

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION TO THE LEVANT DURING THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

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The original chronological divisions of the Middle Bronze Age in the Levant centred on historical synchronisms between the southern Levant and Egypt, and this framework was extended to the northern Levant. In recent years, however, distinct though related chronologies for these two regions have emerged. This is largely due to the different sets of relationships that both regions of the Levant had with neighbouring cultures, which is best exemplified by the regional coverage provided by two of the primary historical sources for these regions: the Execration Texts (for the south) and the Mari Letters (for the north). Limited contact between the northern Levant and Egypt has meant that inferences made about the history and archaeology of the Levant that are, for example, attributed to 'Hyksos' dominance during the MB III are mostly of relevance to the southern Levant (if not to only the southern part of this region). Indeed, the northern Levant was predominantly influenced by historical events in Anatolia and Mesopotamia which included cultural and military incursions during the first half of the second millennium. Differences in the archaeological assemblages of the north and south are also cited as a basis for the adoption of different chronologies, although it can be argued that in many respects a cultural *koiné* was evident across the Levant by the start of the MB II.¹ Cyprus, however, did not share in this cultural *koiné*, and Middle Cypriot material culture was largely the product of endogenous developments, despite maritime contact with the Levant.

While challenges are faced in the adoption of a single chronological schema that adequately represents the historical and archaeological development of the Levant as a whole, to a large extent during the Middle Bronze Age the archaeology of the Levant, not including Cyprus, can now be discussed within an historical framework. This is due to the fact that sources, such as the Mari Letters, provide sufficient insights into Levantine culture to aid

¹ The terminology adopted in this treatment follows that used in recent treatments (e.g. Ilan 1995), abandoning the terms MB IIA–IIC to refer to the Middle Bronze Age since the old MB I is now regularly referred to as the EB IV.

our interpretation of the archaeological record, and vice versa. In fact, the Middle Bronze Age is the first archaeological period for which sources illuminate the history of both the northern and southern Levant (Klengel 1992: 39–83). It is also the first period for which the ethnicity of the Levant's inhabitants is revealed through personal names. The majority of individuals can be identified as ethnically Amorite (Akkadian *Amurru*/Sumerian MAR.TU 'Westerners'), a west Semitic group who are first identified in Mesopotamian sources at the end of the third millennium BC (see Gzella, Ch. 2 above). This cultural ascription is facilitated by references to kings, tribes, and historical figures that are identified by their Amorite names and customs in both the Execration Texts and Mari Letters. Correspondence both temporally and regionally between references in these texts, most evidently with the Execration Texts, permits the suggestion that Middle Bronze Age material culture should be predominantly identified as Amorite. While the process associated with the emergence of Amorite material culture, as wholly distinct from the urban EB IV culture that preceded it, is more difficult to identify in the northern Levant, the stark contrast that accompanies the shift between EB IV and MB I material culture in the south, for example with the reintroduction of fortified urban centres, serves as the clearest basis for identifying Middle Bronze Age material culture as that of the Amorites, as suggested by the names of Amorite rulers in the Execration Texts during the MB I. During the second half of the Middle Bronze Age, however, Hurrians constituted an increasing proportion of the Levantine population, particularly in the north. Unfortunately, it is impossible to identify the Cypriot population with a historically attested ethnic group owing to the absence of references to it in textual sources, but there is no basis for asserting the emergence of a new population during this period. In light of historical sources, archaeological studies focus primarily on three issues for the Middle Bronze Age: ethnicity, political organization, and the historical events that marked the transitions between each phase of the Middle Bronze Age. These are treated here within the historical-archaeological framework of Middle Bronze Age Levantine chronology.

MB I: THE RISE OF AMORITE KINGDOMS (c.1900–1700 BC)

The central question regarding the onset of the MB I (c.1900 BC) on the Levantine mainland concerns the relationship between the emergence of the Amorites and the ethnic associations of MB I material culture.² While settlement in the southern Levant during the preceding EB IV consisted predominantly of dispersed rural communities, the archaeological record of the northern Levant reveals that the transition between the EB IV and MB I was not dramatic. In nearly all respects the material culture of the northern Levant during the MB I appears to have evolved directly out of the preceding EB IV culture, which is most evident at Ebla (Tell Mardikh). Thus the emergence of the Amorites during the early second millennium was probably the result of a gradual process that had already begun in

