

noteworthy to recall, indeed it is incumbent upon us to note, perhaps the largest body of research on questions of land tenure in the Ottoman period has been focused on this region. The interest in these questions has been great because of the ongoing ethno-national conflict there, which began in the Ottoman period. This conflict is inextricably entangled with the questions of ownership of the lands and rights of tenure on them.

I do not suggest that all historical studies of land tenure in Palestine or even most of them are enlisted, nationalist histories. However, historical studies of areas enmeshed in ethno-national conflict can affect historical memory. And they do affect it and, we need acknowledge, they *endeavor* to affect it. Historical memory—the way that individuals and societies remember the past—is inextricably intertwined with the way that individuals and societies understand the present, and with the way they envision the future.¹ Of course, all new histories can and do affect historical memories, but in areas of ethno-national conflict the stakes are higher.

The longstanding paradigm of the failure of Ottoman-era land reform has not been subjected to adequate scrutiny. Shortly, I will demonstrate that its strength is more historiographical than historical. There has been a regrettable lack of empirical study on the implementation of Ottoman property-tenure reform because the sources that would permit methodical investigation – the *defters* of the commissions that were assigned to travel to

¹ Margaret E. Smith, *Reckoning with the Past: Teaching History in Northern Ireland* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 13.