

6. THE DIFFERENTIATION OF THE PEASANTRY

To understand agrarian change, it is crucial to go beyond an examination of demographic factors and technological innovations to the more fundamental changes in the social relations of production. In this chapter, I examine whether and to what extent there were any changes in the social relations of production in Arab agriculture or the extent of differentiation among the peasantry. The examination is placed in the context of the intensification of commodity production as the major force acting on this change. At the same time, the increase in commodity production cannot be understood without connecting it to the impact of government policies and Jewish European settlement. Included in the analysis are the various adaptations of the different strata of the Arab rural population to the new conditions. I start with a brief section on the extent of wage labor.

6.1 Wage Labor

There are no definite and systematic data on the number of Arab wage labor during the Mandate period. The temporary and seasonal nature of a sizeable part of Arab wage labor, especially in agriculture and public works, compounds this problem. However, there are figures and estimates that provide a good but rough indication of its extent and growth over time.