail merchant in the hisbeh by auctioning the produce to the highest bidder (Tamari and Giacaman, 1980, p.14).

The Jordan Valley Agricultural Economic Survey (UNRWA, 1954, p.25-26)

identified six methods of sale of agricultural produce:

- a) Direct trading between the farmer and the consumer usually involved small quantities of poultry products, vegetables and fruits sold by smallholders, and was encountered mainly in Jericho.
- b) Sales from farmers to wholesalers or retailers through commission agents was the commonest practice especially with vegetables. Farmers transported their crop to the commission agents (in the hisbeh), who may also act as wholesalers. The commission agents sometimes paid the cost of transporting the crops and did a certain amount of grading. They charged five per cent of the total proceeds of the sale, plus some municipal charges and cost of portorage within the market, which ranged from two per cent to five per cent.
- c) Sales from farmers to processors were limited by the lack of development of food processing industries, which consisted of flour milling, oil pressing and two or three canneries, although food processing establishments did seem to buy directly from farmers to avoid the extra costs charged by marketing intermediaries.
- d) Sales by farmers to retailers was a common practice with animal products such as milk and also the sale of animals to butchers. In addition, a small farmer might sell directly to a retailer in the same village, because the amount for sale was not enough to interest a commission agent or any other intermediary.

- e) Agricultural merchants were intermediaries in grain marketing. They bought grain from farmers and also sold them food, clothing and agricultural inputs, including seeds. Farmers obtained loans from these merchants and in consequence often became indebted to them, as a result of which they were tied to selling their crops to them year after year at well below prevailing market prices. In areas with limited marketed grain, the merchants bulked it for movement to the next stage of the marketing process. Where marketed grain production was more substantial farmers tried to sell it directly to urban grain dealers or millers.
- f) Direct export was undertaken by those farming on a large enough scale to export their produce themselves, for sale to wholesalers and commission agents abroad. Some of my informants organised the transport by road of their produce of olives and olive oil, and to a lesser extent vegetables and groundfruit, directly to commission agents and wholesale merchants in Damascus or Beirut.

The use of these six methods of marketing in UNRWA study were confirmed from my field work data, which also shed light on the distinctive practice of daman.

While daman literally means "cash tenancy" it has a different significance in relation to marketing. The Damin (one who rents) actually buys a crop prior to harvesting, usually a crop while it is still on the tree (citrus, olives), or less commonly still in or on the ground (water melons, vegetables). The Damin visits the

plantation when the buds of the fruit are appearing and estimates the likely quantity and quality of the crop. Subsequently he offers a price for the whole crop to the owner, and they bargain until a price is agreed.

The damin is therefore responsible for harvesting the crop (typically with seasonal wage labour) and transporting it to market, paying the owner either when the transaction is agreed or after the crop has been sold in the market.

Following this outline of different methods of marketing, I will next elaborate and illustrate how they are employed in relation to different crops.

#### 7.3.1 Forms of Marketing of Different Crops

Bananas are grown mostly in the southern part of the Western Jordan Valley as a highly specialised commercial crop. Marketing is undertaken by specialised merchants who have cellars to store and ripen the bananas which are harvested when they are still green. Bananas are sold to markets in the West Bank or exported by road to neighbouring Arab countries. Merchants owned trucks which they might drive or hire drivers for, or they rented trucks to carry the bananas abroad.

In 1965 a cooperative company for the marketing of agricultural crops was founded by a group of twelve banana producers, who were

substantial landowners in Jericho and Al-auja. They opened offices in Amman and Baghdad (and one of the landowners in Al-auja was operating on a large enough scale to establish a cellar for storing bananas in Kuwait).

The main purpose of the cooperative, in addition to marketing the crop of the twelve members, was to purchase bananas from smaller farmers all over Jericho subdistrict for export. The large landowner in Al-auja owned two trucks which were used for transport to neighbouring countries (and more trucks were hired if needed).

The members of the cooperative took on the expenses of marketing in order to by-pass commission agents and merchants. When they were unable to organise the export of the banana crop of small farmers, this produced a glut in the internal market depressing prices. In 1966 the cooperative stopped functioning, and those banana producers who were unable to market on their own behalf had to rely on the services of merchants who often specialised in exporting (commission agents were not active in banana marketing).

Vegetables and ground fruits were largely marketed through commission agents. Where they were grown by sharecroppers, the common arrangement was for the landowner and sharecropper together to deal exclusively with a particular commission agent from the beginning of the growing season, when typically the commission agent had extended credit to the sharecropper. (Large landowners sometimes preferred to extend credit

to sharecroppers themselves, so as to retain independence from a particular commission agent and try to get a better price.) When farmers had delivered their crop to the commission agent, he auctioned it in the market to the wholesale or retail merchant offering the best price. Some commission agents also engaged in exporting vegetables themselves, or sold them to specialised (and large-scale) export merchants.

The practice of daman was also used with crops of water melons and, to a lesser extent, of vegetables. A price for the crop would be agreed in advance, and the merchant arranged for its subsequent harvesting by workers he hired. In some cases, a merchant might select only one particular vegetable from a farm to purchase on daman, or select only fruit or vegetables of a particular quality. The farmer then disposed of the rest of his crop through the usual channels of the commission agent.

The damin was not necessarily a merchant or commission agent himself, in which case he acted as an intermediary between the citrus farmer and a merchant or commission agent.

The damin usually visited the citrus plantation in May to offer a price for the crop, taking into consideration the quantity of the fruit on the tress, how much it would cost him to hire workers for harvesting and a Natur (guard) to guard the fruit until it had been harvested, and the anticipated market price for citrus. The damin

also tried to take into account weather conditions for the rest of the growing season, and how it might affect the crop.

Once a price was agreed with the farmer, payment was usually made in installments unless the damin wished, and was able, to pay in one installment. The payment period for citrus could stretch from May to the harvest sometime in early winter.

The Damin sold the fruit in one of the major markets (Jericho, Nablus and Amman) to commission agents or merchants who sold it to the internal market or exported it. When the damin was also a big merchant he often undertook the direct export of fruit himself. Large landowners sometimes wanted to avoid selling the citrus crop on daman or being tied to a particular merchant, preferring to pay for the harvest and transport themselves so that they could realise the best price in the market.

Olives are marketed either as olive fruit or as oil. The merchants in this trade preferred to purchase the fruit for processing into oil (and some merchants owned oil presses), which can be stored to wait for good market prices. In addition, some merchants themselves owned large olive groves as well as trading in the crop produced by others.

The majority of villages in the highlands had oil presses (using very simple machinery). The presses were owned individually or by several villagers jointly. In Nablus city there were several oil presses

owned by large landowners, who also owned small factories for the production of traditional olive oil soap for the domestic market.

The olive crop was leased out on daman but to a smaller extent than citrus. Farmers told me that they preferred to harvest their olive crop with their family labour and/or wage labour they could supervise, because when sold on daman, the merchant and his hired workers were often careless in how they treated the trees.

Cereals and grains were produced largely for subsistence and for the domestic market. The major method of cereal and grain marketing was as cited in the fifth of the six methods of sale outlined above.

Large owners of grain land generally leased out their grain and cereals on sharecropping. Small and some medium farmers who grew grain on their own land sold part of their harvest on the threshing floor. Where grain was farmed on sharecropping, the landowner and sharecropper together generally had an agreement with a commission agent (although sometimes the sharecropper retained the whole of his share for home consumption). The commission agent sent the grain to a mill for processing into flour, and then sold the flour to wholesalers and retailers (there were a number of flour mills in the West Bank, the largest being in Nablus).

Sesame seed was largely purchased by merchants who owned presses for processing it into oil and Tahineh sauce which was then sold to retailers and wholesalers.

### 7.3.2 An Example of Agro-Industry

In 1952 in Hebron city a tomato canning factory was established as a private business under the name of the "Industrial Agricultural Company" (prior to 1952 the factory had operated on a very small scale, producing herbal oil from thyme and sage). The first application for a licence was rejected by the Jordanian government on the grounds that the factory should be opened in the East Bank. After some negotiations, a licence was issued.

