

The Canaanite Village: Social Structure of Middle Bronze Age Rural Communities

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The rural sites of the Middle Bronze Age have not received much scholarly attention. A number of sites have been excavated over the years, however, and the accumulating data permits a discussion of the social structure of Middle Bronze Age rural communities. An in-depth examination of the archaeological data, in the light of ethnographic and historical data, suggests that the villages should be interpreted as belonging to the following types: a few villages, exhibiting a surprisingly high standard of living, should be viewed as 'independent' villages. Other villages were 'owned' by a person/family or by an institution. The latter group is divided into two subtypes depending on whether the landlord was present or absent. In the first, poor dwellings were the norm, but one can identify an outstanding structure, greatly surpassing the rest, that hosted the landlord. The second type is characterized by poor standards of living throughout the site, as all the surpluses were sent outside and left the village.

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Roger Moorey

The present paper aims, therefore, to present and discuss the available data concerning this important

Introduction

The Middle Bronze Age has received a great deal of scholarly attention, devoted to various aspects of its (re-)urbanization, chronology, material culture, demography, settlement patterns and processes (e.g. Ilan 1995; Kempinski 1992; Dever 1987; Tubb 1983; Broshi and Gophna 1980; Gerstenblith 1980). The rural sector of this period, however, as for other periods, has not received much direct attention. The attempts to look at this large and important settlement sector have concentrated, at best, on identifying rural sites in surveys, and learning about their settlement patterns and position within the urban system (e.g. Maeir 1997; 2003; Gophna and Beck 1981). Very few studies have attempted to learn about village life at this period through the detailed data available from excavations (a notable exception is Tell al-Hayyat, see Falconer 1994; 1995; Magness-Gardiner and Falconer 1994).

However, a small number of rural sites have been excavated over the years (Fig. 1), mainly for salvage purposes, and the accumulating data enables a preliminary discussion of the nature of the Middle Bronze Age rural settlements.

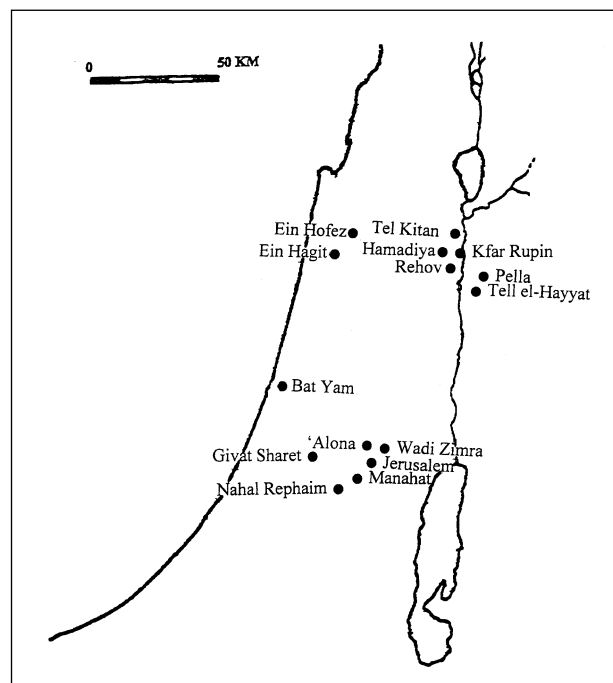


Figure 1. Locations of MB II rural sites.

settlement sector. This will be done in three stages. The first part of the paper will present the data from the various sites. The second part will draw some basic conclusions regarding the architecture and form of the villages, mainly through comparison of the finds from the various sites. The third and main part of the paper will emphasize the archaeological differences, will discuss the social structure and organization of these villages, and briefly comment on their history.

Defining 'rural'

The differentiation of urban and rural sites has received a great deal of attention (e.g. Grossman 1994a; Roberts 1996, 15–19; Van de Mieroop 1997, 10–12, and bibliography there). This is a complex issue and many variables are culturally dependent. Villages should therefore be defined in relation to the towns and cities of the same period. For the pur-

poses of the present paper a rural site is a settlement whose population was relatively small (i.e. a population of dozens to a few hundred or so), and the site size is either small or the occupation density is low. The sites are not only much smaller than the urban centers of the Middle Bronze Age, but they also lack real public buildings (with the exception of temples) and fortifications (they have, at most, a boundary wall of some sort). The sites either lack any evidence of social stratification, or they have evidence for a very limited elite group or dominating family. They lack any indication of real social classes. Specialization was quite limited and the vast majority of the inhabitants were agriculturalists. Trade and other evidence of foreign relations were also limited for the period. As a whole, even a cursory comparison between the settlements discussed here and cities of the Middle Bronze Age will reveal the rural nature of the former.

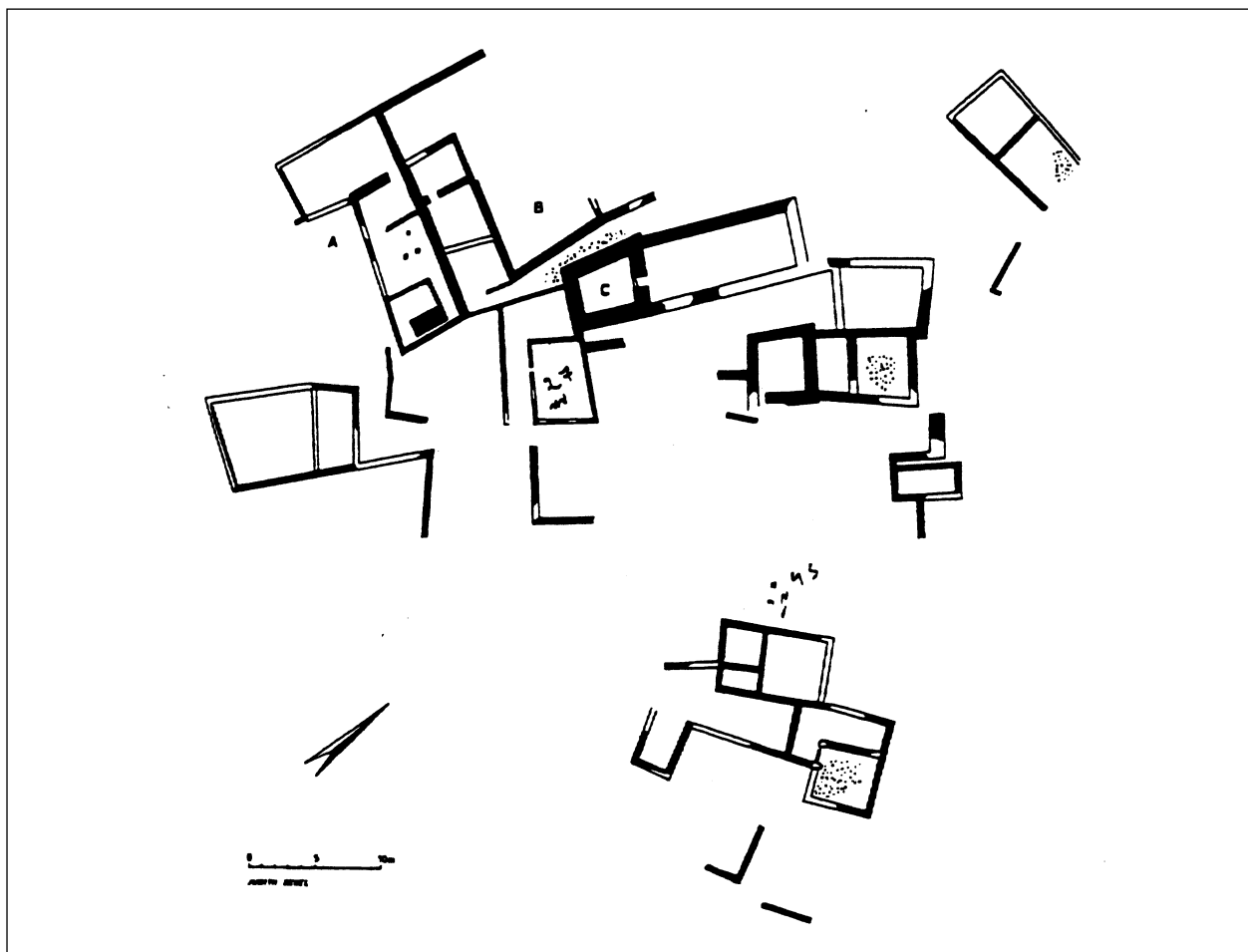


Figure 2. *Kfar Rupin, plan.* From Gophna 1979, 30. Courtesy of Tel Aviv, journal of the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.

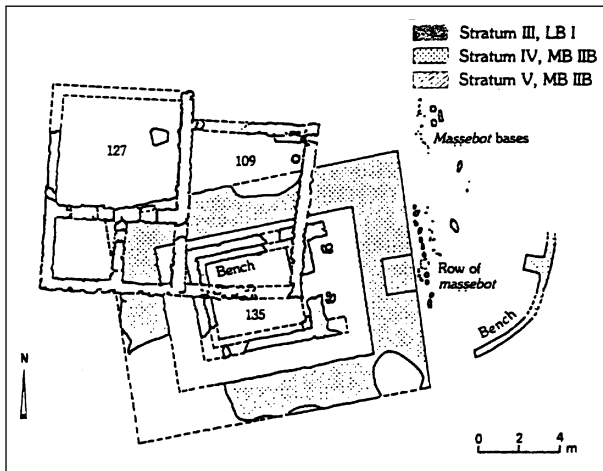


Figure 3. Tel Kitan, plan. From Eisenberg 1993b, 880. Courtesy of Emanuel Eisenberg and the Israel Exploration Society.

