

did not register it at all in the nineteenth century, now under the Mandate found that when the land was sold, their traditional and customary rights to it were no match for the “legal” rights that the new colonial government was enforcing.

The process of differentiation and commoditization was accompanied with only limited capitalist development. Several counteracting factors, acting in conjunction with each other, prevented further capitalist development: the government’s fiscal and trade policies and its general conservative policies toward the rural areas; the competition from settler capitalism that also closed its doors to the expropriated peasants, especially after 1936; and the increased opportunities and thus role of merchant capital in consolidating its influence in rural areas.

Finally, as suggested in Chapter 1, if one of the purposes of the study of history and economic history is to shed light on the present, then this study has an important implication. It is necessary to understand the process of dispossession examined in this study in order to comprehend the present predicament of Palestinian refugees who are predominantly comprised of the small peasants and the landless during the Mandate and their descendants. At a more practical level, any resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that does not include the right of return and restitution to these ex-peasants is bound to fail. It is their persistence to exercise those rights that has kept the Palestinian cause alive.