

Chapter Three

Claiming Property II: Patterns of Agricultural-Property Registration in the *Esas-ı Emlak* register

This chapter moves beyond the immediate vicinity of the village and its structures examined in Chapter Two in order to investigate questions of agricultural-property tenure in the Hebron rural region. It examines the size of landholdings in the Hebron district and the cumulative amounts of individuals' landholdings, with the goal of understanding the socioeconomics of the region. It also analyzes the ways in which agricultural properties were claimed and registered by individuals and villages, in order to identify patterns and characteristics of rural land tenure. The findings presented here for the Hebron district suggest that accepted scholarly understanding of Palestinian village economy and patterns of land tenure in the late-Ottoman era is in need of revision. The *Esas-ı Emlak* reveals that property tenure in rural Hebron was characterized not only by small plots and small landholders, but also by communal landholdings, and by large parcels and large landowners.

This chapter challenges the widely accepted idea that the rural economy in the mountainous regions, where the majority of Palestinians resided, was universally subsistence-based and characterized by small landholdings. It rectifies a common