The data

The following are rural sites that were excavated on a relatively large scale, therefore offer for discussion sufficient material regarding their form and structure.

Kfar Rupin (Fig. 2). This is a small site of less than one acre, located some 6 km. to the north of Tel Rehov. It was bulldozed, covered by a fishpond, eventually dried, and then intensively surveyed by

R. Gophna (1979). The fact that it was covered by water for a long period of time exposed many walls and enabled a detailed survey, which resulted in the following observations. The buildings were made of mudbricks on stone foundations. The surveyor claimed that the houses followed the plan of the 'oriental courtyard house' (Gophna 1979, 28). At least some of the buildings shared common walls. The average size of the room was 4×4 m., and most of the buildings contained at least one large room. In one of the buildings, stairs, probably leading to an upper floor, were observed, and the surveyor suggested (Gophna 1979, 30) that the "central position and orientation of this building, its rectangular plan and thick walls probably indicates that it was the temple of the village". This identification, however, is far from certain. The plan of this, as well as some other buildings, is composed of a series of rooms (some perhaps served as open courtyards) arranged in a row. The site was probably unwalled.

Tel Kitan (Fig. 3). The site is located in the Beth Shean Vally, some 12 km. north of the city of Beth Shean, and was excavated by E. Eisenberg (1976; 1993b). Not much was published, but there is agreement that this a rural site (e.g. Gophna 1979, 32; Maeir 1997, 218; 2000, 35). One fragmentary MBIIa and two better-preserved MBIIb strata were discovered (Eisenberg 1993b, 794–795). The fragmentary MBIIa strata included only some pits, food refuse, ash and sherds, mainly of cooking pots, stor-

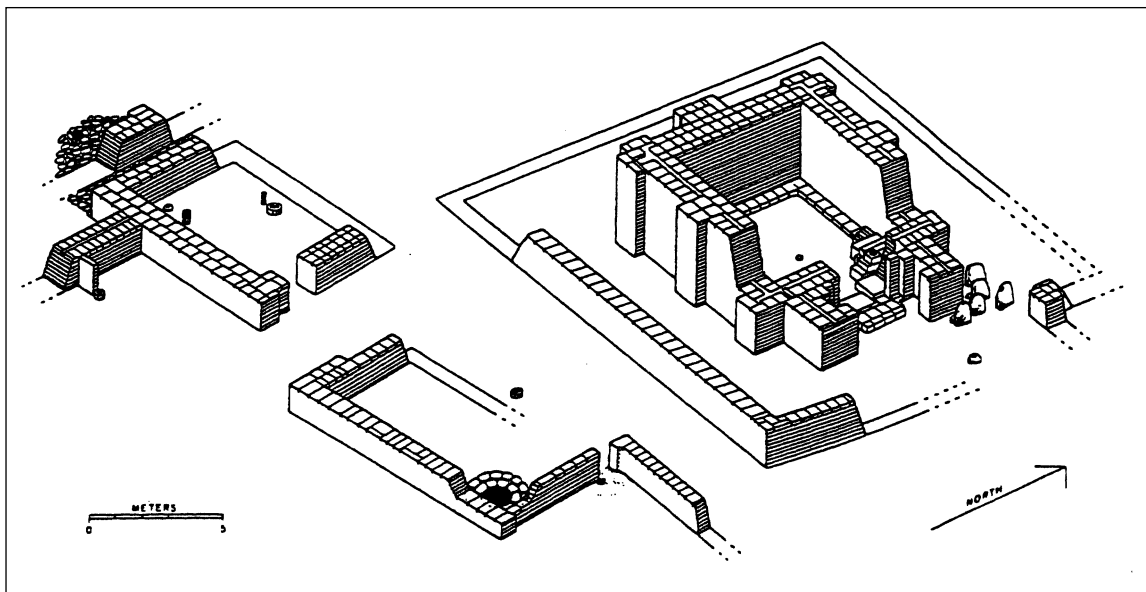


Figure 4. Tell al-Hayyat, isometric plan. From Falconer 1995, 404. Reproduced from the *Journal of Field Archaeology* with the permission of the Trustees of Boston University. All rights reserved.

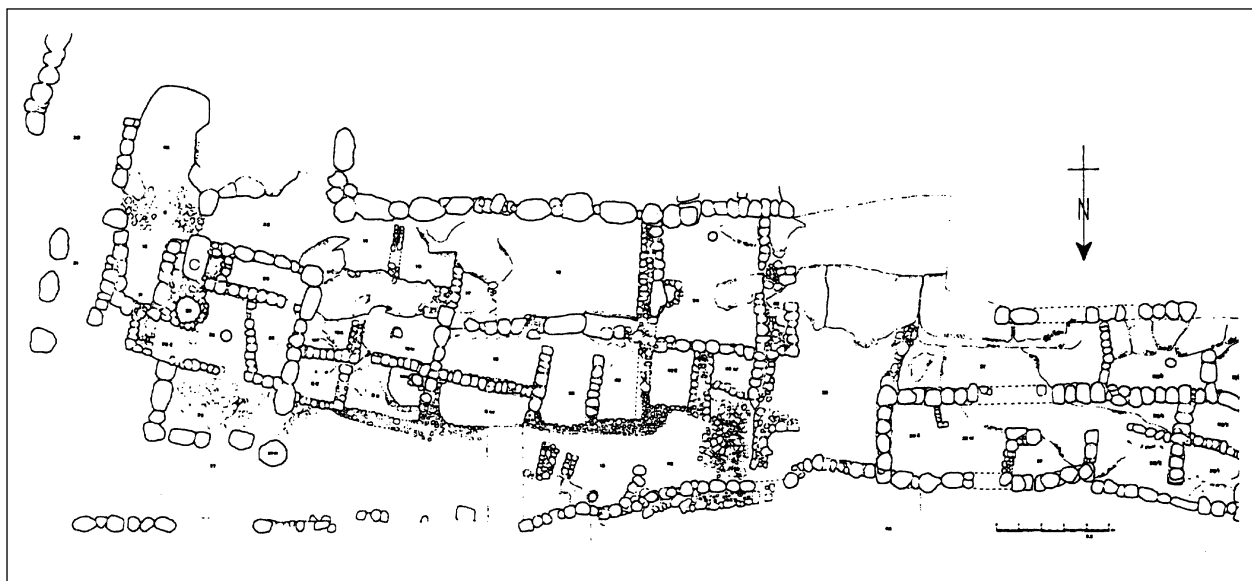


Figure 5. *Givat Sharet, plan. From Bahat 1975, 65. Courtesy of Dan Bahat and the Israel Exploration Society.*

age jars and craters. The excavator interpreted the finds as resulting from cultic feasts that took place around a cultic center. An impressive temple was established during the MBIIb. Hardly anything was published on the finds in the contemporary village. The temple itself witnessed an abrupt change in the later phase of the period. Its area was more than quadrupled and it had massive and thick outer walls. It is likely that during this phase the site was surrounded by a wall (to which rooms were attached). It is possible that at this stage the village shrank in size (Eisenberg, personal communication).

Tell al-Hayyat (Fig. 4). The site is located across the Jordan River opposite the eastern end of the Beth Shean Valley, about 7 km. from Pella, and was excavated by S. Falconer and B. Magness-Gardiner (1983; 1984; Falconer 1994; 1995). Several Middle Bronze Age strata were excavated, encompassing the entire period. The site includes dwellings and an impressive temple. This is the only Middle Bronze II rural site that has received an intensive social discussion and analysis, rather than just a (usually short) description of the finds. Falconer (1994; 1995) concluded that the village was an autonomous village that evolved as a rural response to the growing urbanism in the region. The finds attest that the inhabitants practiced a typical Mediterranean economy (Falconer 1994, 131; 1995, 409–411). The excavator also found evidence for the possible production of pottery (Falconer 1995). Additional finds

(especially faunal remains) will be discussed in more detail below.

Giv³at Sharett (Fig. 5). Large scale salvage excavations were carried out by C. Epstein and D. Bahat at this MBIIb site, located in the southern part of the modern town of Beth Shemesh (Bahat 1975; 1993). The village probably existed for a relatively short period, as no changes and adjustments were observed in the houses that were excavated (Bahat 1975, 66). The site was concentrated around the summit of a hill, and the houses were arranged in a kind of *insula*. Each house had its back to a neighbor, and was oriented toward two streets/alleys. All the houses were built of the same type of stones, on which mudbrick walls were erected. Bahat divided the buildings into two types (Bahat 1975, 65; 1993, 254). The first was the 'typical' courtyard-house that includes rooms around a courtyard. The other type of building (Bahat 1975, 66) was all roofed, without a courtyard (or with a very small one). This type included three wings, each containing two rooms. The wings were arranged in a row, and the occupants had to cross through the front rooms, in order to get to the second wing, and through this wing, in order to reach the last and innermost one. Other buildings were variations of these two types, but the first one was dominant. On the northern terrace, however, the situation was somewhat different. Here all the houses had a wall, built toward the north, probably functioning as the settlement wall.

