

## Introduction

A proper understanding of social formations and economic structures is crucial for analysing and elucidating the processes of transformation in an attempt to identify their salient features and, perhaps, delineate some of the possible course they may eventually take. Of central concern, in this context, is the critical investigation of the social relations of production and the dynamics of class conflicts and their relationship to subsequent political developments.

The purpose of this study is, in very broad terms, to examine a crucial phase in the history of Palestine prior to the establishment of the state of Israel, through a critical reanalysis of the available data and the introduction and incorporation of some hitherto unexplored documents. More specifically, my investigation focuses on Palestine's rural class formation as it evolved between the latter part of the nineteenth century until 1947.

Palestine was under the Ottoman rule until World War One. Like other Third World societies which were directly or indirectly affected by the rise of western imperialism, it had also begun to undergo some major changes in its socio-economic structure. However, the drastic changes in Palestine's socio-economic structure in general and its rural class formation in particular materialized between the 1920s and the late 1940s under British and Zionist colonization of the country. In order to identify these changes and understand their implications on the society's predominantly pre-capitalist economy, a proper conceptual framework is called for.

Chapter One addresses this task by providing a critical examination