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Source: *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 253 (Winter, 1984), pp. 61-73

Published by: [The American Schools of Oriental Research](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1356940>

Accessed: 25/04/2013 03:54

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Urban Canaan in the Late Bronze Period*

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INTRODUCTION

The Late Bronze period in Canaan is well known through a rich collection of written documents, as well as through numerous archaeological excavations. The wealth of data, however, rather than presenting a unified and clear picture of urban life and the socioeconomic situation, presents many problems of interpretation because of its incoherent and sometimes conflicting nature. The issue of the strength of urban occupation, for instance, relies heavily on references to settlements that occur in Egyptian documents. The list of 79 entries of settlements in Canaan in the list of Thutmose III (Aharoni 1967: 140–53), the 24 or 25 entries on the same region (excluding Syria) in the el-Amarna letters—some with their own kings or rulers—as well as other place names mentioned in New Kingdom documents, create the expectation that we have a chain of strong, fortified urban settlements in Canaan. The socioeconomic situation seems well documented both in texts and in the form of the numerous imported goods found all over the country. The archaeological reality, however, often frustrates the picture of strength and wealth by revealing destruction, abandonment, and poverty. The conflicting data have led to two rather opposed points of view

concerning the realities of life in Canaan of the Late Bronze period.

The Problem

While it is universally accepted that the Egyptian conquest of Canaan beginning in the middle of the 16th century B.C., and its aftereffects, were devastating and left many destroyed and deserted sites (see especially Weinstein 1981), there is disagreement as to what followed. While Albright (1949: 101) claimed that “the wealth and culture of southern Canaan decreased rather steadily under foreign misrule, until it reached an extremely low ebb in the thirteenth century,” Kenyon (1971: 556) suggested that “by the last years of the Eighteenth Dynasty . . . almost every town for which there is evidence in the Middle Bronze Age was once more flourishing and some . . . had been newly established.”

More recently these two points of view have been discussed again, each supported by a reconsideration of both written and excavated data. Ahituv (1978: 104–5), following Albright, maintains that Egypt could not have had economic interests in Canaan, which was poor and mainly agricultural; Canaan could offer only its geographic position as an overland link between Egypt and

its northern neighbors. Ahituv stresses the gradual destruction of Canaanite city-states and the deterioration of their economy as a result of many internal and external factors. On the other hand, Na'aman (1981: 182–85) feels that Canaanite vassals paid their Egyptian overlords remarkable sums in silver and personnel as tribute, which would indicate a measure of wealth and a complex organization. Contrary to Ahituv, Na'aman (1981: 185) points to the process of intensification of Egyptian activity and occupation in southern Canaan from the 13th century onward which, he asserts, caused flourishing conditions in those sites.

These conflicting points of view call for a reconsideration of the urban situation in the Late Bronze Age. Concentration here will be on pure archaeological data, examining every excavated site in the country and leaving out of consideration the literary evidence and its bias.

Methodological Considerations

To understand what seems to be a complex and dynamic urban scene, the following points must be considered:

1. Settlement patterns: which sites were occupied during which phase of the Late Bronze period.
2. Territorial history: which sites were occupied continuously from the Middle Bronze period, which showed partial occupation, and which were newly established during the Late Bronze period.
3. Demography: establishment of the correct sizes of Late Bronze period sites and their density of occupation, especially as compared to the Middle Bronze period.
4. Urbanization: determination in particular of the existence or absence of city walls around the settlements, since this is an important factor in defining the urban character of a settlement.

Several problems had to be faced in the attempt to pursue these points. To establish the phase of occupation of a site, the available data from excavations, and to some extent from surveys as well, had to be broken down into one-century units; this was a problematic endeavor in view of the commonly used general designations of LB I (referring usually to the late 16th–15th centuries B.C. and LB II (14th–13th centuries B.C.). Whenever a breakdown of the evidence was not possible, a site was considered to have been occupied in both centuries of the relevant phase, thus somewhat

distorting the occupation picture. However, this was a relatively minor problem; in general, it was rather easy to establish the occupation of a given site in the various phases of the Late Bronze period and to define continuity or disruption of occupation from the Middle Bronze period onward.

