

of the twentieth century, “while there was no legal obligation to register land in the tapu, there was indeed such an obligation concerning the *vergi*-survey.”<sup>44</sup> This study will demonstrate the utility of using these records to examine property ownership in the late-Ottoman era.

Thirdly, this study is very much concerned with the men and women whose names fill the lines of the *emlak* defter, some of them only once, some of them repeatedly. Rural history from below is very much in its infancy in Ottoman studies. Despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire was an agrarian empire, villagers have rarely figured as subjects of Ottoman histories. This study exploits the *emlak* register together with sharia court cases, village history books, and Ottoman population registers to flesh out a picture of late-Ottoman villages, villagers, and rural society in more depth than has previously been possible.

## Sources

Four types of primary sources form the core of this study. They are, firstly, the 1876 *Esas-ı Emlak* property-value and property-tax assessment register; secondly, sharia court cases from the Hebron sharia court and, to a lesser extent, from the Jerusalem sharia court; thirdly, Ottoman population registers of 1905 for the Hebron district; and, finally, Ottoman yearbooks (*salnames*) for the province of Syria for the 1870s. Detailed discussions of these

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<sup>44</sup> Haim Gerber, *Ottoman Rule in Jerusalem 1890-1914* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1985), 205.