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### On the Management of Agricultural Lands in Pre-Industrial Societies and the Advantages of Ottoman Timar

Pre-Endüstriyel Toplumlarda Zirai Toprakların İşletilmesi ve Osmanlı Tımarının Avantajları Üzerine

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**Abstract:** The Ottoman Empire applied the miri land regime, which is a mixture of private and state ownership, in addition to private and public ownership in agricultural lands, and they insisted on applying both until the beginning of the 19th century by operating these lands with the timar system. This study was written in order to argue that the Ottoman agricultural land ownership type and the timar system applied in the operation of these lands had economic, social, military and political advantages over the regimes of some pre-industrial agricultural states. The main question of the study can be formulated as what were the differences of the timar system followed in the Ottoman Empire compared to the regimes of other pre-industrial states, and what advantages did these differences provide to the Ottoman Empire. The possible expected result from the study is that the timar system has important advantages such as the continuity of political stability, efficiency in tax collection, continuity of food supply, ensuring social stability, preventing population mobility, minimizing central budget expenditures, keeping a large mass of horse warriors ready and supplying food goods that the people need. These advantages played an important role in the continuity of the state and in the stability of the Ottoman economic system in the conditions of their times.

**Keywords:** Miri Land Regime, Timar System, Ottoman State, Agricultural Economy, Land Ownership

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**Öz:** Osmanlı Devleti zirai topraklarda özel ve kamu mülkiyetinin dışında özel mülkiyet ve devlet mülkiyetinin karması olan miri toprak rejimini uygulamış ve bu toprakları timar sistemi ile işleterek 19. yüzyılın başlarına kadar, her ikisini de uygulamakta ısrar etmiştir. Bu çalışma Osmanlı zirai toprak mülkiyet tipinin ve bu toprakların işletilmesinde uygulanan timar sisteminin, sanayi öncesinin bazı tarım devletlerinin sistemlerine göre ekonomik, sosyal, askeri ve siyasal avantajlar taşıdığını iddia etmek amacıyla kaleme alınmıştır. Çalışmanın temel sorusu, Osmanlı Devleti'nde izlenen timar sisteminin sanayi öncesinin diğer devletlerinin sistemlerine göre farklılıkları neydi ve bu farklılıklar Osmanlı Devleti'ne ne gibi avantajlar sağlamaktaydı şeklinde formüle edilebilir. Çalışmadan elde edilecek muhtemel sonuç, timar sisteminin, siyasi istikrarın devamlılığı, vergi toplamada etkinlik, gıda arzının sürekliliği, sosyal istikrarın sağlanması, nüfus hareketliliğinin önlenmesi, merkezi bütçe giderlerinin minimize edilmesi, büyük bir atlı savaşçı kitlesinin hazır bulundurulması ve halkın ihtiyacı olan gıda mallarını temin etmesi gibi önemli avantajlara sahip olduğudur. Bu avantajlar ise devletin devamlılığında ve çağlarının koşullarında Osmanlı ekonomik sisteminin istikrarında önemli roller üstlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Miri Toprak Rejimi, Timar Sistemi, Osmanlı Devleti, Zirai Ekonomi, Toprak Mülkiyeti

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## 1. Introduction

The Ottomans established organizations in accordance with the principles of their world of thought and dictated by the conditions of the ages (Genç, 2013: 39-49) in which they lived, and aimed to ensure the longevity of their states and to protect their states and peoples from the effects that could harm the people. The fact that the Ottomans were the dynasty that was able to stay in power for the longest time by resisting all the destructive changes in world history, that the state evolved from a principality to an empire in a few centuries and that it took a few centuries to retreat to Anatolian lands was due to the success of these organizations they established. There was a consensus among scientists on this issue.

According to Ö. L. Barkan, if examined carefully and closely, the empire gained its strength in its more than six hundred years of life thanks to its enormous organization, which worked like clockwork, thanks to the tried-and-tested traditions and methods it had elaborated (Barkan, 1980: 739). According to M. Genç, it was a well-known fact that the development of the Ottoman Empire was based on a series of military successes. But there was no way to count these achievements as purely military. If that were the case, it would not be possible for it to last long. Rather than organizing and training their armies well, the real achievements of the Ottomans should have been sought in the social and economic order they established behind these armies and their feeding (Genç, 2013: 308). On the other hand, according to H. İnalçık, the hypothesis that an empire that had survived for hundreds of years, as claimed by many Christian writers, could only hold on violently, was no longer included in serious science studies. Because, The Ottoman Empire was based on an advanced political and economic system and derived its vitality from them (İnalçık, 2012: 8).

Perhaps the most important of these organizations established by the Ottomans was to operate the timar system (fief) by validating the miri land regime on agricultural lands. For example, according to İnalçık, the timar system was not only the main pillar of the military and administrative organization of the empire, but also became a determining factor in the functioning of the miri land regime, in determining the status of peasant farmers and the tax they would pay and in the management of the empire's agricultural economy (İnalçık, 2012: 168). L. Von Ranke, on the other hand, attributed the power of the Ottoman Empire to three elements, the timar system, the janissary institution and the personalities of the heads of state. Among these timar system was in the first place. The importance of the timar institution did not go unnoticed by foreign historians who wrote Ottoman history. Many western travelers who came to the Ottoman Empire mentioned the timar organization in their travel books with admiration. It was also seen in the articles and books written by the Europeans that the timar system was in an advanced position next to the legal, administrative, military and financial institutions in Europe at that time. These travelers especially emphasized that the Ottomans brought great prosperity to the Balkan societies by spreading the timar system to the Balkan societies (Üçok, 1944: 525-527).

Also according to İnalçık, the recovery of the central state after the Ankara War in 1402 could also be explained by the timar system. Because the Ottoman timar system had created a deep-rooted political and social order that extended its arms to the smallest villages of the country like a network. It was the central authority that gave legitimacy to this whole order. Therefore, the timar owners, as well as the masses of the people, saw a vital interest in the re-establishment of this authority. For this reason, it was not without reason that Ottoman political historians, who foreshadowed the collapse of the empire in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, focused on the timar system (İnalçık, 1996: 114).

But neither the land ownership nor the honor of discovering the management of these lands with the fief regime<sup>2</sup> did not belong to the Ottomans. The Ottoman Empire did not invent the miri land regime itself, on the contrary, it existed on the lands subject to this regime and did nothing but transfer and apply this system, which the Seljuk State inherited in Anatolia, to the newly conquered Rumelia lands (Turan, 1948: 553). However the problematic features of iqta (ikta) in the Seljuks were abolished in the Ottomans. Thus it developed further in the Ottomans and found application until the Tanzimat era (Turan, 1968: 959).

Some practices resembling miri land regime and timar system, which were important for the Ottoman Empire in military, political, economic, financial and sociological fields and constituted the backbone of the economic system, had also found an area of existence in the agricultural states of the pre-industrial revolution. Similar practices also seen in ancient Greek city-states, the Roman Empire, medieval Continental Europe and England, Russia, Japan, and China, where technology was primitive, productivity low, transportation difficult and expensive, macro growth absent, and barely self-sufficient. It was a common solution found depending on the economic conditions that could suffice. This solution is to have the agricultural lands, which provide nearly 90% of the country's national income and where approximately 95% of the population is employed, to be operated by an official, officer or nobleman given to him by the state. In return, agricultural taxes are collected and military service is provided to the state. included its main duties.<sup>3</sup> However, the timar system implemented by the Ottoman Empire differed from other agricultural empires of its time in some important respects, and these differences prevented the problems that arose in other states from finding an area of existence in the Ottoman Empire and provided important advantages to the state.

This article shows that the Ottoman Empire did not face the problems that other states of its era faced, thanks to the timar system, and thus ensured the longevity and stability of its economic, financial, military, social and political structures. It was written to claim that he did not experience similar problems. In order to prove this claim, the pre-industrial agricultural land ownership types and the operating regimes of agricultural lands were examined and the advantages of the timar system to the Ottoman Empire were analyzed based on the application. However, the origins of the timar system, its historical practices, when and how it started in the Ottoman Empire, what kind of developments it showed and what the functioning system was, were excluded from this study, as they have already been examined in the literature. The result obtained from the study is that the timar system, as a subjective practice at the center of the Ottoman economic system, was successful in providing them with some extremely important advantages compared to other states of their time.

