as a highly assertive social status, while the peasants and laborers barely managed to survive and were expected to be highly subservient.

The author documents the lives of the two classes and some of the details of the two worlds with dozens of both family pictures as well as many pictures of peasants’ families. She also embarks on an interesting analysis of these pictures to support her sociological views. Pictures seem to be witnesses that speak louder than documents and theories of the oppressiveness of the pre revolution social order.

However, the 1952 July revolution that began its reign with Land Reform Act leading to the redistribution of land propelled a significant change in the social order by eradicating its feudal economic base. New rules began to govern social relations and interactions between the two classes following the July Revolution and the middle class began to form.

A new social order began to emerge following the July Revolution, and new social relations replaced the old oppressive feudal relations. Nonetheless, memories of the old order continue to haunt the two classes more than 60 years after revolution. Maybe landowners continue to speak of the land they lost, but the peasants and laborers continue to have traumatic memories of the oppression and mistreatment they suffered for centuries as Abaza’s interviews with them reveal.

This is an interesting sociological work narrated through family experience and memories. The book is well designed. It is printed on fancy, fine, and quality paper.


“Landownership in Palestine represents the crux of the current conflict,” says author Aida Essaid in her introduction to this important book (1). The book consists of eight chapters, each of which has its own value and can stand on its own as a contribution to understanding the century-old Arab–Israeli struggle. The introductory chapter includes a summary of the study. Chapter 2, “The Politics of Landownership” constitutes the backbone of the whole research and represents a framework to understand the Arab–Israeli struggle and keep it in the realm of reason as political and historical conflict between the Zionist colonial venture and Arab natives. Chapter 3, “The Legal Framework” discusses the revolution in land ownership since the ottoman rule illuminating the period of the British Mandate that structured the foundation of the Jewish state on the Palestinian land. Chapter 4, “Land Settlement, Transfers, and Disputes” investigates legislation and land policy, which constituted the background for the surveying of the land, the registration of title, the transfer of tenure rights, and the disputes. The author’s investigation concludes that the “British government made it possible for the Jewish Agency and Zionist objectives to play a part in the cadastral survey, registration of title,
and transfers and tenure disputes in Mandate Palestine" (96). Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are case studies of Sarafand al-Kharab, the village of Al-Haram, and the village of Yaqqq, respectively. Chapter 8 is the conclusion.

Beginning with the British Mandate in 1917, the struggle for land, however, has been structured by a land-tenure system and colonial policies that continue today. Those enabled the Zionist movement’s land grab and eventually established the Zionist colonial state in Palestine.

Essaid’s work studies this fundamental aspect of the conflict. It investigated whether the British Mandate land-tenure system in Palestine facilitated the transfer of land from Palestinians to Zionist Jews, and if so, the extent to which that happened. Essaid argues that “[t]he Jewish Agency and Zionist actors played a collaborative role” and concluded “by penetrating every part of the land tenure system, consisting of legislation, land survey, registration, transfers, and disputes, Zionist actors were able to manipulate the land tenure system in Palestine” (238).

The significant implications of the land-tenure system imposed by the British Mandate surpass mere land control. Essaid’s well-researched and documented book contends that the Zionist movement succeeded in purchasing a small percentage of the land, but “this was the most fertile land and that in buying it they also dispossessed many Palestinian fallahin from their land” (238). More significant, however, is the fact that controlling the most fertile land led first to destabilizing and weakening the agriculturally based Palestinian economy and the strategic location of the land acquired would later form the blueprint for the proposed partition of Palestine in 1948.

As its analytical starting point, the research for the book uses benchmarks elaborated in the guidelines the United Nations Human Settlement Programme and investigates the formation and implementation of the land-tenure system. More significantly, the research employs data and information from land registry records located in the Jordanian Department of Land and places the Zionist penetration into the land-tenure system within the theoretical framework of settler-colonialism.