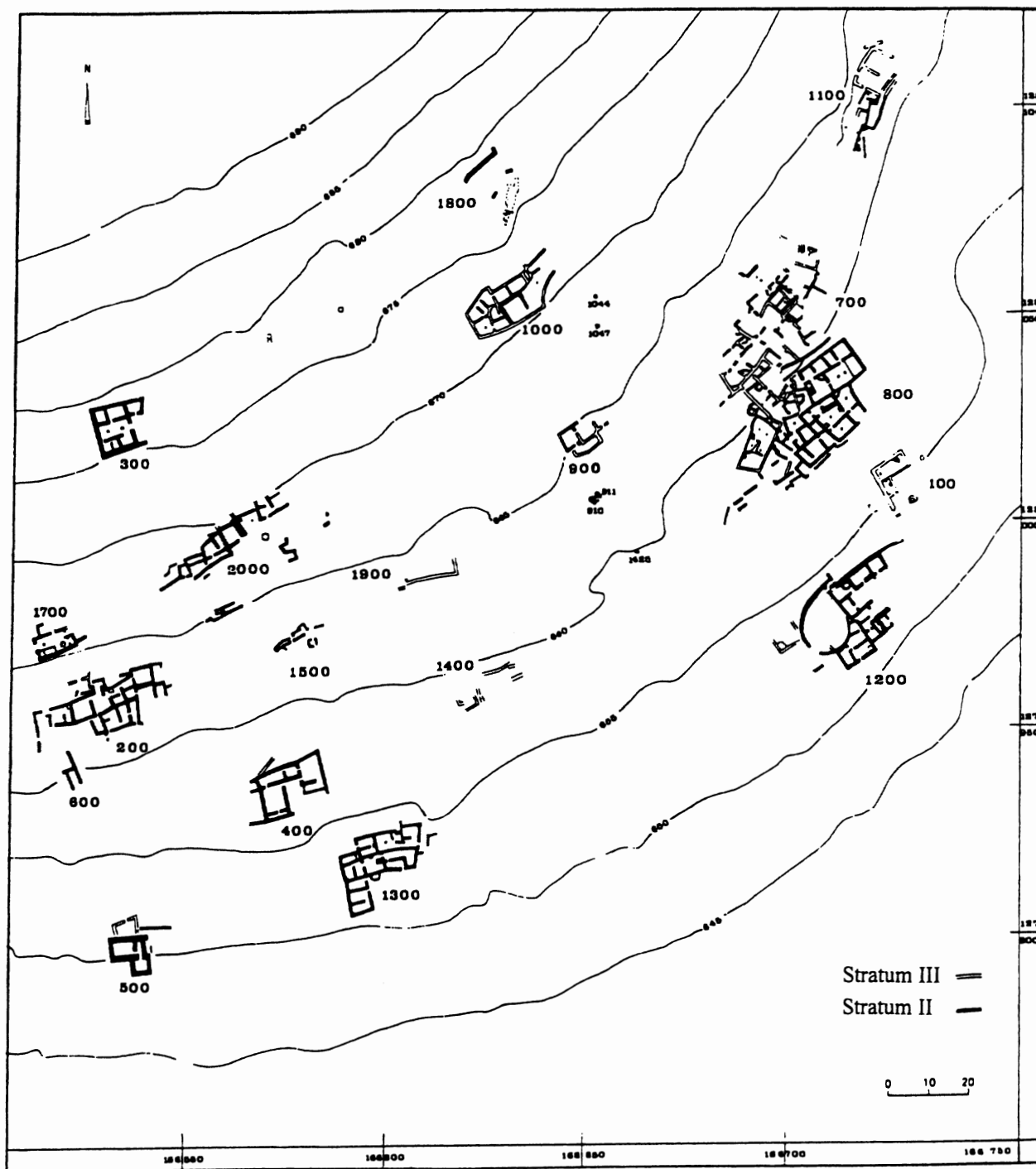


Figure 6. Nahal Rephaim, village plan. From Eisenberg 1993c, 84. Courtesy of Emanuel Eisenberg and the Israel Exploration Society.

Some rooms along this wall were not part of buildings, and were probably communal property. One of these rooms was packed with storage jars containing legumes (Bahat 1975, 66). According to the excavator these rooms served as a storage system (Bahat 1993, 254). The settlement wall was not found in other parts of the village, and the excavator attributed it to erosion and to later agricultural activity. On the highest point of the hill, a temple was found (Bahat 1975, 66–67; 1993, 254). This structure had more stone courses than the other buildings. It formed a long rectangle, with the entrance from the east. The architecture as well as the small finds indicate, according to the excavator, that it had a cultic function (Bahat 1975, 66–67). The finds indicate that the inhabitants subsisted on a typical Mediterranean economy (Bahat 1975, 65).

Nahal Rephaim (Fig. 6). The site is located almost 4 km. south-west of ancient Jerusalem and was excavated by E. Eisenberg (1991; 1993a; 1993c). Stratum II was an unwalled village, dated to the MBIIb (seventeenth century), that existed for a short period before it was abandoned. Most of the houses followed the courtyard-house type (some of a very complex plan), but in a non-uniform way. Some houses, however, had two rows of parallel rooms (the houses in areas 800 and 1200, Eisenberg 1993c, 92). The houses, which were stone-built, were large and well planned. The excavator suggested that each complex of houses had developed from a core that included the first house, and others were added as the family expanded. On the south-west edge of the settlement a temple was found. This was a massive building built like a megaron, and had its entrance on the east side. The unique character of the small finds in the building strengthen the cultic interpretation. It is possible that it had a walled temenos. Evidence for the production of pottery and metal reproduction was also found (Eisenberg 1993c, 91–92, 94, 102).

Manahat (Fig. 7). The site is located some 3 km. south-west of ancient Jerusalem and was excavated by Edelstein (1993; Edelstein and Milevski 1994; Edelstein, Milevski and Aurant 1998). This is the only site where a large area was excavated and has received final publication. The MBIIb village extended over some 30–40 dunams, and probably existed for several generations before it was eventually abandoned. The houses were built of stones, and were probably a variation of the courtyard house (Edelstein 1993, 98–101; Edelstein, Milevski and Aurant 1998, 35). Their size was some 200–300 sq.m. (Edelstein 1993, 98–99), and they usually

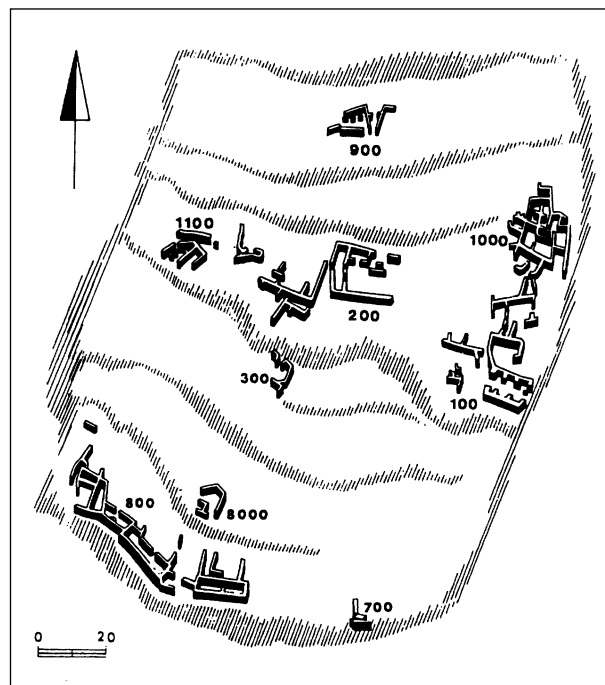


Figure 7. *Manahat, plan. From Edelstein 1993, 97, courtesy of Gershon Edelstein and the Israel Exploration Society.*

included an entrance room, and a central courtyard surrounded by rooms with two stories. Another structure, which had no parallels in the site, was interpreted as a temple or a cultic structure (Edelstein 1993, 101; Edelstein, Milevski and Aurant 1998, 15–16). It is possible that the outer wall of the houses formed some sort of a boundary wall (Edelstein 1993, 99; Edelstein, Milevski and Aurant 1998, 21). The analysis of the finds indicates that the inhabitants practiced a typical Mediterranean economy (Edelstein 1993, 102; see also Kislev 1998, 113). Evidence for some specialization, i.e., metal production and leather production, was also found (Edelstein 1993, 102).

Several additional sites were excavated and, although the data from most is extremely limited, some can supplement the present discussion. The following are some relatively useful examples of this kind of data.

Hamadiya (N). Parts of two structures were excavated by N. Zori, and published by A.M. Maeir (2000). Not much can be said about the site (except for chronology), but Maeir noted that at least one of the houses was built using “well-worked masonry” (Maeir 2000, 35) – an observation that might be of importance for a discussion of social stratification. Ein Hagit. A rural MBIIc site in the Menashe hills that was excavated by Wolff (1995; 1998). Parts of

several dwellings were identified, along with the settlement boundary wall (Wolff 1995, 54; 1998, 453). Ein Hofez. A Middle Bronze rural site that was excavated by Y. Alexandre (1995) in the Menashe hills. Parts of a building with six rooms were excavated.