## 2. Agricultural Land Ownership and Management in Pre-Industrial Societies

Throughout history, agricultural lands were (a) state property, (b) private property (Ancient Greece and Roman Empire), (c) public property, (d) foundation property (Ottoman State), (e) aristocratic property (Europe in the Middle Ages, England, Russia, Japan, and China) and (f) miri property (Ottoman State), which is a kind of original mix of state and private property. While it was possible to theoretically evaluate miri and aristocratic property within the state property, there were significant differences in practice. Waqf ownership, which is another type of ownership, found application in Islamic states and

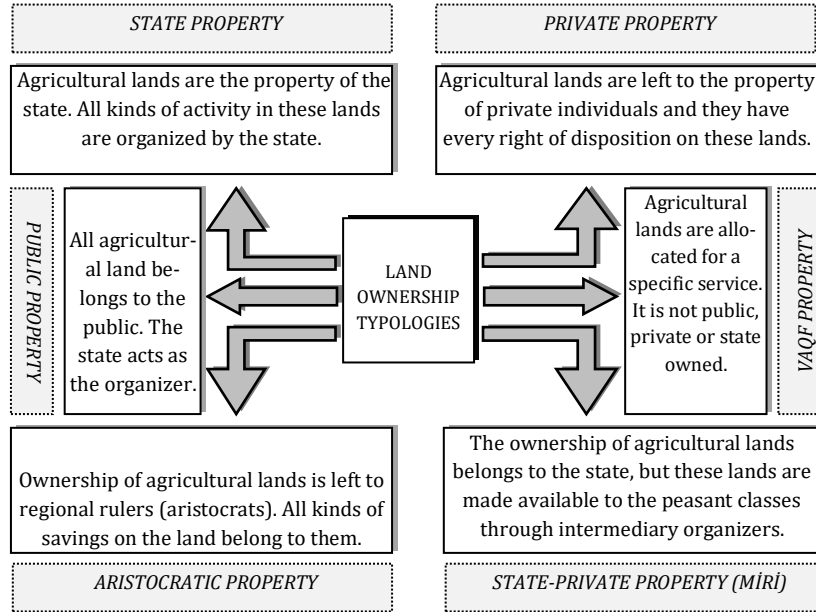
<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive study on the origin and different definitions of grooming, which means "pain, suffering, compassion, attention, loyalty, care and concern" in Farsça (Pahlavi language) of the western region (Beldiceanu, 1985: 11-18).

<sup>3</sup> For example, in 1500, it was calculated that 14.88% of the total population living in England, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, Austria, Poland, Italy and Spain lived in urban areas and 85.12% lived in rural areas. On average, 68% of the population living in rural areas is engaged in agriculture. The remaining 17.12% population lives in rural areas and does not engage in agriculture. By 1750, on average, 18.76% of the population lived in cities, 81.33% continued to live in rural areas, and an average of 56.11% of the rural population was in the agricultural sector. Although 25.22 of the rural population is in the countryside, they are not active in agriculture (Allen, 2000: 11). Compiled from Tables 4 and 5. The same rates must have occurred in other parts of the world, although with some differences.

especially in the Ottomans. For this reason, there are some writers who defined the Ottoman Empire as an institution of civilization (İnalçık, 2019: 245-249).

From the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC until the end of the industrial revolution, the property types applied in agricultural lands were concentrated in private, state and aristocratic property types, excluding Islamic states. But especially in the period between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the dominant property type was aristocratic or feudal. Although some states that adopted the feudal property type initially adopted state property, this property type evolved into aristocratic property over time.

Graph 1: Types of Agricultural Land Ownership in History



In ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, agricultural lands were owned by the elite, and slave labor was allowed to be employed on these lands (Ayla, 2008: 1-5). In ancient Greece, in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, the collapse of the fragmented primitive communal order resulted in land becoming the private property of large families in some areas. Powerful families, over time, took possession of the basic productive means of clan society, thanks to their economic superiority (Diakov & Kovalev, 1987: 249). Aristocracy emerged in the 800s BC, and city-states emerged towards the 700s. In the 600s, slavery became widespread. Since the Greeks despised physical labor, they preferred slavery and paid work and hire on agricultural lands.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, Solon, who ruled the city-state of Athens in 594 BC, had followed a middle path between the demands of the rich and elite in Athens to protect their financial supremacy and the desire of the poor to redistribute the land to themselves in his reformed laws (Martin, 2014: 124-125,140,152).

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, that is, at the beginning of the republic, the Roman Empire was divided into two classes as patrician (noble heads of clans) and plebs (non-noble people). Although the Romans emphasized the training of clergy, right decision making and nobility for the first group, the main reason for the separation was economic (Baker, 2013: 36-37). Law also played an important role in the formation of the close link between status and landed property. In Athens and Rome there was private ownership of land. However, while there was a sharp separation of citizenship and others in the first,

<sup>4</sup> Slavery was common practice in the city-states of ancient Greece. Only on the Spartan site was there an intermediate class called the helot, which differed slightly from the status of slaves. But the economic duties assigned to the helots were the same as those of the slaves. It could be even worse at times.

the property of the noble classes until 300 BC in Rome, and after these dates, the property of individuals who were rich or included in the aristocracy became the subject (Finley, 2007: 108).

In the Republican period (450-30 BC) in the Roman Empire, elite families dominated the economic and social lives of the cities, just as they did in political, religious and military organizations. The wealth and power of these classes rested on their control over land and their subordinate classes (Boatwright, 2004: 23). Since Rome distributed the lands it acquired with the wars that started in 300 BC to ex-soldiers and Roman citizens, in 310 BC, slavery (*nexum*) was abolished in return for debt, and slaves obtained from wars began to work on agricultural lands. However, the wars gave the opportunity to land buyers along with prosperity. While they dominated the market, they also seized land near major cities using debt and fraud. The lands of the elite classes grew and large estates called *latifundia* (*Latus+fundus*), meaning big farm in Latin) were created, which employed slaves and produced wine and olive oil for regional markets (Tauger, 2011: 21). The use of slave labor on these lands did not change the relationship between landlords and peasants (Wood, 2002: 25). The use of slaves was also a practice that worked against Roman peasants on large farms.

Pliny the Elder (Pliny the Second) (23-79 BC), seeing the blow these lands had inflicted on the Roman economy, would call *latifundia perdidere Italiam* (*latifundia will destroy Italy*). The Gracchus brothers, on the other hand, would have realized the problematic aspects of large land ownership, and because they wanted to put the solution into practice, they would be killed one after the other by the conspiracy of the big landowners.<sup>5</sup>

By the Middle Ages, the ownership of agricultural lands in Europe, Russia, Japan and China was under the ownership of the central state. The coordination of production and the provision of political administration by distributing the lands to the peasants by the officials sent from the center, and the concentration of the lands in the hands of the officials and nobles by becoming independent from the control of the central authority, shifted towards aristocratic or feudal property type.

In medieval Europe, the ownership of agricultural lands was based on the power of the center and was established in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century AD during the Carolingian Empire (800-888).<sup>6</sup> The difficulty of administering the country with the officials (*missi dominici*) sent from the center necessitated the establishment of feudal relations (*vassal-lord*). With Charlemagne, who came to the throne in 800, the empire was divided into 250 counties, a noble loyal to the king was appointed to each region, and two deputies and a bishop for religious affairs were appointed next to this noble or soldier for control (Ağaoğulları & Köker, 2006: 178).

While the relationship between the lords who would rule the county region and the king was *commendatio*,<sup>7</sup> *beneficium*<sup>8</sup> and *immunitas*<sup>9</sup> at the beginning, these qualities of the relationship deteriorated over time and the lords sent to the provinces became one of the equals and independent rulers who owned the lands they were assigned. Because over time, the *vassal-lord* relationship became complicated and their responsibilities changed from region to region.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Tiberius Gracchus, who entered the senate in 133 BC, and his brother, Gaius Gracchus, who followed him ten years later, were to be murdered in the senate during the landlords' quarrel over the land reform they proposed. The aim of the Gracchus brothers was to break the dominance of large farms in agricultural lands, to limit the property lands to a certain size and to distribute the rest to the people, to implement a radical reform (Plutarkhos, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> The territory of the Carolingian Empire included present-day Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, northern France, West Germany, Switzerland, and northern Italy.

<sup>7</sup> A free but powerless person becomes his servant by entering the service of a stronger person.

<sup>8</sup> A land concession granted to someone who has held a religious or administrative office to meet their needs, including the population in that land.

