

The Palestinian City-States of the Bronze Age

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The Background

Palestine, both west and east of the river Jordan, the present day Israel, Palestine and Jordan, also called the Southern Levant, may be divided into five geographical zones going from west to east. Along the Mediterranean lies the coastal strip or coastal zone, which is narrow in the north, but broadens towards the south. East of this we find the central mountain range which is a southern continuation of the Lebanon range. Between the coastal zone and the mountain range lie the lowlands, in this paper taken together with the coastal zone. To the east of the mountainous zone lies the Jordan-Arabah Valley, a part of the Rift Valley reaching from Turkey to East Africa, with the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea below sea-level. Finally, east of the Jordan Valley lies the Transjordanian mountain range which passes into the Syro-Arabian desert. The land is furthermore intersected by a number of cross-valleys going from west to east, notably the Jizre'el Valley (Strange [1998] 8-13 with frontispiece and maps 1 and 3).

In the mountains of Palestine the vegetation consisted of dense forests of oak, pistachio and carob trees, with some open spaces in between, while the rest of the land was steppe or even desert (Joffe [1993] 25 with references; cf. Strange [1998] 13 map 5). A number of edible plants grew in this land, e.g. barley, emmer, peas, and lentils, while the fauna included dogs, sheep, goats, pigs and cattle (Redman [1978] 112-140). This became the basis for the emergence of agriculture and of villages in the Neolithic Period. Later also viticulture was introduced, and olive oil production expanded. The land thus had great potential for agriculture and, later, urban centres to develop.

On the other hand, apart from being mountainous, the land was also hard to penetrate because of wild animals like bears, boars, wolves and lions, and it was regarded as a place unsuited for living by those Egyptians who traveled there.

“Lo, the miserable Asiatic,
He is wretched because of the place he’s in:

Short of water, bare of wood,
Its paths are many and painful because of
mountains”

(Instructions for Merikare quoted from Lichtheim
[1997] 64).

It is noteworthy that the country is described as short of water. Due to the peculiar pattern of rain, falling on the western slopes of the mountains and only in a rather short period in winter (cf. Strange [1998] 13 with map 4 and diagram), people were dependent solely on the water from natural springs, until the water-tight water reservoir or the cistern was invented, some time in the second millennium B.C. The oldest example I know is from the Middle Bronze II B Period, 17th-16th cent. BC (Yadin [1972] 38f.). A solution was found already in the large open reservoirs in Arad and Ai; the oldest significantly coincide with the first walled cities of the Early Bronze II Period. They may reflect those found in Jawa in north-eastern Jordan from the Early Bronze I Period, and to have reservoirs was possibly an idea brought into Palestine, but forgotten with the Early Bronze Age (for Arad, see Stern [1993] 43; Amiran [1978] 13; for Ai, see Stern [1993] 78f.; Callaway [1978] 51f.; for Jawa, see Helms [1981] 157-98).

This country, on the other hand, fragmented into numerous small valleys and with difficult passage between its various parts, is ideally suited to the development of city-states, and was very seldom united into a larger unit except when under foreign rule.

In a discussion of the city-states in Palestine, it must also be taken into account that the great river civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt flourished contemporaneously with the Bronze Age Period in Palestine (ca. 3500-1200 BC), and that Palestine, together with Syria of which it is geographically an extension, was a transit area and open to influences from both civilizations (Strange [1998] 14 map 6; 17-20 maps 10-15).

In the Bronze Age, however, Egypt was the only great power which had an interest in dominating Palestine, as is attested by the inscriptions of the

Egyptian kings as well as by many literary sources found in Egypt.

