

land in the northern part of the country. But also in the south, interested parties were provided with lists of purchasable land.”²⁰ I relate his observation to the *şemsiyye* commissions.

I do not believe this was part of the tapu commissions’ work, as Shechter has theorized. This is for two reasons. First, the geographical scope of these committees’ work appears, at this stage, to have been quite limited. If this was a regular, empire-wide duty of tapu commissions, one would expect to see reference to it in the laws and directives on land-reform procedures, and one would expect these commissions to have been widely known across the empire. They are not.²¹ Second, *şemsiyye* clerks are listed in the Syrian provincial *salnames* (yearbooks) of 1291 H (1874) and 1296 (1879) in the *sancak* (province) of Tripoli (*Tarāblus-Şām*). They appear as a division separate from the land and property registration divisions.²² It would be important to know more about these commissions and the scope of their work; their relation with the tapu and property-tax commissions and

²⁰ Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation 1856-1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development*, trans. William C. Young and Michael C. Gerrity (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993), 111. Schölch relies on foreign diplomatic and Zionist sources.

²¹ Not only have I found no research on these commissions or lists, with the exception of Shechter’s article, Fischbach’s and Schölch’s brief references and part of an article by Ruth Kark, I have not found any Ottoman scholars who were familiar with these commissions. Ruth Kark has found documents about the commissions in the Israeli State Archives. See pp. 57-59 in her article, “Mamluk and Ottoman Cadastral Surveys and Early Mapping of Landed Properties in Palestine”, *Agricultural History*, 71/1 (Winter 1997), 46-70.

²² ISAM, *Salname-i Suriye* 1291 H (1874), 67. ISAM, *Salname-i Suriye* 1296 H (1879), 80. I am grateful to Martha Mundy for the latter reference, for a number of discussions with her on the *şemsiyye* commissions, and for her suggestion that I look in the *salnames*. In the 1871 provincial *salname*, *şemsiyye* clerks are not mentioned.