

nomadic, the relationship of these communities to one another, the socio-economic ordering of these societies and their religion and norms.

- the physical limitations imposed upon the inhabitants (e.g. the aridity of the southern slopes of the Hebron mountains resulted in the dispersion of villages).

- the exposure of the different areas to external forces (e.g. the exposure of coastal villages to foreign invasions resulted in cycles of destruction and expansion).

Factors such as general conditions of security and interaction between the different communities - nomads, peasants and urban dwellers - all played a part in the expansion, contraction or destruction of areas of settlement. These factors were also crucial in the formation and siting of individual settlements. During the 19th century, Palestine was inhabited by two Arab communities which differed fundamentally in their patterns of life, and in the economic basis of their subsistence. These two communities also differed in the types and patterns of settlement in which they resided.

On the one hand, there was the Bedouin community which lived a semi-nomadic existence. They tended to occupy the more arid areas of Palestine and had a more temporary and mobile type of settlement based on nomadic tent encampments. On the other hand, there was a stable sedentary community which consisted primarily of peasants occupying hundreds of autonomous villages. These villages were partly located in the coastal plain, but the majority were located in the highlands. The sedentary communities also included a semi-urban population which occupied about ten towns located both in the lowlands and the highlands. It is convenient to divide Palestine into three areas based on the communities' pattern of social organisation and their type of settlements:

- Semi-nomadic areas. These included the Naqqab desert (core of the Bedouin) the Judean desert, the Jordan Valley, the Jezreel