

altogether occupying 4% of the total cultivated areas, dry farming dominates the agriculture of the West Bank. As with all rain-fed agriculture in dry zones, crops are subject to significant variations in yield. This is especially true of the two most important crops in the West Bank (in terms of acreage tilled), cereals and olive trees, each occupying about 700,000 dunums,¹ out of total cultivated area of 2 million dunums (Kahan, 1983:20). In addition to the impact of precipitation patterns, the olive harvest is also subject to annual fluctuations and a relatively long period of maturation. That makes it an ideal crop for cultivation by peasant households in marginal agriculture since they can seasonally attend to the olive harvest while being involved in an external occupation (see Chapter 8).

Land Tenure

Land categories in the West Bank, as in transJordan, are still based on criteria established by the Ottoman Land Reform Acts, beginning with the Land Law of 1858. Ambiguities inherent in these legislations reflect the juxtaposition of legal categories of private property over a variety of land tenure forms accumulated from previous centuries. Those ranged from the communal form (musha' tenure, formally abolished by the Ottoman codes, but did not effectively disappear until the 1950s), to notions of private property (mulk) in the Western freehold sense of the term (cf. Doukhan, 1938).

One of the main problems in the definition of land categories concerned the so-called public domain, or miri. In effect, cultivated land which fell under the classification of miri increasingly came, by right of usurfact reinforced by successive new legislation, under the private domain. In 1922, the British Mandate government introduced the category of state land (aradi dawla) with the purpose of distinguishing