

1891. In 1894 another loan agreement between the state and the Rothschilds was struck. Out of a loan of B.P. 9,033,574 contracted in that year, the Turkish government's share was B.P. 8,220,552. The rest was paid in advance as interest (Suvla, R.S., 1966: 103-104).

These burdensome loans, as various historians noted, were not able to save the decaying Empire. In 1876 the Empire almost declared bankruptcy when it stopped its cash payments for these loans (Owen, 1981; Suvla, 1966; Mao'z, 1968). The weakening of the Empire in the late 19th and early 20th century facilitated the increasing encroachment of western imperialism in the region.

Various writers have argued that the effects of the legal changes introduced in the 1850s were minimal. They maintain that, for fear of conscription and high taxes required by the new policy, many cultivators simply ignored the law and continued to cultivate their lands as previously, dealing primarily with the head of the village/Hamula (Warriner, 1966; Scholch, 1982). So far as the legal status of many Amiri holders was concerned, this claim is partially correct. It has been reported that many peasants, in an attempt to avoid paying taxes or exposing their male children by officially registering their land with the state, had instead registered the land in the name of the head of the Hamula or the local tax collector or even used faked names (Owen, 1981; Stein, 1984). However, as will be shown shortly, even those who did register their land and had title deeds proving possession were not saved in the process. What was at stake was not a mere legal change. Policy changes were but a legal cover for a more complex process of socio-economic change which began to grip the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century.