² This work adopts the very low chronology as described by Manfred Bietak (2002) for Egypt and the Levant. Recent evidence from Mesopotamia suggests a similar downward shift of the chronology (Gasche et al. 1998). Indeed, whatever schema is chosen, it is necessary to emphasize that the same chronology must be adopted for both Egypt and Mesopotamia, as these chronologies are linked via the Middle Bronze Age stratigraphy of Hazor, which is identified in the Mari Letters (Ben-Tor 2004).

the northern Levant during the late third millennium. The identification of the material culture of the Levant as Amorite during the MB I is based, therefore, on textual sources. Nevertheless, a number of elements of the cultural assemblage of the Middle Bronze Age reveal the crystallization of Amorite identity, the consolidation of their political power, and the gradual spread of their culture southwards over the course of the MB I. Indeed, the rapid pace of cultural developments in the south during the MB I has obscured thus far distinct traces of an indigenous non-Amorite population during this period, and this has resulted in the widely held notion that the indigenous population emulated Amorite elite practices to the point of effectively becoming archaeologically indistinguishable. Nevertheless, the complicated nature of this process, which was undoubtedly protracted, will require closer study in the future.

Most explanations of the diffusion of Amorite culture have adhered to one of two models: military invasion or economic colonization. The so-called 'Amorite Hypothesis' associated with the work of Kathleen Kenyon suggested that two waves of nomadic warriors, at the beginning and end of the EB IV, swept in from the steppes of Syria across the northern Levant and destroyed major settlements such as Ugarit, Byblos, and Ebla as they moved southwards (Kenyon 1966). More recent models, however, draw upon economic data associated with the arrival of Amorite culture in different parts of the Levant during the Middle Bronze Age (Gerstenblith 1983; Cohen 2002). Although these economic models seek to address the nuances of the archaeological data, it is much more likely that the spread of Amorite culture throughout the Levant from c.1900 to 1700 BC resulted from different social and economic circumstances, which were nevertheless associated with the establishment of Amorite cultural and political centres. Despite their differences, each of these models recognize that the origins of MB I material culture associated with the Amorites are traced back to the northern Levant.

The spread of Amorite culture represents, therefore, a protracted process that resulted in the foundation of Amorite dynasties in the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Egypt from the end of the Ur III period in Mesopotamia (c.1900 BC) until the Amorite takeover of Avaris (c.1640 BC), the capital of the 'Hyksos' during the 15th Dynasty. The identity of Amorite rule at the start of the Middle Bronze Age may be owed to military campaigns by Mesopotamian kings into the northern Levant which began as early as Lugalzagesi (c.2250 BC) but continued through the Akkadian and Ur III periods (Burke 2008). Proponents of the 'Amorite Hypothesis' mistakenly attributed the destruction of settlements connected with these campaigns to Amorite conquests. However, not only do the Amorites seem to have endured these military raids, but the raids may have ultimately contributed to the formation and consolidation of Amorite social and political identity from the EB IV to the MB I. Recent work in the late third-millennium levels of Umm el-Marra in the Jabbul may shed light on the details and chronology associated with the crystallization of Amorite ethnicity.

Dated to the 12th Dynasty, the Berlin group of Egyptian Execration texts reveals that Amorite dynasties ruled a number of southern Levantine towns, such as Ashkelon, Byblos, Ullaza, and 'Irqatum (ancient 'Arqa). However, these texts do not permit the reconstruction of the duration of their rule, kinship affiliations, or territorial control. It is only by virtue of the Mari texts from the 17th century BC (early MB II) that Amorite polities, especially those in the north, are identified as kingdoms. Yamḥad (with Aleppo as its capital), Ugarit, Qatna, and Hazor are among the leading kingdoms of the Levant identified in the Mari Letters at the start of the MB II. Together, textual sources indicate that by the end of the MB I, Amorite

kingdoms (the largest located in the north) dominated the entirety of the Levant from Aleppo to Ashkelon.