In 1952 processing started on a larger scale, mostly canned tomatoes which were sold in the West and East Bank. In 1955 the factory started direct exporting, largely to other Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait). In Iraq it appointed a marketing representative in collaboration with the House of Trade and Commerce in Baghdad.

In addition to tomatoes the factory canned other kinds of vegetables including green beans and peas, broad beans, spinach, vine leaves and okra. It also produced jams from apples, cherries, quines and plums, as well as some concentrated orange and lemon juice.

Vegetables and fruit for the factory were purchased throughout the West Bank by commission agents. Fruit came largely from Hebron district which was known for its fruit trees and vineyards. Tomatoes grown on Aradi Baaliyeh (rainfed land) in Hebron district were obtained through commission agents or by direct purchase from farmers.

The factory used quite sophisticated machinery imported from Italy. For the first three years it was exempted from paying customs duties on imported machinery, also from taxes, because the Jordanian government wanted to encourage the industrial processing of agricultural products. Customs duties were levied, however, on machinery imported to make the cans themselves (the materials for which also had to be imported).

Technical assistance in installing and operating the machinery was obtained from Syria which had a number of canning plants. The factory also hired a chemical engineer who was sent to Italy on a UNESCO scholarship to gain more experience in processing and canning.

### 7.3.3 The Role of Merchant Capital

The complexity, diversity and flexibility of marketing arrangements have been shown as an index of the increased commercialisation and specialisation of agricultural production in the West Bank in the 1950s and 1960s. A variety of practices, often associated with particular crops and their internal and external market destinations, were conducted to perform the function of merchant capital, that is, organising the circulation of agricultural commodities from producers to various intermediaries (including processing in some cases) to consumers in the West Bank (and Jordan more generally) and abroad.

It was shown how the organisation of credit for production expenses was built into the marketing arrangements that linked commission agents with sharecroppers (and their landlords). It is worth

emphasising that some commission agents and merchants were themselves medium and large landowners, and that some of these used profits from trade to invest in agricultural production on their own account, thereby contributing to the formation of agrarian capital and the further development of agricultural commodity production.

#### 7.4 The Agricultural Labour Force

It has been suggested that sharecropping practices contributed to the growth of agricultural production, and its increased commercialisation in the West Bank in the 1950s and 1960s, in a context in which most agricultural enterprises - including those established on wholly or partly sharecropped land - employed some wage labour. The latter is certainly borne out by evidence from my own fieldwork (see Table 8.1 in chapter 8). Here I will examine the evidence from official data sources to see what they suggest, subject to the kinds of qualifications noted already.

Table 7.1  
The Agricultural Labour Force, 1961 and 1967

| District  | Total  |         | Working Proprietors<br>and Family Workers |        | Employees |        |
|-----------|--------|---------|---|--------|-----------|--------|
|           | 1961   | 1967    | 1961                                      | 1967   | 1961      | 1967   |
| Jerusalem | 20,091 | 26,274  | 12,333                                    | 26,245 | 8,373     | 10,029 |
| %         | 100    | 100     | 60  | 72     | 40        | 28     |
| Nablus    | 30,486 | 78,690  | 21,104                                    | 48,183 | 9,348     | 30,507 |
| %         | 100    | 100     | 69  | 61     | 31        | 39     |
| Hebron    | 13,418 | 34,414  | 11,073                                    | 16,791 | 2,329     | 7,623  |
| %         | 100    | 100     | 83  | 69     | 17        | 31     |
| Total     | 64,805 | 139,378 | 44,510                                    | 91,219 | 20,050    | 48,159 |
| %         | 100    | 100     | 69  | 65     | 31        | 35     |

Sources: For 1961, adapted from the First Census of Population and Housing, Department of Statistics, Amman; for 1967, from Population and Labour Force in the Agricultural Sector, Department of Statistics, Amman.

The first table presents the findings of the Census of Population and Housing of 1961, and of a survey of Population and Labour Force in the Agricultural Sector conducted in the first quarter of 1967. The most striking feature of these figures is the great difference for the two years. Were the figures accurate, the agricultural labour force would have more than doubled in the space of six years. This is wholly implausible, and the 1967 survey did suggest two major sources of under-reporting in the 1961 Census. The first is that it was conducted during November when the harvesting season was finished, and many seasonal wage workers in agriculture would not have been recorded.

The second source of error was the under-reporting of female agricultural labour, particularly for the category of family workers.

'The traditional social attitude of the people considers the wife who is helping her husband in his agricultural work as being economically non-active and leads, therefore, to her exclusion from the members of the labour force in agriculture. The same attitude applies to all female family members helping men in agricultural work' (Government of Jordan, 1968, pp.7-8)

The following table compares the data on the female agricultural labour force for 1961 and 1967.

Table 7.2

## Women in the Agricultural Labour Force, 1961 and 1967

| District   | Women in total<br>agricultural<br>labour force |        | Women in category<br>of own proprietors<br>and family workers |        | Women in category<br>of wage earners |       |
|------------|--|--------|---|--------|--------------------------------------|-------|
|            | 1961   | 1967   | 1961  | 1967   | 1961                                 | 1967  |
| Jerusalem  | 2,183  | 5,188  | 457   | 4,188  | 1,726                                | 1,000 |
| Women as % | 11   | 14     | 4   | 16     | 21                                   | 10    |
| Nablus     | 1,099  | 19,475 | 474   | 16,488 | 625                                  | 2,987 |
| Women as % | 4  | 25     | 2   | 34     | 7                                    | 10    |
| Hebron     | 3,423  | 3,976  | 3,241   | 3,893  | 182                                  | 83    |
| Women as % | 26   | 16     | 29  | 23     | 8                                    | 1     |
| Total      | 6,705  | 28,639 | 4,172   | 24,569 | 2,533                                | 4,070 |
| Women as % | 10   | 21     | 9   | 27     | 13                                   | 8     |

Sources: As for Table 7.1

Women workers are much more strongly represented in the figures for 1967, which show more than four times as many in absolute terms, and twice as many in proportional terms of the total agricultural labour force. Moreover, nearly 90% of the increase is accounted for by female family workers in Nablus and Jerusalem. Women wage earners in Nablus also increased in absolute terms and as a proportion of all wage workers in the District. Female family workers in Hebron increased in numbers but declined proportionally, while female wage workers in Jerusalem and Hebron declined both absolutely and proportionally.

The figures for 1967 suggest that the total agricultural labour force in 1961 was underestimated by at least about 35,000 workers, from the categories of female family workers and all wage workers. In fact, the total labour force as reported in the 1961 Census would not give a ratio of much higher than one worker per agricultural holding or enterprise. The following table presents a very crude estimation of workers per holding in 1967, using the labour force data for 1967 with the data on number of holdings in 1965 in Table 5.2 in chapter 5.

Table 7.3

## Average Numbers of Workers per Holding

|           | Total | Family Workers | Wage Workers | Ratio of wage workers to family workers |
|-----------|-------|----------------|--------------|---|
| Jerusalem | 2.0   | 1.4            | 0.5          | 0.36                                    |
| Nablus    | 2.9   | 1.8            | 1.1          | 0.6                                     |
| Hebron    | 2.5   | 1.7            | 0.8          | 0.47                                    |
| Total     | 2.5   | 1.6            | 0.9          | 0.56                                    |

Note: Household and wage workers for Jerusalem do not add up to 2.0 because of rounding.

This table is of some use, although it is likely that the figures on the agricultural labour force for 1967 contain errors, if nowhere near as gross as those for 1961. The usual problems of enumeration apply, and the category of female wage workers is likely to be the most under-recorded, as women were more concentrated among the most casually employed agricultural workers, typically hired by the day and sometimes paid in kind rather than cash. Nevertheless, the figures for 1967 in Table 7.3 do show that over one-third of the agricultural labour force consisted of wage workers, with the highest concentration in Nablus District which is consistent with fieldwork data. The above table further shows that the average intensity of labour hiring per holding was higher in Nablus in 1967 than in Jerusalem and Hebron.

