

in cash or in kind) and the tenant a share in the crop, was not significant (except in years of plenty) since, according to Firestone, "(the tenant's) actual take was geared to his subsistence and a fluctuating debt accommodated the difference between that and his contractual share year after year." (1975a:10, emphasis added) Furthermore, the sharecropper enjoyed a higher measure of security in tenure which reflected itself in the landlord's delegation of higher status tasks to him, such as ploughing (ibid.:11). In practice, however, such expressions of filial bonds meant very little in terms of differential monetary rewards.

Thus, a consequence of these perspectives (if we allow for some simplification) is that Granott saw a hierarchy of peasant strata in which tenants and sharecroppers constitute the middle segment (with hired tillers at the bottom); Carmi and Rosenfeld (1974), in contrast, portray a fluid 'bottom' composed of smallholders, tenants, sharecroppers, and even wage workers continuously exchanging positions. Both perspectives, nevertheless, seem to collapse all gradations of sharecroppers within the generic category of 'tenant' and view it (at any point in time during the period considered) as secondary to the greater distinction between smallholder and landless peasant. Given the problematic nature of the notion of smallholder in Palestine at the period (since a substantial segment of the peasantry did not have title deeds to their land), and given the fact that, as we shall see, many peasant proprietors were also tenants and sharecroppers, such a view draws the 'class' lines at the wrong edge. Basically, in our view, it underestimates crucial functional differentiation within the tenant peasantry - some of whom occupied positions superior to the peasant smallholder, and some were simple croppers.