

rural population.

### **Rural Palestine: Socio-Economic Changes**

A drastic deterioration in the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian peasants was evident as early as 1929. One such change was increasing pressure on the agricultural land. This phenomenon was largely caused by the colonial taxation and land expropriation policies but demographic changes within the rural population also contributed to it. The relatively high birth rates characteristic of the Palestinian population combined with the absence of conscription during British rule placed additional constraints on the agricultural land. In the process, inheritance resulted in land parcellization and the shrinking of the size of land owned by individual peasants. (76)

Yet, the most important phenomenon which occurred in late 1920s and early 1930s was what some British officials referred to as "epidemic indebtedness" and widespread poverty among the rural population. The severity of this phenomenon attracted the attention of various officials including the "Agricultural Expert" of the Jewish Agency. To demonstrate this, three tables will be provided: the first, by Dr. Wilkansky, an "Agricultural Expert" from the Jewish Agency; the second by the Director of Survey, J.H.Simpson and the third will be compiled from three sources of information.