Notes

1. Information derived from fieldwork.
2. Information derived from a large landowner in Ain Sinya.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## FORMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

This chapter will show the complexity of the relationships between (1) two basic forms of agricultural production (simple commodity production, capitalist commodity production whether on a smaller or larger scale), (2) the units of production in which they took place, and (3) four categories of the agricultural population distinguished by landownership (landless, small, medium and large landowners) who are involved in the constitution of forms and units of production.

It was seen in earlier chapters that units of production do not correspond simply with (type and) extent of landownership. That is, through effective division by tenancy (on a sharecropping or cash basis) a large landholding may be divided up into a number of different units of production, in each of which production is organised by a different agent, whether a household, household head, manager, etc. Alternatively, a household or household head may organise production in two or more units of production operating as distinct 'enterprises' (e.g. own land worked with family labour for subsistence and cash crops, plus land rented in and worked with wage labour to produce specialised commodities).

In the latter case, while under a single 'management', the two enterprises also exemplify the two different forms of production:

simple commodity production using family labour on own and/or rented land, and capitalist commodity production using wage labour on own and/or rented land (and which may contribute to a process of accumulation).

As will be seen in more detail, this means that the socio-economic differentiation of the agricultural population can not be established simply on the basis of (extent of) landowning (or landlessness), nor on the criteria of renting in and out of land, and employing wage labour (see below). An analysis of forms of production shows that sharecropping can not be assumed to represent or embody a particular social relation of production in this context, and that renting in and out of land cuts across different strata defined solely in terms of ownership of land. Indirectly, the complexity of arrangements through which units of production are constituted over longer or shorter periods of time also highlights the flexibility of the agrarian system of the West Bank during this period, and the contribution to that flexibility of sharecropping as a means of allocating and re-allocating land.

These brief remarks indicate that forms and units of production have to be distinguished according to both their 'external' conditions of existence (how the conditions of production, including land and credit, are assembled and combined; how this affects various claims on the distribution of the product), and their 'internal organisation of production (labour processes involving family labour and/or wage labour, and how they are 'managed').

### 8.1 Categories of Landholding and Sharecropping Practices

The four categories of the agricultural population relevant to this analysis, each of which was well represented in my fieldwork interviews, are as follow:

- (1) Landless people who farm land rented in on sharecropping or cash tenancy, and/or who work as agricultural wage labourers;
- (2) Small owners (between 10 and 49 dunums) who farm their own land, and either sell their labour power or rent in additional land (or rent out land);
- (3) Medium owners (between 50 and 199 dunums) who may rent out some of their land and/or rent in additional land:
- (4) Large owners (more than 200 dunums) who often rent out land, sometimes combined with production on part of their land using wage labour.

The following table shows the distribution of land renting and labour hiring practices among the four categories of people I interviewed. Particular combinations of practices will be illustrated in section 8.3, but first some comments on the table are in order.

Table 8.1

Renting of Land and Labour Hiring

| <u>Category</u>         | <u>Farms Own Land</u> |      | <u>Rents in Land</u> |      | <u>Rents Out Land</u> |      | <u>Sells Labour</u> | <u>Buys Labour</u> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|------|----------------------|------|-----------------------|------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                         | All                   | Part | Share                | Cash | Share                 | Cash | <u>Power</u>        | <u>Power</u>       |
| Landless<br>(N=17)      | -                     | -    | 15                   | -    | 1                     | -    | 3                   | 15                 |
| Small owners<br>(N=13)  | 6                     | 3    | 6                    | 1    | 7                     | -    | 1                   | 9                  |
| Medium owners<br>(N=10) | 5                     | 5    | -                    | -    | 5                     | -    | -                   | 9                  |
| Large owners<br>(N=16)  | 3                     | 10   | 1                    | 1    | 14                    | -    | -                   | 13                 |
| Total<br>(N=56)         | 14                    | 18   | 22                   | 2    | 27                    |      | 4                   | 46                 |

Included in the landless category are two men who did not rent in land, and subsisted solely through agricultural wage employment. Of the fifteen who rented in land, thirteen were 'peasant' sharecroppers, while the other two were quite different. One managed 600 dunums of land in Jericho for an absentee landlord resident in Amman, and was paid with a 60% share of the land he managed. He retained 100 dunums as a farm of his own for citrus and banana production, worked exclusively with wage labour, and rented out the rest on a sharecropping basis. One of his 'sharecroppers' was a non-farmer who rented in 100 dunums worked with wage labour under the supervision of a salaried manager (see section 8.3). For these two, therefore, farming was a purely commercial 'investment' rather than a 'peasant type' activity (oriented to simple reproduction).

These examples also show the inadequacy of labour hiring in itself as a criterion of differentiation. The table shows the prevalence of labour hiring in all four categories, but does not distinguish between casual labour hiring as a supplement to family labour during periods of peak labour demand, and an exclusive reliance on wage labour in capitalist and petty capitalist enterprises (e.g. those of the two 'sharecroppers' noted above).

The category of small landowner is a very mixed one with respect to renting practices. Only one person in this category farmed all his own land, and neither rented land in or out. The other five who farmed all their own land rented in additional land (four through sharecropping and one through cash tenancy). One owner both rented

out and rented in land. Two farmed part of their own land and sharecropped out the remainder, while four small owners rented out all of their land and did not farm at all. Those small owners who rented out all or part of their land lacked the family labour resources and/or were engaged in other economic activities (see section 8.3).

None of the medium sized owners rented in land, which is striking (though it should be remembered that this is not a systematic nor representative sample, see ch. 2). Five of them farmed all their land, while the other five farmed part of their land and sharecropped out the rest. There is no correlation between the two sub-groups and size of landholding within the range of this category (50 to 199 dunums). It appears, therefore, that those who rented out land on a regular or occasional basis did so primarily because of labour constraints (supply of family labour, wage rates of hired labour), given that the availability of family labour fluctuates over time as do labour demands of different crops according to climatic conditions (see section 8.3).

Of the sixteen large landholdings, seven fell within the range of 200 to 500 dunums, four were between 500 and 1000 dunums, and five were over 1000 dunums (of which two were the holdings of really major landowning families, possessing 5,000 dunums and 20,000 dunums). Only three of these large owners farmed all their own land (all of which were at the lower end of the range, two with 300 dunums and one holding of 400 dunums). One of these was a 'joint household' unit of

production owned and worked together by seven related households, which also rented in land individually as sharecroppers (see section 8.3). The other two were run as purely capitalist enterprises, one of which rented in additional land on cash tenancy (see section 8.4). Three other large landowners rented out all their land, while the rest retained part of their land for commercial production (with hired field labour and sometimes managerial labour, in which case the owners played no part in agricultural production themselves).

## 8.2 Three Stages of the Production Process

### (i) Assembling the Means of Production

In sharecropping the first step is to lease in a plot of land. In cases where the sharecropper is a landowner (whether small, medium or large) he may be extending an already established unit of production by renting in additional land (particularly if it is adjacent to or near his own land), or he may use rented land to establish a separate unit of production (especially if it is characterised by a different mode of labour recruitment and organisation).

Other material means of production have to be assembled and combined with land to commence the production cycle, such as means of irrigation, seeds, young plants, fertilizers, insecticides and possibly agricultural machinery.

The importance of the distinction between Aradi Baaliyeh (dry, i.e. rainfed, land) and Aradi Marwiyeh (irrigated land) highlights the

centrality of water supply as a variable. If the land leased in is regarded as Marwiyeh, its owner is supposed to provide irrigation water, whether from ownership of an artesian well, or from rights to water from a stream or canal (as in Al-auja) or through purchase from other landowners or private companies.

In this situation, then, the landowner provides irrigation water together with land, while the sharecropper provides labour to work the land (whether his own and/or family labour and/or wage labour). Generally, the costs of other means of production are shared equally by the landowner and the sharecropping tenant. The costs of other means of production are often financed on credit from a commission agent to whom the sale of the crop is pledged, and in some cases their advance is deducted solely from the tenant's share of the final crop.

