

Colonial Capitalism and Third World Economies:

Some Theoretical Considerations

The task of analysing the social, economic and political structure of Palestine's economy prior to its subjugation to British and Zionist colonialism, is indispensable for the comprehension of the processes of change and development that this economy underwent in the early twentieth century.

The question of whether or not either pre-capitalist economies or colonial economies are capable of generating changes from within has been hotly debated amongst Marxist and non-Marxist scholars alike. At the centre of this debate is the issue of the character and nature of pre-capitalist economies.

Most non-Marxist literature on this issue adheres to the notion that change in late-developing societies is possible only through the intervention of external forces. Support for this argument, however, tends to be drawn from largely subjective factors. One such factor is the notion of 'peasant culture' which is comprised of the attitudes, norms and values of the 'peasants' or 'peoples' of these societies (Bill, 1972; Weber, 1968; Shanin, 1971; Eisenstadt, 1985). It is argued that these normative values, present obstacles to mobility and change within Third World countries.

Within the context of the Middle East, the "Mosaic Model," to use Bryan Turner's words (Turner 1978), was the predominant approach of the Orientalists. The 'Islamic' state, according to the classical orientalists, is composed of a mixture of conflicting groups hierarchically divided on religious, sectarian, ethnic, occupational