<sup>9</sup> Exemption of the possessions of an individual or religious authority from the military and judicial power of the authority to which they are subject.

<sup>10</sup> As each lord was connected to the downward chain of vassals, confusion of duties arose, and the chain of dependency was broken because he did not communicate with his vassal by interacting with his vassal. Vassal in service process gained continuity by getting rid of time



For the next 400 years, all of Europe was ruled by hundreds of small political and economic units led by these lords (Heaton, 1963: 86). The power of the central states would remain symbolic and the lords would gather all kinds of political, economic, judicial and financial authority in these lands as the owner of the lands they were assigned to. The peasants of the previous era became the landed serfs of the new order. Production, taxes, and drudgery fell on the serfs (Norht & Thomas, 1971: 777-803).

In the case of medieval Russia, aristocratic landed property became prominent in the period between 1240 and 1533 called Apanaj Russia.<sup>11</sup> Russia was divided into numerous principalities and privileged fiefdoms owned by the nobility (boyar). As in Western Europe, the vassal hierarchy was linked to the land. Inherited property was called vatchina, and property given in return for service was called pomestie (Riasanovsky & Steinberg, 2011: 113).

With Ivan III, Mestnichestvo was implemented in Russia in 1475. With this practice, the place of the family members of the duma (council), who gathered around the Moscow Principality and numbered 45 in the 1550s, in the palace, the military and the administrative hierarchy were regulated, and the members of these families attained certain status (Bushkovitch, 2012: 59). Thus, social stratification was legalized. The efforts of Ivan IV (Grozny), who ascended the throne in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to strengthen the central state, on the one hand, led to an oppressive regime, on the other hand, it failed to break the resistance of the princes and landed nobles of the apanaj period.

While every legal practice after this date caused the lands in Russia to be in the hands of the aristocrats, serfdom was made permanent with the Ulozhonie Law of 1649 and their bonding to the land was legalized. Thus, while the Russian people were left at the mercy of the landlords, at the end of the century, their being bought and sold and bequeathed practically took place. This situation did not change throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Every intended change resulted in favor of the aristocratic class (Riasanovsky & Steinberg, 2011: 191).

By the time of the tsarism of Peter I (1689-1725), the reforms implemented did not have much effect on the change of agriculture and peasantry in Russia, and the country remained a medieval society while serfdom continued. The situation of serfs even worsened. Serfdom became the basis of the whole social order more than ever before. The living conditions of serfs remained unchanged until serfdom was legally abolished in 1861 during the reign of Alexander II (1855-1881). When there was a change, new problems came to the fore. In the period between these two tsars, most of the people of Russia were peasants who earned their living from the land and paid taxes in cash and in kind to their masters who owned the land. Just before 1861, only 8% of the 74 million population lived in cities and less than a million people were employed in factories (Blum, 1960: 3). After the 1861 law, the problem of the peasantry continued to be the main problem of the day, as it was in Europe between 1500-1850 (Volin, 1943: 41).<sup>12</sup>

In the history of Japan, the first practice that determined the ownership and use of lands became evident with three practices that came into force as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century in the Heian (Kyoto) period. The first of these was the establishment of a permanent army consisting of the children of the nobility, the second was the granting of the Japanese agricultural lands divided into 68 provinces in the 700s to the governors of this province, elite families and some bureaucrats. Thus, in the 800s, large families called daimyo began to form and claim ownership over agricultural lands. The third practice was the appointment of a shogun (commander of the soldiers) to the emperor to deal with military affairs in 784. The shoguns would displace the emperor, placing him in a symbolic position, and making Japan a military state that would last for nearly a thousand years (Küçükcalay, 2016: 377-378).

limitations. Thus, these lands began to be divided as the property of the lord, to be the subject of inheritance, transfer and sale (Poggi, 2016: 36-37, 43-45). As the main source on the sociological relations that form the basis of feudal society (Bloch: 2007).

<sup>11</sup> The period between 1240-1533 in the history of Russia and the name given to the nobility in this period.

<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, right after 1861, it was determined that 28% of the villagers did not even have enough land to meet their own needs, and by 1900 this rate had increased to 52% (Riasanovsky & Steinberg, 2011: 449).

In the period from 1185 to the beginning of the Meiji reforms in 1868, three families, namely Kamakura, Ashikaga, Tokugawa, and the shoguns from these families took part in the administration. The official recognition of the lands heaped in the hands of aristocratic families in Japanese history was for the first time with an edict dated 1585 and it was decided that a peasant could not sell his land, be an agricultural worker and moreover, could not employ new people to work in his field. During the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868), the country was divided into some 300 daimyo districts, and these families began to live off the taxes levied on the farmers' produce and their produce. This situation led to the formation of a dual administrative structure in which the central government and families were located together (Buluş, 2002: 141-145). While the peasant-soldier mentality was dominant until that date, the noble families and their soldiers (samurai), who made up 10% of the society after that date, were over the remaining 90% of the society. 85% of the 90% of the population were peasants working in agriculture. Peasants in feudal Japan, who were admired in theory but despised in real life, were as poor as they always were. The emphasis was not on the farmer, who bore the tax burden and paid the agricultural rents, but on agriculture itself (Meyer, 2009: 108).

It was an open feudal system, and Japan had common ground with the medieval western world. However, feudalism in Japan differed from its European and Russian counterparts in the existence of traditional centralized civil rule. The lord-vassal relationship was much more personal than in the west, where the contractual relationship was more common. It was patriarchal and almost familial in Japan (Henshall, 2004: 35).

Under the shogunate, the peasants were the basic class ruled in feudal society. Feudal lords controlled nearly every aspect of the farm system in addition to the peasants' way of life. The landowners controlled the divided parts of the country, while the shogun represented authority stemming from Confucian philosophy. The relationship between the shogun and the daimyo was a vassal-lord relationship. Under these officials, the peasants were on their own pieces of land, in a situation where serious restrictions were placed on their freedom. Peasants could not leave their land. Which crops they would plant were determined and they were compelled to pay taxes to their daimyos based on their status. These taxes were passed on to them as salaries of the samurai class. Taxes amounted to up to 60% of the peasants' produce (Uchtmann & Osborn & Maloney, 1987: 365-366). The samurai did not know the law, spent lavishly, and did not hesitate to act recklessly by drinking (Parris, 2009: 152-153).

Over time, with the development of the money economy, lending classes emerged in Japan and they lent money to the peasants by mortgaging their lands. In this way, they began to own lands due to debts that could not be paid in time. A new class has thus been added next to the daimyo and samurai class (Uchtmann & Osborn & Maloney, 1987: 367). This time, the peasants began to be the symbolic owners of the land and to pay rent to the new owners of the land in addition to the old taxes. This was the outline of agricultural production in Japan when the Meiji reforms began in 1868.

China's agricultural history also began with small farming, as in ancient Greece and Rome, but over time these turned into poor peasants of the expanding empire, losing their lands to rich lords. Between 1000 and 600 BC, the peasant classes, mostly non-Chinese, had relations of dependency with local landlords who claimed their own produce. In one ancient source, peasants were described as those who transferred their produce to the landlords and took rations from them (Tauger, 2011:27-29).

The first regulation of the ownership and use of agricultural lands goes back to the Cuntıyan Decree, which was implemented in 484 by the Wei dynasty in China, which was divided into three by the Wei, Wu and Shu dynasties. This decree meant equalizing land use. The lands belonged to the emperor and the tenure was around 25 acres for men over the age of fifteen and 12 acres for women. The purpose of the law was to provide food for the people as much as possible, and this law was applied in Chinese history until the 800s. Although this practice was broken from time to time by the counter moves of the regional lords, it was also followed during the Tang and Song dynasties, which existed between 618 and

1279 and ensured the unification of China. It was completely destroyed during the Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty between 1279-1368 (Huang, 2007: 100-110).

From 1368 to 1912, the Ming and Qing (Manchu) dynasties existed in China. The situation of the peasants began to deteriorate over time, although the use of the land was given to them. At the top of Chinese society were hereditary nobles. These could be civil and military officials who were given property, salary and food allowance, or they could be noble individuals. After the nobles, there were civil servants, scientists and men of letters who served the state. Some of these groups, especially the last ones, lived on income from their lands. The rest of the population was made up of the commoners (Dillon, 2016: 31-32).