Archaeological evidence also supports the identification of these kingdoms. The leading indicator of political organization is the defences employed by these kingdoms (Burke 2008). Historical sources from Mesopotamia from the late third millennium through the first half of the second millennium indicate that long-distance military campaigns into the northern Levant occurred with regularity. In response to these campaigns Amorite rulers adopted a type of defence common to settlements in the Middle Euphrates during the third millennium. Massive earthen ramparts were crowned by thick mud-brick walls, which were supplemented by deep fosses. Together these devices were employed to repel siege machinery, specifically the battering ram (Akkadian *yašibum*) and the siege tower (Akkadian *dimtu*), as attested in the Mari archives. The capitals of Amorite kingdoms were always the largest settlements within their territories, and thus featured the most impressive examples of these features. During the MB I the layouts of large and medium-sized settlements were predominantly elliptical, as at Byblos, Ashkelon, Akko, and Burga. By the start of the MB II an almost entirely orthogonal layout was adopted, as seen at Ugarit, Qatna, Hazor, Dan, and Timnah (Tel Batash). The change in overall layout between these periods reflects the realization that defensibility could be improved by employing straight lengths of wall that were more easily defended from towers and bastions.

This explanation of the military concerns of Amorite kingdoms during the Middle Bronze Age supersedes earlier suggestions which asserted that conflicts between city-states were the primary motivation for the construction of fortifications or, more recently, that this process was predominantly one of conspicuous consumption and peer polity emulation. Although there is only limited evidence for the destruction of Levantine settlements as a result of conflict before the expansion of the Egyptian and Hittite empires in the 16th century BC, the sustained threat posed by Mesopotamian powers such as Assyria and Mari up to the end of the MB II against northern Levantine states like Yamḥad and Qatna required the construction and maintenance of these defences. Since Amorite kingdoms in the south could not rely on northern states as buffers against these threats, similar fortifications were constructed throughout the kingdoms of Byblos, Apum (ancient Damascus), Hazor, and Ashkelon from the MB I to MB II–III. It is also likely, as revealed by Sesostri III's campaign against *Skmm* (i.e. Shechem) mentioned in the Khu-Sebek stele (c.1850 BC), that Egypt posed an occasional threat. Functional reasons dictated, therefore, the investment of large quantities of human resources in the construction of defences throughout the Levant during the Middle Bronze Age. Nevertheless, royal inscriptions from Mesopotamia indicate that the construction process related to the defences of even the largest settlements probably did not last more than a couple of years.

Like the evidence for defensive architecture, the settlement pattern of the MB I reveals a north to south trend for the foundation of new settlements bearing Amorite material culture. The evidence can be divided into two major zones, which correspond to the main trade routes through the Levant: the Levantine coast from Ugarit to Ashkelon, and inland from Aleppo to Hazor. The evidence from the southern Levantine coast consists of the foundation of commercial ports such as Akko and Ashkelon, and the gradual establishment of enclaves east of them along wadi systems leading inland (Cohen 2002). This pattern is remarkably clear due to the resolution afforded by the MB I ceramic sequence from Tel Aphek (Kochavi, Beck, and Yadin 2000).

These settlement patterns appear to have developed as the result of long-distance trade networks. The new ports along the coast of Israel reveal what was probably initially a need for freshwater and foodstuffs for ships from Byblos making their way to Egypt. However, eventually these ports were identified as kingdoms in their own right, probably as demand grew in Egypt for olive oil and wine that could be abundantly produced in the southern Levant (Stager 2001). The items and ceramics found at Avaris and at sites along the Levantine coast suggest that in the MB I Canaanite ships began to transport copper from Cyprus, timber and resins from Lebanon, and wine and oil from Canaan, along with trinkets, to Egypt. The Mari texts provide unequivocal evidence that Alashiya (Cyprus) provided most of the copper needed in the Levant and Mesopotamia in this period, although archaeology on Cyprus has provided little to substantiate this picture. The earliest evidence for the Cypriot goods that accompanied the large quantities of copper to the Levant included Red-on-Black bowls and jugs, White Painted IV–VI jugs and juglets, and, with less frequency, amphorae, zoomorphic vessels, and bowls. Jewellery, scarabs, gold, carnelian, and faience and alabaster vessels were shipped from Egypt. Such Cypriot and Egyptian artefacts were thus deposited in tombs in the southern Levant during the MB I, while Tell el-Yehudiyeh Ware juglets are common to tombs throughout the southern Levant, Egypt, and Cyprus. Tin was also distributed through this network, and accounts for the proliferation of bronze weaponry and tools during the MB I. Foodstuffs such as Nile perch were also sent from Egypt.

