

the citrus fruit industry. Those factors resulted in the subjugation of coastal peasants to landlords and urban notables and hence a decrease in rural autonomy. In contrast, the majority of highland villages enjoyed substantial rural autonomy from their townships, perhaps with the exception of villages around the town of Nablus.

The spatial relationship between villages, towns, and roads tells us a great deal about the differences in relations between peasants and town dwellers in both areas (mountain and coast). It also reflects security conditions.

In Palestine, the main urban centres occupied two major axes. The first group of towns were located along the coastal highway and included from south to north: Gaza - 'Asqalan - Jaffa - Haifa - and Acre. Villages were either located on the main coastal road or close to it (concentrating around major towns as explained above).

In the highland group of towns, the town-road relationship was somewhat similar, but village-road or village-town relationships were very different. As can be seen in Fig. 1.11, the major highland road which stretched from Bir el-Saba' south, passed through all the towns of Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, el-Bireh, Nablus, Jenin and Nazareth. It is important to note that this highway which stretched the length of the country had only five villages located along it: Dhayiriyeh, Ein Sina, Ḥuwara, Balata and Deir Sharaf (villages or small towns like Halhul, Beit Jala, Shu'fat, and Silat ed-Daher grew towards the main road during the 20th century only). This striking phenomenon of the villages keeping away from the main road can be explained by the following: 1) Mountain villages were more or less self-sufficient. They were villages with a majority of small land holders which lived on subsidiary agriculture. Most of these villages had their own crafts: women made and embroidered their own dresses, constructed household utensils (mud bins, pots, dishes, jars, etc.) and wove rugs and baskets. This gave the village substantial autonomy and made its contacts with town occasional or seasonal. 2) Their seclusion from main roads protected them from invading armies and government authorities (represented by its tax collectors). The absence of Bedouin threats enabled them to survive