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Ownership of Land in the Emirate of Transjordan 1921 – 1946: Survey and Registration Processes

Huda Abdulrahman Suleiman Al-Masoud*

ABSTRACT

The study shows that the processes of survey and registration were among the most important measures carried out in order to identify and confirm land ownership and evolve their sizes during the study period. Over the years special departments were established to be in charge of these tasks, starting with the Department of Land Registry (*Tabu*) and continuing with the Department of Survey and ending with the Department of Registration. The activities of the Department were well received by the population because it preserved their rights legally. Perhaps the most important results of the survey and registration is the documentation of the evolution of the sizes of land holdings, wherein small holdings formed 36.2% of the land area, owned by 85% of the land holders, while medium-sized holdings comprised 34.4% of the land area, owned by 11.58% of the land holders, and large land holdings made up 29.4% of the land area, owned by 3.42% of the land holders.

The processes of survey and registration led to state control over land in the Emirate of Transjordan and the elimination of the anarchy that prevailed in land ownership and its illegal take-over. The application of laws relating to land settlement from 1923 to 1946 led to the flaws that marred the Ottoman land laws being addressed, and to a system of sorting and classifying agricultural land being created. Land ownership was specified by the names of their owners based on definitive proofs of ownership that could not be contested after having passed all the stages of settlement.

In addition, the application of these laws accompanied the reorganization of the offices of land registry and the establishment of departments and directorates of registration and survey that took over the implementation and enforcement of these laws critically. This period witnessed the clear determination and confirmation of the rights of free disposal, use and sale of land.

KEYWORDS: Land registry, Land holdings, Land ownership, Emirate of Transjordan.

* This study is derived from a doctoral dissertation completed in 2005 in Institute of Arab Research and Studies, Cairo, Entitled: "The ownership of land and the development of systems in the Emirate of Trans Jordan".

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