The pattern of Amorite settlements along the inland route from Aleppo to Hazor reveals the economic impact of long-distance donkey caravans of the type depicted in the Beni Hasan tombs in Egypt dated to the 19th century BC, and similar caravans mentioned in the Mari texts at the start of the MB II. Tin was undoubtedly one of the major commodities moving southwards, while copper, wool, olive oil, and wine were shipped to Mesopotamia from the northern Levant. In this respect it appears that by the end of the MB I regional specializations are evident in the increasing shipment of surplus of goods to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia. The most prominent of these goods included copper from Alashiya, timber and finished metal goods from the northern and central Levantine coast, olive oil and wine from the southern Levant, and wool and textiles from the inland northern Levant.

A major component of the archaeological record of the MB I consists of burials and their assemblages. MB I Amorite royal burials are attested at Byblos and Ebla, which should be identified as a district capital of Yamḥad at this time. Tombs I to III at Byblos, which were located on the western side of the mound (probably beneath the royal palace), date to the late 19th and early 18th centuries BC. In addition to gold and silver ceremonial weapons like the duckbill axe, mace, and dagger, they included exquisite examples of Middle Kingdom pectoral jewellery demonstrating the interest in traded goods from Egypt. So-called ‘warrior burials’ of the MB I found throughout the Levant and the middle Euphrates region reveal a shared Amorite identity across the region. These burials consist of the interment of a single adult male and his weapons, often a duckbill axe and/or a dagger (Garfinkel 2001). These weapons were markers of social rank, perhaps indicating the role of these individuals as tribal warlords, as suggested in the Egyptian *Tale of Sinuhe*. Conspicuous for their rarity during this period are communal burial chambers, which become common only during the MB II–III. The itinerant nature of the Amorites, who were involved in long-distance trade during the MB I, may be suggested by this mortuary pattern. However, the interaction between Amorite groups arriving in the southern Levant during the early stages of the MB I with local EB IV communities remains to be studied further.

MB II: AMORITE RULE AND AMORITE KOINÉ(C.1700–1600 BC)

As demonstrated foremost by the occurrence of Amorite names, by the start of the MB II Amorite dynasties were established throughout the Levant and Mesopotamia. While it is impossible to determine to what extent dynasties in these two regions may have been consanguine, a shared Amorite identity resulted in the emergence of the first *koiné* culture of the Near East. Rulers throughout these regions appear to have spoken Amorite, although they corresponded with each other in Old Babylonian; they worshipped gods belonging to related pantheons; and they traced their identity to a common ancestry (i.e. the Tidnum), thus satisfying the criteria necessary for identifying them as an ethnic group (Kamp and Yoffee 1980: esp. 98). Despite this shared identity, the Mari texts reveal that Amorite dynasties in the northern Levant and Mesopotamia vied intensely for military supremacy.

During the MB II, fortifications were improved as rectilinear layouts, six-pier gates, and bastions were adopted at newly fortified centres (Burke 2008). These are evident at Ugarit, Qatna, Hazor, Tel Dan, and in the secondary settlements arrayed around these centres. Ashkelon's satellites, which included Yavneh-Yam, Ekron, Timnah, Lachish, Haror, and Tell el-'Ajjul, were fortified for the first time in this period, although many were already settled during the MB I (Cohen 2002). To one extent or another, urban planning must have followed in major settlements such as Qatna and Hazor after the massive efforts required in the construction of their fortifications (Kempinski 1992). An identifiable pattern of fortified settlements around Ashkelon during the MB II, for example, suggests a process of growth related to Ashkelon's consolidation of control over its hinterland following nearly two centuries of economic interaction with its neighbours (Burke 2008). While there is a lack of data for the settlement patterns associated with other Amorite centres which hampers comparisons across the region, it may be surmised that the process witnessed around Ashkelon was simply one of the last examples of Amorite territorial consolidation that occurred during the Middle Bronze Age. Far less evidence, including almost no evidence of fortifications, is available in Cyprus to permit a reconstruction of its political organization during this period.

Contemporaneous with political consolidation, during the MB II a process of settlement infilling began and continued through the MB III. While this process probably took place during the MB I in the northern Levant, it established a dense settlement pattern in the coastal plain of Israel by the end of the MB III. A seven-tier settlement hierarchy can be reconstructed for the Levant in this period (Burke 2008). From largest to smallest these include fortified political centres (e.g. Hazor and Qatna), secondary fortified provincial centres oriented to major political centres (e.g. Lachish), smaller fortified towns (e.g. Timnah), unfortified villages, fortresses (e.g. Burak and Mevorakh), watchtowers (Burke 2007), and farmsteads. While these settlements can be assigned individual size attributes, size is a relative criteria since, for example, Byblos, which was at the top of its settlement hierarchy, was less than 6ha in size while Ekron, which was a satellite of Ashkelon, was 22ha in size during the MB II. A site's role was more significant, therefore, than its size.