‘Alona. Parts of a Middle Bronze Age IIB village were unearthed north-west of Jerusalem by S. Weksler-Bdolah (1999). Middle Bronze Age remains, including large parts of buildings, were discovered in two excavation areas, and they seem to indicate, according to the excavator, that the Middle Bronze village was well organized (Weksler-Bdolah 1999, 68*). In one of the areas a large and complex courtyard house was excavated. Storage installations were observed in this house. The situation in the second area is less clear. Many rooms were unearthed here, but the exact nature of the structure(s) cannot be ascertained.

Wadi Zimra. Parts of a Middle Bronze Age IIB village were exposed by I. Meitlis (1992, 127). Middle Bronze Age remains were discovered in three excavation areas (C, C1 and D), and included a large dwelling as well as parts of other buildings and perhaps also a boundary wall.

Most of the Middle Bronze excavated rural sites, however, were excavated to such a small extent (or the publication is so limited), as to make the use of the data minimal. This can be seen for example in Bat Yam (Gophna 1970), where the meager remains could be interpreted as a rural site, and might hint at the presence of a cultic structure. In many other cases the data is even more limited, enabling only some chronological observations (e.g. Covello-Paran 1999; Ben Tor 1984, 260–273; Greenhut and De Groot 2002; Seeden 1986; Lehman *et al.* 1991, and many others. See also various sites in Gophna and Beck 1981).

However, the above mentioned sites supply enough information to enable us to discuss the nature of the rural settlement of the Middle Bronze.

Architecture and settlement form

This section will briefly discuss (mainly on a ‘technical’ level) the architecture and form of the Middle Bronze Age villages, in order to present the data in an orderly fashion, and to facilitate future discussion.

Dwellings

Building types

Many of the dwellings are built as variants of the courtyard house style so typical of this period (e.g. in

Manahat, Nahal Rephaim, Givat Sharet and ‘Alona; see Beeve 1968, 41–46; Ben Dov 1992; Oren 1992; Kempinski 1992; Wright 1985, 57). Some of the houses, however, were built following a different plan. The basic component of this planning was a broad room, and when there was more than one room/space, these were arranged in a row (e.g. in Tell al-Hayyat and Kfar Rupin), or in the case of larger houses, in two rows (e.g. at Givat Sharet and Rephaim Valley). Sometimes the two types of structures can be found together at the same site; in Givat Sharet and the Rephaim Valley courtyard houses are found together with the two row houses, but not with the simple ‘row house’. Generally speaking, the courtyard house (and the two row house, which could be a subtype of the courtyard house) is more typical of rural sites in the south/highlands, while the simple row house is more typical of the northern valleys. It should be noted that the latter is much smaller than the other type of house (below).¹

Building size

The rural structures vary greatly in size. Rural houses include compounds of up to several hundred square meters, for example in Manahat, Nahal Rephaim and at least one structure at ‘Alona. The ground floor of these houses usually covered some 100–300 sq.m. (Edelstein 1993, 98–99; Edelstein, Milevski and Auran 1998a, 36; Eisenberg 1993c, 89, 91; see also Weksler-Bdolah 1999), and since many of them had a second story, their area was even larger (Edelstein, Milevski and Auran 1998a, 33; Eisenberg 1993c, 89). These large houses are also well built, resembling wealthy urban houses, and were usually interpreted as rich dwellings (Eisenberg and De Groot 2001, 9). The houses at Giv³ at Sharet are somewhat smaller, covering some 56–120 sq.m. (Bahat 1993, 254).

Other houses, however, were much smaller, e.g. some 25–50 sq.m. in Kfar Rupin (Gophna 1979), 25–40 sq.m. at Tell al-Hayyat phase 4 (Falconer 1995, 406), and maybe 15 and 70 sq.m. in phase 3 (Fig. 8; Falconer 1994, 129). Phase 2 at al-Hayyat exhibits larger internal differences, with a corner of what appears to be a very large building (in addition to the temple, and outside its compound), but also two small rooms/structures of some 20 and 25 sq.m. (Falconer 1994, 129). The information from Hamadiya is very limited, but internal differences seem to have existed there also.

Generally speaking, the courtyard houses, although by no means uniform in size (or even plan), can be much larger than the second type described above, which is usually smaller. The

houses of the northern valleys (i.e. at Tell al-Hayyat and Kfar Rupin), which usually belong to the second group, are smaller than these of Nahal Rephaim, Manahat, Givat Sharet and 'Alona, and perhaps also the structure that was partially unearthed at Ein Hofez. It should be noted that there is a great variation among the houses themselves, both between and within sites. The large houses must have hosted a large extended family, while the smaller ones could have only have been inhabited by a small nuclear family. This issue will be further discussed below.

Building technique

Most houses were built with mudbricks on stone foundations, in line with the traditional building technique so common in the region (e.g. Reich 1992, 5). In some cases, i.e., Manahat and Nahal Rephaim, however, entire walls were built of stones. It is likely that the difference results from different location and from the availability of construction material.

Public buildings

Temples

Practically all the excavators of the sites that have been exposed over a relatively large area reported the existence of a temple or a shrine of some sort at the sites. Some of the temples are quite distinguishable, i.e., at Tell al-Hayyat and Tel Kitan, and probably also at Nahal Rephaim and Givat Sharet. In all four cases the structures were oriented toward the east, and the cultic association is even strengthened by the small finds. The temples at Tell al-Hayyat and Tel Kitan are also built according to a plan which is typical of the MBA urban temple (Magnes-Gardiner and Falconer 1994, 135–140; Mazar 1992; Alpert-Nakhai 2001, 95–96).

At Manahat the situation is less clear. The structure was built on a west/east axis, although the entrance seems to have been from the west (Edelstein, Milevski and Auran 1998a, 15). The excavator suggested that the finds can also be associated with cult, but this is somewhat less obvious than in the former cases (Edelstein 1993, 101; Edelstein, Milevski and Auran 1998, 15–16). The most problematic temple, however, is at Kfar Rupin, where there are no small finds associated with the structure (since the site was only surveyed), nor is the architecture indicative of cult. The orientation of the building also does not conform to any of the above, and there is no real reason to accept the cultic interpretation. It is more likely that the large

house is just a rich dwelling. A possible shrine was also found at the Bat Yam site (Gophna 1970; Gophna and Beck 1981, 53–62; 1988, 76–78). Another cultic structure was identified at Kfar Shemaryahu, but this seems to have been an isolated structure and was not part of a settlement (Kaplan 1971; Gophna and Beck 1981, 71; 1988, 80; Van den Brink 2000, 46), perhaps like the Nahariya Temple (Dothan 1993).

In summary, in all the sites that were excavated intensively temples were reported, but the evidence in some cases is extremely limited and problematic. It is possible, however, that the existence of some 'sure cases' means the existence of temples in the villages of the period should be seen as typical (see also Maeir 1997, 233; 2003, 63–64). It could be that even when a temple was not found, we may assume that this was a result of limited exposure, and that one had, in fact, existed. The temples vary greatly in size and quality, but most of them were oriented to the east. It is interesting that Middle Bronze Age rural temples seem to follow an eastern orientation more strictly than their urban counterparts (for the orientation of Bronze Age temples, see Mazar 1992; Faust 2001, 145–147 and additional references there).

Boundary walls

Settlement walls are another type of public construction that were identified in several of the sites. The existence of such walls was inferred in Givat Sharet, Manahat, Tel Kitan, Ein Hagit and probably also at Wadi Zimra. The construction of the walls required communal (voluntary or forced) work and decision making, and thus may inform us further on the nature of these villages.

Storage facilities

Only in Givat Sharet were rooms interpreted as a communal storage facility identified.

Social structure

Types of villages according to their architecture and plan

The sites under discussion are not uniform in any way, and they clearly represent different modes of social organization. Based on the archaeological evidence, the villages described above can be divided into two main groups.

The first group is composed of villages that were dominated by a large structure, usually a temple.

