

in their possession, such as working animals and tools. They could also gain access to grazing grounds, water sources and mills they might need to support production on whatever piece of land was left in their possession. The fact that the Marj, as explained earlier, was the major area to develop the Musha'a system, increased the chances of the survival of share-cropping production.

Share-cropping in the late 19th century and early 20th century began to find its way to many Amiri holders. Peasants who found themselves indebted were forced to pawn their land or even to transfer their title deeds to the name of the creditor to release themselves from the burden of debt.

On most Amiri land, where production was organized around the village/Hamula, heads of Hamulas were themselves the merchants and the usurers. Hence, peasants who transferred their land to the head of the village/Hamula continued to live on the land and probably to cultivate the same piece of land they earlier owned. However, their presence, rights and their relation to that land acquired a different meaning. They cultivated the land not as free owners but rather on contractual basis agreed upon by the new landowner. Surplus labour generated from the land was divided between them and the new landowner.

Share-cropping, Firestone noted became widespread in the hilly regions of Nablus and Jerusalem in the early 20th century. These areas were for a long time under the control of a small number of Hamulas, the most important of which were the Hussaynis and Abdel-Hadis (Firestone,1975; Abu-Manneh,1986).

The significance of the emergence of the share-cropping system in the village/Hamula organized form of production was not only