

of a number of conceptual approaches pertaining to Third World social formations. It also places a special emphasis on the notion of the "Asiatic Mode of Production" which has enjoyed prominence and wide circulation in a variety of Marxist perspectives as a viable framework of analysis (Avineri,1972; Saed, 1981; Gozansky,1986; Saed,1984), as well as on the concept of the "Articulation of Modes of Production" also widely adopted within the African context (Rey, 1982; Wolpe, 1980; Arrighi, 1970; Burawoy,1976). This critical examination of the current literature, it is suggested calls for introducing an alternative framework for conceptualizing the Palestinian experience. The approach we adopt in this study, namely, historical materialism, is not new in the Marxist quarters. It has been convincingly applied in studying certain areas in the Third World, including India, (Bagchi,1982; Chandra,1981; Patnaik,1983) and a range of Middle Eastern economies (Saleh,1979; Barakat,1975; Abdel-Fadil,1988).

This, however, was not the case in studies on Palestinian development, the overwhelming majority of which have been conceived and carried out from an "Orientalist" point of view. A number of critical scholars who have done extensive reviews of the available literature on Palestine have highlighted the need for developing a class perspective as a more appropriate method for analysing Palestine's history (Rodinson,1981; Turner, 1984; Zureik,1981; Asad, 1979). In this context, it is hoped that our study will be a contribution in that direction.

Our claim to originality in this study, however, rests upon the empirical data presented in support of our theoretical propositions. Before we proceed further, a note on the research techniques employed in this study is worth mentioning.