Although the peasants came after the scientist and literary class according to Confucian thought, they were the most disadvantaged class in practice. The difference between peasants and aristocratic classes in China was manifested in education, lifestyle, authority, responsibilities and obligations. In the modern era, the Maoists knew this and had won their war against the west. Feudalism or semi-feudalism played a role from time to time in the long history of China, but it was never the mainstream and the peasants were not uprooted (Deng, 1999: 75-76). But they were poor and powerless groups. Although it varied from region to region, the peasants had to pay rent and taxes while living on a scarce basis. The land of the landlords, on the other hand, was dividing and shrinking within a few generations. Peasants were exposed to natural disasters and were under the pressure of high taxes (Dillon, 2016: 31-32).

Although peasants had lands in medieval China, this was symbolic and the feudal regime dominated China. The overlords did not deal with the land, but they could not impose a chore on their serf peasants as a matter of custom. A villager was registered in the register of his birthplace and could not leave. Peasants without land rented land at values corresponding to 60% or 70% of their crops. Agricultural implements were extremely primitive. The villagers were starving. It was natural for them to sell their children. Cities of China were not passable by beggars (Yeliseyeva, 2009:175-176).

The Ottoman State had applied the timar system on these lands by appropriating agricultural lands as miri property. So much so that, by 1528, 87% of agricultural lands were in miri status and these lands were under the control of the state (İnalçık, 2003: 114). At least the intentions of those who ruled other states to appropriate the ownership of the land to the state were similar. But the Ottomans, unlike the others, paid great attention to the protection of this property type with the precautions they took.

The Ottomans remained loyal to the quintet system built before them to categorize the lands, and their lands were property land (arazi-i memluke), foundation land (arazi-i mevkufe), publicly abandoned land (arazi-i abandoned), empty land (arazi-i mevat). ) and miri land (arazi-i miriyye) (Küçükcalay, 2021: 202).<sup>13</sup> Property and land occupied a large place in this quintuple structure. Since the principles of the property were evaluated in the books of Islamic law, there was no need for them to be regulated by law books throughout the Ottoman history. Miri land, on the other hand, was the land whose bare ownership (rakabe) belonged to the state and whose use was transferred under a lease, and the authority to regulate the forms of savings, transfer and transfer principles of this land belonged to the state. These principles were determined by edicts, provisions and laws (Aydın, 1991: 346). Of the five types of terrain, the overwhelming weight was in miri lands.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> For detailed information on soil types in the Ottoman Empire, the formation of miri lands and the implementation of the timar operating system (Cin, 1987: 1-87; Cin, 1992: 65-68).

<sup>14</sup> These lands are lands that were not left to non-Muslims during the conquest, but were kept for the state treasury, lands that did not have heirs after the death of their owners, did not leave a will, have no debts, whose owners are unknown due to statute of limitations, and which were not given as iqta during the conquest or which could not be taken for the state treasury. was occurring (Cin, 1991: 342).



Until the laws of Mehmet II and the introduction written by Ebussuud to the Code of Budin (Albayrak, ? : 102-104) after the conquest of Budin, the practices on agricultural lands, which consisted mostly of the compilation of individual regulations and fatwas depending on the fiqh principles presented to the sultans, were systematized with these laws and regulations. Until a new regulation in 1858, the land of miri remained within this system and grew gradually (Küçükcalay, 2021: 202).

The Ottoman Empire operated the miri lands with the tımar system. This regime was a name given to some soldiers and civil servants to cover their livelihoods or services, to tax resources from certain regions to collect on their own account, and to military fiefs with annual income records up to twenty thousand piasters (Barkan, 1980: 874) It was controversial whether the iqta, which was practiced during the Asr-ı Saadet period and was known to be practiced by the Sassanids, İlkhaniids, Ayyubids, Mamluks and Seljuk State, or the pronia seen in Byzantine practice, was effective in the adoption of the tımar regime.<sup>15</sup>

During the times when the money economy of the tımar system was not sufficiently developed, in the face of difficulties in the transportation of tax revenues, a large part of which was collected as a crop, their conversion into money, their collection as a central state treasury and their distribution from there, and the maintenance of their livelihoods with these salaries to be distributed, or in the face of the difficulties of military service. Similar methods, which had been applied in various ways in various ages in the east and west for political and other reasons, had been successfully used for centuries in the organization of a cavalry army in the Ottoman Empire (Barkan, 1980: 874).

Shortage of money was one of the main problems of pre-industrial states. In the face of the scarcity of gold and silver, the state had difficulty in finding money for large-scale enterprises and for a large army it kept. On the other hand, for the same reasons, the peasants also paid the most important tax, the grain tax, in kind, as they could not pay in cash. The state, on the other hand, would sell these income sources to tax farmers, since it lacked the means to collect and convert the tax paid in kind. Thus, the state would lose revenue and could not collect the money needed to pay the salaries of the army (İnalçık, 2003: 111-112).

Moreover, the only problem was not that the money economy was not developed. It was necessary to feed the people, the state, the big cities and the central army (janissaries), that is, the continuity of the supply of food products. A large cavalry army required by the conditions of the age had to be financed and equipped for wars. Since most of the tax revenues were obtained from the agricultural sector, it was necessary to prevent the reduction of tax revenues. Full employment and labor should be distributed across the country at a level that would not disturb the supply-demand balance. The balance established in the economy should not be disturbed by the difference in wealth, the agglomeration of lands in certain hands, and the social classification that emerged due to wealth. The Ottoman rulers preferred to implement the tımar system in the miri lands in order to achieve these goals and prevent the problems that would arise.

However, the fief regime differed from the feudal practices practiced in much of medieval Europe, in England, Japan, Russia, and China.<sup>16</sup> These differences stood out as structural differences between the

<sup>15</sup> For debates on the origin of tımar see: (Şahin, 2013: 58-74).

<sup>16</sup> (a) In the Ottoman fief, villagers had the right to marry, inherit, and choose their profession. They could not be subject to drudgery, and they had to pay their taxes in accordance with the law. They were free from the oppression of the clergy and could not be traded with land, and they could leave their land by fulfilling certain conditions. (b) In the tımar land, the relationship between the cavalryman, the peasant, and the state was regulated not by arbitrary or customary law, but by written law. (c) The tımar lands were not the property of the cavalryman, nor did the cavalryman play a role in political administration, judgment and punishment. The villagers could not be treated arbitrarily and were under the control of judges and administrators such as kadi, banner lord (sancakbeyi) and grand seigneur. (d) In the tımar system, the cavalry was not one of the equals, but a subordinate officer of the central authority, who organized the cultivation of the land, collected taxes and supplied soldiers to the central army in return. (e) In the aristocratic (feudal) type of property, agricultural lands were usually divided into two, one of which was occupied by the lord, and the others were organized as lands given to the peasants in strips, while in the tımar agricultural lands were overwhelmingly peasant lands. (f) Cavalryman could not make peasants work on the land

fief regime and the feudal system. But the most important were the differences between the implementation of private property, feudal (aristocratic) property and fief regimes and the economic (financial and financial), social and military consequences. The timar system also contained originalities in this context and provided some advantages to the Ottoman Empire with its results.

### 3. Advantages of the Timar Operating System

Throughout history, private property (Ancient Greece and Rome) and aristocratic property (Medieval Europe, Russia, Japan and China) types have found widespread application in agricultural lands. However, these two types of property practices, and therefore the operation of agricultural lands depending on these property types, caused significant problems, and these problems emerged in a wide range extending to each of the social, economic, political and military fields.

In the ancient Greek city-states and the Roman Empire, limited private ownership of agricultural lands and production with slave labor were insufficient to solve the problems in front of the main problem of agricultural societies, the lack of supply, the financing of the state and the army, and the survival of the people. While the lands were concentrated in certain hands over time, slave labor was eliminating working opportunities. Moreover, the harmony between the demand, which includes the basic needs of the people, and the supply made due to slave labor on large farms, was also distorted. Another consequence of the agglomeration of lands in the hands of the elite meant that the burden of taxes was placed on the poor producers. Tenancy, on the other hand, caused the economic situation of the villagers to deteriorate further due to the fact that they were in the range of taxes and rents. The result is the sharpening of the class society structure and the widening of the difference between the classes, the impoverishment of the people by moving away from the land, which is the most basic production factor, the settlement of the people in the cities causing social problems, the decrease in the tax revenues of the state in parallel with the decrease in production, the difficulty in financing the armies and the social problems associated with all these. confusion had arisen.<sup>17</sup> Professional armies were occasionally involved in these social upheavals.

