

on the peasantry, substantial demographic growth in the countryside, and the establishment of an effective--though rudimentary--network of transportation which linked the village to regional centres and to demands of the external markets. Structurally the period saw a radical reorganization in the land tenure system and the modes of agricultural production: from communal ownership of the land to absentee private property; from subsistence farming to monetization, commodity production and export of agricultural yield.

The village remained the source of revenue and power but not the seat of authority. Its big landlords, tax farmers, government functionaries, artisans, merchants and notables were all located in the four or five major urban centres constituting the privileged elite which established its hegemony over Palestine. Yet despite those hierarchical cleavages and disparities in wealth Palestinian society was divided by lineage units and other forms of kinship and quasikinship identifications in which class formations were hardly visible. And although the city-village dichotomy permeated the consciousness of Palestinians when they reflected on groups outside their local community (as evidenced in the folkloric literature), it was nevertheless a consciousness mediated through other identifications which they believed to be primary. These were mainly regional loyalties, religious affiliations and clan affiliations. Throughout the period under consideration, and with minor exceptions, the peasantry of Palestine were divided by factions, based on clan alliances and relations of patronage with urban landlords and notables.

Patronage and Clan Factionalism

Palestine was not quite a 'patronage society' in the sense suggested by Gellner (either during the mandate or in the late Ottoman period)-- a system characterized by an "incompletely centralized state, (with a) defective market or defective bureaucracy" and where a dominant syndrome of long-term unsymmetrical relations and inequality of power prevails (Gellner, 1977:4-5)