

predominantly on leased land, while highlands dry farming -- by contrast -- has a preponderance of owner-cultivators leasing-in additional land to supplement their income. Since valley farming, both in the citrus plantations in the Southern Valley and in the Northern Ghor, is almost exclusively intensive farming based on irrigation, it is possible to speak of a stratum of sharecropping peasants. This is not the situation in the hills where sharecropping arrangements are embedded in the structure of seasonal labour allocation in a manner to that described by Geertz for Java. Here, social cleavages in the countryside are brought about by dynamics completely external to agriculture.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have taken the position that sharetenancy is a highly adaptive mechanism for the allocation of rural labour in a variety of agricultural regimes, rather than viewing it primarily, or merely, as "an agency for the siphoning of agrarian surplus" generated by landless peasants in traditional agriculture.

In the Middle East, in common with many Asian countries, sharetenancy has historically been associated with cropping arrangements in the large estates of absentee landlords. The stabilization of land titles in private hands, given the communal usufruct in villages and the relations of patronage in land, led to the alienation of the peasant's access to his land and the flourishing of an intricate network of tenancy compacts throughout the first half of this century, mostly to the advantage of landlords.

But this aspect of sharecropping has camouflaged a more complex reality of agrarian relations. In Palestine, particularly, absentee and big landlordism were a relatively minor phenomenon and landlordship --