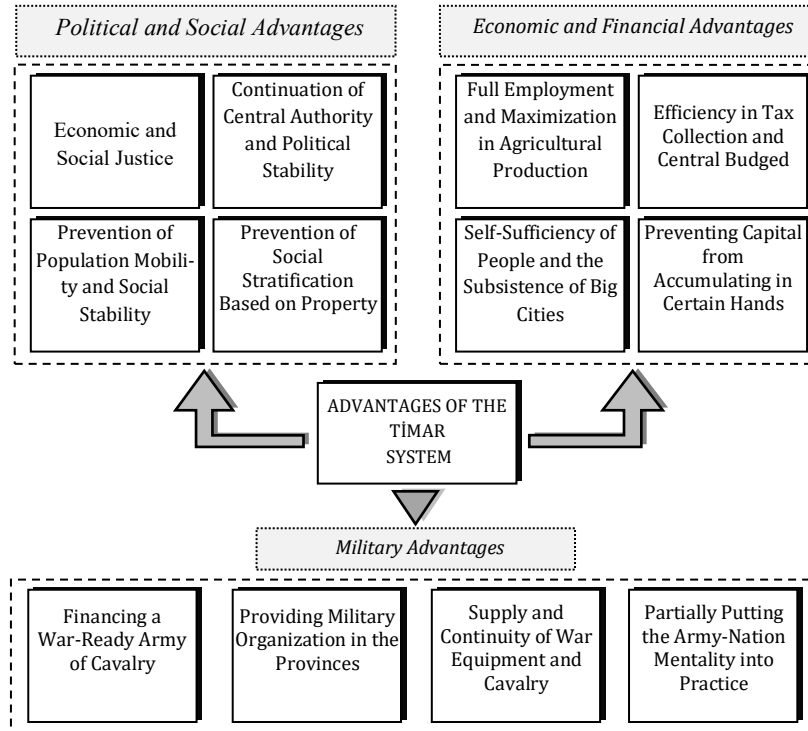
Feudal property type also confronted states with similar problems. The fact that the lands were in the hands of some nobles, soldiers, state bureaucrats and clergy and acted as rulers independent of the authority of the central state caused political fragmentation and weakened the power of the central administrators, causing the concept of the state to become symbolic. These groups came to the fore as independent small units, acting arbitrarily in judging, levying and collecting taxes, making laws, and burdening the peasants with drudgery. Moreover, they were not in a determined behavior in the support of the military, which they had to give with the central decisiveness. The fact that the peasants were tied to the land and turned into a commodity to be bought and sold with it, in addition to taking away the freedom of the peasants, caused the landed nobles to claim rights over their production.

Peasants were forced to face poverty by transforming into serf status stationed somewhere between slaves and free people. The result was that social stratification became apparent, and large sections of societies were confiscated as landless serfs for the products of their labor. The badness and poverty in the living conditions of the peasants triggered peasant revolts, pushing the states into social chaos.

on which he produced and could not subject them to drudgery on these lands. (g) In feudalism, a mansion represented a closed unit, while in the Ottoman timar, a manor's land represented an economically and politically open unit, and (h) according to Islamic law, there was no land-based slavery system (Barkan, 1956: 237-246; Barkan, 1980: 873-895; Kılıçbay, 1982: 353; Şen & Türkmenoğlu, 2012: 189-204).

<sup>17</sup> Societies that adopted private and feudal (aristocratic) property relations in agricultural lands were subjected to intense uprisings of slaves, peasants and serfs. The Spartacus revolt in Rome, the mass peasant revolts in Europe between 1250 and 1550, the 1789 French and 1917 Russian revolutions were the most well-known of these revolts. What these and other uprisings had in common was the popular protest against the poverty they had to face. There is a rich literature on this subject. see: (Fremion, 2003).

Graph 2: Advantages of the Timar Regime



The timar regime implemented by the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, offered three groups of advantages to the Ottomans: political-social, economic-financial and military, compared to the private property and feudal property practices they followed in other states of their era. These advantages allowed the Ottoman Empire to face the problems that arose in contemporary states, either completely or to a limited extent, and to stay away from them to a large extent. For this reason, the timar regime was an application of the Ottoman Empire, which it put into practice by adding originality.

### 3.1. Political and Social Advantages of Timar

The first important contribution of the timar system to the Ottomans was political and social. With the timar regime, the Ottomans provided economic and social justice, established the continuity of central authority and political stability, prevented population movements that could disrupt the balance of the economy, and prevented social classification based on property.

Within the timar regime, the relations between the state, the peasant and the sipahi (cavalryman) who disposed of the agricultural lands were based on the law, and the state, like an arbitrator, was meticulous in protecting the rights of both the peasant and the cavalryman (Türkmenoğlu, 2021: 485-503). Thus, the villagers were not subjected to drudgery and arbitrary behavior. The owner of the timar (sahib-i ark or sahib-i raiyyet) was the only person with full authority to enforce the conditions set forth in the laws on miri land and reaya on land and peasants. If he broke these laws, he would be prosecuted and in danger of losing his right (İnalçık, 2012: 169-170).

According to H. İnalçık, small peasant family businesses were highly protected. The rea, that is, the farmer families and the land unit (farm), in Byzantium and Ottoman Empire, were tried to be meticulously protected against the elders. One of the main duties of the imperial bureaucracy was to protect this regime. Peasants, as the poor and the poor, were treated as a class that needed to be

protected (İnalçık, 1996: 4-5). In this sense, it was a fact that the Ottomans took even the Balkan peasants from serf status and turned them into free peasants.<sup>18</sup> Although writers such as G. Kaldynagy emphasized that the timar system had negative effects on agricultural output in Hungary (Kaldynagy, 1974: 499-508), for example, Barkan points out that timar abolished the serf system on agricultural lands and made serfs free peasants of a great empire (Barkan, 1980: 758).

The most important difference of the Ottoman timar system from similar practices in history was that the villagers used the lands they took from the cavalryman as if they were the owners of the land as long as they did what was necessary, and they knew that the lands they had saved would pass to their children in case of their death (Barkan, 1999: 324).<sup>19</sup> In theory it was a state of agricultural lands, but in practice it looked like it was peasants' land. But the state kept this theoretical property to itself for the functioning of its economic system. Thus, the peasants did not feel the pressure of the state ownership of agricultural lands and did not cause problems that could arise in practice.

In the timar system, in the distribution of lands to the peasants, aiming for a near-equal distribution of lands with the same productivity level was a practice in which justice emerged concretely. The lands distributed were large enough to be worked with a pair of oxen, and were usually around 40-60 acres. The size of the land held by the peasants fluctuated around the average (Küçükkalay & Efe, 2009: 245-279; Küçükkalay & Koyuncu, 2016: 171-228). In agriculture, which is the dominant sector of the economy, it is also understood from the censuses of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries that the land was divided equally among the productive peasants. So much so that, according to the statistical data collected due to the land reforms made in the 1930s in the Balkans, which gained independence, it was revealed that even a hundred years after independence, the egalitarian land distribution still existed in the countries of the Ottoman region (Genç, 2013: 67).<sup>20</sup>

In the distribution of lands with different productivity to the peasants, the relationship between productivity and size was realized in the opposite direction. The lands are classified as unproductive (edna), medium fertile (evsat) and fertile (alâ), 100-150 acres of unproductive land (forty steps in width and length), 80-100 acres of medium-fertile land and 60-80 acres of fertile land was being distributed (Barkan, 1999: 324).

Justice was also manifested in the taxes collected in the fief lands. The fact that the rent was taken in the form of a share according to the fertility of the land (Barkan, 1980: 802) everywhere caused the tax to be predictable, to be in a linear relationship with the amount of produce and could not be increased arbitrarily by the timar owner, since this rate was determined by law. The amount remaining from the tax to the peasant was at a level that was sufficient for the peasant.

The fact that the tithe, which was received in the form of a share, was collected at different rates in different regions was not a matter that would harm tax justice. Considering this difference, it could not be claimed that these ratios were determined arbitrarily and randomly. In this regard, it was clear that the fertility of the soil, the agricultural methods in the region, the amount of net income the villagers could obtain, the order of the lands subject to taxation, and the practices and customs that had been

<sup>18</sup> Halil İnalçık made the following comments on this subject: "The main lever that enabled the establishment of the Ottoman administration and Islam in Albania was the fief system, and while this system was being established, religious and racial monopoly never played a role in the state's actions. The state was accepting the elements that recognized its dominance and served, regardless of their religion or race, into its cadres with full equality. This was not a case unique to Albania, either." (İnalçık, 1996: 114).