Establishing the size of a settlement and its density were much more difficult. A common way to determine the size of a settlement is to outline its walls and calculate the area that they surround. This method is useful for drawing a static picture but it has drawbacks when a dynamic situation is to be investigated, since walls are massive structures that can—and do—outdate the layers of occupation contemporary with their construction. A city wall can survive for many generations, and it may protect a diminishing population that has abandoned parts of the settlement, or an expanding population that must build upward and crowd within the limited area. A wall can thus hardly reflect the fluctuations in actual size of a settlement over a given time, nor the processes that occurred within the surrounded area.

The case of the Middle Bronze settlements reoccupied in later periods clearly illustrates this problem. MB II fortifications were often so massive that they were practically indestructible; later generations could easily nestle inside the “crater” formed by the huge earthen ramparts. This, however, need not imply that the later settlements occupied the entire area surrounded by the fortifications, nor that the nature of occupation was similar.

Another, and more serious, problem was the realization that the majority of Late Bronze period settlements lacked city walls, although some made use of earlier fortifications. Despite the common reluctance to accept this fact, the accumulated evidence is strong. The lack of city walls prevents the use of even the most commonly accepted criterion for establishing the size of a settlement.

Processes of growth or decrease within a settlement were even more difficult to trace, especially since the excavated areas on a site are often small and the extent of their exposure limited.

In view of all these drawbacks posed by the nature of the evidence, some guidelines were formulated to deal with the specific questions at hand. First, it was most important to define the exact location where Late Bronze material was found on a site. Differences between overall occupation of a site and partial occupation, concentration

of finds on the acropolis only, lack of finds or only scattered finds on the slopes or lower terraces, often became the only clues for determining the size of the settlement, especially when city walls were lacking. Second, to trace fluctuations in density of occupation, it was necessary to observe any increase in the number of installations for everyday use, or on the other hand, their desertion or conversion to other functions. Silos—and especially water cisterns—can be very useful, as they are large and often cut into the rock and therefore hardly ever completely destroyed. Third, it was vital to note the appearance of burials dug into destroyed houses or else into open areas in a settlement where they had not occurred previously; this can give some clue to changes in the use and importance of certain areas in the settlement.

Individual indications, and certainly a combination of two or three signs, can supply information, or at least raise questions pertaining to changes in the size and intensity of occupation of a settlement.

The picture that is reconstructed here of settlements in Canaan of the Late Bronze period is based on a critical survey of all excavated sites for which any kind of publication was available, from full-fledged reports to raw excavation files. It is clearly realized that the available data are not complete, and thus this reconstruction should be regarded only as a step toward a better and more nearly correct understanding of the realities of life in Canaan of the Late Bronze period.¹

MASTER LIST OF SETTLEMENTS IN CANAAN OF THE LATE BRONZE PERIOD

Information about settlements of the Late Bronze period is presented in Table 1, which contains data on continuity of settlement from the MB II period to the 13th century B.C. in 77 excavated sites, as well as information about their size and the existence or absence of a city wall.

The list of MB II settlements is not complete and includes only sites that were either occupied again at some phase of the Late Bronze period or, although abandoned, had Late Bronze period cemeteries nearby. No attempt was made to give a full and detailed picture of the distribution or density of Middle Bronze period settlements, as this is beyond the scope of the present study (but see Broshi and Gophna 1984). Nevertheless, even the partial data presented here are sufficient to display the striking decrease, both in number and especially

in size, of Late Bronze period settlements.

The difficulties in dividing LB I and LB II have already been mentioned. The size of the settlements is calculated, somewhat arbitrarily, as follows:

1. Up to 10 dunams (4 dunams = 1 acre) = tiny settlements;
2. 11 to 50 dunams = small settlements;
3. 51 to 100 dunams = medium-sized settlements;
4. 101 to 199 dunams = large settlements;
5. 200 dunams or more = very large settlements.

The size-class of a settlement, when known, appears beside the plus-sign (+) designating occupation. The minus-sign (−) designates no occupation, and no sign indicates a lack of information.

The settlements are presented in longitudinal geographic regions parallel to the Mediterranean shore, sites in each region being listed from north to south. The Jezreel Valley, an integral part of the inner-valley system, is nevertheless inserted in its proper geographic position between the Galilee and Samaria Mountains.

