

ABSTRACT

This study investigates and analyzes the nature and extent of rural change in Palestine during the Mandate. It inquires into the changes in taxation, debt, land tenure, the techniques of production, and agricultural production. A unifying theme and emphasis, however, are on the more fundamental changes in the social relations of production in the rural areas. A unifying theme and emphasis are done in the context of the interaction among colonial government policy, European settler capitalism, the structure and internal dynamics of the rural areas, and by the further integration of the country into the world capitalist market.

This study is an effort to add to the relatively few studies on the social and economic transformation of Palestine. Whereas existing studies have generated some insights, this study shows that the approaches used, especially the “dual-economy” one, are inadequate for a fuller understanding of the process of socioeconomic change, especially in the rural areas. This study uses the alternative “structural/historical” approach. In addition, the existing studies have not dealt specifically with the question of peasant differentiation and its accompanying dispossession and pauperization. Some of those studies have either dealt with agriculture and rural areas at a macroeconomic level without addressing the differential impact that socioeconomic change had on the different strata of rural inhabitants or concluded, given the overall growth and development in agriculture,