

In general as security conditions improved, the Bedouin's autonomy, and hence his influence, decreased. Except for the last fifty years of the Ottoman rule in Palestine security provisions were minimal. Migdal notes that in 1852 "there were only 976 Ottoman soldiers in what today constitutes the West Bank and only 160 of them stood ready for immediate use by the Ottoman ruler (Pasha)" (Migdal, 1980: 9). This was a safer period than the eighteenth century, which experienced the worst deterioration in public security. During its last fifty years, however, the Ottoman Government provided better security conditions by improving communication systems (roads and railways), controlling inter-village wars, and weakening private armies. The Government also tried to integrate the Bedouin community within its system: for example, it re-established the city of Bir es-Saba in 1900, in an attempt to control the Naqab desert tribes. In 1870 Turkish soldiers undertook armed attacks against the Bedouin tribes residing in the Jezreel Valley.

Even though one can perhaps say that the beginning of schemes to settle the Bedouin community started under the Ottoman Government, the inability of the Government to enforce public security, coupled with the bad conditions of roads, made its authority and most of its policies almost absent from Bedouin life.

The second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, however, saw major changes that undermined Bedouin society both economically and socially. By the middle of this century, the Bedouin communities had very little option of maintaining the strength and influence they had enjoyed for centuries. As their power decreased, so did their influence on peasant settlements.

#### LOWLAND VERSUS HIGHLAND SETTLEMENTS

The lowlands of Palestine, especially the coastal plain, presented a pattern of sedentary settlement which is very different from that of the mountains, due to the differences in its social history, as well as in topography and climate. The two areas had settlements which