The Evidence

As the population of Palestine in the greater part of the Bronze Age was illiterate, the evidence for city-states is mostly archaeological, and because of this we cannot adduce any proof that Palestine was organized into a number of city-states instead of a number of less institutionalized settlements such as we see in, e.g., the Neolithic Period. From one short period in history, however, *viz.*, the Amarna Age, the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten (1352-36) and a short period before, corresponding archaeologically to the Late Bronze II Period, we have a corpus of texts pertaining to the city-states of Palestine (for the Amarna letters, see conveniently Izre'el [1995] 2411-19). In this period it is demonstrable that Palestine was split up into city-states, and by inference it is reasonable to postulate a similar kind of political organization during the other periods of the Bronze Age, at least from the Early Bronze II Period when the first walled cities emerged.

As the city-states are best known from the Amarna Period of the Late Bronze Age, these will be taken as a model for Palestinian city-states during the entire Bronze Age. The city-state system of the Amarna Period has been investigated many times, most recently in an exhaustive treatment by Finkelstein (1997), who skilfully combines archaeological and written evidence. This study is largely based on the results of Finkelstein's work.

History

In the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Periods (ca. 8/7000 - 3500 BC) all of Palestine, both west and east of the river Jordan, was settled in a large number of villages. Although the oldest large towns in the area go back to the Neolithic Period – e.g. Jericho west of the Jordan river (Kenyon [1993] 674-78) and Ain Ghazal east of the river at the edge of the desert (Rollefson [1997] 36-38) – they can hardly be called cities; more likely they should be viewed as large conglomerations of houses or large villages.

The Chalcolithic Age ended ca. 3500 BC with a collapse, a catastrophe caused by either a climatic change or an invasion (Gonen [1992] 79f.), although any explanation seems to be, at best, tentative.

In the Early Bronze I Period (ca. 3500-3000 BC) Palestine on both sides of the river was densely settled

(Joffe [1993] 39-61 with fold-out map), in the south under heavy Egyptian influence (Gophna [1995] 277-80), but in the north probably also influenced by immigrant groups from the north (Hennesy [1967] 35-46).

At the end of the Early Bronze I Period, around 3000 BC, there was a population crisis all over the country: many large settlements shrank to a fraction of their former size, and others were abandoned, while the population became pastoralists or migrants (Finkelstein [1995] 49-55; Gophna [1995] 273f.). This is a recurring phenomenon in the history of Palestine especially after the beginning of the Bronze Age. Every now and then there is a break in settlement, a collapse of urbanized society: the cities and villages dwindle or disappear, the population drops and people become pastoralists or migrants (the best description of this pattern is Finkelstein [1995]). Such periods are found already between the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period and the Pottery Neolithic Period; between the Pottery Neolithic Period and the Chalcolithic Period; between the Chalcolithic Period and Early Bronze Age; at the end of the Early Bronze Age in the Intermediate Early Bronze/Middle Bronze Period (corresponding to the First Intermediate Period in Egypt); at the end of the Middle Bronze Age in the Middle Bronze/Late Bronze Intermediate Period (corresponding to the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt); at the end of the Late Bronze Age in the Late Bronze/ Iron Age Intermediate Period (partly corresponding to the Third Intermediate Period in Egypt cf. Kitchen [1973]); and later also at least in the Ottoman Period from the conquest of Palestine by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1517 to the conquest by the British in 1917 (Lemche [1985] 134; Strange [forthcoming a]). The reasons for this pattern are still obscure, but certainly climatic change sometimes plays a role, most notably in the case of the Early Bronze Age to Middle Bronze Age Intermediate Period caused by a drought, and coinciding with the First Intermediate Period in Egypt (Joffe [1993] 89-93).

When society recovered in Early Bronze Age II (about 2900 BC), it was on a much smaller scale. There were fewer and smaller settlements, but several were now walled, and the southern Levant became urbanized (Joffe [1993] 64f,68-79 with fold-out map). In the present state of knowledge it is impossible to decide whether this urbanization was an indigenous development (Finkelstein [1995b]; Gophna [1995] 274f.), or whether it was the result of diffusion from either Egypt, which had dominated southern Palestine in the Early Bronze Age I (Kempinski and Gilead [1991] 189), or from the north, as Tell Jawa, the

earliest walled town in the southern Levant, was built already at the end of Early Bronze Age I (see also Joffe [1993] 63-87).