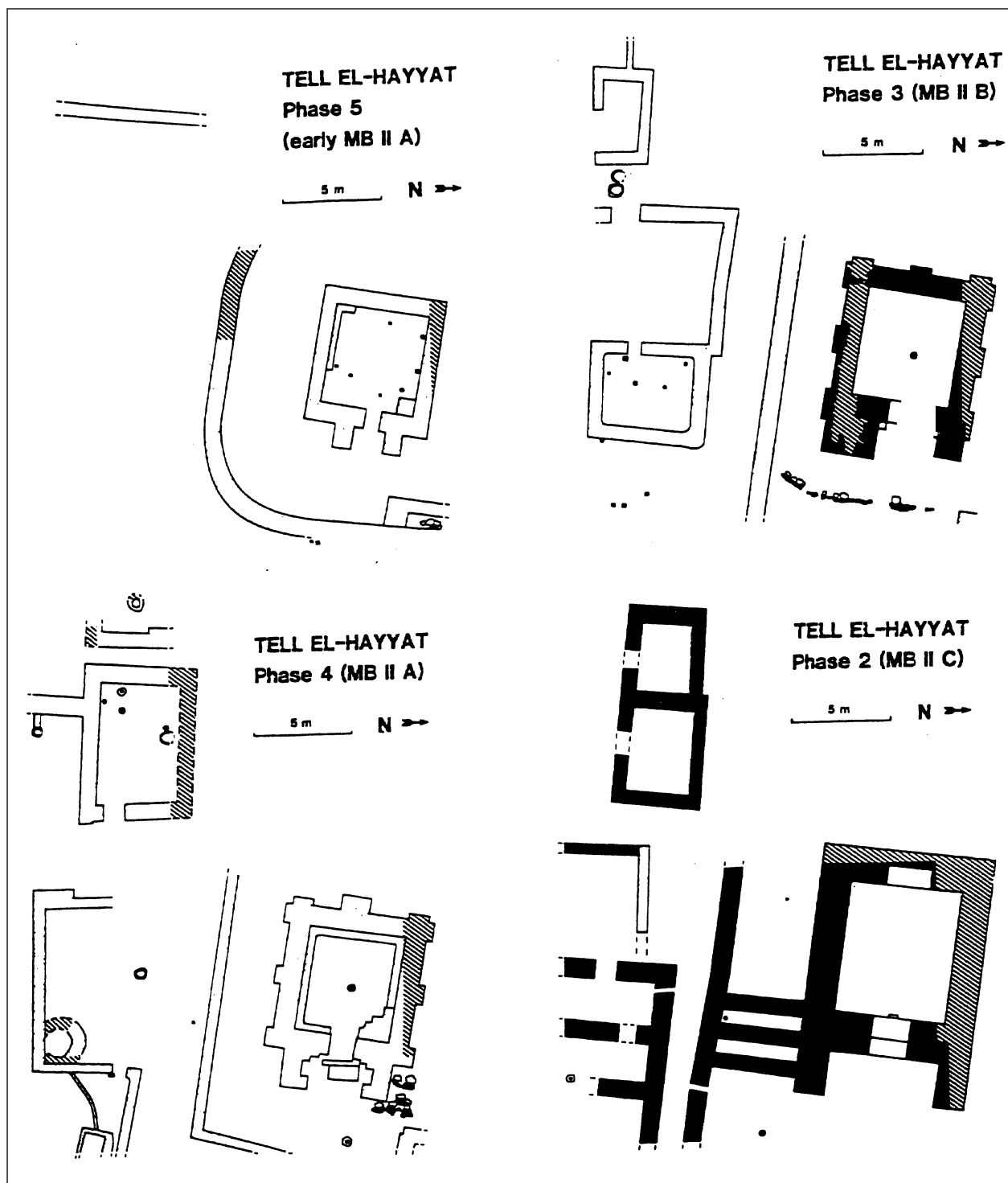


Figure 8. Tell al-Hayyat phases 5–2. From Falconer 1994, 129. Courtesy of Steven E. Falconer.

The dwellings in these settlements belong to the 'row house' type, and are usually very small, not only in comparison with the large dominating temples, but also with the houses of other, contemporary villages that belong to the second group. The best examples for this type of village are Tell al-Hayyat, Kfar Rupin and Tel Kitan.

The second group of villages exhibits an opposite relationship between the domestic houses and the 'public' buildings. The dwellings in these villages, mostly of the 'courtyard house type', were very large, and while temples were found there too, the latter were usually smaller than both the dwellings of these villages and the temples in the villages of the first group. The second type of village is best exemplified by the villages of Manahat, Givat Sharet, and Nahal Rephaim.

The architectural, and hence social, landscape of the two types of villages was clearly very different. A village dominated by a single structure (whatever its correct interpretation), in the first group, and a village in which dwellings were the dominant feature, in the second group.

These two groups can be further differentiated according to their location. The first group is typical of the northern valleys, while the second group is typical of more hilly regions of the central hill country and the Shephelah. The former area was also more densely taken up by settlements of various types, while settlement in the latter region was sparser.

More archaeological observations regarding the distinction between the two types of villages, for example in architecture, settlement planning, pottery, botanical and faunal remains, will be provided below, but the data presented clearly indicates that these two groups of villages represent different social formations.

'Social categorization' of villages

Forms of land tenure vary greatly across time and space; most societies having more than one form of land ownership and of title for its use. There are also various ways to make a typology of land tenure and ownership (for a short description and references, see White 1986, 247–248; Trigger 2003, 315–337). Trigger (2003, 315–337), for example, in his wide-scale comparative study referred to three types of landownership: collective, institutional, and private. Elaborating on his and similar works (see also, for example, Magness-Gardiner 1994), we would like to develop a slightly different categorization.

From the perspective of those who work the land, land ownership can basically be divided into two cat-

egories. In the first category we include settlements in which those who worked the land also owned it (i.e., 'autonomous' villages. In Trigger's terminology this refers mainly to collective ownership, and perhaps also the rare instances in which all the villagers owned their plots independently). The second category relates to sites in which the inhabitants worked land that was owned by someone else, whatever the exact legal status (cf. White 1986; Roberts 1996, 57–60; Trigger 2003, 155; 315–337), and whoever was the owner/landlord (i.e., 'owned' or private villages. In Trigger's terminology this refers to institutional ownership and to [most forms at least of] private ownership).

There were of course various levels of 'rights' to land; from owners (i.e., the first category), through renters, sharecroppers, to landless labourers (the second category). Clearly, there was variation in status among the various groups included in the second category, but generally speaking, "less secure rights to land generally correlates with lower social status" (Trigger 2003, 155).

For our purposes the basic distinction is the most important. When people own the land, even if they pay taxes in various forms, they usually get to keep much of their surplus produce. When they work on land that belongs to someone else, they will usually be given less of the surplus (Trigger 2003, 156, 335, 336; cf. Roberts 1996, 57–59). This basic distinction will result in different standards of living – higher in the first instance (e.g. Magness-Gardiner 1994, 45). Variation in the standards of living leave a clear trace in the archaeological record, and can therefore be identified by archaeologists (e.g. Smith 1987; Smith *et al.* 1989; Crocker 1985; Wason 1996; Faust 1999b, and references). Archaeologically, therefore, we can distinguish between the two types of villages according to their relative standards of living. The inhabitants of autonomous villages enjoy a higher standard of living in comparison to the residents of the owned/private villages (whether owned by an individual, the state, or another institution). This is manifested in an improved standard of construction, and the various finds (e.g. storage vessels, archaeological, and faunal remains) attest to greater wealth and surpluses (Magness-Gardiner 1994, 45). A comparison of contemporaneous sites can be very helpful in the process of explaining the nature of the various rural sites.

These two basic categories can be divided further, as, in the first instance, the land can be owned by small independent units (be it nuclear or extended families), or communally/collectively by large kinship groups (which was common in the past, e.g.

Falconer 1995; Faust 2000b; Trigger 2003, 154, 316–334, and many references). We shall call settlements that belong to the first sub-category independent villages, and those that belong to the second sub-category, communal villages. The second category of owned villages can also be divided according to the owner, be it a person, an institution or even the state (crown) (as was done by Trigger 2003, 321–334; see also Magness-Gardiner 1994; 44–45), or by the forms in which these who lived on the land and worked it repay the owner (White 1986). We prefer, however, a different division of this category. For our purposes, it would be more worthwhile to divide the owned villages not according to the type of owner, but according to its type of residency, i.e., present landlord or absentee landlord. This distinction is expected to be manifested archaeologically, as the house of the resident landlord will probably be identified (cf. Magness-Gardiner 1994, 45; Roberts 1996, 57). In this sub-category, we expect to find a village, in which most inhabitants lived at a relatively low standard of life, and this will be sharply contrasted with that of the landlord. In the second sub-category – that of an absentee landlord – we will simply see a village composed of relatively poor houses.

On the basis of the above, and in light of previous works (e.g. Trigger 2003; Magness-Gardiner 1994), we can therefore refer to four ‘ideal types’ of villages: (1) Villages owned by an ‘urban’ palace, an ‘urban’ temple, or by a member of the urban elite that is/are not present at the site, i.e., an ‘absentee landlord’. In this kind of village the standard of living was low, on a bare subsistence level, since the profits (‘surpluses’) went to the landlord in the center, or in other words, to the ‘city’. The villagers’ standard of living will vary according to their status (and the exact percentage they paid the landlord) etc. Sharecroppers, for example might expect to have had 50%–66% of the crops left, though probably before tax (see Hallow 1998 for the situation in Mesopotamia at the time). While there is a clear difference between the possible types of ownerships mentioned above, archaeologically speaking, as long as the landlord was absent, the exact nature of the owner is of less import. Villages can be either established with such a status (i.e. investment colonies, Hayden 1994, 202–203; see also Schwartz 1994), or they can be ‘taken over’ by an outside elite or by the state itself (Hayden 1994, 203; see also Faust 2000a, 16–18). For our purposes, however, the outcome, is similar.

(2) Villages owned by a resident landlord, whatever his nature. These villages too, could have been formed as investment colonies or could have been

autonomous villages that were ‘taken over’ by their owner, either from within or without. Ethnographically, for example, such villages can be attested by settlements containing a single stone house and many mud huts (e.g. Magness-Gardiner 1994, 45), but the actual physical structure of the village can of course vary. Such evidence attests to a wealthy family/institution that dominated the settlement.

