

There is evidence to suggest that the border between these two villages was either uncertain – despite its de-facto delineation in the *Esas-ı Emlak*—or in dispute. Several of the parcels designated as Sa’ir holdings were in areas that village historian al-Shuyukhi identifies as belonging to Shuyukh’s lands.²⁸⁸ Additionally, Hebron sharia court records indicate at least one border dispute involving Shuyukhis. In the summer of 1911, eight Halhuli villagers appeared in court to appoint an agent to represent them in an inter-village land-dispute case against Mustafa b. ‘Ali b. Hassan al-Hajj of Shuyukh and his associates (*rufaqqātuhu*) from the village. Regarding these other men, the court record states only that “their names are known”, so it seems that this dispute had been going on for some time.

The conflict was over a borderlands area estimated to be sixty feddans in size, hundreds of dunams. This land, known as Arḍ Wardān, is located within a larger area known as al-‘Arrūb. It was bordered by Halhul lands to the south; musha lands of Shuyukh and musha lands of Sa’ir to the east; Bayt Ummar’s lands to the north; and to the west were the village of Bayt Ummar and musha lands of Halhul.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ These are Marāḥ Za’frān, Dayr Abu Ghanaym, Khallat Ilyās, Wadi Ḥarīq, Wadi Ihyāsh, and Khallat al-Qamīḥa. (See the map and listing of village land areas in al-Shuyukhi, pp. 22-24.) It is interesting to note that the two Jewish settlements established much later on Shuyukh’s lands, in 1983 and 1999 on al-Za’fran and Qanān Inyās, respectively, are in or adjacent to these areas which were registered to Sa’ir in 1876 under the names of Shuyukhi landowners, that is, in borderland areas where there appears to have existed a dispute over ownership rights between the two villages.

²⁸⁹ HR 22 / 15 / 32 (6 Sha’ban 1329 / 2 August 1911) The lands in question are clearly seen in Abu Sitta, sheets 458/C3 and 459/A3-B3. As per Land Code reforms, these disputes were no longer heard in the sharia court; we know of them because land-disputants continued to be allowed to appear in court to appoint a representative (*wakil*) to present their case to the tapu official or the Administrative Council.