

Although the main impact of redistribution did not appear until the period between 1975 to 1978 -- when the laws acquired more muscles, there was a wide divergence between the intention of the law and its actual implementation. The 1978 agricultural census did show an increase in the proportion of owner-operated holdings for the year 1975 (from 37.1% in 1975 to 40.4% in 1978) and in share-cropped areas (from 22.0% to 26.9%) both at the expense of cash rentals (ibid.:52, 54). But the proportion of big landlords, those owning more than 200 dunums, remained virtually the same (about 2 percent of holders), and, significantly, those owning less than 10 dunums; that is, the destitute peasantry increased from 14.6% of total holdings in 1975 to 18.3% in 1978 (derived from Table 2-4, ibid.:50). Thus, while the data on the form of holdings tend to support the objectives of land reform aimed at creating a viable middle peasantry, figures on the distribution of the size of holdings indicate increased differentiation.

One major source of the increased differentiation has been the loopholes built into the land reform law. The original land redistribution law (of 1959) aimed at creating manageable farm units for holders with the minimum size of 30 dunums (to prevent fragmentation); however, a 1960 amendment to the law redefined the word "holder" as to include individual members of a single landlord family, thus allowing many landlords to retain holdings which would have been expropriated, and others to amass holdings in the name of various household members exceeding the maximum allowed by the law (Hazleton, 1974; Dajani, 1980:43).

However, neither the size of holdings nor the form of tenure help us in understanding the nature of class relations in the Valley, a point which requires a more detailed examination of the terms of tenancy relations. (Corresponding data for the Western Valley is not available for the 1970's or the present -- however, the situation there is compounded