Agricultural machinery is generally restricted to traditional types of plough, axes, hoes, etc. There were not many tractors, combines, and sprays in use, and they were owned mostly by large landowners (and four medium landowners). There was a certain rental market for these more modern means of machinery among farmers (including sharecroppers). Landlords owning modern machinery usually made it available to their sharecroppers; otherwise landlords and sharecroppers generally shared equally the costs of renting machinery and equipment.

(ii) Organisation of the Production Process

Once the material means of production have been assembled they have to

be combined with labour to undertake production. While family labour was the most widespread form of labour used, it was widely supplemented with wage labour (and in some cases wage labour was employed exclusively). The use of family and/or wage labour in sharecropping enterprises depended on the area under cultivation, the labour demands (relative labour intensity) of different crops, and the availability of family and wage workers.

The specific organisation of the labour process constitutes the major elements of the internal composition of any unit of production. Within sharecropping units of production using family labour, with little specialisation by skill and a rudimentary technical division of labour (especially given the low level of mechanisation) the principal division within the labour process is the sexual division of labour.

The sexual division of labour is clear in two areas - that of the domestic economy and that of the agricultural unit of production. Domestic labour necessary to daily maintenance of household members and generational reproduction was absolutely and exclusively performed by women. Within agricultural production there was some division of tasks by gender. Men usually did the ploughing, whether with draught animals or tractors. Men also tended to do digging work, including clearing around young vegetable plants and around olive trees. Women's main tasks were weeding, harvesting and threshing.

In sharecropping, the landlord plays no active role in the organisation of production and so cannot be considered as part of the

social division of labour within the production process. The landlord's role and the relations it involves are confined to the beginning and end points of the production process (assembling the means of production, and the realisation and distribution of the product, respectively).

(iii) Realisation and Distribution of the Product

Immediate realisation of commodities produced has been discussed in the chapter on various marketing arrangements. In sharecropping, the distribution of the realised value of the product takes place according to the claims of the sharecropper, the landlord, and the commission agent (who may also have advanced credit, for which the appropriate deductions would be made).

At the same time, the value of commodities thus realised and distributed depends on the labour expended in the production process. The surplus labour expended by family labour (and by wage labour when employed) in sharecropping enterprises is appropriated, typically, by the household head as the organiser of the enterprise, and then distributed between himself and others with a claim on part of the product (landowner, commission agent). Whether the quantity of realised surplus labour that accrues to the sharecropper (as an income net of 'payments' to labour on one side, whether family or waged, and of rent, commission and interest, on the other) constitutes a possible or sufficient source of accumulation is, of course, another question. Moreover, the answer to this question relates to the dynamic of the

form(s) of production in which the sharecropper is engaged, that is, whether oriented to simple reproduction (including the goal of higher levels of consumption) or to expanded reproduction (investment in expanding the efficiency and/or scale of commodity production for the sake of accumulation).

By contrast with sharecropping, cash tenancy does not allow the landlord to realise a larger income from increased output. The landlord's claim on the realised product is restricted to the fixed sum agreed for rent. Therefore, a tenant producing on the basis of a fixed money rent may calculate the costs of, and returns to, the enterprise differently than a share tenant, according to specific conditions of production (inputs and yields) and realisation (market conditions). Like the sharecropper, however, a cash tenant is likely to be tied to a particular commission agent for the realisation of commodities produced.

### 8.3 The Constitution of Forms and Units of Production Through Sharecropping: Some Examples

In this section I shall illustrate the analytical framework proposed with some specific cases of how forms and units of production are constituted through sharecropping (and the fluidity and flexibility of their conditions of existence). The examples are grouped under the four categories of the agricultural population by landholding, to further show how these were cross-cut by the key social relations

entailed by agricultural production in the West Bank during the period under consideration.

(i) Landless Sharecroppers

Here I will illustrate the situation of 'peasant' sharecropping and by way of contrast the distinctive conditions of a 'non-peasant' sharecropper. In relation to the former, the southern part of the Western Jordan Valley best illustrates the circumstances of 'landless peasant' sharecropping, due to the influx of refugees in what was an agriculturally very underdeveloped area.

On his arrival in Al-auja in 1949, a landless refugee started to rent in 100 dunums on sharecropping from a bedouin landowner. This land was divided into non-adjacent plots of 20 to 30 dunums, and the sharecropper worked it with his own and his family's labour (that of his father, his wife and their four children). This should be considered as one unit of production, organised as a household enterprise for subsistence and simple commodity production. The latter included vegetable production with its heavy labour demands. Peak season labour needs in vegetable cultivation were sometimes met through cooperation (labour pooling) with other sharecropping families; when this was not possible, supplementary casual wage labour was employed.

Credit for production expenses during the growing season was obtained from a commission agent, and was free of interest on smaller sums.

However, if a larger sum was needed, interest of 25% on the sum borrowed was deducted when the crop was sold by the commission agent. This case, then, exemplifies the constrained situation of the 'classic' landless peasant sharecropper for whom simple reproduction is an annual struggle.

A complete contrast is provided by the case of a landless 'investor' (of Greek origin) who rented in land for sharecropping in Jericho. The land he rented was part of a large holding, owned by an absentee landlord who entrusted the administration of his holding to a manager, who retained 60% of the income from the holding as his payment and remitted 40% to the landowner. The manager retained a plot for his own use and rented out the rest of the holding to a number of sharecroppers on a 50:50 arrangement. The 'sharecropper' in question here in turn hired a salaried manager (paid monthly) to work his rented plot of 100 dunums with wage workers hired from a nearby refugee camp.

In a formal sense, the arrangement between the Greek 'investor' and the landlord's manager at one end of the production process, and his relations with the commission agent (from whom he received advances for production expenses) at the other end, were just like those of any other sharecropper. However, clearly the production process was organised as a purely commercial (and subsidiary) enterprise for this particular 'sharecropper', who employed salaried supervisory labour as well as fieldworkers on the land he rented in. In this situation,

therefore, it is the organisation of production on the land rented (the form of production), rather than the 'external' conditions of existence of production, that distinguishes this 'sharecropper' from other landless ('peasant' type) sharecroppers.

(ii) Small Landowners and Sharecropping

In Anabta town (on the northern plain) a small owner had 13 dunums planted with orchards of olives and almonds. Cereals and pulses were cultivated between the trees. This owner and his family were both poor and with a labour capacity 'surplus' to the land they possessed. To acquire means of subsistence he sharecropped in another 41 dunums of unirrigated land for the cultivation of both subsistence crops (cereals) and cash crops (vegetables, water melon) with family labour. Both kinds of land and the form of production on them constituted a single unit of production, geared to simple reproduction. He said that he was too poor to hire wage labour and thus relied on family labour. The only exception was sometimes during harvesting seasons when if he was short of labour, he sought to employ casual women workers who could be hired for a small payment in kind.

Another very small landowner in Anabta was in a quite different position, that further demonstrates the inadequacy of size of landholding as an index of differentiation in these circumstances. He owned 22 dunums of land divided into two plots. One plot consisted of 12 dunums of olive trees which he worked himself with between two and four wage labourers during the ploughing and harvesting seasons. (No

other family labour was available as this man's children were migrant workers on the Gulf.). The olive orchard can thus be considered as a petty capitalist enterprise.

The other plot of 10 dunums consisted of irrigated arable land. During the winter the owner used it for cereal cultivation with hired labourers. During the summer season he sharecropped it out for vegetable cultivation, preferring not to take on the expense and the responsibility of supervision of more labour intensive vegetable growing. This example shows that even a small plot of land could be occupied by two distinct units of production on a systematic seasonal rotation. Moreover, its owner was in no sense a typical small 'peasant', given his reliance on wage labour and his activities as a trader exporting olives, oil and almonds to the East Bank of the Jordan, and importing grain from there.

The case of a small landowner (though with 49 dunums on the borderline of small and medium ownership) in Zababdeh village in the highland zone, illustrates the diversity and flexibility of land and labour use within a single household. The household's land was divided into a plot of 11 dunums used for cereal and vegetable cultivation, an area of 22 dunums planted with water melons, a vineyards of 11 dunums and an olive orchard of 5 dunums.