DISCUSSION

Number of Settlements

The number of settlements in the different phases of the period is as follows:

MB II	54 (minimum)
16th century	24
15th century	28
14th century	48
13th century	56

The decrease in number of settlements from the Middle Bronze period to the first two centuries of the Late Bronze period is conspicuous and has been noted by many scholars (e.g., Kenyon 1971: 555). Town life picked up in the 14th century B.C., and by the 13th century the number of occupied sites climbed back to Middle Bronze levels. Although the numbers given here are representative only of the state of our knowledge today, the trend seems clear, and it is doubtful whether new excavations will drastically change the picture, as summarized in Figure 1.

When information obtained from surface surveys is considered, the marked decline in the number of settlements between the Middle and Late Bronze periods is brought into sharper and rather startling

TABLE 1. Settlements in Canaan from MB II to the 13th Century B.C.

Site	Period of occupation and size of settlement									
	MB II	Size	16th century	Size	15th century	Size	14th century	Size	13th century	Size
<i>Coastal Plain</i>										
Achzib	+	4	+	4	—		—		+	1
Avdon	+	2	—		—		—		—	
Kabri	+	5	—		—		—		—	
Nahariya	+		—		—		—		+	
Acco	+		—		—		+		+	
Tel Bira	+	5	—		—		—		—	
Tel Kisan									+	3
Tel Regev Harbaj*							+	2	+	2
Tell Abu Hawam	—		—		—				+	2
Shiqmona	—		+	1	+	1	+	1	+	1
Tel Megadim	—		—		—		+		+	
ṢAtlit	+		—		—		—		—	
Tell Nami	+	1	+	1	+	1	+	1	+	1
Dor	+	4					+		+	
Tel Mevorakh	+	1			+	1	+	1	+	1
Tel Zeror	+	2	—		—		+	2	+	2
Tel Girit	—		—		—		+	1	+	1
Tel Hefer (Ifshar)	—		—		+	2	+	2	+	2
Tel Nuria	—		—		+		+		+	
Tel Burgata									+	1
Tel Mikhal	+		+	1	+	1	+	1	—	
Tell Jerisheh	+	3	+	3	+	3	+	3	+	3
Aphek	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2
Jaffa	+	2	+	1	+	1	+	1	+	1
Mesubim Intersection	+						+	1	+	1
Yavneh-Yam	+	4	—		+	4	—		—	
Tell es-Sultan	+	2	—		—		—		—	
Tel Mor	+	1	+	1	+	1	+	1	+	1
Ashdod	+	5	+	3	+	3	+	3	+	3
Ashkelon	+						+		+	
Tell el-ʿAjjûl	+	4	+	2	+	1	+	1	—	
Deir el-Balah	—		—		—		+	1	+	1
Tell Ridan	+	2	—		—		—		—	
Tell Jemmeh*	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2
Tell el-Farʿah (S)	+	3	—		—		—		+	1
<i>Samaria and Judean Mountains, Foothills</i>										
Gezer	+	4	—		—		+	2	+	2
Tel Batash (Timna)	+	2					+	2	+	2
Beth-shemesh	+	2	—				+	2	+	2
Lachish	+	5	+	5	+	5	+	5	+	5
Tel Šippor									+	1
Tell el-Ḥesi	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2
Tel Nagila	+	3	+	3	—		—		—	
Tell Beit Mirsim	+	2	—		—		+	2	+	2
Tel Sheriʿa	—		+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2
Tel Maʿaravim	—		—		—		+	1	+	1
Tel Halif (Lahav)	—		+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2
<i>Upper Galilee</i>										
Tel Qadesh	+	3	—		—				+	1
Gush Halav	—		—		—		—		+	
Tell er-Ruweisa	+		—		—		—		+	