<sup>19</sup> Mehmet Genç's comments on this subject were as follows: "However, they allocated the lands belonging to the state to individuals as if they were their private property. "As if", not as private property. Because the peasant knows the land he saves with its borders, he knows what he will get from there, he knows what tax he will pay for the products he will get. If the villager wants it, he has the right to get a copy from the state and paste it on his door. He was a tax collector, he was a tax officer, there is no application." (Genç, 2001: 324).

<sup>20</sup> M. Genç says the following on this subject: "Equality is most common in the grooming system. The Ottomans did not leave the ownership of the land to individuals. The state retained land ownership in its own name. They did it wisely. If they had left the land to individuals and became private property, that system would hardly have survived for a hundred years, not six hundred years. That is why they kept the ownership of the land belonging to the state" (Genç, 2001: 324).

going on for centuries were taken into consideration (Barkan, 1980: 802). However, in other states in history, it was very difficult to say that tax justice worked especially in favor of the peasants.<sup>21</sup>

However, the taxes paid by the villagers in the Ottoman Empire were generally around 20% of their total product value. Even in the censuses (temettuat) made as late as 1840, it was determined that the tax burden of the villagers was around one-fifth of their total income.<sup>22</sup> According to M. Genç, the Ottomans chose to solve the financial problems of the state by transforming the system within itself, instead of increasing the taxes on the villagers, and they established a fair tax system for the villagers (Küçükcalay, 2022: 432). Explaining the share of tax revenues in total income in England, China and the Ottoman Empire between 1285-1900, Clark determined that the tax rates in the Ottoman Empire were almost half of the other two (Clark, 2013: 171).

While establishing justice with the state fief regime, it wanted the peasant population to operate in small production units also prevented the population from putting pressure on the cities by breaking off from the land. In an environment where labor as a factor of production could not provide its own distribution under market conditions preventing population mobility prevented all kinds of social pressures that could occur on the capital and the central government. Because such repressions could lead to widespread and mass peasant revolts and threaten the unity of the state, as in other countries. For this reason, it was aimed that small units (an area of approximately 2000 km<sup>2</sup>) that are self-sufficient and called kaza (township) could be economically self-sufficient and a kind of micro-balance was established. It was not desired that the amount of labor factor that provided the production-consumption balance in these micro units, whether in agriculture or in the craft sector, would become mobile and disrupt the existing balance. Disrupting the optimum land-peasant match in agricultural production was not a desirable situation.

The timar system also aimed to serve the state for the cavalymen who were given land to operate. For this reason, the ability of the cavalryman to fulfill his duties was subject to the control of rulers such as kadi, banner lord (sancakbeyi) and grand seigneur (beylerbeyi). In addition to this control, the fief lands promoted (growing) with service to the state, the first amount of land (kılıç) acquired by the father when the fief was passed to the children passed to the children, and the lands gained through promotion were returned to the state.<sup>23</sup> Thus, both the cavalryman and the children, whose timar lands would be transferred to them in the event of their father's death, were aware that their timar lands and income would only come from the services they provided to the state. The most obvious example of serving the state was the practice of taking an annual income from a cavalryman from his fief if he did

<sup>21</sup> For example, in the republican period of the Roman Empire (before 27 BC), peasants paid taxes corresponding to about 10% of their production. By the 6<sup>th</sup> century, this rate had reached 33%. In addition to taxes, the peasants also paid rent to the landlord. The situation was no different in Russian feudalism. For example, during the reign of Peter I (1672-1725), the total tax burden of the Russian peasant was around 64% of the wheat produced by the households. As in the previous feudal periods of Japan, even in Meiji (1852-1912) Japan, the peasants bore the weight of the tax burden. Whether the landlord paying the tax or the farmer paying the rent, this rent usually amounted to 45% to 60% of the crop. In medieval England, peasants were subject to a large number of taxes, taking into account the tithe, manor taxes, and feudal obligations to the lord, and considering that they had to save seeds for the next season. Seed reserved for the following year was equivalent to the consumption of 25% of the next season's harvest. Other obligations mentioned above also brought an extra burden of around 25-30%. (Harman, 2009: 91; Milward & Saul, 2012: 337; Küçükcalay & Koyuncu, 2024; Polk, 2012: 30).

<sup>22</sup> Although there are many studies on this subject, it has been determined that the tax burden in these villages is around 20% of the income of the villagers in the examinations made on the Alpu Village of Eskişehir and the five villages in Konya Akşehir and the five villages in the hinterland of İzmir (Küçükcalay & Efe, 2009: 245-279; Küçükcalay & Koyuncu, 2016: 171-228).

<sup>23</sup> In order for a villager to be a fief owner and for a timar owner to grow, its usefulness to the state was essential. In fact, in the timar system, it was forbidden for a reaya to own a fief, but this rule was violated for those who served in wars. The rule for getting a fief and being promoted was similar among the Janissaries. For example, in an important record dated 1577, it was clearly stated that "if the janissary troop demands progress, they will be entitled to demand progress if they conquer a province and show self-righteousness". For example, while it was stated in the history of Peçevi that the promise of timar to the soldiers during the conquest of Budin during the escalation of the war increased the success of the soldiers in the war, Koçi Bey stated that timar was not given to those who did not see their usefulness. Companionship of a soldier in war, bringing useful (language) captives, bringing news from the enemy's homeland, conquering the fort, guiding the expedition, bringing news from the enemy army, supplying materials for the campaign ammunition, helping the transport, following the enemy, repairing the castle, Bringing the flag from the hand of an unbeliever on a horse, keeping an unbeliever on a horse alive, and similar services could be reasons for progress (Özünü, 2010: 239-240) The mentioned book of mühimme was given by Özünü as MD. C. 30, 223/518.



not actively participate in the war (Tabakoğlu, 2018: 317). Thus, the cavalryman could not earn an income without serving the state.

Another purpose on which all these measures were based was to prevent the formation of wealth-based classification, poverty and practices such as begging within the Ottoman social structure. In Europe, in the Russian, Japanese and Chinese feudal periods, poverty and poverty, which were the main problems of societies, did not occur, and there were no institutions such as begging.<sup>24</sup> Depending on the requirements of the economy, a flexible classification was accepted (ruling-administered) and the transition between classes was prohibited, but the thought of a classification based on neither blood nobility nor wealth was not in the minds of the Ottoman rulers (Tabakoğlu, 2005: 48). With the transitions between classes, it was left flexible depending on certain rules.

### 3.2. Economic and Financial Advantages of Timar

The timar system had positive economic and financial contributions to the Ottoman Empire. As a matter of fact, the timar system was effective in issues such as ensuring full employment and maximizing agricultural production, establishing efficiency in tax collection and budgeting, contributing to the nutrition of large cities by ensuring self-sufficiency of the people. It's also preventing the accumulation of land in certain hands as a production factor.

The first economic aim of the timar system was the maximization of production, especially in the production of food commodities, by ensuring full employment of land and labor factors. In an economic environment where productivity is low and difficult to increase, commercial transportation is expensive and technology is primitive, and in an era where the belief in zero total economy<sup>25</sup> maintains its existence, all the attention of the state is to ensure the continuity of existing production, sustainability of close-equal distribution relations, not falling below a level of welfare that can ensure the livelihood of the people. In this way, the feeding problem of the big cities and the central army could be solved. For this, it was necessary to achieve the best level of matching of population and land, in other words, to reach a nearly full employment level in both.

Reaching full employment increased the tax revenues of the state and financed both the expenses of the central government and the cavalrymen stationed in the provinces. It was this purpose of achieving full employment that the peasants in the timar lands were stripped of the land they had saved for three years without cultivating it, and that they could not leave their lands, or that if they left, they were subject to a heavy tax under the çift bozan tax (Arslan, 2018: 198). Another derivative aim was to prevent ceding groups from causing social turmoil.