(3) Communal villages (‘collectively owned community’ according to Falconer 1995, 399). This relates to an autonomous village in which the inhabitants held the rights for the land and the crops, which were in many instances grown collectively (e.g. Trigger 2003, 154; Falconer 1995; Faust 2000b). Such villages (in varied forms) exhibit not only relatively high standards of living (Magness-Gardiner 1994, 45), but also communal enterprises (cf. Faust 2000a; 2000b). Villages of this type can exist either in ‘tribute relationships’ with the urban system, when they had to pay taxes, or in ‘symbiotic relationships’, when they were more independent (Hayden 1994, 203. Note the two types are part of a continuum).

(4) Independent villages. This refers to autonomous villages, in which the land and products were owned by individual family units, and not collectively. It appears that, in antiquity, and especially in the ancient Near East, this was a relatively rare form (e.g. Trigger 2003, 333). It is possible that, archaeologically, this theoretical type can be distinguished from the former by the lack of indications for communal enterprises.

The above is not the only possible typology of course. Furthermore, it refers to ideal types, and in reality there were many intermediate situations (where, for example, some of the land was owned by the inhabitants, while some of it was owned by an outsider. There were also villages in which most of the inhabitants owned their land, but there were some families of wage laborers, etc.). A typology is an aid to an analysis of ancient villages, and theoretically such villages could have existed in the past. Admittedly, some of the four theoretical types appear more typical of past societies than others (e.g. type (4) seems to have been rare).² Since all are possible forms of human organization, none can be ruled out without a contextual examination of all the available evidence, and all should be considered.

The nature of the Middle Bronze II villages is now considered in light of the above, beginning by discussing the nature of the village of Tell al-Hayyat, as this is the only village that has received a detailed social analysis in the past, and for which there is abundant information.

Tell al-Hayyat

The excavator had explicitly addressed the issue discussed here. Cautiously, Falconer (1995, 414) wrote: "(A)lthough its temples might suggest that Tell el-Hayyat was part of an institutional estate (i.e., similar to those attested near Ugarit and Alalakh), only limited aspects of Hayyat's economy reveals the intimate ties to external markets that we might expect for such a community". After discussing the data, Falconer (1995, 415) concludes that "(I)n light of all these characteristics, it is tempting, though perhaps not prudent, to portray Tell el-Hayyat as an archaeological example of a collectively owned village, analogous to these known historically from ancient Syria and ethnographically from a variety of locales throughout SW Asia". He therefore ends the article with the following words: "(I)nstead, we may conclude more assuredly that Tell el-Hayyat illustrates the resilient nature of many rural communities at the foundation of the Middle Bronze Age society in the southern Levant, in which production and consumption was inspired more by long-term community survival than short-term economic maximization. This resilience is embodied in household and village economies that exploited some opportunities presented by town and city markets, but simultaneously insured community autonomy in the face of the inevitable liabilities of urbanism".

Falconer's detailed and careful analysis is exemplary, but as can be seen in his own words, much of his data is open to different interpretation (see also Hayden 1994, 201, 202, 204, 205; Maeir 1997, 233–234). The comparative data presented above enables us to put Tell al-Hayyat in its proper context.

The village and the temple

We conclude that Tell al-Hayyat was a village that was owned by the temple, as it is clear that the temples are the main focus of the site. The monumental nature of the temple(s), is attested in plan and construction, as well as in size in relation to the local dwellings (Fig. 4). The contrast between the temples and the more 'local' shrines found in several other villages, indicates that they were the major element in the site.³

Temple and dwellings

The small size of the majority of the dwellings, both in comparison with the dwellings of many other rural sites and in relation to the temple, indicates that they were unimportant in the local 'social landscape'. The contrast between the small and poor dwellings and the monumental temple is therefore

extremely sharp. As already mentioned, this situation is almost opposite to that uncovered in most other rural sites.

Moreover, the temple preceded the dwellings, and the dwellings were added later. They, however, were always in the shadow of the temple, and as we will see below, probably belonged to it, and were administered by its functionaries.

The small and poor houses that comprised the majority of dwellings indicate not only that their inhabitants were poor and probably lived only at a subsistence level, but also that they probably comprised nuclear families. While the formulation for establishing the number of inhabitants on the basis of the structure size varies greatly (Narol 1962; Ember and Ember 1995, 98–99, and many others),⁴ it is clear that small structures of 20–40 sq.m. could not have housed more than some five persons (at least the smaller houses). It is impossible, therefore, that these small houses were inhabited by more than a nuclear family, and this, too, might indicate that they were of a relatively low socioeconomic standing (Yorburg 1975, 9). This is more clearly the case in light of the larger houses found in some of the MBII villages (200–300 sq.m.).

Note also that while most houses were very small, it is possible to observe a tendency (from phase 4 of the MBIIa, to phase 2 of the MBIIc) for growing differentiation between the houses. While the smallest dwellings become even smaller as time progressed, one can observe the establishment of larger and larger houses (compare the plans in Falconer 1994, 129). While the latter could belong to the temple's functionaries, it could also be indicative of decline in community coherence and the lack/failure of potential leveling mechanisms (for the latter, see, e.g. Nash 1988; Wilk 1993; Lees 1979; Boehem 1993). All this makes the existence of a communal village at Tell al-Hayyat even more unlikely (especially in the later stages of MBII).

Small finds

The detailed analysis presented by Falconer enables us to support with additional data the scenario presented here. Falconer (1995, 411) notes that fruits became more common as time progressed, but writes that "increased fruit production did not trickle down to the level of the individual household consumption"; it was found mainly in the temple area. This probably indicates that the surpluses did not go to the inhabitants of the dwellings, who were probably only sharecroppers or landless laborers. They continued to live on a subsistence level. Falconer's (1995, 411–414) detailed statistics of the

sherds is also interesting. While the decrease in the number of storage jars in the temple could have, theoretically, resulted from an existence of storage area in an unexcavated part of the site, their decrease in each dwelling must be seen as meaningful. It could indicate that, as time progressed, the households had smaller and smaller surpluses.

Another worthwhile line of evidence is faunal remains, especially pig bones. Pigs constituted some 31%–45% of the faunal assemblage in the domestic area of the tell (Falconer 1995), in contrast to 8.27% in the Rephaim Valley (Horwitz 1989), 7%–4% at Manahat (Horwitz 1998), and 20% at Ein Hagit (Wolff 1998). The issue has received a great deal of discussion, and various ‘pig principles’ were defined in the discussion of the finds in the MBII villages (e.g. Horwitz 1989; 1998; Wolff 1998; Falconer 1995).⁵ While it is possible that the main cause of variation among the MBII villages is indeed geographic location (e.g. Horwitz 1998, 110), this cannot explain the internal variation between different parts of Tell al-Hayyat, i.e., the fact that pigs are abundant in the domestic part of the village (in the dwellings), but are almost absent from the temple area (e.g. Falconer 1994, 133). While not the only possible explanation, we would like to suggest that the “principle” that was operating here was that of class (Hesse and Wapnish 1997, 252–253). In many instances pigs are associated with low socioeconomic status and this seems to explain the internal variation at Tell al-Hayyat (see also Hayden 1994, 205). This, therefore, is in line with the general picture of poor dwellings that stands in contrast to the rich temple.⁶

Tell al-Hayyat: a summary and historical overview

The evidence presented above concerning the prominence of the temple and the negligible position of the dwellings clearly indicates that the site was owned by the temple, whether an extension of an urban one (Maeir 1997, 233–234; 2003, 64) or not. The families that dwelt in the site were probably only landless laborers or sharecroppers.

Whether the village was an investment colony, or was gradually taken over is more difficult to determine. Writing about investment specialization, Hayden (1994, 201) states: “(T)he archaeological signature of this kind of specialization – lower general standards of living and greater inequality between commoners and elite administrators in investment communities – appear clear. Another signature includes the urban architecture used for temples, elite residences, and granaries...”. This description accords well with the archaeological

finds from Tell al-Hayyat, for example the fact that the temple preceded the village, and the similarity between the local temple and its urban counterparts. This makes the suggestion that the site was an investment colony attractive. In this case, the villagers were probably settled on the temple’s land. It is not surprising that Hayden (1994, 201, see also p. 205) himself had explicitly raised the option that Tell al-Hayyat was an investment colony. While the deterioration in the economic situation of the villagers during the MBII might hint toward a ‘take-over’ relationship, the overall picture supports the interpretation of the site as an investment colony. The large house unearthed in the later stage of the Middle Bronze Age II might have belonged to one of the temple’s functionaries.

Whatever was the exact nature of the relations, it is quite clear that the temple was used to legitimize the claims and monopoly of an elite (e.g. Schwartz 1994, 28; 2000, 177–179; see also Maeir 2003).

Additional ‘owned villages’

Although the available information is more limited, there are several additional sites that exhibit a similar reality, i.e., they were ‘owned’ by person or institution.

Tel Kitan

The MBIIb village was centered around a large temple, but no dwelling unearthed at this site has been published in any detail yet. Theoretically, it is possible that the village was a communal one, i.e., the temple was a ‘village temple’, as was suggested by Falconer for Tell al-Hayyat.