TABLE 1, *continued*

Site	Period of occupation and size of settlement									
	MB II	Size	16th century	Size	15th century	Size	14th century	Size	13th century	Size
Jezreel Valley										
Tell Qashish (Qasis)	+				+	1	—		+	1
Yokneam							+		+	
Tell Abu Zureiq									+	
Megiddo	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2
Ta'anakh*	+	3	+	2	+	2	—		—	
Tel Yosef	+	1	+	1	+	1	+	1	+	1
Samaria and Judean Mountains										
Jenin									+	
Dothan	+	3	—		—		+	1	+	1
Tell el-Far'ah (N)	+						+		+	
Shechem*	+	2	—		+	2	+	2	+	2
Tell Marjameh	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2	—	
Bethel*	+	2	—		—		+	2	+	2
Gibeon	+	4	—		—		—		—	
Jerusalem	+	2					+	2	+	2
Beit Zur	+	2	+	2	—		—		—	
Hebron	+									
Tell Rabud (Debir)	+	3	—		—		+	3	—	
Jordan Valley and tributaries										
Dan	+	5								
Hazor*	+	5	+	5	+	5	+	5	+	5
Tell 'Oreimeh (Kinneret)*					+	2	+	2	+	2
Karnei Hittin*							+	1	+	1
Tel Yin'am	+	2							+	1
Tel Rekhes	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2	+	2
Tel Kitan	+	1	+	1	+	1	—		—	
Beth-shan							+	2	+	2
Deir 'Alla							+			
Jericho	+	2	—		—		+	1	—	

*Settlement has a city wall.

focus. Surveys can give a full picture of the number of settlements in a region, since information is collected not only on the large and conspicuous sites but also on small and unobtrusive ones. However, the data that surveys provide is often only general, and it is seldom possible to subdivide the pottery collected on a site into phases. The results of various surveys are therefore presented here (Table 2) in the most general way possible, that is, with a division into Middle Bronze and Late Bronze periods only.

The number of Late Bronze period settlements in the surveyed regions is only 37 percent of the number in the Middle Bronze period (cf. Broshi

and Gophna 1984). The decline in the number of settlements seems, therefore, much sharper than witnessed in the excavated sites—too sharp, as a matter of fact, not to require some consideration. The obvious discrepancy can be at least partially explained by considering several other conspicuous differences between settlements of the two periods (differences to be discussed later and only mentioned here). It was found that the size of Late Bronze period settlements was greatly reduced, and many tended to be concentrated on the acropolis of the tells. If the pottery samples were collected on the lower terraces only, Late Bronze period remains could easily have been missed. The

TABLE 2. Number of Sites as Obtained in Various Surveys

<i>Region</i>	<i>MB</i>	<i>LB</i>
Judean Mountains (Kochavi 1972: 83)	6	3
Judean Foothills (Kochavi 1972: 83)	3	1
Judean Foothills (Dagan 1980: 30)	2	7
Judean Desert and Jericho Plain (Kochavi 1972: 146)	2	—
Southern Samaria Region (Kochavi 1972: 189)	7	3
Northern Samaria Region (Kochavi 1972: 237)	40	12
Eastern Lower Galilee (Zori 1977)	40	13
Jordan Valley (Mellaart 1962: 115; Ibrahim, Saurer & Yassine 1976: 41–66)	14	6
Sea of Galilee Plain (Dayan 1958)	27	14
Hula Valley (Dayan 1962)	11	7
Beth-shan Valley (Zori 1977: 154)	43	21
Golan Heights (Kochavi 1972: 293)	30	8
Southern Carmel Range (Olami 1981: 13)	45	3
Atlit Coast (Ronen and Olami 1978: xv)	1	1
Western Galilee Coast (Frenkel 1978: 18–19)	1	2
Total	272	101

distribution of Late Bronze settlements is also an important factor, as there was a shift of settlement concentration to the Coastal Plain and along important communication routes. The mountainous parts of the country and the inner regions, where most surveys have been conducted, certainly suffered from a process of desertion.

Size of Settlements

While the pattern of decrease and gradual increase in the number of settlements during the Late Bronze period is common knowledge, the changes in their size has been neither noted nor evaluated. The data are presented in Figure 2 and Table 3.

When the data are simplified into three categories only—tiny settlements (up to 10 dunams), small and medium-sized settlements (11–100 dunams), and large and very large settlements (over 100 dunams)—the following picture emerges.

TABLE 3. Number of Settlements from the MB II to the 13th Century*

<i>Size</i>	<i>MB II</i>	<i>16th cent.</i>	<i>15th cent.</i>	<i>14th cent.</i>	<i>13th cent.</i>
1	11	29	37	37	43
2 + 3	61	59	52	58	52
4 + 5	28	12	12	5	5