Be this as it may, a number of fortified cities were built all over the country, cities which were apparently organized as independent city-states in a peer-polity system. They constituted a network with territory of various sizes, depending apparently on the geographical and geopolitical conditions, but surely also on the opportunity for agriculture and trade. These city-states lasted until the Early Bronze/Middle Bronze Intermediate Period (ca. 2300-2000 BC) when the cities were abandoned, and the population of the country became nomads.

In the Early Bronze II Period we find Dan (Tell el-Qadi Palestine Grid 211294), Kadesh (Khirbet Qadish PG 199279), Kabri (el-Tell and el-Nahr PG 163268), Shimron (Khirbet Sammuniyeh PG 170234), Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak PG 204236), Tell el-Muhaffer (PG 170205), Aphek (Tell Ras el-Ain PG 143168), Tell el-Far'ah (North PG 182182), Khirbet el-Makhruq (PG 198171), Tell Yarmut (Khirbet el-Yarmuk PG 147124), Ai (el-Tell PG 174147) and Arad (Tell Arad PG 162075); see Fig. 1.

Later in the Early Bronze III Period we find Dan, Kadesh, Kabri, Hazor (Tell Waqqas PG 203269), Shimron, Beth Yerah, Megiddo (Tell el-Mutesellim PG 167221), Beth-Shan (Tell el-Husn PG 197212), Tel Yarmut, Ai and Tel Erani (Tell el-Sheikh Ahmed el-'Areini PG 129133); see Fig. 2 (Finkelstein [1995b] 57-64 with maps).

The factors taken into consideration by Finkelstein are:

1. The size of the cities.
2. The presence and strength of fortifications systems.
3. Further evidence for public construction.
4. The settlement patterns in the countryside.
5. Geographical logic.
6. The situation at the beginning of the second millennium.

For Palestine east of Jordan, only two major sites have been excavated, Bab el-Dhrah and Zeraqoun (this is to be linked closely with Tell el-Fukhar, see Strange [1997]), and there is not yet sufficient material to allow territorial reconstruction (Finkelstein [1995] 56).

This system collapsed at the end of the Early Bronze Age, ca. 2300 BC, and the country entered the Early Bronze Age/Middle Bronze Age Intermediate Period.

