

## PART I

### THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF PALESTINE (1850-1980)

In the following three chapters (2, 3 and 4) I will discuss structural transformations that came after the Ottoman land reform regulations beginning in the 1850s, and the integration of Palestine-Syria into the world capitalist market through the medium of merchant capital and European (mainly German) and Jewish (mainly East European) settlement activities.

During this period, extending over one century, central Palestine was ruled by four different régimes (Ottoman, British, transJordanian, and Israeli) with each introducing new socio-economic changes that affected the land tenure system and stratification patterns in the country. Initially, Palestine's relative poverty of resources, combined with its religious and strategic significance in contributing to its separation from the path of development thrust upon the other Middle Eastern provinces of the Turkish Empire. Its peripheralisation in the world capitalist economy was inhibited by a relatively diversified agriculture (dictated in part by a versatile ecology), and European lack of interest in exploiting the country for its raw materials or limited market (Scholch, 1982:56). Palestine was destined by geography and divinity for higher appropriation.

The Ottoman attempts at increasing its agrarian source of revenues, through the elimination of communal forms of cropping arrangements (musha') and the securing of private title deeds to land, had the major, and probably unintended, consequence of the emergence of big landlordism and absentee land ownership. It was this re-alignment of forces between the emergent coastal commercial bourgeoisie, and the landed and urban-