

The tax farmer would oppress the peasant without fear of punishment or inspection; he squeezed from the Fallah a much higher tax-rate than the fixed tenth, either by arbitrarily rating a higher price for his crops, or when receiving the tithe (ushur) in kind, by forcing the peasant to give him the wheat at a rate lower than the market price. If the peasant refused to yield to these demands, the tax-farmer could employ any of the following means against him. He could deprive a peasant of the necessary quantity of grain required to sow his field for the next year,; or impose on him heavy fines, or even subject him to corporal punishment (Ma'oz, 1968: 160).

Many peasants, in the process, became heavily indebted to the new owners and were eventually forced to flee the land and seek subsistence somewhere else (14). This happened in the Marj, where the heavy taxation imposed on them by the Sursuks led to many abandoning their land and leaving the region. According to Owen, even when the Sursuks brought in other dispossessed peasants, settling them on the land and providing them with cash advances, they were not able to succeed. This effort failed and the new peasants, who were eventually ruined, had also deserted the land (Owen,1981). Resorting to a share-cropping system, Owen observed, was the most profitable choice for the Sursuks. A similar argument regarding the Rothschilds enterprise in the Maritime Plain is provided by Gozansky (Gozansky,1986).

#### Changes in Pre-Capitalist Relations of Production

Share-cropping, which in the late 19th century became widespread in Palestine, was not, as some authors maintained, incompatible with capitalism (Gozansky, 1986; Saed, 1985). On the contrary, this system provided a strong indication that changes in production relations were developing. Share-cropping, as Marx maintains, is a transitory form of production relation which marks the transformation of pre-capitalism