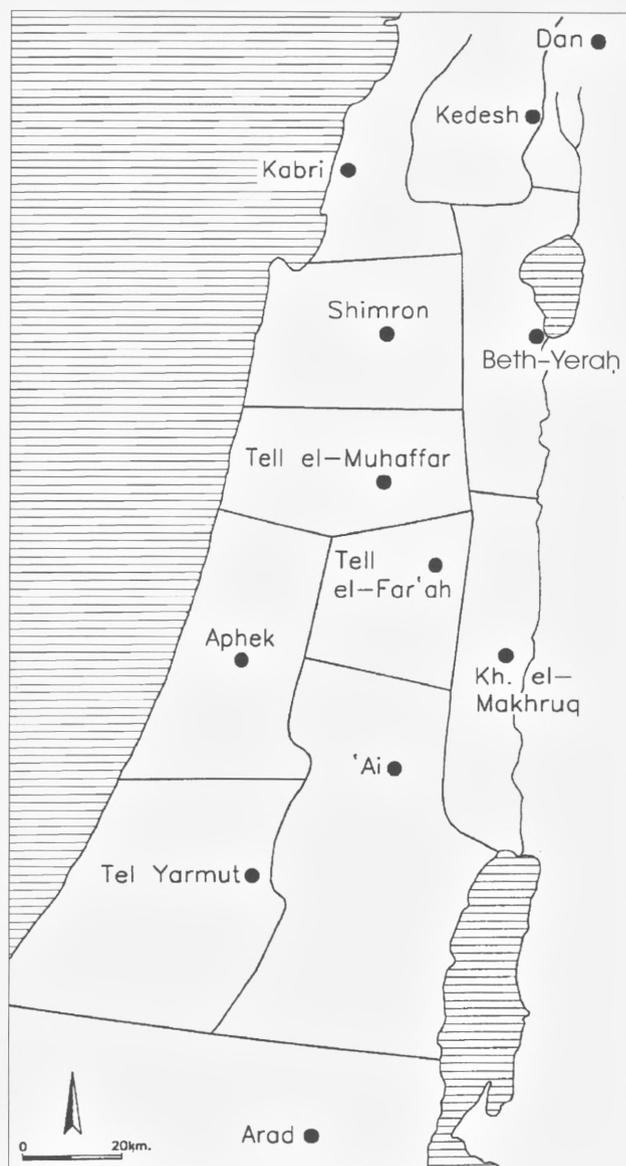


Fig. 1. EB II peer-polity centres (Finkelstein [1997]).

After 2000, at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, the cities in Palestine reemerged, and with them also the city-states. Again it is probable that it was diffusion from the north, as the earliest pottery from the Middle Bronze suggests.

Naturally the new city-states were centered around the same settlements as before the intermediate period, either in Early Bronze II or in the Early Bronze III Period, the places probably dictated by geo-political conditions, although Finkelstein finds a few new city-state locations: Akko (Tell el-Fukhar PG 158258), Dor (Khirbet el-Burj PG142224), Shechem (Tell Balata PG 177179), Gezer (Tell Abu Shusha PG 142140), Jerusalem, Tell el-Safi (PG

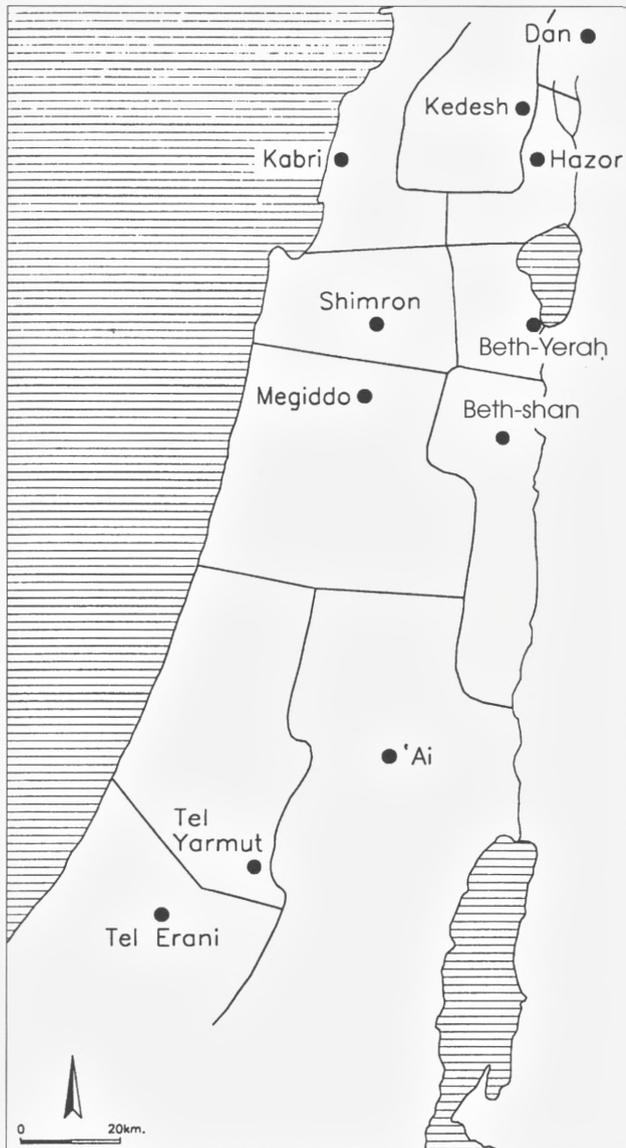


Fig. 2. EB III peer-polity centres (Finkelstein [1997]).