*By size groups, percents

When the percentage of small to medium-sized settlements remained more or less stable in all phases, with a general decline toward the end of the period, there was a fourfold increase in the number of tiny settlements, from 11 percent to 43 percent of the total number of settlements. On the other hand, the number of large and very large settlements sharply decreased so that by the 14th century they comprised less than one-fifth of their number in the MB II period. Of the six sites in Class 5, only Lachish, 200 dunams (Tufnell 1958; Aharoni 1975; Ussishkin 1978) and Hazor, 840 dunams (Yadin *et al.* 1958, 1960, 1961; Yadin 1972) survived for the duration of the Late Bronze period. Kabri, with 600 dunams (Prausnitz and Kempinski 1977: 156–66; Prausnitz 1973: 219), and Tell Bira, with 260 dunams (Prausnitz 1962: 143; 1975: 23–25; 1980: 206–7), both Middle Bronze period sites in the northern coastal plain, were abandoned altogether. Dan with its 200 dunams (Biran 1976: 202–6; 1978: 268–71; 1981: 103–5; Laughlin 1981: 21–37), had not yet yielded more than a handful of Late Bronze sherds in any of its 20 excavation areas. Ashdod (Dothan 1971: 2–13; 1973: 122–38; 1981: 151–53) declined in size and in the Late Bronze period occupied only the 80 dunam acropolis. Of the six large (Class 4) settlements of the MB II period, Achzib (Prausnitz 1973: 319–23; 1975: 202–10; Zori 1961: 62) survived into the 16th century B.C. and was then abandoned. Yavneh-Yan (Kaplan 1969: 120–21)

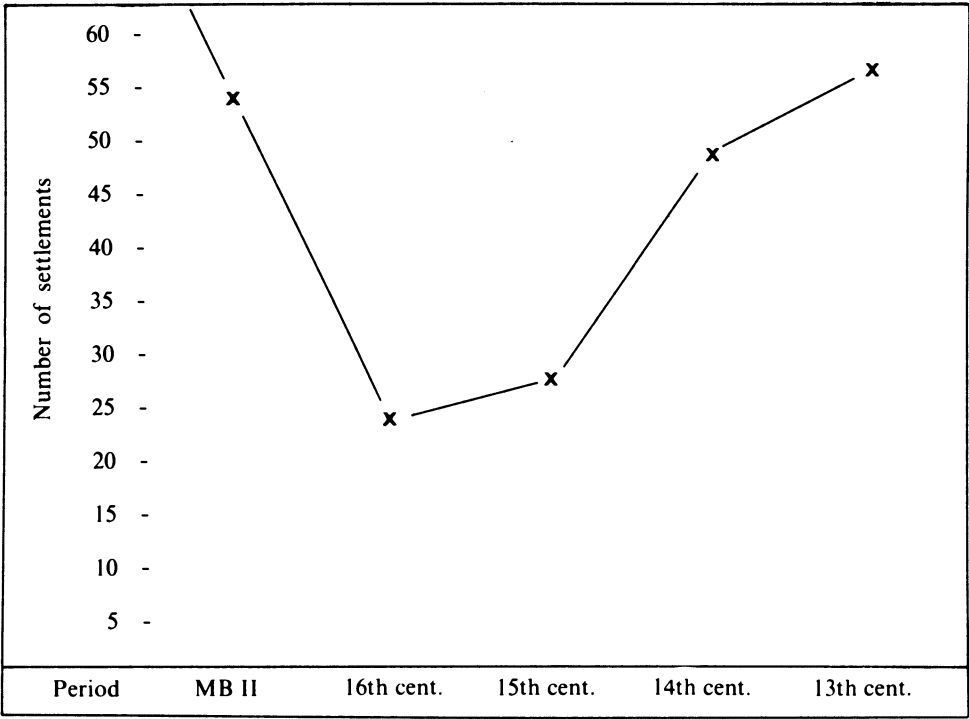


Fig. 1. Fluctuations in number of settlements.

