

In the sixteenth century, *Miri* land was primarily administered by *sipahis* (cavalrymen) who were granted tracts of land known as *timars* or *ziamets*, the latter being a much larger piece of land. In return for collecting taxes from peasants on the land, the *sipahis* were expected to provide local security and in time of war furnish troops for the central army.⁵ Lands not given to *sipahis*, besides *Mulk* and *Waqf*, included *Khass* (i.e., lands retained as the personal property of the ruling family and whose taxes were collected by salaried officials, *emins*, or local governors). Other lands were given out or auctioned in the form of tax farms (*iltizam*).⁶

Unlike other provinces of the empire, where one form of land administration predominated, in Palestine (part of Syria) all these varied forms were used. This was because of the remoteness of the country from the center of power, the relative weakness of central control, and the need to balance the needs of local security with those of tax collection.⁷

The *timars* were granted to *sipahis* for life as long as they fulfilled their functions and could be inherited. However, the *timar* or *ziamet* could be abandoned if determined to be insufficiently productive by the *sipahi*, or the latter could be

⁵Ibid., 11.

⁶In Palestine, *iltizam* was known as *muqata'a*. See A. N. Poliak, *Feudalism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon, 1250-1900* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1939), 48-9.

⁷Owen, *Middle East*, 12.