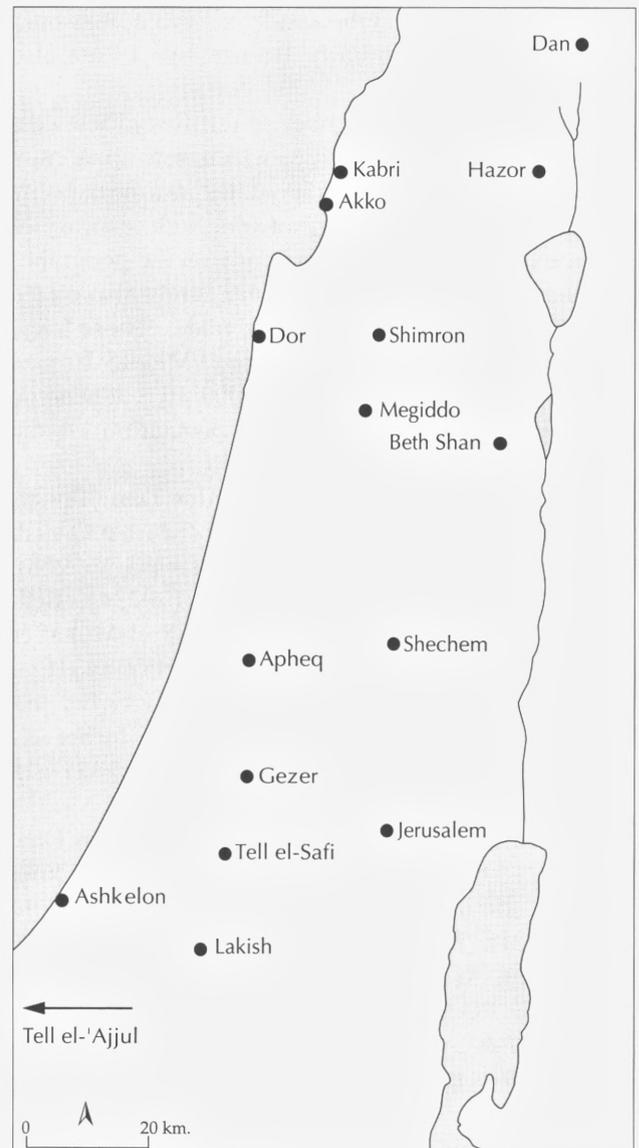


Fig. 3. MB peer-polity centres.

135123), Ashkelon (Asqalan PG 197189), Lakish (Tell Duweir PG 135108) and Tell el-'Ajjul (PG 093097); the other city-states being Dan, Hazor, Kabri, Shimron, Megiddo, Beth Shan, Apheq, (Finkelstein [1992] 215); see Fig. 3.