Interestingly, the use of family labour was concentrated first of all on the vineyard and the olive orchard (where it was occasionally

substituted by casual female wage labour in harvesting). Then, subject to availability of family labour, water melons were cultivated by the household (sometimes supplemented by occasional wage labour), but in some years the owner preferred to simply rent out the melon field to a sharecropper. The smaller plot for cereals and vegetables was regularly sharecropped out. Here the striking point is the diversity (and distribution) of crops with different labour demands, and the resort to casual wage labour and to sharecropping out in the face of constraints imposed by household labour supply. Again, this shows that even a small area could be used flexibly by different units of production according to (changing) annual conditions.

(iii) Medium Landholding and Sharecropping

A medium sized landowner, also in Zabadeh owned 92 dunums in plots distributed both in the hills and in the plain. His pattern of land use also displayed considerable flexibility and diversity. He had a large olive plantation of 42 dunums on which the use of family labour was concentrated, although supplementary wage labour was employed in the ploughing season and labour was saved during the harvest by selling the crop through daman. In some years the 30 dunums of land under cereal cultivation were worked with family labour supplemented by wage labour; in other years this plot was sharecropped out. The remaining 20 dunums were planted with water melons, for which the owner depended more on wage labour. Occasionally, this land was sharecropped out but less so than the cereal land.

In this case too the units of production operating on particular areas of land often changed from year to year, an important determinant being the availability of family labour (as reflected in the decision to sell the olive crop on the tree through daman to avoid the effort or costs of harvesting), and the price of wage labour relative to returns (involving a trade-off between hiring wage labour and sharecropping out land: cereal land was sharecropped out before land for growing melons, which brought a better rate of return at prevailing wage rates).

(iv) Large Landholding and Sharecropping

Previous chapters have indicated the subdivision of large holdings into a number of effective units of production through sharecropping. The retention and use of areas of large holdings for purely capitalist production is discussed in section 8.5 below.

Here it is worth noting one unusual, and apparently anomalous case, that warns against the simplistic use of size of holding as an index of differentiation at the upper end of the scale, just as earlier we noted its problems at the lower end of the scale. In Khirbet Kreiseh in the highland zone of Hebron district, a considerable holding of 400 dunums is farmed as a single unit of production through cooperation between seven households, headed by seven brothers. The 400 dunums were owned by their father, and on his death they decided not to partition the land between them but to keep it under a single title and to farm it collectively with their families.

The land was used mainly for grain cultivation but also contains a variety of fruit trees. Labour was mainly provided by the brothers and their families, with some (limited) supplementary wage labour at periods of peak demand. At the same time each of the families involved sharecropped in land on an individual basis to grow vegetables and wheat, thus gaining its own source of income additional to that shared out from the jointly owned and farmed land.

This is an unusual way of households being involved in more than one unit of production, that is, by having a share in a large but collectively owned and worked farm and working their own units of production established on land individually rented in through sharecropping (and also worked principally with family labour). The forms of production involved in this particular set of arrangements can be termed joint household simple commodity production and (the more typical) single household simple commodity production.

#### 8.4 Two Cases of Cash Tenancy

Cash tenancy was much less prevalent than sharecropping, but, similarly to sharecropping, the two examples in my sample of renting in extra land do pertain to landowners from different categories (small and large) involved in different forms of production (simple commodity production and large scale capitalist production). The key difference between cash tenancy and sharecropping, in addition to the different implications of a fixed vs. share rent, is that all

production and marketing expenses are borne by the tenant (rather than shared between tenant and landlord). These two factors may increase the risks for the tenant, but also mean that the tenant is in a position to appropriate the benefits of any increased output (rather than sharing these with the landlord).

The two cases of cash tenancy in my sample are both drawn from Anabta in the northern plain, an agro-economic zone with a longer history of land settlement and peasant proprietorship. The first case is that of a small landowner with 40 dunums of hilly land planted with olive and almond trees. These supplied sufficient income for him to rent 30 dunums of land on the plains for arable cultivation each year (the plot rented in varied from year to year, and was obtained from different landlords, but was always in the same locality).

In this instance, the land rented in formed one unit of production together with land owned, and was worked with family labour, supplemented with seasonal wage labour for ploughing and harvesting, thereby conforming to a petty commodity producing enterprise under the 'management' of a single household.

The second case of cash tenancy concerns the family enterprise owned by three brothers, one of whom effectively managed agricultural production while the other two were non-active 'shareowners' receiving their share of annual income from the enterprise (and occupying themselves with other business interests). The three brothers owned a

large area of 300 dunums of irrigated land on which vegetables were grown and an irrigated citrus plantation of 35 dunums. Both were worked exclusively with wage labour largely recruited from nearby refugee camps and from the town of Anabta itself.

The scale of this specialised capitalist agricultural enterprise was extended by the regular annual renting of an additional 100 dunums on cash tenancy. This area was used for the rotation of (winter) wheat and (summer) vegetables, again exclusively with wage labour. As with the other case of cash tenancy, the land rented in constituted a single unit of production with land already owned, as it was organised by the same agent under the same form of production (in this case, large scale capitalist production).

#### 8.5 Large-Scale Capitalist Farming

Examples of larger scale capitalist farming have been noted so far in relation to landless 'investors' who may acquire land through sharecropping and have it worked for specialised commodity production through hired wage labour (including managerial labour), and in relation to an enterprise comprising a large (and irrigated) landholding expanded with additional land rented in on cash tenancy. Generally, citrus and banana plantations were run as capitalist enterprises; also high value (albeit more labour intensive) seasonal crops like vegetables and ground fruits were also produced on a capitalist basis (including on land sharecropped in for this purpose).

It is worthwhile giving the further examples of large landowners engaged in capitalist production, both drawn from the West Jordan Valley which, for historical reasons noted earlier, was something of a 'frontier' for both sharecropping and capitalist farming after 1948, in the context of the influx of refugees and the rapid commercialisation of agriculture.

The first example is that of a refugee who came to Jericho after 1948 with enough money to purchase 300 dunums of land. On this land were established a citrus orchard of 80 dunums and a banana plantation of 30 dunums, with the remaining 190 dunums put to vegetable cultivation. All crops were worked exclusively with wage labour under the supervision of three salaried Wukalaa (plural of Wakil = farm manager). Their responsibilities included the recruitment of up to seventy daily wage labourers (male and female), mostly from the nearby refugee camp of Aqbat Jabr; supervising farm work; and managing irrigation provided from the landowner's artesian wells.

While this landholding coincided with the boundaries of a single unit of production (and capitalist enterprise), much larger landholdings were typically divided between capitalist enterprises run by (or on behalf of) the landowner, and land that was sharecropped out. A very large landowner in Al-auja had about 4,500 dunums, of which 700 to 1000 dunums were farmed annually depending on the supply of irrigation water. This area included a permanently established citrus orchard of 100 dunums and banana plantation of 200 dunums managed for the

landowner by salaried Wukalaa. The other 400 to 700 dunums that could be cultivated each year were rented out on sharecropping.

In this case, the landholding as a whole provides a single source of income for the owner (albeit two kinds of income, namely profit from his own citrus and banana enterprise and share rent from land leased out to sharecroppers). From the viewpoint of production, however, the land use was divided between different units of production, in which different forms of production were constituted (large scale capital production; simple commodity and possibly petty capitalist production by small and medium sharecroppers).

#### 8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has identified three forms of production: simple commodity production (typically organised by single households, exceptionally by a group of households), petty capitalist production, and large scale capitalist production. The boundaries of these three forms are somewhat fluid and difficult to specify precisely in all cases due to lack of sufficient data (though the analytical issues involved have been illustrated in relation to some particular cases).

The boundary between simple commodity and petty capitalist production tends to be problematic in many studies of agriculture (and of non-agricultural production), and for some writers the two in fact become synonymous (either by theoretical decision or the difficulties

of distinguishing between them empirically). In this context, given the near universality of labour hiring by all categories of agricultural producers, the key issue is whether wage labour is basically supplementary to household labour during seasons of peak demand (ploughing, harvesting), or whether a unit of production is farmed primarily or exclusively with wage labour. At one end of the spectrum, smallholdings worked exclusively with wage labour have a petty capitalist character (8.3).