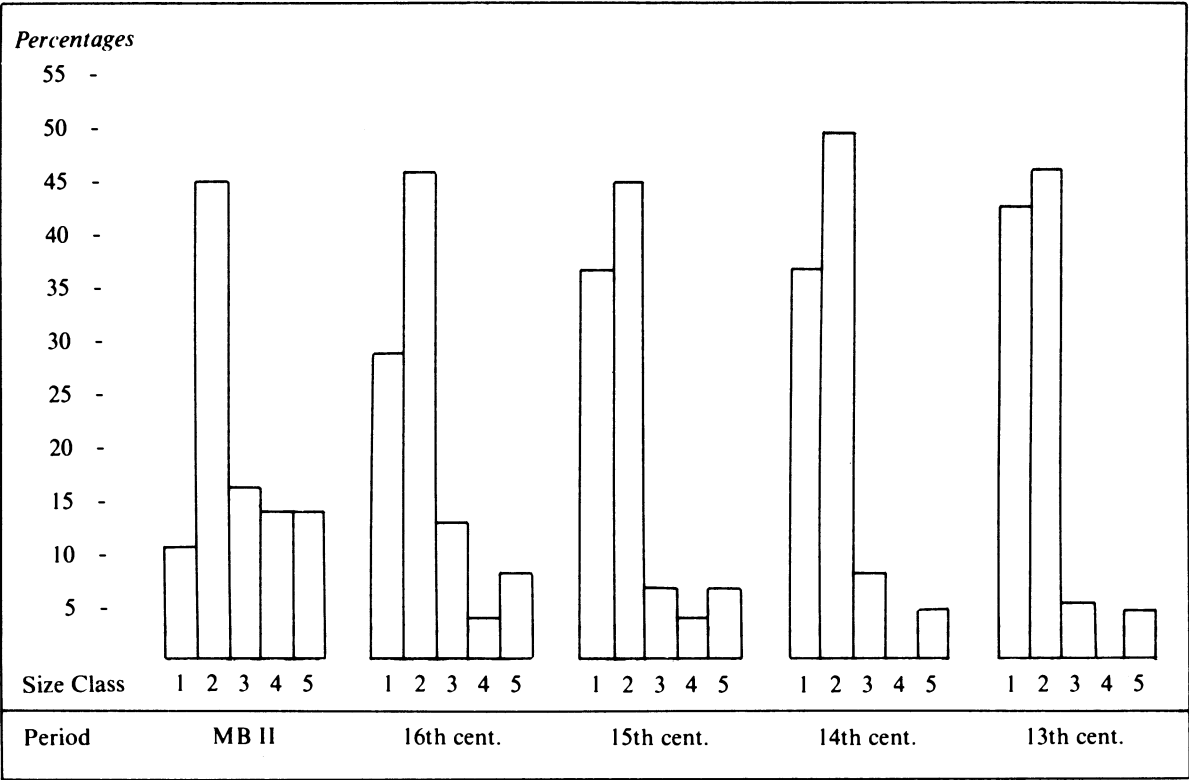


Fig. 2. Size of settlements (in percents of total available data).

TABLE 4. Size of Settlements from the MB II to the Thirteenth Century*

Category	MB II	16th cent.	15th cent.	14th cent.	13th cent.
1	25	35	50	75	95
2	700	385	420	700	700
3	525	225	150	225	225
4	900	150	150	—	—
Kabri	600				
Tell Bira	260				
Ashdod	280				
Lachish	200	200	200	200	200
Dan	200				
Hazor	840	840	840	840	840
Total	4350 (at least)	1835	1810	2040	2060

* In dunams

survived into the 15th century only. Tell el-^cAjjûl (Petrie 1931–1934; Mackay and Murray 1952; Kempinski 1974: 75–87; Gonen 1981: 69–78, 80*) was destroyed by the end of the MB II period, although part of the settlement was occupied in the 16th century B.C. and later by an Egyptian fortress. Gezer (Macalister 1912; Dever *et al.* 1970, 1974, 1976: 438–39) was destroyed at the end of the Middle Bronze period, and when occupation was renewed it seems to have been limited to the western part of the tell. Gibeon (Pritchard 1962) was abandoned altogether. The situation of Dor, which has not yet been clarified, probably will be better understood based on the current excavations.

The actual size of all settlements for which information is available is calculated in Table 4, using average numbers of dunams per size-class: Class 1: 5 dunams, Class 2: 35 dunams, Class 3: 75 dunams, Class 4: 150 dunams. The Class 5 sites are listed with their actual sizes.

These numbers are startling. Even in the 13th century B.C., when the number of settlements was nearly comparable to that of the MB II period, the total occupied area was only about 45 percent of the listed area of MB II period settlements, which actually means that it was much less. It is also apparent that the gradual increase in the number of settlements between the 16th and the 13th centuries added only about 12 percent to the occupied area. Again, the numbers are tentative, since the total number of settlements is not yet known. But even if we double the total area for each period to include settlements not yet discovered, not yet published, or for which no information is supplied, the total area of occupation in

the Late Bronze period was nonetheless very small indeed. The proportion between the MB II settlements and those of Late Bronze, as well as between different phases during the Late Bronze period, would remain the same.