The nature of the political organization of the Levantine landscape, which is suggested by the fortifications employed and the settlement hierarchy, is also supported by several additional features. Political centres at the top of the rank-size hierarchy possessed large palaces

with elaborate architecture and masonry, royal burial complexes, and royal statuary. Both royal capitals and their secondary fortified settlements preserve evidence of the palaces (of kings and provincial governors, respectively), cuneiform tablets (evidence of their administrative role), and impressively constructed *mgdôl*-style temples (attesting the existence of a priestly class). The best excavated example of an MB III–III royal palace is found at Qatna. Although royal palaces in the Levant were built on a much smaller scale, they bear architectural similarities to Old Babylonian palaces at Mari and Šubat-Enlil in Mesopotamia. Located within large, well-fortified settlements, these palaces were adorned with grand central courtyards, throne rooms, carefully dressed orthostats and column bases, tiled floors, drainage systems, cedar beams, and plastered walls and floors—all of which suggest the employment of specialized labour. Evidence also exists for the presence of fresco-producing artisans from the Minoan Aegean, who were commissioned to paint elaborate scenes for certain rooms in the palaces of Qatna, Alalakh (modern Tell Atchana), and Avaris, as well as in residences at Kabri and Tell el-Burak. The palace at Qatna, as was no doubt the case at other Amorite capitals, functioned until it was destroyed in the Late Bronze Age (Novák 2004). Although the limited quantity of Old Babylonian texts from Levantine palaces is often compared with the numbers of texts from Mesopotamian sites, the difference is probably due to the limited number originally produced (and is thus relative to the size of the populations of these kingdoms) but is also largely the accident of preservation, since few Levantine sites appear to have been destroyed in conflagrations during the course of the MB II (cf. Alalakh VII).

The royal palace at Qatna, as was probably typical of other royal palaces, featured a subterranean royal burial complex. The conceptual layout of these complexes is effectively that of MB II–III cave burials, which are especially well attested in the southern Levant. The plan consisted of a shaft or entrance from the surface that led down to a central chamber from which doorways led into adjoining chambers. Individuals were laid out on benches, beds, or in niches within these chambers. DNA analysis of approximately 300 individuals interred in the Middle and Late Bronze Age cemetery at Ashkelon confirms the widely held belief that these tombs are those of the extended patriarchal households or, as in the case of Qatna's tombs, the royal household. Many of these tombs, as at Qatna, also continued to function during the Late Bronze Age, suggesting a high degree of cultural continuity between these periods. Faunal remains associated with both the royal and elite burials of patriarchal households reveal the remains of ritual feasting associated with burials customs or celebrations of the dead, if not both.

Palatial complexes at Alalakh (Level VII) and Ebla probably functioned as the residences of provincial governors, since these two sites were known vassals of Yamḥad, the capital of which was Halab (Aleppo). Thus, attempts should be made to distinguish between royal palaces and the residences of governors during the Middle Bronze Age. Palaces at Lachish and Megiddo, for example, should probably also be identified as those of provincial governors rather than those belonging to the rulers of city-states. This interpretation is supported by the collection of texts from Alalakh VII (Wiseman 1953), which reveal the administrative workings of the province of Mukish within the Amorite kingdom of Yamḥad. It is also supported by the discovery of individual collections of Old Babylonian tablets from sites such as Shechem, Gezer, and Hebron, which also possess characteristics of provincial centres. The characteristics shared by royal and provincial capitals have been conflated in the process of identifying city-states in the southern Levant, as opposed to kingdoms as identified

for the northern Levant. Nevertheless, evidence, notably the size of Ashkelon and Hazor, both of which reveal traits of royal capitals, demonstrates the artificial nature of this characterization (Burke 2008). The theoretical framework described by the patrimonial household model provides a clear understanding of the social, economic, and political relationships embedded within this framework of domination (Schloen 2001).

