

Palestine during the mandate period, and in pre-republican Syria, Iraq and Egypt.

Dajani suggests a typology of classification for landlords, based on their degree of involvement in the farm operation, which possibly provides a better model for differentiation of peasant-landlord relationships than the absentee/owner-operator dichotomy (Dajani et al., 1980:55-57). This typology is based on the functional categories of: (a) the absentee landlord who delegates to the tenant total responsibility of cultivation, usually on a cash-rental basis; (b) the "commuting landlord" who manages his farm through an agent (wakil). The latter, in turn, will cultivate it on a share basis, lease it to a sharecropper, or to wage workers (Dajani calls these "nonresident owner-operators"); (c) sharecropping compacts involving a range of involvements by a nonresident and resident landlord with his lessee-sharecropper; (d) "resident owner-operation" involving primarily household members' work and occasional hired labour during peak seasons. Thus between the two extremes of "absentee landlords" in the classical sense (a) and peasant owner-operators (b) we have a whole complex network of compacts in which the landlord relationship constitutes degrees of partnership with his tenant. A significant number of these compacts involve what is known as mixed tenancy (farmers who are owners and lease, on a sharecropping basis, surplus land from "absentee" landlords). In the Eastern Valley the proportion of these compacts has been on the decline, from 26.7 percent in 1961, to 14.2 percent in 1973 and only 11.6 percent in 1978 (Sharab, 1975:3, Dajani, 1980:54). But in the Western Valley, in the absence of redistributive schemes it continues to be a major form of tenure. In Zbeidat, for example, about one-third of the total farming households (31.3 percent) were owner-sharecroppers in 1980 (see next chapter).