The boundary between petty and large scale capitalist production concerns the size of enterprises. A 'pragmatic' definition has been used here, with units of production of 100 dunums and above clearly satisfying the conditions of large scale capitalist enterprises when worked exclusively with wage labour (and often salaried managers as well).

The analysis of forms of production enables us to depict some patterns in the farming, renting, and labour hiring practices of the four categories set out in Table 8.1 (though these patterns do not represent any simple correlation with size of holding). First of all, simple commodity production (similar to conventionally understood 'peasant' production) is applicable to (i) most of those landless farmers who sharecrop in land, (ii) most of the small owners who farm all or some of their own land (those who farmed all of their own land, also rented in additional land), (iii) most of the medium owners who farm all their own land or farm part of it and sharecrop out the rest

(none of the medium owners in my sample renting in land), and (iv) the single (and unusual) large holding that was jointly owned and worked by households which also sharecropped additional land on an individual basis.

At the same time, of course, some of those listed above might be engaged in petty capitalist production, that is, working an area of under 100 dunums primarily or exclusively with wage labour, whether on plots they owned and/or sharecropped in. An example of one such small owner was given in section 8.3. According to the logic of this classification, a medium landowner with more than 100 dunums who worked it exclusively with wage labour would qualify as a larger scale capitalist farmer. However, there were no such cases in my sample. The only medium owner who worked his land exclusively with wage labour had an overall holding of 100 dunums, part of which was regularly rented out on sharecropping. In this respect, he was the same as the second small landowner in Anabta described in section 8.3.

Moving to larger scale capitalist farming, it is obvious that for those in the landless and small owner categories, a large capitalist enterprise could only be established by renting land in. For the medium landowners (above 100 dunums) and large landowners, a large capitalist enterprise can be established through farming all or part of their land (to which additional land might be added, again by renting in). In practice, as we have seen, large scale capitalist farmers in my sample comprised (i) two landless 'investors' who

operated 100 dunum enterprises on land they did not own, and (ii) twelve of the sixteen large landowners. Of the latter, only two farmed all their land as commercial enterprises, one of which was augmented by additional land leased in on a cash rent. The other ten - and more 'typical' - large landowners tended to retain part of their land for citrus and banana growing enterprises, and to sharecrop out the rest.

As far as renting out land is concerned, it is striking that a high proportion of small and medium owners (7 of 13, and 5 of 10 respectively) as well as of large owners (13 of 16) rented out land, mostly on a sharecropping basis.

## CHAPTER NINE

## CONCLUSIONS

This study concerns a relatively small area within a relatively short period of nineteen years. However, the West Bank itself contains three fairly distinct agro-economic zones whose different characteristics have proved of some relevance to issues investigated here, and the period was one of severe externally induced pressure on the land resources and inherited agricultural practices of the West Bank.

Within the sometimes severe limitations of the lack of an adequate wider data base (e.g. systematic data on land distribution over time), and the conditions in which fieldwork was conducted, a picture emerged of considerable adaptation to the multiple effects of 1948, including increased commercialisation and growth of agricultural production, and the role in this process of sharecropping. In the course of my fieldwork and subsequent analysis of its results, I had to abandon my earlier notions of sharecropping as a determinate form of production (and 'exploitation'), and move towards a conception of sharecropping as a type of tenancy arrangement that, according to specific conditions, can coexist with - and even encourage - different forms of production.

The last point was discussed in the previous chapter. In this concluding chapter I will summarise my findings and the issues they

raise, and relate these to several positions in discussions of sharecropping and agrarian change more widely.

### 9.1 The Findings

1. Sharecropping is not a form of production, but can be combined with different forms of production.
2. Sharecroppers are not necessarily landless but can include different types of agricultural producers.
3. Sharecropping therefore does not simply correlate with vertical differentiation of the agricultural population on a scale of landholding (although the Western Jordan Valley provides one case where nearly all sharecroppers owned no land of their own), but has to be related to the horizontal differentiation of different forms of relatively specialised commodity production.
4. The 'persistence', and even increase, of sharecropping practices in the context analysed, was related to the lack of mechanised agriculture, and the demands of often labour intensive cultivation. One very important finding, relevant to the latter, and which contradicts one powerful image of sharecropping, is that in the West Bank it depended generally on the availability of wage labour, whether hired as a supplement to family labour during peak seasons of ploughing, weeding, and harvesting, or as the exclusive form of labour in enterprises farming land rented on share tenancy.
5. Sharecropping hence served as an adaptive mechanism in bringing together land (and sometimes intensifying the use of that land)

with labour, above all the 'labour reserve' of a population of landless and agriculturally skilled refugees, whether employed as sharecroppers or as wage workers.

6. The combination of sharecropping with different forms of production, including capitalist farming, puts into question the notion that the landlord's rent necessarily represents a relation of 'exploitation' (sometimes associated with the concept of a 'feudal' or 'semi-feudal' relation of production, as suggested by Bhaduri in the Indian debate).
7. Sharecropping is not an intrinsic 'obstacle' to the growth of agricultural output and commercialisation but, in certain circumstance, may contribute to it.

These findings highlight a number of issues. The first is the need for a concept of horizontal differentiation of different forms of commodity production, which may or may not be in competition with each other according to their type of specialisation. The notion of horizontal differentiation, utilising forms of production, helps avoid the over-simplified use of indicators of vertical differentiation, such as size of holding.

Second, the conditions of existence of different forms of production (all of which may involve sharecropping arrangements), together with the widespread use of wage labour, throws a different light on mechanisms of appropriation than that suggested by a simple view of sharecropping as a relation of production/'exploitation' between a landlord class and a (landless) 'peasant' class.

Third, to what extent does commodity production established through sharecropping allow accumulation of capital by farmers that might be reinvested in agricultural production (whether on a smaller or larger scale)?

Fourth, what kinds of resources are required to enter (or expand) farming through sharecropping in land, and in particular labour resources (e.g. availability of family labour, financial means to employ wage labour)? How does this affect how much land is rented in, and the uses to which it is put? (These questions are also relevant to sharecropping out land; about half the small and medium landowners in my sample rented out land on sharecropping).

## 9.2 Sharecropping and Units of Analysis

As noted, in the analysis of my findings my view of sharecropping changed from the assumption that it is a determinate relation of production, through which a determinate form of production is constituted: the landless or otherwise 'poor' peasant household exploited through 'pre-' or 'semi-' capitalist rent by the landlord. Sharecropping practices emerged as simply one possible form of land-renting or tenancy, albeit by far the most prevalent one in the West Bank in the period considered. Those renting in land through sharecropping were different social categories (landless and small landowners, commercial investors), as were those renting out land through sharecropping (small, medium and large owners of land).

Together with the finding that different forms of production were established on sharecropped land, this puts the question of social relations of production, and class relations, within a different problematic. For the two parties in sharecropping contracts did not correspond to two straightforward 'classes' of landlords and rural landless. Whether some more differentiated class analysis of those involved in agricultural production through sharecropping can be made, is discussed further below (9.4).

A key step in arriving at the findings summarised above was to distinguish three sequential stages of any production process: the assembly and combination of means of production and labour, the organisation of the production process itself (and its constituent labour processes), and the realisation and distribution of the product. I discovered that taking only the first stage, particularly if the mode of obtaining land is emphasised at the expense of how labour is recruited, and the third stage (the division of the production including the share rent), gives a rather formal identity to enterprises established through sharecropping that are otherwise distinct in social terms, that is, representing different forms of production. To understand the latter, it is necessary to take into account how production is actually organised (the second stage of the production process), as well as to give due emphasis to the recruitment of labour to the enterprise, including wage labour.

