

Land was the basis of livelihood and the source of wealth and prosperity for the villagers of Deir Ghassaneh. The size of the village's lands was the basis of power and prestige for the village as a whole vis-a-vis other villages. The protection of the natural resources of the village, i.e., cultivated fields, water resources, and wooded lands, were the responsibility of the village as a whole, and not only the responsibility of its owners. Whether land was communally owned (musha') or individually owned (mulk) the village had the right to object if some of the village land was alienated to villagers from outside the village. (This was the case with lands belonging to the 'Abed clan who were driven out of Deir Ghassaneh after a dispute with the Barghouthi clan. After leaving the village to reside elsewhere, the 'Abed family tried to sell their lands in Deir Ghassaneh to villagers from a neighbouring village. The inhabitants of Deir Ghassaneh were mobilized against such an act of alienating village land to "strangers" and the transaction was stopped.) Normally, the owner of the adjacent land had the privilege or right of buying it, before the sale was allowed to others in the village or to "strangers". This right was called haq al-shuf'a (the right of neighbourhood). Indirectly, the village community was considered the corporate owner of the village as a whole.

This perhaps explains the relative solidification of the village land, i.e., the village lands surrounded its core of built-up area. However, due to a number of complex reasons, which will be discussed below, every village had a share of its lands located within lands belonging to other villages, referred to as detached areas. (According to Granot "the exact meaning of detached areas is that within the boundaries of one village are to be found stretches belonging to owners who reside in another village" (Granot, 1952: 166)).

As figure 3.6 illustrates, the village of Deir Ghassaneh owned a number of detached pieces of land in a number of villages; Kefr ed-Dik, Brokin, Kefr 'Ain and, Beit Rima. It also owned some in Khirbet Mismar, Deir Ballut and stretches of land in the coastal plane (not shown on figure 3.6). However, the only village which had land