

While Geertz may have misjudged the egalitarian character of the institution - "the ancient weapon of the poor," and even exaggerated the degree of exchangeability in the positions of share-tenant and landholder, he nevertheless has properly guided us to seek the manner in which share-tenancy is embedded in the network of agrarian institutions through the particular historical linkages that wed the peasant to his village economy and beyond. What is needed then is a periodization and taxonomy of the various forms of sharecropping arrangements that prevailed in a particular region. With this in mind, we will now examine how and why the system continued to persist in Palestine as the agrarian regime moved from bid landlordism to medium and small peasant holdings; from subsistence agriculture to capitalist relations.

The Forms of Sharetenancy in Palestinian Agriculture

The generic name for share-cropping among Palestinian peasants is muzara'a (co-cultivation), or muhasasa (from hissa - "share"), or sharakah (partnership), and is generally distinguished from daman² (cash tenancy). The sharecropper himself is known as qatrutz or harrath er-rub' (ploughman of the fourth) in simple cropping, referring to the share of the yield that goes to the cultivator; or shareek (partner), and muzari' (co-cultivator) in the case of joint farming. (The term muhasis used by agronomists and social scientists is never used, to my knowledge, by the peasants themselves).

The status of the cropper varies from the humblest qatrutz, basically a rural proletarian, who used to crop during the harvest for one-sixteenth of the yield (against 3/4 to the farmer-landowner, and 3/16 for the work of his family), to the full partnership exemplified in sharikat mugharasa (joint farming compact) in which a contract is drawn transferring