

Before proceeding to examine the relations of production within the Amiri category, we must first consider additional facts about the Amiri concept. Almost all literature to date has mistakenly substituted the term "Miri" for Amiri (Warriner, 1948; Zureik, 1979; Abdo-Zubi, 1987). Historical data found in the course of research for this study show that there is an important difference between the two concepts.

In his rarely read, yet legally and conceptually illuminating account of land tenure in Palestine, al-Qanooni observed that the term Miri, found in British documents and widely quoted thereafter, is no more than a distortion in the translation of the Ottoman land laws by British interpreters (4). Miri, he observed, is a descriptive term and not a category. It denotes that land is cultivable or of a good quality (al-Qanooni, 1936:6-9). Thus, all Amiri land can be miri (i.e., cultivable), but not all miri land is of the Amiri category. Mulk and Waqf land, for example, can also be miri or cultivable.

During the period of Ottoman rule, the term miri was found in all "Tabu" or land registration papers as an expression of the productivity of land. However, during the British Mandate, when the Ottoman land laws were translated into English, the letter A was dropped from the word, and miri was treated the same as Amiri. This act, some legal experts on land have observed, resulted in the loss of many tracts of Mulk land which had the description miri in the title papers during both British and Israeli rule (al-Qanooni, 1936). This confusion according to one land specialist has enhanced Israel's claims over land belonging to Palestinian peasants resulting in further land expropriation, both inside Israel and in the Occupied