

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is about the dispossession and pauperization of the Palestinian Arab peasantry during the Mandate period (1918-1948). The study is based on an inquiry into and an analysis of the conditions and main changes in rural areas. The process of change is conceived within the context of the interaction of colonial policies, European settler capitalism, and the indigenous rural socioeconomic structure, and, in addition, by the further intensive integration of the country in the world capitalist market.

Most studies on Palestine during the Mandate have dealt with its political history. Studies on different aspects of the social and economic transformation of the country are few in number. This study is an effort to add to that literature, but beyond that, the significance of the study stems from other considerations. First, although some of the existing studies on the society and economy of Palestine have generated some insights, the approaches used are seen as inadequate for a fuller understanding of the process of socioeconomic change, especially in the rural areas. Those approaches and an alternative one are elaborated on later in this chapter.

Second, and perhaps most important, is that the existing studies have not dealt specifically with the question of peasant differentiation and its accompanying dispossession and pauperization. Some of those studies have dealt either with