It is much more likely, however, that the temple, whether an extension of an urban one or not, owned the village. According to this hypothesis, the villagers were wage laborers or sharecroppers of the temple’s land, and were administrated by the temple’s functionaries. The fact that the temple was very impressive seems to strengthen this hypothesis as it stands in contrast to the more rural nature of the local shrines unearthed in most other sites (e.g. Givat Sharet and Manahat). If the excavator’s interpretation of the earlier MBIIa stratum is correct, and it was a by-product of cultic activities even before the village was established, then the supremacy of the temple is even more secure, and it is likely that the village evolved around an existing ‘holy site’. It is likely that the MBII village was established as an investment colony. The increase in the size of the temple during the Middle Bronze Age indicates that it flourished. Alternatively, perhaps, it resulted from the need to impress its peers (if the temple was a local one and not an extension of an urban temple).⁷

Kfar Rupin

In light of the data presented, it is likely that the village of Kfar Rupin was owned by a person/family, whether from the nearby Tel Rehov, or, if the larger house is indeed a dwelling, than by the people who lived in it. There is no real evidence that the latter served as a temple, and even its orientation is different from MBII rural temples. Its size can therefore indicate that this is a dwelling whose inhabitants were richer than the rest. The fact that temples were observed in all other villages indicates that one might be expected to be found here too, but it could have been located elsewhere in the village. On the other hand, the lack of a temple, if indeed this is the case, might exhibit the site's dependency on the city, and the same can be deduced from the lack of a defensive wall.

The small size of the average house (25–50 sq.m.) indicates that it was inhabited by a small family, probably a nuclear one, therefore strengthening a case for the low socioeconomic standing of their inhabitants. The dwellings could not have been part of a 'communal village'. Their standards of construction clearly show that the surpluses did not accumulate in the village, and the inhabitants were left on a subsistence level. The inhabitants were probably wage laborers or sharecroppers or the like.

While the option that the inhabitants of the larger house were the owners of the village is more likely, it is also possible that the village was owned by the nearby town of Rehov, or by someone who lived there. The large house could have, in such a case, served the overseer.

Who 'owned' the villages?

In summary, the three 'owned villages' discussed here seems to have belonged to a resident landlord. In two of the villages the owner seems to have been the temple, and a rich family was probably the owner in the third case.

While this interpretation is extremely plausible, it is not certain. It is possible that the real owner lived in the nearby urban center: i.e., it could have been that the temples were not independent, but rather extensions of urban temples, or even of the polities themselves. Viewed in this light, the large dwelling at Kfar Rupin could have housed not the owner, but an overseer of some sort. Attempting to learn about the nature of the temples, and their relationship with the urban temples/centers requires a detailed study of the latter, which is well beyond the scope of the present study (but should be conducted as part of a more regional study). The similarity between the rural temples unearthed at Tell al-Hayyat and Tel

Kitan and their urban counterparts might lend some support to the suggestion that the temples were indeed 'polity-oriented' (Maeir 2003, 64; see also Schwartz 2000, 178–179). As far as the large dwelling at Kfar Rupin is concerned, it should be noted that an interpretation of the structure as housing an overseer is much less likely, and would require additional evidence. This, too, would require a more detailed study of the reality in the nearby cities, which cannot be conducted here.

Autonomous villages

Not all the villages, however, fall into the above category(ies). In the following section, villages that seem to have been autonomous (mainly of the third group, that of communal villages or collectively owned villages), will be reviewed.

Dwellings

Manahat, Nahal Rephaim, Givat Sharet, and probably also 'Alona, Wadi Zimra, Ein Hagit and Ein Hofez, exhibited a reality which was totally different from the one discussed above. The houses in these sites were much larger than these of the previous sites, and cannot be regarded as houses of the poor. On the contrary, most of the houses resemble wealthy edifices (e.g. Eisenberg 1993c, 92; Eisenberg and De Groot 2001, 9; see also Maeir 2000, 35), and it is most likely that the houses fall into what we referred to earlier as a better standard of construction, implying that the inhabitants had some surplus at their disposal.

Moreover, whatever constant is chosen to calculate the number of the inhabitants in a structure, it is clear that the large houses found at Manahat, Nahal Rephaim and Givat Sharet (and probably also at 'Alona, and at Ein Hofez) indicate that they were inhabited by large, extended families. According to B. Yorburg's (1975, 9) comparative study, in agrarian societies such families are typical of the "rich, and among the landowning peasants" (see also Faust 1999a; 2000b; for the relations between family size and wealth; also Netting 1982; Kramer 1982). The important element is the existence of surpluses. In this respect, "landowning peasants" refers to all those who owned the land, whether individually or collectively. It is very likely that the large houses found in these villages indicate both large families and wealth (land), as the two usually go together.

In the light of Yorburg's observation, it is worth restating that the small houses found in Kfar Rupin and at Tell al-Hayyat support the view that the inhabitants were nuclear families of wage laborers or sharecroppers.

Temples

Another indication of site status can be seen in the temples that were unearthed. Structures that were interpreted as temples, usually on what seems to be solid grounds, were unearthed in Nahal Rephaim, Givat Sharet and perhaps also at Manahat. But the relatively small size⁸ and the plan of these structures indicate that they were just 'village shrines', used by the villagers. This notion is strengthened because none of the temples discussed here resemble MBII urban temples (unlike the temples at Tell al-Hayyat and Tel Kitan). Moreover, none of the temples is as impressive as these of Tel Kitan and Tell al-Hayyat, and they were all much smaller than the dwellings. The existence of these temples cannot be seen as an imposing statement by a landlord or a state, but rather represents the religious practices of the villagers. It might even show the villages' 'independent' nature, and their lack of dependence on towns.

The large dwellings, when compared with the relatively small temples, exhibit the nature of the relationship between the two elements. The sharp contrast between dwellings and temples in Tell al-Hayyat (and probably Tel Kitan) highlights the differences in social structure and in the nature of the economic relations at the two types of villages.

Boundary walls

In addition, most of these villages also had a boundary wall (Manahat, Givat Sharet and possibly also Ein Hagit and Wadi Zimra), probably reflecting a communal effort, as no other 'body' or institution is likely to be responsible for it. Moreover, this could also serve as a statement regarding the site status (Warren 1983; Faust 2000b). There are many possible reasons for the establishment of a boundary wall (e.g. Rowlands 1975), including: the guarding of livestock, the storing of water, ensuring privacy, etc. An interesting reason is that of the symbolic importance of the wall (Rowlands 1975, 299; see also Hingley 1990; Parker-Pearson and Richards 1994, 24). Hingley (1990, 96) observed that settlement "enclosures can be defined as boundaries of social exclusion", i.e., the creation and maintenance of a boundary divided the "local 'corporate' groups" from other such units, and, in general, from the broader society (Hingley 1990; see also Bevan 1997, 184–186). According to Thomas (1997) who studied first millennium BCE Britain, enclosed settlements often symbolize a division in society, and between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'; usually in an agrarian society which uses intensive agriculture, and in which there is a strong sense of land as prop-

erty. The existence of boundary walls, therefore, also indicates self-identification and social recognition of the local group, both in the physical and symbolic aspects (see Kolb and Snead 1997). Warren (1983, 255), who excavated a similar wall in a Bronze Age village in Crete, concluded that "the defensive arrangements of the exterior wall... are the most specific indication of independent status". A similar situation was observed in villages in Iron Age Israel (Faust 2000b). The existence of a boundary wall built by the local community should therefore be seen as an important characteristic of these communities, in contrast to other rural settlements.

It is likely, therefore, that Manahat, Nahal Rephaim, Givat Sharet and probably also 'Alona, Wadi Zimra, Ein Hofez and Ein Hagit, should be viewed as autonomous, probably communal villages (following the above typology), that were inhabited (mainly?) by landowning kinship groups who lived above subsistence level. These villages existed either in tribute relations or in symbiotic relations with the nearest urban center.

Interestingly, Nahal Rephaim does not exhibit a boundary wall. This is not a proof that the site was not a communal village, of course, as such villages can exist without a boundary wall. Still, it can be suggested that it is of importance. The site is different from others in the communal villages group also in its 'open' nature and the large distances between the houses. Theoretically, it could be argued that the inhabitants owned the land individually and not collectively (i.e., an independent village). While such a form of ownership is rare, it could explain the unique form of Nahal Rephaim, and cannot be entirely ruled out.

Regional differences and historical processes

The distinction between the owned villages and autonomous (or communal) villages is in accordance with an examination of regional differences, and with preliminary observations regarding the historical processes in which these villages participated.

When examining the data on a regional basis, one can immediately observe that the villages in the hilly region, i.e., in the Judeans hills, the Shephelah and probably the Menashe hills, are different from these of the northern valleys. Some of the differences could be attributed to ecology (e.g. building materials), but not all of them.

The northern valleys

It is possible that the concentration of 'owned villages' in the northern valleys resulted from the dense settlement in the region (e.g. Maeir 1997), where

every village was located near a large center of some sort, and the latter was eventually able, one way or the other, to gain control over the former (e.g. Hayden 1994, 205). The dense and long established settlements in this fertile region resulted from the creation of classes and institutions that eventually became the owners of the land (whether the take-over occurred from within or without the settlement), and divided it among themselves.

