

offices; the location and quantity of lands that they determined should be auctioned; how it was decided which areas they would survey; and how their work affected land registrations.²³ It appears they were commissioned to enforce provisions in the Land Code allowing the confiscation and auction of agricultural land that lay fallow for three consecutive years without reason.²⁴

To return to the British *Survey*, Ruedy's second source, what merits discussion is the two-pronged claim we observe in this short excerpt from it and also in Ruedy. The claim that the fear of taxation and the fear of conscription led small landowners to evade registration of their properties *en masse* is one of the pillars upon which rests the claim that the implementation of property-tenure reforms failed. I argue it would be extremely significant if the claim that peasants feared taxation and conscription is reliable. This would mean that someone somewhere had interviewed Ottoman villagers. (If a petition had been found – a document source – surely it would have been cited.) The rural inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire have rarely been the subject of history. Rather, rural Ottoman studies have tended to focus rather narrowly on land-related questions and agricultural production.²⁵ One reason often cited is the dearth of sources that give insight into villagers' lives. In a collection of

²³ Shechter states that the commissions worked in secret, p. 147.

²⁴ Land Code, Article 68 (Ongley, 37)

²⁵ Nicolas Michel, "Introduction: Ottomanisme et ruralisme", in Mohammad Afifi, Rachida Chih, Brigitte Marino, Nicolas Michel, and Işık Tamdoğan, eds. *Sociétés rurales ottomanes/ Ottoman Rural Societies* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2005), 1