

Ideologically, Granott has established himself as a Zionist authority on land relations in Palestine, and sought -- on a number of occasions -- to rebutt criticisms of the political consequences of land transfers from Arab absentee landlords to the Jewish National Fund. Together with several Labour-Zionist historians, he saw this process as an act of deliverance of the fellahin from their feudal lords (Granott, 1956:251-252; and Granott, 1952:302-303; see also Sereni, 1936:17, 83-88).<sup>3</sup> Other writers, it must be added, who did not share Granott's ideological predispositions, such as 'Ashour and Warriner, also saw in sharetenancy contracts instruments of oppression for the small holding peasant.

Conceptually, therefore, Firestone was confronted with the dilemma that, in its main thrust, his thesis ran counter to the empirical findings established by several authorities on Middle Eastern regimes. At one point, he himself refers to the works of Milliot, Pesle, Berque (in North Africa), and Lampton (in Persia) where:

Instead of accession to capital ownership, or at least of contractual equality of some sort, there had been dire exploitation of labour; and instead of compatibility between religious law and actual practice, a clear dualism perpetuated by obscurantist jurists... (addressing) themselves primarily to the agricultural institutions dictated almost by definition by dependence and patronage (Firestone, 1975b:322)

The prevalence in Palestine of patterns of "mutual benefit and solidarity" over patterns of direct exploitation is seen by Firestone as the product of a transitional peasant economy where market relations hastened a greater accession to capital ownership (including in land) by small landholders. It also reflected a coincidence of compatibility between normative principles of the Islamic shari'a and agrarian practices, rather than an expression of Palestinian exceptionalism (in the Middle Eastern context).