

market relations in agriculture, not polarization between wage and capital, and not the emergence of rural capitalism, but an actual ascendancy of the small holding peasantry, and the demise of big landlordism by the middle of this century. Such a demise has led, at least as far as the Nablus district is concerned, to the increased homogeneity of the peasant strata, in a context in which the differentiation between rural wage workers (ḥarateen and ujara') became synonymous with the small holding fellahin.

#### Peasant ascendancy or subjugation?

How are we to reconcile this view with Granott's proposition that "tenancy in all its forms brought with its spread the enslavement of the fellah in the countries of the East?" (Granott, 1952:291; emphasis added) and with his claim that, in Palestine, "the position of the fellahin who owned holdings of their own was incomparably superior to that of tenants. Even in its outward appearance a village inhabited by landowning fellahin differed from those belonging to tenants" -- the former being distinguished by the presence of gardens and orchards in its immediate vicinity (ibid.: 292).

At one level, the answer lies in Firestone's restriction of his analysis to one area of central Palestine, beyond which he hesitates to generalize (except in a cursory fashion, cf. Firestone, 1975a:184), while Granott establishes his position on the basis of cases derived from several regions. Nevertheless, Firestone discusses an area which includes hilly and plains terrain (the Nablus mountains and stretches from the Marj Ibn Amer plateau bordering Jenin -- the latter also examined by Granott). However, significant divergence between the two writers lies, in our view, in the conceptual and ideological underpinnings which govern the perspective of each author.