

tivated area of the Beersheba sub-district was increased by more than 65 per cent during the five years of 1931-1935, thus:

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|-----------|------------------|
| 1930-1931 | 1,266,362 dunums |
| 1931-1932 | 1,380,742 » |
| 1932-1933 | 1,493,682 » |
| 1933-1934 | 1,345,429 » |
| 1934-1935 | 2,109,234." » |

Mr. Granovsky went on to point out that "The experts of the Jewish Agency estimate the cultivable area of the Beersheba sub-district at 3,500,000 dunums, apart from any new tracts which may become cultivable in the future when supplies of underground water are found and provision is made for storing the rainwater which now runs off unused." He concluded by challenging the official definition of the term 'cultivable.'²

Sir John Hope Simpson supported the Jewish Agency contention when he said: "There is practically an inexhaustible supply of cultivable land in the Beersheba area" given the possibility of irrigation.³

The Beersheba sub-district has been inhabited from time immemorial by the bedouin tribes of Palestine who cultivated what areas they were able to depending on the amount of rainfall in a given year. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that Arab practices have been to rotate cultivation, that is, lands cultivated one year are left fallow for one or two subsequent years because of lack of fertilizer and sufficient rainfall. Therefore, when it is estimated that the 'cultivable' lands of the Beersheba sub-district are only 2,000,000 dunums, it actually means that the *cultivated* lands in any one year are in the neighbourhood of that figure, and that the total *cultivable* lands of the region are at least twice the area cultivated in any one year.

As regards the 'uncultivable' lands of the Beersheba sub-district, here also the rights of the bedouin tribes should not be ignored. Neither the Ottoman Government nor the British Mandatory ever interfered with these rights over the whole territory. The whole of these lands are traditionally recognized to belong to the bedouin tribes, while certain bedouin tribes of Jordan and the Sinai Peninsula exercised pasturage rights during certain periods of the year. The fact that the Palestine Government did not include these lands under the column of 'Public' but showed them separately and admitted in its memorandum to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry that "it is not safe to assume that all the empty lands south of Beersheba or east of Hebron, for instance, are mewat" (dead land), is proof that Government recognized Arab rights and interests in these lands.

In the circumstances, it is wrong to presume that the figure of 10,573,110 dunums appearing in the 'Village Statistics' under the separate column of 'Uncultivable Land' is government-owned.

(2) Granovsky, A., *The Land Issue in Palestine* (Jerusalem, 1936), p. 64.

(3) *Cmd. 3686* — Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development, 1930, by Sir John Hope Simpson, p. 20.