

Chapter Eleven

Re-peasantization and Agricultural Technology:

The Case of Zbeidat

The process of peasantization in the Jordan Valley has been uneven, exhibiting a number of regional variations and a sharp diversion in the paths of agricultural development between the Western and Eastern Valleys after 1967. The village of Zbeidat, which we are examining here, is "un-typical" of the Jordan Valley rural settlements in several respects: its population is semi-nomadic in origin unlike the sedentary peasantry of Central and Northern Palestine who took refuge in the Valley after 1948; its location in the Central Valley isolates the inhabitants from two major urban centres catering to the social and economic needs of the Valley villages, Nablus in the Northern highlands and Jericho in the south; finally, the manner in which agricultural technology, in the form of drip irrigation, arrived to the village through the communal participation of its farmers -- sets it aside from many Ghor settlements, where landlords and rich peasants were the pioneers in the introduction of agricultural technology.

Yet in the sense we discuss it in this analysis, no village in the Jordan Valley is "average". In the spatial distribution of its inhabitants, degrees of social differentiation, penetration of capitalist relations in agriculture, magnitude of migration and wage labour, crop variety, amount of land confiscation and security in tenure -- in all of those variables typicality refers to the statistical averaging of disparate aspects of agrarian structure which can nowhere be seen in a concrete "representative" village. This variability is especially true of the Western Valley where