

Chapter One

The Implementation of Tanzimat-era Property-Tenure and Property-Tax Reforms in Palestine

When did the series of land-tenure reforms ushered in beginning with the Land Code of April 1858 (7 Ramadan 1274) begin to be implemented in Hebron and the other administrative districts that comprised Palestine? Not only in textbooks⁴⁵ but also in a number of scholarly research works,⁴⁶ academic authors have skirted this question. Most scholarly sources discussing property-tenure reform in the nineteenth century mention only the promulgation of the 1858 law (and sometimes the 1867 law permitting foreigners to possess property) before leaping on to a discussion of the causes, goals, and effects of the reform. The process of reform is an important missing link in this narrative. Before embarking on a discussion of

⁴⁵ E.g., James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, second edition, 2007, republished 2010): 30-32; Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, A History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, seventh edition, 2010): 20-22; Gudrun Krāmer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel*, trans. Graham Harman and Gudrun Krāmer (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008): 81-87.

⁴⁶ E.g. Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus 1700-1900* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1995): 159. Doumani uncritically reproduces the traditional narrative within a larger discussion focusing on the process of the commoditization of land. The two-pronged focus of this discussion is, first, evidence of land as private property before 1858 and, secondly, on the phenomenon of farmers losing their lands due to debts (155-164); Farid al-Salim, "Landed Property and Elite Conflict in Ottoman Tulkarm," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 47 (2011), 66