

Capitalism, they argued, was entrenched in all aspects of Egypt's rural structure; it was manifested in the mechanization of agriculture, in production for the market, in wage labour and so on. For a transition to occur all aspects of capitalist production, not just land tenure forms, would have to be altered. This debate carries a special conceptual weight for understanding late nineteenth century changes within the Palestinian socio-economic structure. These changes affected not only the form but also the substance of Palestine's pre-capitalist formation. Palestine's pre-capitalist relations of production in general were undergoing a process of transformation.

Production Relations in Pre-Capitalist Palestine

The Palestinian peasantry was not composed of individual and isolated enterprises, nor were they a homogeneous, undifferentiated entity. The futile exercise of finding one or more titles to describe Palestine's pre-capitalist mode of production can be avoided by an empirical study of what actually was at work there.(5) By the late nineteenth century, Palestine's social and economic structure was already in a state of transition. The economic, political and legal changes which swept the Ottoman Empire in the mid nineteenth century were felt in all five categories of land tenure in Palestine. A full analysis of these categories and the changes they underwent will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Suffice it to mention here that the two most important forms of land tenure, the "Amiri land" (land possessed by the cultivators and formally owned by the state) and the "Mulk land" (land privately owned by individuals), had undergone substantial changes. The social, political and economic differences which characterized the