

disparaged the outcome of Ottoman reforms in much the same way as Warriner.¹³

Comparing it to Ruedy, we see emerging what I argue was becoming a compensatory historiographical trend that continues in the literature until today. In the absence of new evidence on the implementation of land reform, and in the absence of evidence to support existent theory on the implementation of land reform, historians have judiciously chosen to paraphrase or quote the claims of those who preceded them.

Despite the 1945 *Survey's* admission that actually very few land registers were found in Palestine when the British assumed rule in late 1917, it, too, authoritatively commented on the authenticity of their contents,

...it was soon apparent to the cultivators that the registers were being used as a means of identifying properties for the purpose of taxation and of disclosing the existence of persons subject to military conscription. For these reasons only a small proportion of transactions was recorded, and these chiefly concerned elderly persons, females, foreigners and those sufficiently influential to be able to avoid military service. As an index of owners, the registers therefore became hopelessly incomplete. Nor was there any survey.¹⁴

Two interrelated points in this assessment (we cannot characterize it as an observation, given that there was little to observe) merit clarification. Neither of these points is the fact

¹³ Martin Bunton's insightful researches have closely examined and critiqued the production and implementation of British land law, ostensibly a continuation of Ottoman law. See, by him, "Inventing the Status Quo: Ottoman Land-Law during the Palestine Mandate, 1917-1936", *The International History Review* 21/1 (1999) 28-56, and *Colonial Land Policies in Palestine, 1917-1936* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ *A Survey*, 238.