Shared Amorite religious customs are revealed by a common temple type and a shared religious iconography. The so-called *mgdôl*-style temple (Mazar 1992: 162–9), which is attested throughout the Levant by the MB II, is directly descended from the third-millennium temple type, as demonstrated at Ebla. This temple type featured a symmetrical plan with a direct-axis entry way, usually through a portico, that aligned with the dais at the rear of the building. The temple was rectangular in layout, and was longer than it was wide. A few examples featured a wall dividing the interior space, thus creating a tripartite structure, but most examples lack this feature. This temple type established a long tradition of temple construction in the Levant that continued into the Iron Age. Many of the MB II–III structures were renovated during the Late Bronze Age. While their exact function remains unknown, stelae or *masseboth* have been identified at Ebla, Hazor, Gezer, and Shechem, as at Mari. Almost no such evidence exists for cult places in Cyprus during this period.

The Amorite *koiné* that pervaded the Levant is evident among burial customs, temple and house architecture, religious and royal iconography, palatial architecture, and fortification strategies during the MB II. The architecture of large upper-class homes was typified by the Mesopotamian courtyard-style house (Kaplan 1971: 295–6). Many houses also featured vaulted burial chambers built below the house as found at Megiddo, and burial customs were frequently intramural. Common among these were infant jar burials below the floors of houses in the southern Levant, while in the north cooking pots were used to achieve the same end. Where vaulted family tombs could not be built below a house for one or another reason, individuals were often interred extramurally in caves or rock-cut tombs in nearby hillsides. In this respect, these burials were not entirely different from contemporary rock-cut tombs in Cyprus, which were employed for multiple interments presumably of extended family members over many decades.

MB III: *PAX AMORITICA* (c.1600–1530 BC)

Some scholars identify the final stage of the Middle Bronze Age in the southern Levant, the MB III (c.1600–1530 BC), as a distinct phase contemporaneous with the rule of the Hyksos in Egypt because of shared material culture assemblages with Avaris in Egypt, which include among other things Hyksos scarabs. While direct political relationships between the 15th Dynasty and the Amorites of the southern Levant cannot be inferred from this evidence alone, the socioeconomic and political environment in the Levant and the Egyptian Delta, which permitted the rise of an Amorite dynasty at Avaris, was clearly one of considerable peace, prosperity, and flourishing international trade towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age. This is evident in the abundance of traded Cypriot and Mycenaean wares that continued to be deposited in Amorite tombs in this period, and a continuation of the settlement process throughout the Levant that had begun during the MB II. In the highlands of the southern Levant, settlement proliferated during the MB III and a number of sites were fortified for the first time, including Shechem, Shiloh, and Hebron, seemingly after Jerusalem

was fortified, suggesting the consolidation of power throughout this region during this period (Burke 2008).

While it is difficult to reconstruct developments in the settlement pattern in the northern Levant during this period, its wealth is represented in the archaeology of Alalakh and Ebla, both of which were provincial capitals in the kingdom of Yamḥad. These sites reflect the peak of the development of the Amorite *koinéas* reflected in palace and temple architecture, and burial customs. Alalakh also reveals the extent to which Hurrians were becoming a larger portion of the Levant's population. At Alalakh their presence is suggested by the occurrence of Hurrian names in the Alalakh tablets and a unique style of ceramics known as Nuzi Ware.

Although the MB III culture of the southern Levant is often identified as 'Hyksos' because of the role played by Levantine Asiatics in the rise of the 15th Dynasty (Bietak 1997), there is no basis for the identification of a territorial Hyksos state, ruled from Avaris and encompassing the southern Levant or Canaan. Rather, the retreat of the Hyksos to the southern Levant, insofar as it can be identified, simply reveals the socioeconomic relationships of the Amorite refugees. Sharuhēn (Tell el-'Ajjul?), besieged by Ahmose, was not the seat of an independent Hyksos kingdom but the first large and well-fortified settlement along the overland route into Canaan that may have sheltered a large part of this displaced population.

The end of the relatively short-lived *pax Amoritica* was brought about by the campaigns of the Hittite and Egyptian empires which began c.1540 BC and lasted for two or three generations. Archaeological evidence of these events in both regions include destruction levels at nearly thirty major settlements in the southern Levant and settlements such as Alalakh, Ebla,³ Afis, Tuqan, and Kadesh in the northern Levant (Burke 2008). While the relatively limited investment made in fortification construction during the MB III and a reliance on the maintenance of existing systems may have facilitated the collapse of Amorite rule, the dissolution of Amorite kingdoms is more likely to be reflective of the political fragmentation of and growing competition between states that characterized the Late Bronze Age.

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³ P. Matthiae suggests that this destruction should be attributed to Pizikarra of Nineveh, after c. 1524 BC (Matthiae 2006: 85).

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SECTION D

THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE
