

by an individual.<sup>3</sup>

Two important issues relating to Ottoman land policy need to be highlighted. First, the primary interest of the Ottoman government was that of “maintaining military preparedness, preserving urban and rural security, and raising revenue.”<sup>4</sup> Second, the critical importance of maintaining revenue meant that the government did not interfere with the communal ownership and use pattern (*Musha'a*) in the first three and a half centuries of Ottoman rule of the Arab provinces. Interference with the *Musha'a*, which predated Ottoman rule, could have elicited strong opposition that the government avoided as long as taxes were paid.

To put all this in a broader context, tracing the evolution of land tenure conditions beginning with the sixteenth century (i.e., the first century of Ottoman rule in Palestine) is essential. The emphasis is on the forms of land management and the appropriation of the agricultural surplus. This brief sketch of the evolution of land tenure conditions provides a historical sense of the continuities and changes in the system. This, in turn, provides a framework within which we can better understand the nature and dynamics of the response of Palestinian peasants to European settlement.

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<sup>3</sup>Halil Inalcik, “The Emergence of Big Farms, *Ciftliks*: State, Landlords and Tenants,” in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, eds. Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 20.

<sup>4</sup>Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), 10.