Because agrarian change in the West Bank in this period was marked by a quite complex diversity and flexibility of farming enterprises, I

used the unit of production as the principal unit of empirical analysis, to which I have tried to relate the form of production as the principal unit of theoretical analysis. At the same time, I have pointed out significant differences between the three main agro-economic zones that are relevant to the analysis. Caglar Keyder<sup>e</sup>, in an article on 'Paths of Rural Transformation in Turkey' related different forms of production to the dynamics of change in different agro-economic zones, arguing that the village should constitute the primary unit of analysis:

"... the impact of social and economic change on individual households is primarily mediated by the social structure of the village. Therefore, it would be impossible to predict differential developments based on adaptations to socio-economic change on the basis of individual households" (Keyder, 1983a, p.174).

In developing this proposition Keyder identified four types of villages in Turkey: (i) those in which production for subsistence predominates, with a tendency to agrarian and social decline, marked by substantial out-migration; (2) villages of 'subordinate commercialisation', that is, petty commodity production, often a highly diversified kind and supplemented by seasonal labour migration; (3) 'petty commodity production with accumulation', that is, relatively specialised petty commodity production with reinvestment in land and agricultural machinery (grain and cotton growing villages are given as examples); (4) 'capitalist farming' in which one or more large scale farmers are concentrating land in their own hands and 'squeezing out' peasants who either leave the village or remain as agricultural labourers.

In a recent study of contemporary sharecropping in the West Bank, Salim Tamari adapted this typology, suggesting that villages of Keyder's types 2,3 and 4, broadly correspond to the situations prevailing in the highlands, the northern plain, and the Western Jordan valley respectively. At the same time, in recognition of local complexities and diversity, Tamari qualified the application of Keyder's typology, noting that

"... it collapses a number of regional attributes of villages undergoing transformation into broad analytical categories for the purpose of extrapolation ... Projection from such trends is hampered by the apparently limited amount of empirical investigation involved, and secondly by a tendency to extrapolate future trends from embryonic forms of development, such as the case of peasant capitalism ('Kulak-type' villages) (Tamari, 1983, p.18).

Concerning the period I studied, there was a relative distribution of the concentration of petty commodity (small and medium peasant) production in the highlands, 'petty commodity production with accumulation' in the northern plain, and capitalist farming in the Western Jordan Valley. However, this rough pattern does not translate well into a village typology of the kind suggested by Keyder. While the highlands were relatively more homogenous, villages in the northern plain were characterised by petty commodity enterprises, some based solely in sharecropping but most typically on land owned which might be augmented by sharecropping in extra land. The latter in some cases pointed to 'Kulak' accumulation, but in this process investment in machinery, or in acquiring extra land through purchase, were not as important as investment in purchasing labour power together with renting in extra land to put it to work.

At the same time, capitalist enterprises specialising in citrus production were part of the agrarian 'mixture' in the northern plain, though not as prominent as in the Western Jordan Valley, where capitalist farming enterprises and a 'purer' form of landless peasant sharecropping coexisted. The development of capitalist farming in the Western Jordan Valley, however, did not rely on a process of redistributing land through concentration on one hand, and dispossession on the other. Land was already highly concentrated in large holdings that were largely left fallow or used for grazing before 1948. It was the influx of landless labour that enabled large landowners to bring more land under cultivation, through a combination of capitalist plantation production with hired wage labour, and renting out land on sharecropping. Again this took place without any major investment in agricultural machinery, although investment in irrigation facilities played a significant role.

While it would have been valuable to conduct an investigation into forms of economy at the village level, fieldwork conditions and time constraints prevented this in any systematic fashion. The above observations suggest that had a village level analysis been possible, it would not have produced a typology as clear cut as Keyder's, but rather, perhaps, a range of particular combinations/'articulations' of different forms of production and the social categories related through them.

### 9.3 The Conditions and Character of Sharecropping Enterprises:

#### Some Comparative Points

First, it is worth contrasting the situation in the West Bank with that put forward in arguments that tie sharecropping to the existence of an exploited, indebted or otherwise immiserated peasantry. In the extensive Indian debates about modes of production and the development of capitalism in agriculture, this argument was put forward by A. Bhaduri (1973). In Bhaduri's view, sharecroppers are tied into a relation of extreme dependence on their landlords, which is reinforced by a cycle of indebtedness that reproduces that dependence from one agricultural year to another. It is also reinforced by the ability of landlords to force sharecropping tenants to sell their crops to them at prices they determine. In short, the landlord concentrates the various forms of 'pre-capitalist' exploitation in his relationship with sharecroppers: rent, interest, and merchant's profit.

Somewhat closer to the West Bank, Keyder (1983b) paints a similarly bleak picture of the situation of sharecroppers in Turkey. According to Keyder, a sharecropping peasantry emerges due to difficulties in reproducing the ability to sustain independent farming, rather than because of any absolute shortage of land in itself.<sup>1</sup> As far as the West Bank is concerned, the analysis of sharecropping during the British Mandate period by Ashour (discussed in chapter three) converges with the kind of dependence/exploitation theme of Bhaduri and Keyder.

During the period I studied, the most likely candidates for an oppressed peasantry of this type were the landless refugee sharecroppers of the Western Jordan Valley, the conditions of whose arrival in 1948 did seem to put them at the mercy of landowners, at least initially. Evidence from Al-auja suggests that in the 1950s landless sharecroppers in the valley were subject to harsher conditions of contract than elsewhere in the West Bank. They were often responsible for providing all the inputs to production, or meeting their costs, while the crop was shared 50:50 with the landlord. By the early 1960s, however, with the opportunities opened up by labour migration to the Gulf countries, it was less easy for landlords to impose such terms on sharecroppers, and the interdependence of landowner and tenant became clearer, with owners having to share the costs of inputs with their tenants.

At a more theoretical level, Banaji (1977) criticised Bhaduri's conception of the 'pre-capitalist' or 'semi-feudal' nature of sharecropping relations, arguing that Bhaduri emphasised features that are not incompatible with capitalism. I agree with this criticism, though not necessarily with Banaji's alternative formulation of peasantry as formally subordinated to capital, hence having the status of ('disguised') wage labourers (see section 9.4 following).

Other Indian critics of Bhaduri's position include Bardhan and Rudra who produced evidence that sharecropping has been "adapting itself more and more to the needs of increasing production and profit by enterprising farmers, both owners and tenants" (1980, p.290).

Strictly speaking, their evidence suggests one empirical configuration or trend against another, rather than a theoretical criticism of Bhaduri, such as that advanced by Banaji. In this sense, the contrast between the positions of Bhaduri on one hand, and Bardhan and Rudra on the other, is more like the contrast between Ashour and Firestone on sharecropping in Palestine during the British Mandate (see chapter three).

In fact, it is not necessary to the position put forward here that sharecropping must be associated with, or give rise to, any one particular empirical trend or pattern, precisely because of its indeterminacy with respect to production relations and forms. Because it is not a determinate relation nor form of production, but can be combined with different forms, sharecropping can only be associated with any particular tendency of change (or stagnation, for that matter) by the specification of other conditions of agricultural production. Thus, at an empirical and evidential level, both Bhaduri and Bardhan/Rudra might be broadly correct about particular areas, as both Ashour and Firestone may have been broadly correct about different localities in Palestine (or Greater Syria) that they drew their principal evidence from.

Nevertheless, it has been argued here that the flexibility and adaptability of sharecropping, as a mechanism of bringing together land and labour, did contribute to the growth of agricultural production and commercialisation in the West Bank. Moreover, my fieldwork data do not suggest that it was tied in to any extreme

relations of dependence of tenants on landowners. In fact, I have emphasised the central role played by commission agents, as one rather specialised kind of merchant or trader in agricultural commodities, in both advancing credit for production expenses and organising the exchange of commodities. The arrangements for the latter involved both landowner and sharecropper, who jointly paid the merchant's commission as a share of the value of the crop.

The widespread employment of wage labour by all sizes and categories of farming enterprises, including those on sharecropper land, has also been stressed. Wage labour was commonly employed as a supplement to family labour in petty commodity producing households during periods of peak demand for ploughing, weeding and harvesting. For the last two tasks, casually hired female workers were sought as they were cheaper to employ (and easier to control?) than men. Sharecroppers I interviewed in Al-auja told me that if landlords were not pleased with the progress of plots worked with family labour, they often instructed the sharecropper to employ additional workers for wages. In some cases, even small agricultural enterprises relied exclusively on wage labour, as well as larger scale capitalist plantations and farms.