The hill country

The situation in the hills was apparently different. Here, the villages were located away from large cities, and it is likely that they were autonomous, and could keep their surpluses, or at least most of them. After all, as Hayden (1994, 203) noted, the further the villages are from the centers, the more autonomous they could be, and the less tribute they have to pay.

Location and historical processes

It is notable that the hill villages were all established during the later phases of the Middle Bronze, and existed for a relatively short period of time (e.g. Givat Sharet, Manahat, and the Rephaim Valley, and probably also 'Alona and Wadi Zimra). If this is not a coincidence, then perhaps the villagers established these sites as a response to the urban pressure (i.e. pressure from the authorities, taxation, etc.) in other regions. They, perhaps, have migrated to the more remote and hilly parts of the country in order to keep their surpluses – something they could no longer do in the plain and the valleys. Such population movements are typical of the Middle East in various periods (Sperber 1978, 102–118; Agmon 1986, 41; Grossman 1994b; Lewis 1987, 12–14), as part of the “fluidity of the settlement-demographic continuum” (Bunimovitz 1994, 195–196, and additional references). The fact that the phenomenon was short lived seems to indicate that, in the end, they failed. It is possible that the nearby towns did not view their independent status favorably and, one way or the other, caused them to abandon the sites.

Another possible explanation for their short period of existence is that their distance from any major power could have resulted in a lack of defence/security, and that this fact (whether in relation to semi-nomads or para-social groups, or even foreign armies and polities) forced them to leave the sites. Alternatively, perhaps the settlements were just the hinterland of the nearby towns (e.g. Jerusalem; Eisenberg and De Groot 2001), and that there was no antagonism between the two sectors. But again, such a reality could have existed only in a remote region.

The situation in the villages in the plains/valleys was more complex. Some of the sites seem to have been short lived too, such as Hamadiya (Maier 2000, 35, 39). Tell al-Hayyat and Tel Kitan, however, had long lives and it is likely that they had, as we have seen, developed as villages that were owned by an institution (investment colonies).

The exact historical processes surrounding the formation and disintegration of the various villages, however, is beyond the scope of the present paper, and should be conducted elsewhere.

Summary and conclusions

The Middle Bronze villages excavated so far seem to have belonged to two different types. The first type is that of ‘owned’ villages. Tell al-Hayyat and Tel Kitan seem to have been owned by an institution (a temple – whether an extension of an urban center or not). The inhabitants were probably just landless laborers or sharecroppers. The village at Kfar Rupin seems to have been owned by a wealthy family who lived either in the village, or in Tel Rehov.

The majority of houses in these villages were small, and stood in sharp contrast to the magnificent and large temples (or to the large dwelling at Kfar Rupin). The stratigraphical evidence that indicates that the cult preceded the habitation strengthens the view that the village was only an off-shoot of the temple. The analysis of the fruit remains from Tell al-Hayyat also supports this view. In these cases the landlords, or their agents, were probably present in the villages.

The second type are the autonomous villages, such as the villages of Manahat, Nahal Rephaim, Givat Sharet and probably also these excavated at 'Alona, Wadi Zimra, Ein Hagit and Ein Hofez. These villages were located farther away from the urban centers, and that distance enabled them to stay (or to become) independent. These villages usually also had temples, but these were small. The dwellings, on the other hand, were very large – much larger than the temples, therefore attesting to the surpluses of the inhabitants, and the local nature of the temple. The large dwellings were inhabited by large extended families that lived on their land. Most of these villages had a boundary wall – an element that in such a context seems to have enhanced the communal feelings and togetherness of the inhabitants, and even marked their independent status.

The conclusions presented above are preliminary, and the data is very limited, often the results of salvage excavations at sites which are not distributed evenly across the landscape. This paper, therefore,

intends to open the issue for discussion, and by no means attempts to finalize it. The history of the rural settlements in the different regions should be studied in more detail, using data from surveys, and compared with results from 'planned' excavations of the urban centers. This is especially relevant for two regions. Jerusalem's environment has been, in addition to the large number of rural sites that were excavated, surveyed intensively (Kloner 2000; 2001; 2003). A combined analysis of the data should greatly improve our understanding of the region's history, and will advance the analysis of each settlement sector.⁹

The second region is the Beth Shean Valley. For this region too, we currently possess a large body of data, and while integrated analyses were presented a couple of years ago (Maier 1997; Knapp 1993), this comparative study contributes further insights. With the additional data available (studies of pottery, for example Fischer 1999), a new synthesis should advance our understanding of the complex situation that existed in this region, and will shed more light on land tenure and urban-rural relations. The function of the various temples also deserves more scrutiny, and so does the chronology of the various sites.

Only when more study is devoted to the rural sector, will we be able to confirm, refute, or correct the conclusions presented above, and to advance the discussion of Middle Bronze Age II society.

Notes

¹ The 'simple' row house and the 'two row house' will receive a detailed treatment elsewhere; see also Faust 2000a.

² Most scholars believe that at least the two types of owned villages as well as the communal village existed in the ancient Near East (e.g. Trigger 2003, 315–337; Magness-Gardiner 1994; Zaccagnini 1999, and many others; but see, for example, Schloen 2001; Steinkeller 1999, 291; Lamberg-Karlovsky 1999, 187–188, who object to this view. This reality in Syria-Mesopotamia, however, exceeds the scope of the present paper).

³ Magness-Gardiner and Falconer (1994, 135–140) have discussed the similarities between the Tell al-Hayyat Temple and many of its counterparts, but suggested that these should be attributed to "a common set of cultural rules" (Magness-Gardiner and Falconer 1994, 139). The fact that many rural temples do not follow these 'rules' indicates that the situation is more complex, and these 'rules' were not shared by the entire Middle Bronze Age society. The similarities between the Tell al-Hayyat temple and its urban counterparts cannot therefore be attributed to some cultural concepts, encompassing the entire Middle Bronze Age society, regarding cultic space, and should be viewed as meaningful (an option they did

not absolutely rule out).

⁴ Most studies of housing in ancient Israel (e.g. Stager 1985, 17–18; Hopkins 1985, 152–157; Holladay 1992, 310, and many others) use Naroll's constant of one person per 10 sq.m. (Naroll 1962, and others, e.g. Kramer 1979, in regard to the Near East). It is important to note that although this figure is frequently used in Near-Eastern Archaeology, it is not universally accepted. Some scholars are of the opinion that a constant of 6 sq.m. per person should be used (e.g. Ember and Ember 1995, 98–99; Brown 1987; see also Zorn 1994, Table 1). It is also possible, and even probable, that there is no universal figure, and the ratio varies from one culture to another. It is important to note, therefore, that the present study deals with one culture, and therefore cultural variation is not expected to explain the phenomenon discussed here. Moreover, whatever was the exact number of people who lived in the various houses, it is clear that there is a big difference in this regard between the various houses discussed here, and this begs an explanation.

⁵ The expectation (quoted by Horwitz 1989, 50), that a large percentage of pigs is expected at more independent communities seems to be refuted. If the social analysis presented in this paper is correct, than a comparison of the finds in the villages discussed here (not including finds from cities) indicates the opposite.

⁶ Other lines of evidence that Falconer raised are more ambiguous, and are open to various interpretations. E.g. his expectation (Falconer 1995, 404) that "if Tell el-Hayyat began as a rural shrine, which later developed into a residential community, we might expect pronounced distinctions between the assemblages of phases 5 and 4". I don't find this expectation to be a necessity, and a local shrine could have developed to include dwellings without any clear differences in the overall assemblage (the expected differences are mainly statistical). Observed differences could be very revealing, but their absence does not necessarily imply that there were no changes. An additional example is his claim that the animal bones found in the temple reflect "communal ritual behaviour" (Falconer 1995, 405; see also Falconer 1994, 133). The finds are more likely to reflect differences between poor households, and the much more affluent temple.

⁷ According to Eisenberg (pers. comm.) it possible that during the last MBII phase there were no dwellings on the tell. If so, then perhaps during this phase the inhabitants of the village were removed to the slopes of the tell, whose summit was used only for the temple. A suggestion that at this stage the temple served simply as a road temple is less plausible, given the changes in the nature of the site throughout the MBII.

⁸ Some 57 sq.m. at Nahal Rephaim (Eisenberg 1993c, 91); and probably some 34 sq.m. at Givat Shareit (Bahat 1993, 254). The structure at Manahat, if indeed a temple, is more than 90 sq.m., but even this large building is still much smaller than the dwellings.

⁹ For attempts to combine data from Jerusalem and some of the villages around it, although not systematically and with no reference to surveys, see Steiner 2001, 20–23; Eisenberg and De Groot 2001.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Aren M. Maeir for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and Emanuel Eisenberg for giving me information regarding the excavations at Tel Kitan. A shorter version of the paper was presented at the 2003 ASOR annual meeting at Atlanta, and I would like to thank the participants for their comments. Thanks are also due to the anonymous reviewers, whose comments altered some parts of this paper drastically. The responsibility for any mistake or error is, of course, mine alone. This study was sponsored by the Dr Simon Krauthammer Chair in Archaeology and by the Moskovitz Foundation, both at Bar-Ilan University.

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