In view of the decline in the number of large settlements and the gradual reduction in size of the occupied area, Hazor is an enigma. In the Late Bronze period Hazor remained an abnormally large settlement, more than four times the size of Lachish, the second largest settlement in the country, and about 16 times larger than the average 50-dunam settlements. Moreover, the 840 dunams of Hazor represent only about 40 percent of the calculable settled areas in the entire country in the 14th–13th centuries B.C. and about 20 percent, even if the overall area is doubled. It is difficult to understand what social and economic conditions enabled Hazor to retain its unique position. Perhaps Hazor benefitted from the destruction or reduction of its near and more distant neighbors and competitors such as Dan, and annexed arable land, water resources, and control of trade routes formerly shared with others. This question requires further consideration.

On the whole then, the Late Bronze period was a time of dramatic weakening of the urban fabric. Along with the gradual increase in the number of settlements from the very low point in the 16th century B.C., the nature of the settlements changed. The tiny settlements now made up about 40 percent of the number of settlements; and they, together with the small and medium-sized settlements, formed the overwhelming majority of the settled area of Canaan and constituted between 88 percent and 95 percent of the total number of settlements.

This, no doubt, indicates both a substantially smaller population than in the Middle Bronze period, and a breakdown of the system of medium to large city-states that formed the backbone of Middle Bronze Age Canaan. This breakdown is corroborated by further elements to be discussed later.

Continuity of Occupation from Middle to Late Bronze Period

Only 17 of the 77 settlements were occupied uninterruptedly from the Middle to the Late Bronze period. On the coast only three sites had such a pattern: Tel Nami (Unnamed 1977: 21–22), Tel Mikhal (Herzog 1978: 123; 1981: 119–20), and Tel Mor (M. Dothan 1973: 22–33; 1981: 151–53), all tiny sites that probably were small ports. Tel Mor seems to have been first settled only at the very end of the Middle Bronze period. Farther inland were Tell Jerisheh (Avigad 1976: 575–78), Aphek (Kochavi 1975: 17–43; 1979: 22; 1980: 18), and Ashdod (M. Dothan 1971; 1972: 2–13; 1973: 122–33; 1981: 151–53, 82*), as well as Tell Mevorakh (Stern 1976: 49–50), whose function changed from a small settlement to a roadside temple. In the foothills region only Lachish and Tell Sheria are listed; in the inner valleys, only Megiddo (Loud 1948) and Tell Yosef (Zori 1972), and, in the Jordan Valley, Hazor. All other sites were abandoned for the duration of the Late Bronze period or at least for part of it. This further stresses the situation of dislocation of urban Canaan that we have already seen.

New Settlements of the Late Bronze Period

In contrast to the abandonment of old settlements, there was limited activity in establishing new sites at one phase or another during the Late Bronze period. Two types of such new settlements can be discerned. Along the coast the few small ports that survived from the Middle Bronze period were supplemented by a string of new sites—Rosh Haniqra (Tadmor 1978: 1023–24), Aczib (resettled on a small scale after a gap in occupation), Nahariya (Yogev 1980: 8–9), Tell Abu Hawam (Hamilton 1935: 1–69; Anati 1975: 9–12; Weinstein 1980), Shiqmona (Elgavish 1975: 257–58; 1977: 166–67), Tell Megadim (Broshi 1969: 248) and Tell Girit (Gophna 1970: 8)—all on the northern

