

into question conventional theories about the size of rural landholdings in the mountainous regions. The notion that they were small has continued to be influential.⁴⁵⁶ As has been shown in Chapters Two and Three, however, most individuals (and families) in Hebron's villages owned more than one plot of land and although we have seen that a number of villages appear to have had fewer than 50 dunams available for each of its residence owners, other villages both small, like Sar'a, and large like Dura, had enough to disburse to each residence holder hundreds of dunams. While Hebron's villages were larger in size and fewer in number than in other mountain districts, such as Nablus, the weight of evidence now compels us to re-examine current understandings throughout Palestine.

This study has also raised a number of questions which call for more research. Prominent among them are, what was the scope and geographical extent of the *şemsiyye* commissions, and how influential were they in bringing about land auctions and sales of large land-tracts in Palestine? When more is known about these commissions, it may be possible, for example, to more precisely understand the strategy of *en bloc* registrations which were seen in so many of Hebron's villages.

Finally, this study has emphasized that the possession of a tapu certificate was not the sole means of proving ownership of property in the Ottoman Empire in the years

⁴⁵⁶ Doumani (1995), for example, argues "...in the highlands of Palestine, where small landholdings prevailed and where the average male peasant could expect to inherit a piece of land, the proceeds of which could provide a living for himself and his family." (157).