

regard was taxation. The burden of taxes lay heavily on the Palestinian peasants, the majority of whom were actually or potentially ruined. The peasants were not only required to pay heavy taxes they could never afford, they were also forced to deal with new methods of tax levies introduced by the colonial rule. These methods included imprisonment, collective punishment, confiscation of crops and even land seizure.

The scale and intensity within which these policies were carried out are graphically illustrated, as early as the first decade of British rule, by the emergence of massive impoverishment and widespread indebtedness among the Palestinian direct agricultural producers. Although as the previous chapter showed, the process of peasant indebtedness, impoverishment and partial expropriation had already begun under the Ottoman rule, British colonialism, it will be demonstrated, marked the turning point in the history of socio-economic transformation of Palestine.

The process of land concentration and partial commoditization (i.e., the land sales to the Rothschilds), it was argued in the previous chapter, did not cause a radical change in the forces of production. It did, however, leave its imprint on the existing relations of production. One dimension of this change was the small-scale expropriation of the peasants who had previously lived on the land which was turned into the private property of the Rothschilds. These peasants were partly turned into share-croppers and partly into wage labourers working on the Rothschilds' plantations.

The most important change which took place between the late 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century was with regard to a large section of the peasantry whose land came under the control