

Chapter Nine

Depeasantization II: The Case of Natufa

The common ecological features of Natufa and Ras el-Tin, and the similar area and kinds of cultivated crops in their plots convey a false notion of homogeneity in their social structure. For, in the historical evolution of their social structure, the two villages are worlds apart. Even by the turn of the last century Natufa's relative prosperity was visible to a visiting traveller, who noted the presence of a boarding school for girls -- a unique phenomenon for a Palestinian village at the time (Grant, 1907:223). The heavy Christian presence in the village was responsible for inviting the establishment of several missionary schools, including a protestant, catholic and finally a local secular high school established in 1924. The Christian presence was also probably the stimulant for one of the earliest village migrations to America in Palestine. A village survey conducted in 1930 revealed that migrant remittances constituted the main source of livelihood for a number of village households (Hope-Simpson, 1930:63).

But Natufa's relative wealth, compared to the neighbouring villages, was occasioned by the very sources of poverty that inflicted Ras el-Tin and the rural dry farming highlands in Judea. Fifteen years after the British Mandate in Palestine, only 65 households out of the total 118 (i.e., 36%) were found to possess sufficient land to ensure subsistence (Government of Palestine 1946:274), half of which was based on cereals. The Hope-Simpson Report found the total village debt (for 1930) to be 7,000 sterling, an average of 39 sterling per family, which was 12 sterling higher than the