

Introduction

This study is about land tenure and the implementation and adoption of property-tenure reforms in the rural areas of the Hebron district (*qaḍa*) of southern Palestine during and after the Tanzimat. The 1858 Land Code marked the beginning of property-tenure reform in the Ottoman Empire. It is widely viewed by scholars as one of the most significant modernizing evolutions in Ottoman law. The Code, together with a series of laws that followed it over the following decades, rewrote the legal system of land tenure in the empire, institutionalizing individual, broadly inheritable title to all land and property. Attestation to the significance of these reforms is their legacy. The influence of Ottoman conventions of land tenure has been present in Ottoman-successor governments and states in *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria) region until today.

Despite their recognized significance and enduring legacy, a large body of literature over the past century and today characterizes the *implementation* of these reforms in the empire as a failure. A dismal failure, in fact. This view is most pronounced when the geographical parameters of investigation are the provinces of historical Palestine. It is