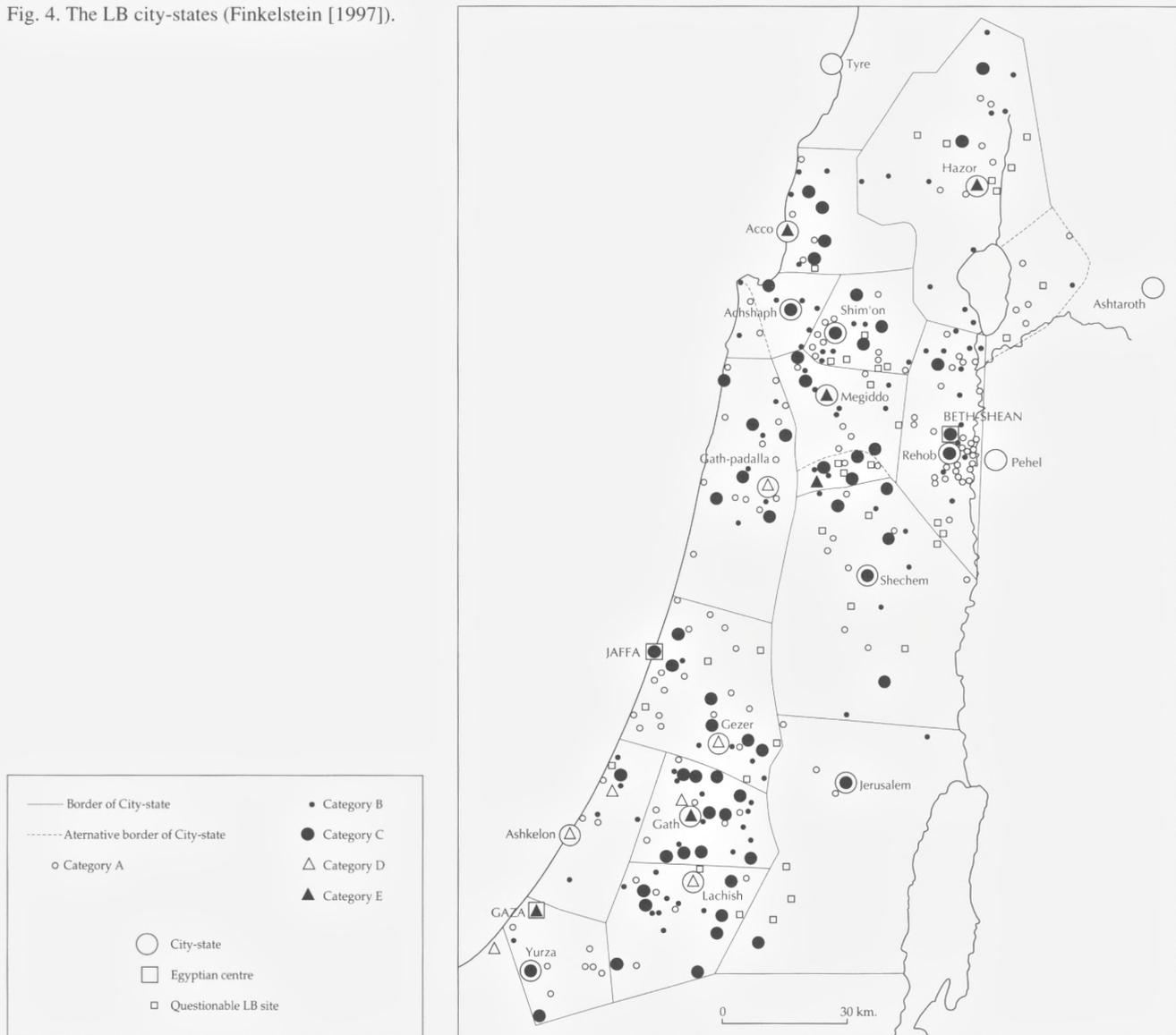
These city-states then probably survived to the end of the Late Bronze Age, when Palestine was again partly depopulated and the inhabitants nomadized as the result of a longer population crisis during the Late Bronze Age. Some cities survived even longer (Strange, *infra* 129). After the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age Transition Period a new set of states, the so-called territorial states Israel and Judah on the western side of the river Jordan, and Ammon and Moab and, a

little later, Edom, emerged. Only on the coastal strip did a new set of city-states, the Philistine city-states, survive, but now with a new population (Strange, *infra* 129-30).

The following section focuses on the city-states of the Amarna Period, because, as mentioned above, that is the only period for which, in addition to archaeological evidence, a number of written sources enable us to reconstruct the political organization of society.

In this period Palestine west of the river was divided into 14 city-states. It is more difficult to be precise about Palestine east of the river, as the number of Amarna letters from this part of Palestine is limited; in fact only the northern part is attested in the letters

Fig. 4. The LB city-states (Finkelstein [1997]).



(see map, Helck [1971] 188), and the southern part of Jordan south of Wadi Hesa was settled only by nomads (Bienkowski [1992; 1996]; Strange [forthcoming b]).

