

Once notions of universal transitional forms of rural transformation are broken down to their constituent 'national' components, the homologous trends discussed by Gudeman above begin to reflect the stubborn impact of local history and structure. The rural sociologist writing in this tradition has thus the problematic task of constantly analyzing the unique attributes of village society under examination while demonstrating its linkages with the world economy on the one hand, and common affinities with other rural formations on the other hand. One task cannot be a substitute for the other, unless we are reduced to the futile exercise of seeking the placement of this or that rural formation into its proscribed compartment of world capitalist development.

- 4 -

In this essay I have examined the process of agrarian transformation in two contrasting ecological zones; one characterized by dry farming and rapid marginalization of agriculture, the other by intensification and successful adaptation to mechanized farming. Both regions, the central highlands of Palestine and the Western Valley, were subjected in the last 15 years to a combination of political and economic intrusions which operated to set aside Palestinian village society from the path of rural transformation experienced by neighbouring Levantine peasants in Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. Chief among these factors are the absence of a national state sector, and the spontaneous mechanisms of the labour and commodities markets in the rural sector mediating the control of the Israeli colonial state apparatus.

The resultant consequences of these factors, while specific to the Palestinian case, have not been entirely isolated from similar trends of agrarian change witnessed in other regions of dry farming zones in the third world. Here, too, we witness a clear trend towards the inte-