

Abstract

This study provides a conceptual and empirical analysis of the processes of social, economic and political change in rural Palestine during 1920-1947. At the theoretical level it re-evaluates some conceptual frameworks and introduces an alternative paradigm to the Asiatic mode of production proposed by Marx. This analytical research, based on available literature and on empirical data, will contribute to scholarly work on change and development and fill a gap in the current literature on Palestine.

This sociological enquiry re-examines a number of social, economic and political phenomena which characterised Palestine's economy in the first half of the 20th century. It places a special emphasis on the impact of colonial capitalism on rural class formation. The dynamics of pre-capitalist Palestine is examined first, thus preparing the ground for an adequate understanding of the various changes introduced by British and Zionist colonization.

In this study we demonstrate that Palestine's transformation process was mediated by a number of forces, the most important of which were the colonial government, the influx of capital and the influx of European Jewish settlers. These forces are investigated, their relationship with each other identified, and their impact on the Palestinian indigenous population analysed.

The analysis of agrarian social transformation establishes a strong relationship between changes introduced by colonial settler capitalism and changes generated from within pre-capitalist social formations.

Our investigation of some specific phenomena, such as the issue of 'land transfer' and impact of Jewish settlement on the indigenous