half of the Mediterranean coastline, as far south as the Sharon Plain. These seem to have been small harbors that served the growing maritime trade with Cyprus and Mycenae (cf. Weinstein 1980). Not one new harbor has been found on the southern part of the coast, perhaps because of the second type of settlement activity centered there. In the 14th century B.C. and more so in the 13th century, the Egyptians became active in establishing strongholds in Canaan, and especially in the southern Coastal Plain. The Egyptian fortresses and strongholds at Deir el-Balah (T. Dothan 1978: 266–67; 1981: 126–31), Tell el-Far'ah (S) (Petrie 1930; Starkey and Harding 1932), Tell el-'Ajjûl, Tell Jemeh (Amiran and Van Beek 1976: 545–48; Van Beek 1974: 274–75; 1977: 171–76; 1979: 54–55), Tel Mor, Jaffa (Kaplan and Kaplan 1977: 532–40), Aphek, and then Beth-shan (James 1966: 207–12; 215–25; Kempinski 1975: 213–15) continued the string of fortresses on the vital routes of northern Sinai (Oren 1980: 25), and helped Egypt tighten her grip on southern Canaan and the highways leading north. The increase in the number of Egyptian and Egyptianizing objects and architectural elements in settlements and tombs and the introduction of foreign burial customs—especially burial in anthropoid coffins—testify to the influx of new political and ethnic elements in the population of the country in the form of Egyptian and Egyptianizing mercenaries (see the summary in Weinstein 1981). The effect on the Canaanite population of Egyptian control in the southern Coastal Plain and the Shephela regions probably was rather oppressive; it certainly did not encourage normal, full-fledged urban life. If we subtract these Egyptian strongholds from the total number of settlements in Canaan, we get an even sharper picture of weakened town life in the Late Bronze period.

Fortification of the Settlements

Another problem that emerges from a critical survey of the excavated sites is the realization that the majority of them were not fortified; this includes even the large and strategically-located settlements. Only a handful of settlements were surrounded by a wall during the entire period, or even during part of it. It is true that Megiddo had a well-constructed monumental gate, but nowhere is this gate connected with a wall (Loud 1948, figs. 381, 382). Moreover, private houses were actually

built over the ruins of the Middle Bronze period wall, which was not replaced by a new line. The same process was observed at Beth-shemesh (Grant and Wright 1939: 28, fig. 2). Lachish also had a gate, but no sign of a wall was found in either of the sections cut into the slopes of the tell. Perhaps both at Megiddo and at Lachish the gate led to a fortified palace while the town was left unprotected, or else the gate's function was more ceremonial than practical. At Gezer the first phase of the "Outer Wall" was attributed by the excavators to LB II, but the evidence has been disputed (Dever 1982) and references therein). The lack of a wall at Ashdod was explained by erosion (Dothan 1971: 19; 1972: 3–4). In nearly all these cases, and in many others, the towns could not possibly have made use of an earlier wall and thus lacked fortifications of any sort. Hazor is again an exception, as the old Middle Bronze earthen rampart could easily have offered protection to the Late Bronze period city.

The almost total lack of town fortifications is a striking phenomenon in the history of settlement in the region. Contemporary historical sources clearly convey the impression of a restless period, lacking civil security. The Egyptian kings led frequent military campaigns into or through Canaan, the city-states often quarreled with each other, and the situation deteriorated further because of the occasional raids of the Shusu and the meddling

of the Habiru. In such a situation a city wall would seem to have been a natural and universal urban feature. Its absence should perhaps be explained as an outcome of the Egyptian policy in Canaan, intended to weaken the power of the semi-independent city-states and to prevent uprisings and revolts.

CONCLUSION

When the urban situation in Late Bronze period Canaan is studied carefully, the picture seems quite clear. The country never recovered from the heavy blow it received from Egypt at the end of the Middle Bronze period. Although in the 14th and 13th centuries there was a wave of new settlements, these settlements were small and added only a relatively minor area to the urban landscape. These new settlements—those on the sea coast that probably functioned as harbors and those on the southern Coastal Plain and in the Shephela region, which served Egyptian imperialistic intentions—were so small that they did not significantly alter the overall picture. The lack of city walls in the great majority of settlements only corroborates the picture of the break-up of urban life.

The historic implications of this picture, especially in connection with the later Israelite conquest and settlement, may be far reaching, but they are beyond the scope of this study.

NOTES

*This study is part of the author's forthcoming doctoral dissertation at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The study of Weinstein (1981) became available only when this article was in galley-proofs, as did the manuscript of Broshi and Gophna (1984).

¹The pitfalls awaiting a study uncritically using raw data from surveys and occasional finds are clearly illustrated by Thompson's exhaustive but uncritical pub-

lication (1979). Thompson scanned the Department of Antiquities files and used untested or even disproved and obsolete data alongside information obtained from orderly excavations. The picture of settlement thus obtained is quite misleading. For an evaluation of Thompson's study see Kalai (1981: 261–63) and Dever (1980: 60, n. 48).

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