

corporations were active by the late 1840s with the purchase and sale of (the usufruct right to) *miri* lands in Palestine, almost a decade before the issuance of the 1858 Land Code.³⁶

Doumani also brings into focus the question that is at the heart of the debate about how un/successfully land-tenure reform was carried out in Palestine. The paradigm of success/failure as it has been crafted hinges its final assessment of censure on the increasing forfeiture by peasants of their lands in the last decades of the empire and later, due to unpayable debts. The conventional paradigm that has developed has offered a range of possibilities to explain how this happened. You may have noticed. They range from unscrupulous land clerks registering lands in their own names and heartless mukhtars and shaykhs stealing the title to the land of their neighbors and relatives in their villages or tribe, to primarily urban-based moneylenders who acquired rural lands that peasants had mortgaged to them, when those same peasants could not repay their loans and interest charges. This important issue of land loss resulting from high-interest mortgages from urban moneylenders, and the complementary discussion of the Ottoman Agricultural bank as an alternative to this private system, is discussed in Chapter 4 of this study. I will argue that, in the case of long-term loans and some short-term loans, urban-based moneylenders offered villagers better terms of borrowing and conditions of repayment than the Ottoman

³⁶ Her dissertation-in-progress, "The Business of Property: Peasants, Settlers, and Beirut Corporations in Palestine, 1850-1923" examines the agency of villagers and family groups in the legal and commercial development of late-Ottoman northern Palestine. See www.histproj.org/completed/ALFF.pdf, accessed 12 April 2015.