

Although all strata of the peasantry participated in the search for urban employment, what we might refer to as the "middle peasantry" had a relative advantage over others in that they could prolong the search for jobs beyond the savings capacity of the lower peasants, and because they were better connected with urban contacts (ibid.), but even this advantage was periodically wiped out by the iron law of partible inheritance and the decreasing size of the average plot.

If we assume both an absence of a land market and a relative homogeneity of holdings, however, the demographic size of the peasant household must have played a more important role than the amount of holdings, since in dry farming land the peasant patriarch can release more sons and relatives for wage labour employment once he secures the minimum number of croppers he needs on the farm. This assumption is borne out, at least, by the behaviour of peasant households in the Bani Zeid area which is examined in chapter eight, below. The Carmi/Rosenfeld thesis rests, in short, on a number of assumptions which they perceive to have dominated Palestinian social structure up to 1948, and perhaps later. These features include a stagnant (dry farming) agrarian regime, a parasitic absentee landlord class whose fortunes were derived from land rent and interest on loans, and absence of an indigenous urban manufacturing sector which could have absorbed the "surplus" labour force. The major consequence of this "non-viable peasant existence" has been a process of proletarianization without urbanization (Carmi and Rosenfeld, 1974:480). The emergence of casual peasant-labour, whose status is defined by urban labour needs, in turn defines (actually debases) the condition of the urban landless proletariat by reducing him to the status of a migrant villager in terms of his replacement potential. Casual labourers, thus defined, "were no longer dependent solely on land for subsistence, neither were they alienated from the land"