Another positive economic effect of the timar was that it provided efficiency in tax maximization and in reducing the burden of the central budget. The financial aspect of the timar was so important. H. İnalçık presented the farmer family in the Ottoman Empire as the most important unit of agriculture and taxation system, as in many medieval states (İnalçık, 1959: 583). According to M. Genç, the grooming system, which emerged as an original and successful basis for keeping a large and powerful state alive, in an agricultural economy where transportation opportunities are limited, financial-bureaucratic organization and methods are insufficient, and a very small part of the national product participates in cash exchange. It was the first and most important of the phases of Ottoman financial methods. In fact, the timar system represented an important financial solution in the face of the difficulty of transferring,

<sup>24</sup> For example, while M. Genç gave the ratio of begging to the total population as 10% in France and England in the 17th and 18th centuries, he stated that the same figure was only 0.01% in Istanbul. According to Genç, in a census in 1736, there were only 322 non-Muslim beggars in Istanbul, and it was understood that 70% of them were poor enough to beg. According to Genç, the reason for this was that the Ottoman Empire, in the first place, adopted the land ownership in a controlled manner on agricultural lands and operated the timar system (Genç, 2016: 13-14).

<sup>25</sup> The perception of zero-sum economy is a perception formed by believing that it is not possible to increase the national income of the country, and therefore, for one person to become rich, others must become poorer (Küçükkalay, 2019: 155-156)

converting into money, collecting and distributing tax revenues, most of which were collected in kind (from the product), to the officials from there (Genç, 2013: 95).

One of the two main problems of tax collection in a pre-capitalist society was the difficulty in establishing and operating the organization to collect the tax, and the other was the case that the tax collection cost was greater than the tax revenue collected if tax collection was done centrally. Moreover, privatization of tax collection was not possible in the whole of a large empire, and tax farmers were causing an additional cost. In societies dominated by pre-capitalist relations of production, it was not possible to collect land rent or tax in cash, since the use of money was not common. Under the conditions of that day, it also seemed difficult to transport the products collected in kind to the market, convert them into money and distribute them as salaries to the soldiers and officers of the central state. Even if the central state managed to collect taxes in kind, the market conditions that could convert these taxes into cash were not developed (Ayдын, 2001: 66-67).

As the only way to overcome these problems, the Ottomans introduced the timar and implemented this regime until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the timar system, the agricultural tax,<sup>26</sup> which constitutes the overwhelming part of the GNP and the national tax revenue, was collected at the source and at the lowest cost, tax avoidance was minimized, and the collected taxes were used to finance the cavalry army, which was the most important expense item. The feeding and maintenance costs of the hundreds of thousands of cavalry soldiers were also provided by the groomers scattered across the country. Low tax collection costs helped to keep tax rates low.

Another economic effect of the timar system was that it prevented the concentration of lands as a production factor and therefore the deterioration of the balance established in the economic field. Although there was no elite class in the Ottoman Empire, there was no significant pressure for the concentration of the lands. Since there was no symbiotic relationship between the central authority and bureaucrats in the direction of the continuity of the central authority, as in the Roman Empire, the European Middle Ages, Russia and Japan, there was no class in the Ottoman Empire that would keep such pressure alive. The Ottomans' way of raising bureaucrats and arranging their relations with the state did not allow this.

In the timar system, the first practice that prevented the concentration of agricultural lands in certain hands over time was that the timar lands, which grew with new additions, were not transferred to the sons of the cavalryman with these increases in the event of the death of the cavalryman, but was transferred in its original form, called the sword. In this way, it was not possible for a cavalryman fief to be inherited from father to son as a family property, to grow in various ways over generations, and to form a regional lineage and land nobility.

Another practice that prevented the accumulation of agricultural lands in the hands of certain individuals was the frequent change of hands of fief holders. In particular, the fiefs (zeamet) and estates of the grand viziers and pashas changed owners every two or three years, and the timar owners were prevented from establishing close ties with both their lands and the people of the region. (Barkan, 1980: 898). In fact, H. İnalçık indirectly emphasized that the timar system prevented the concentration of lands in the hands of certain classes, by expressing that agricultural lands had fallen into the hands of the aristocracy with the deterioration of the Ottoman timar system towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (İnalçık, 1941: 240-241). M. Genç, on the other hand, stated that the problems that would arise if

<sup>26</sup> The only study on this subject is the work of Ö. Lütfi Barkan. According to Barkan's calculations, a total tax revenue of 537.929.006 piaster was recorded in the 1527-28 budget. Accordingly, it was determined that 49% of the total tax revenues in Rumeli, Anatolia, Karaman, Zülkadriye, Rum, Diyarbekir, Aleppo, Damascus and Egypt were at the disposal of timars and foundations (12% for foundations, 37% for timars). In other words, 37,512 timars save 37% of the total tax revenues when the Egyptian province is excluded, and 49.9% when it is included (Barkan, 1953: 243; Barkan, 1952: 251-329).

agricultural lands became private property, as in the capitalist system, did not occur in the Ottoman fief regime.<sup>27</sup>

The prevention of the sale, transfer, dedication, donation and inheritance of the entire timar land and the people (reaya) farms distributed to the peasants also allowed the lands to be operated by peasant families in small units. The measures taken to prevent the cavalymen from gaining lands and positions at the expense of the central authority and not forming a separate land aristocracy, and the renewal of their timar certificates in the sultan's changes, on the one hand, reminding the cavalryman that they are a state official, and on the other hand, the continuity of the system by controlling the timar lands and preventing the agglomeration of the lands in certain hands. was being done (Tabakoğlu, 2018: 317-318). The state's greatest policy in this regard was its tight control over the factors of production, including the land (Genç, 2007: 526-529).

### 3.3. Military Advantages of Timar

The third group of advantages offered by the timar system to the Ottoman Empire were those of a military nature. This regime served the state to have a mounted cavalry class ready for war, to provide military organization in the provinces, to provide timar cavalymen and equip them with war vehicles, and to partially put the army-nation mentality into practice.

Ö. L. Barkan and M. Akdağ emphasized that the main purpose of the timar system was military, and although the regime had other aims, its basic logic was based on this. For example, Akdağ stated that there were discussions on this issue and that the organization could be considered as military since a significant part of those who received some taxes from the reaya instead of salary in return for their services were indebted to fulfilling their military duty (Akdağ, 1945: 419; Barkan, 1980: 726). Clerks, religious officials, judges, etc., by means of grooming. Although income allocations were made to civil servants such as civil servants in return for their salaries, it could be said that the main purpose of the timar system was to feed soldiers for expeditions. The demand for military service, even in the early periods when the state recognized the wide disposition rights of local people, pointed to this (Acun, 2002: 899).

With the application of timar, the Ottoman Empire was able to finance this army by keeping the cavalry army (the cavalry army) required by the times constantly ready. In return for the revenues collected from the timar areas, the duty of the cavalryman was to equip the soldiers with war tools such as horses, weapons, shields, spears and swords in proportion to their income and put them into the service of the central army in times of war. This is why it was important for agricultural lands to be fully employed and to collect taxes without interruption. Thanks to the timar system, the Ottomans were able to feed a cavalry army with a significant number of soldiers without any problems and use it in times of war.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> M. Genç says on this subject: "In other words, the logic of the system is to ensure that all agricultural lands and all the villagers living on it carry out their production activities without interruption. This was a system that kept agricultural production at the highest possible level under technological conditions in the field of macroeconomics. Here, of course, we are faced with a different system than when land is the subject of private property. The mechanisms that would occur if the capitalist bourgeois class owned land as its private property would not work here. Under the conditions of capitalism, the fertility of the soil and its ability to be a source of capital accumulation in the long run are of course more. But the risks and dangers are also very high." (Genç & Özvar, 2021: 66).

<sup>28</sup> For example, in İdris-i Bitlisi's *Heşt Bihişt*, he estimated the Anatolian cavalry army in 1473 at around 20,000 and the Rumelian army at around 24,000. İnalçık stated that around 1475 there were 22,000 cavalry in Rumeli and 17,000 in Anatolia, and the number of cavalry was 40,000 a hundred years later and 50,000 in 1503. In the official records dated 1527-1528, Barkan states that the number of timar holders in the Ottoman Empire was 37,521 (9,563 of them were citadels), while the number of cavalry with timar was around 70,000-80,000. In the Sofyalı Ali Code of 1653 (İnalçık states that this date should not be 1560-1580), this figure is given as 118,135 in 56,089 timars in 26 states. The same number is stated as 100,000 in the Ayn Ali pamphlet and this number is repeated by Hezarfen as well. According to Marsigli, there were more than 3,000 zeamet and more than 51,000 timars throughout the country in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The number of provincial soldiers here was 126,000 (İnalçık, 2013: 112; İnalçık, 2012: 169; Ayn Ali Efendi, 2021: 32-34; Tabakoğlu, 2018: 320).

