

culture grew beyond the ability of most refugee farmers, the landlord's share increased (in relative and absolute terms) in a range amounting between 30-66 percent of the crop value (Government of Jordan, 1961:140). By the mid-sixties sharetenancy in the Valley became the prevalent form of tenure. A survey conducted by the Royal Scientific Society in the mid-seventies revealed that 85.5 percent of sharecroppers in the East Ghor Valley had entered into compacts with their landlords on that basis (97 percent in the Middle Ghor, 62 percent in the Northern Ghor, and the vast majority in the Southern Ghor) (Sharab, 1975:37). My own investigation in the Ghor el-Far'a region (Western Valley) in 1980 revealed that all muhasasa contracts in that area conformed to the fifty:fifty system. In the northern plains (Jenin-Tulkarem), by contrast, peasant sharecroppers had to surrender two-thirds of the net yield to the landlord in irrigated land (al-Damin, 1980:inter.).

Higher returns for sharecroppers in the Valley than for those in the northern plains were discussed in some detail in Chapter 5. There we explained the differences in terms of stable agricultural communities in the north (as opposed to lack of settlement in the Valley), and to the presence of tribal landlords in the Valley who set the pace for later compacts with their tenants.

The presence of refugee peasants also had a different impact on agriculture in the northern Valley, where citrus cultivation was scarce, than on the south. Instead of creating a rural proletariat, it merely reduced the average size of sharecropped land, from 50 dunums to 20 dunums per household (Abdel-'Ali, 1980:inter.).

One crucial aspect of defining the class character of agrarian relations in the Jordan Valley lies in the proper assessment of the consequences of absenteeism. Sharab (1975) has thrown new light on the