In my fieldwork I found that different kinds of crops with different labour intensities and commercial value were an important variable in the decision whether to sharecrop out or sharecrop in land. A similar finding emerges from recent research in highland Ecuador by David Lehmann (n.d.), who argues that there is no correlation between sharecropping and type of labour employed, but a very strong

correlation between the latter and different crops (and their order of importance in the farming of different localities). Just as in the West Bank, sharecroppers frequently employ wage labourers (according to the crop and its significance), and one reason for sharecropping out of land by owners in highland Ecuador is to transfer to someone else the responsibility for recruiting labour and organising it in production.

#### 9.4 Relations of Production and Rural Classes

Given, as I have argued, that sharecropping is a relation of tenancy, for which a particular form of rent is paid, and that it can be combined with different forms of production, then the share rent in itself cannot be taken as a relation of 'exploitation'. If it were, then we would have a situation in which capitalist farmers, as well as household producers, renting in land, were being 'exploited'. If it is to be argued that a relation of exploitation is involved in sharecropping (or any other form of) tenancy in conditions of agrarian change under capitalism, then this is not an intrinsic characteristic of the tenancy relation itself but of the forms of production established wholly or partly on rented land. This approach thus reorients the problematic towards the form(s) of labour involved in the enterprise: family labour, wage labour, or some combination of the two. As I have shown, the latter was very widespread on small and medium sized agricultural enterprises in the West Bank (while capitalist farms, whether small or large, depended exclusively on wage labour).

The following table summarises the combinations of land and labour in the constitution of agricultural enterprises, which were illustrated in chapter 8.

Table 9.1  
Combinations of Land and Labour in the Constitution of  
Agricultural Enterprises

|    | Own Land      |             | Rented Land   |             |
|----|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
|    | Family Labour | Wage Labour | Family Labour | Wage Labour |
| A1 | X             |             |               |             |
| A2 | X             |             | X             |             |
| A3 |               |             | X             |             |
| B1 | X             | X           |               |             |
| B2 | X             |             | X             | X           |
| B3 | X             | X           | X             | X           |
| B4 |               |             | X             | X           |
| C1 | X             |             |               | X           |
| C2 | X             | X           |               | X           |
| C3 |               | X           |               |             |
| C4 |               | X           |               | X           |
| C5 |               |             |               | X           |

A1, A2 and A3 are simple commodity producing households that employ family labour only. B1, B2, B3 and B4 combine household labour with wage labour, and thus may be simple commodity or petty capitalist enterprises. The ambiguities of this category were noted in chapter 8; it is also relevant that the majority of farming enterprises in the West Bank in the 1950s and 1960s would be included here. C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5 indicate clearly capitalist enterprises on the criterion of exclusive use of wage labour on own land or rented land. C1 and C2 illustrate the possibility of a combination of household production on land owned and capitalist production on land rented in.

While the delineation of these possible combinations can be rather formal and static, they do help illustrate some difficult issues. On the view of sharecropping as the mechanism of exploitation of a landless or otherwise marginalised peasantry (Bhaduri, Keyder) then only those falling within A3 might qualify for this class position. On the other hand, the logic of Banaji's theorisation of peasants under capitalism as a category of wage labour means that all those in A would qualify as members of this exploited class, irrespective of whether they were sharecroppers (A2,A3) or not (A1).

A problem with both these positions is that they offer no useful means of analysing the categories of B, where most of the agricultural producers of the West Bank were clustered. This might be because in different ways they adhere to the view that the definitive social relation of production of capitalism - that between capital and wage labour - can only yield two basic class positions or places, i.e.

bourgeois and proletarian. Thus Bhaduri translates social groups who fail to qualify as authentically bourgeois or proletarian into 'pre-capitalist' or 'semi-feudal' entities, while Banaji's solution is to redefine peasants or agricultural petty commodity producers as 'wage labourers'. Following the reading of Marx by Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985), the point is that the capital - wage labour relation produces three basic class positions or places: bourgeois, proletarian, and petty bourgeois. In terms of the economic identification of class places, those which are petty bourgeois (manifested in simple commodity production under capitalism) represent a peculiar contradictory unity of elements of both capital and labour. From the side of capital, they represent private possession of the means of production; from the side of labour they represent the expenditure of their own labour power in production.

The latter, however, does not restrict simple commodity producing enterprises to the use of family labour exclusively because private possession of means of production discloses the possibilities, in principle, of employing the labour power of others, of accumulation, and of transformation into capitalist enterprises. The extent to which, and the ways in which, these possibilities might be realised is a question of the specific concrete conditions that facilitate or inhibit such developments. (The same applies of course, to change in the other direction, i.e. proletarianisation of simple commodity producers.) On this approach, the enterprises clustered in B, including the majority of landless sharecroppers who are in category B4, do not represent an insoluble problem for theoretical analysis,

nor an embarrassing anomaly for empirical analysis. In fact, in the West Bank during this period it was above all the specific condition of a massive influx of agricultural labour that stimulated agricultural growth and commercialisation, which included the expansion and/or formation of commodity producing enterprises to which refugees contributed as sharecroppers or as wage labourers on the farms of others (including sharecroppers).

In terms of relations of production, then, the process of agrarian change in the West Bank in this period can be analysed within the framework of capitalism as long as it is appreciated that capitalist relations of production produce petty bourgeois as well as bourgeois and proletarian class places. This analysis also suggests that the tenancy or rent relation does not represent a relation of 'exploitation' between any sharecropper (capitalist or simple commodity producer) and landlord. The latter appropriates a share of the product (whether in kind or as part of its value realised through exchange), whether it is the product of family labour, wage labour, or some combination of the two. That appropriation is not 'exploitation', although it is made possible by the realisation of surplus labour contained in agricultural commodities, whether the source of surplus labour is the 'self-exploitation' of household labour and/or the exploitation of wage labour.

The logic of this analysis suggests that the major line of class division in the West Bank was between a rural proletariat and all those who had effective possession of agricultural means of

production, including otherwise landless sharecroppers. Among those with effective possession of land, there are further distinctions between simple commodity and capitalist commodity producers, and between those engaged in production and landlords (who included small and medium as well as large landowners).

Strictly speaking, I have focussed on the somewhat abstract formulation of class relations and places, rather than the sociological analysis of classes in the concrete sense, that is, who occupies those class places and how are they internally differentiated. This step is often a difficult one in the study of peasantries, as individual social agents can move between class places, whether over the longer term or on a regular short term basis (e.g. peasants-cum-seasonal wage labourers), or even hold different class places simultaneously. Examples of the latter would be those who combined simple commodity production on their own land (petty bourgeois) with petty capitalist production on rented land (bourgeois), and/or trading on a significant scale (bourgeois - merchant capital). Another combination, of which there was only one example, in my sample, is that of simple commodity producer and wage labourer simultaneously.

It is these multiple combinations, together with the enormous range of variation that can exist among petty commodity producers, that makes concrete or sociological class analysis of the peasantry often so complex and difficult. This is particularly so when there are no overt means of class organisation nor expression of class demands, as

in the West Bank during the period studied here. With the opportunities afforded by agricultural growth and commercialisation, including the wider access to land made possible by sharecropping, on one hand, and slow recovery from the trauma of 1948 together with the continuing dominant preoccupation with the Zionist state, on the other, the West Bank did not experience any rural class struggles or even dissent, as far as one could tell. Such disputes as were pointed out to me concerned, for example, litigation over land titles, rather than issues which expressed any major or general tensions or any criticism of the system of landholding and land use.

Footnote

1. Ironically, my fieldwork shows that the picture given by Keyder of the emergence of a category of peasants forced by circumstance to become sharecroppers, in the conditions of the West Bank was more valid for the widespread practice of renting out land on sharecropping by small and medium landowners. In their case, the principal constraint was lack of sufficient family labour to work the land themselves.

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