It was also a fact that the timar system had organizational and managerial contributions spread throughout the country. These tens of thousands of military class members, large and small, representing an army scattered to the furthest corners and suburbs of the country and spread over a multi-religious and multi-cultural country, in the state-owned powers such as maintaining public order and collecting taxes, played an important role in the establishment and development of the social order and political structure of the regions. they were playing (Barkan, 1980: 875). Although the cavalrymen did not have a role assigned to them in the political administration, they did not have some duties. With Timar, the Ottoman State had formed administrative cadres representing the central authority even in the farthest village. However, timar owners were not the only representatives of the central state in the provinces. The timar owners were kept under the watchful eye of the kadi, who ensured that they did not violate their rights and fulfill their duties in their interactions with the direct producers. This brought the distinction between legal practices and administrative practices (İslamoğlu İnân, 1987: 103).

For example, the chief administrator in a timar region was the grand seigneur. He was responsible for giving the timars, preparing the army, and appointing and promoting the timar owners, but the kadis in the provinces and the treasurers who carried out the affairs of the center were directly subordinate to the central administration. Thus, a system of administration was established in the states that balanced each other (İnalçık, 1995: 550). The timar owners were also included in this system.

As an administrative institution, the timar system represented the sultan's executive power in the provinces, from the grand seigneur to the cavalryman. Cavalrymen had some managerial duties, albeit limited. As they formed a kind of police force responsible for the protection of the people in the rural areas, they also played an important role in the collection of taxes allocated as timar and the implementation of the laws of miri lands (İnalçık, 2003: 121). The revenues of agricultural lands and the number of soldier (cebelu) that had to be taken in times of war were directly proportional. As the income obtained by the cavalryman from the land increased, the number of soldiers he had to supply would also increase. Although this situation changed over time, the linear relationship between the two never changed (Emecen, 1993: 188-189).

With the Timar system, the Ottoman Empire had also implemented the army-nation logic. This logic, which was adopted in the history in the states where private property was followed in agricultural lands, could not be operated. Because, as the lands were accumulated in certain hands, the people who got richer were reluctant to participate and finance the war in person. In cases where armies were formed from the people, the production structure of the country was deteriorating. This pointed to a kind of scissor gap. When professional armies were established, a gap came into play, which was the difficulty in controlling and financing professional armies. In the feudal property system, the nobles, who were supposed to support the central state militarily, avoided giving this support from time to time because the power of the center was weak. The Ottomans, on the other hand, succeeded in creating the latter from the common people, by establishing a fine balance between the professional army (janissaries) and the cavalryman. Young people, who were interested in their daily life in normal times, were eager to enroll in the cavalry army in order to benefit from the benefits of war in wartime.

#### 4. Conclusion

In pre-industrial states, six types of ownership were applied to agricultural lands: (1) state ownership, (2) private ownership, (3) public ownership, (4) aristocratic ownership, (5) foundation ownership, and (6) state-private ownership (miri). The first five of these were used in ancient Greek city-states and the Roman Empire, in medieval Europe, in civilizations such as Russia, Japan, and China, while miri land ownership and the timar system were used only in the Ottoman Empire.

Although property types other than miri property have some advantages in obtaining maximum product from agricultural lands, collecting taxes and employing the peasant class on these lands, they have not been able to prevent the emergence of certain problems in practice. For example, when state ownership of agricultural lands is in question, problems such as providing and organizing the labor to

produce on these lands, collecting taxes and transporting the products to the market come to the fore, in cases where private ownership is applied, the most fundamental problem is that the lands are concentrated in certain hands and the people become landless. The concentration of agricultural lands, which is most clearly seen in the Roman Empire, fueled poverty, insufficient production and famines over time, while the political unity of the states was also threatened by peasant rebellions. In the aristocratic property type, where agricultural lands were in the hands of the nobles, those working on these lands had to live a life within the wage and tax range, at a minimum subsistence level. This type of ownership was widely practiced in medieval Europe, Russia (1650-1917), and for almost 1000 years after the history of Japan.

The miri land ownership and the timar system implemented on these lands, which the Ottoman State began to implement immediately after its foundation and expanded over time, were an agricultural land ownership system specific to the Ottoman State that prevented the problems caused by other types of ownership. With the miri land ownership and timar system, the Ottomans achieved three groups: political-social, economic-financial and military. Unlike other pre-industrial states, these advantages ensured that the problems in agricultural production of the Ottoman State were minimized. Some of these advantages also existed in other pre-industrial states, but since they did not show integrity, they could not prevent the economic structure from creating problems.

In the land ownership regime implemented in the feudal periods of Russia or Japan and in the feudalism implemented in the European Middle Ages, the political authorities aimed to finance a mounted military army, collect taxes from agricultural production and provide employment for peasant classes in the agricultural sector with the property and land management systems they implemented. However, unlike the Ottoman timar system, the fact that the management of agricultural lands was freed from state control and left to the aristocratic classes and the right to own agricultural lands was given to these aristocratic classes prevented the realization of economic goals such as establishing economic justice, ensuring the livelihood of the people and producing basic consumer goods for the people. Moreover, the abandonment of land ownership to the aristocrats also paved the way for the strengthening of centrifugal elements that would threaten the political power of the central authority and threaten the central authority.

These advantages, which are shown in detail in Graph 2, served the main purposes of ensuring maximum production in the agricultural sector, employing almost all of the population residing in rural areas and ensuring their economic livelihood, collecting maximum tax revenue from agriculture, which is the largest sector of the economy, preventing social chaos, collecting tax revenues at the lowest costs, meeting the food needs of large cities, preventing the concentration of agricultural lands in certain hands, keeping a large cavalry army ready during wars and preventing social unrest. Therefore, except for exceptional periods, the concentration of agricultural lands, which were the most important production factor in the Ottoman Empire, in certain hands, the peasant class rebelling for economic reasons and threatening the political system, the poverty of the city dwellers as in cities such as London and Paris of the period, and the need for a large fiscal organization to collect taxes did not arise.

The most important conclusions of this article are that the Ottoman State's preferred miri land ownership and the timar system implemented on these lands were original practices and, unlike other systems, had significant advantages for the continuity of the economic and political structure. Indeed, in the miri property system, although the ownership of agricultural lands was theoretically in the hands of the state, in practice these lands were treated as if they were the peasants' own property and were accepted as such by the peasants. Although the inclusion of agricultural lands in state ownership is a known practice in world history, the Ottomans added a psychological element to the system by minimizing the disadvantages of state ownership. This psychological element was that the peasants viewed agricultural lands as their own property and the system was operated as if private ownership was being implemented.



Another advantage of the Miri land ownership and the tımar system was that, with the methods developed, it developed precautions for every possible point of the system that could deteriorate and contributed to the continuity of the political and economic structure of the state. For this reason, the problems that emerged in pre-industrial empires did not occur in the Ottoman State, with some exceptions. Although other states in the world had some goals, they were inadequate in repairing the problematic aspects of the system. In this context, the Ottoman State was able to get rid of these problems to a large extent by controlling the most important production factor, land, with Miri property and by operating these lands with an original method such as tımar.

The contribution of this study to the field of economic history is the emphasis on the fact that the Ottoman State had a long life, prioritized the welfare of its subjects, had no widespread peasant rebellions in society, was not subject to a sharp class division, did not concentrate the most important factor of production, land in certain hands, did not experience widespread problems in feeding large cities, was certain of the power of the central authority, and was able to keep a large cavalry army ready. Another contribution of this study is that the Ottomans used a method of agricultural production in accordance with their religion and worldview, with the tımar system, which was not applied in any other state, on lands based on state ownership, and prevented possible problems.

This study, although it falls outside its purpose and the problem it tries to solve, also contains some hidden suggestions for the agricultural sectors of modern economies of the post-industrial era. In post-industrial economies, the surrender of agricultural lands to private ownership causes these lands to be subject to development, agricultural lands to be divided and reduced, speculation to be made on these lands, the composition and quality of agricultural production to focus on profit and income maximization rather than needs, and the quality of agricultural lands to not be improved. There are experiences to be learned from history on this subject.

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