

Chapter IV

Rural Class Formation in Palestine

The effects of British colonial policies on the indigenous Palestinian peasants, or fallaheen, had far reaching implications. The expropriation of a considerable number of fallaheen and the imposition of the new British taxation policies placed additional economic pressures on the already suffering fallaheen. These policies, however, did not only affect the economic status of the peasants. More importantly, as the following chapter will show, British colonialism had altered the whole class composition of the indigenous Palestinian rural society.

The fallaheen, under colonialism, became differentiated not only in terms of economic status but also on the basis of their membership in a separate social class. A classical Marxist approach to the phenomenon of class differentiation will help explain the general tendency which emerged, however the identification of the specific mechanisms at work in Palestine requires a more detailed treatment. While contradictions in rural Palestine did develop between the emerging classes of the landless proletariat and the indigenous landlords, the main conflict, as this chapter will demonstrate, lay somewhere else.

During the British period, land expropriated from the fallaheen was not accumulated by or concentrated in the hands of the class of indigenous landlords. Rather, it was transferred to a foreign body. The ownership and use of this land became the inalienable property of the European Jewish settler classes. The main contradictions which