The City-States

Territory and number of settlements

The territory of the states ranged from 2500 sq.km. (Hazor, which strictly speaking belonged more to Syria than Palestine) to 375 sq.km. (Akshaph); their size depended apparently on the geographical and economic possibilities. I will list them according to their geographical distribution; the details are taken from Finkelstein (1997). Of course this is one proposal among others, as Finkelstein himself is aware

([1997] 237, 240-42). For a full tabulation, see Finkelstein (1997) 246f, with description pp. 231-40, Fig. 4.

The coastal zone with the lowlands. Akko, 600 sq.km. with 5600 inhabitants in 14 settlements, capital Akko (Tell el-Fukhar PG 158258).

Akshaph, 375 sq.km. with 2000 inhabitants in 11 settlements, capital Akshaph not identified. The state had the important harbour Tell Abu Hawam.

Gath-padalla, 1150 sq.km with 6200 inhabitants in 25 settlements, capital Gath-padalla (Jatt PG 154200).

Gezer, 1150 sq.km. with 7200 inhabitants in 25 settlements, capital Gezer (Tell Gezer PG 142140). In this city-state the Egyptian stronghold Jaffa was situated on the coast.

Ashkelon, 650 sq.km. with 4700 inhabitants in 12

settlements, capital Ashkelon (Asqalan PG 197189). In my opinion, however, Ashdod (PG 117129) lying between Jaffa and Ashkelon, should in view of its importance and its inhabitation from the Late Bronze II Period (Dothan and Freedman [1967] 8f., 74-77) be treated as an independent city-state, although it is not mentioned in the Amarna tablets.

Yurza, 600 sq.km. with 5600 inhabitants in 11 settlements, capital not identified. This city-state was situated north of the Nahal Besor/Wadi Ghazze, the border to Egypt. In this city-state was situated the Egyptian main stronghold in the province, Gaza (Tell Ghazze PG 099101), the capital of the province Kanaan.

Gath, 650 sq.km. with 12,600 inhabitants in 28 settlements, capital Gath (Tell el-Safi PG 135123).

Lakish, 950 sq.km. with 7000 inhabitants in 35 settlements, capital Lakish (Tell Duweir PG 135108).

The mountainous zone. Shechem, 2300 sq.km. with 4400 inhabitants in 24 settlements. To the number of inhabitants an additional number coming from pastoral groups might be postulated. Capital Shechem (Tell Balata PG 177179).

Jerusalem, 2400 sq.km. with 1500 inhabitants in 8 settlements, capital Jerusalem. The capital was probably only a military stronghold, as there is doubt about the existence of Jerusalem in the Late Bronze Age (Franken and Steiner [1992]; Steiner [1998] 149-50). I tend to agree with Finkelstein ([1997] 235) that Jerusalem must have been inhabited, as LB pottery has been found in the excavations and in tombs, and also because of building elements from an Egyptian temple found in the vicinity (Barkay [1996]). Also here should be added without doubt a number of people coming from pastoral groups.

The valleys. Shimron, in the northern Jizre'el valley, 550 sq.km. with 3800 inhabitants in 25 settlements, capital Shimron (Khirbet Sammuniyeh PG 170234).

Megiddo, controlling the Jizre'el valley, 700 sq.km. with 7400 inhabitants in 24 settlements, capital Megiddo (Tell el-Mutesellim PG 221168).

Rehob, controlling the northern Jordan valley west of the river, 850 sq.km. with 4700 inhabitants in 46 settlements, capital Rehob (Tell el-Sarem PG 197207). In this city-state the Egyptian stronghold Beth-Shan (Tell el Husn PG 197212) was situated.

Hazor, controlling the Hule Valley and Upper Galilee, and by far the largest city-state and city in Palestine, 2500 sq.km. with 16,600 inhabitants in 34 settlements, capital Hazor (Tell Waqqas PG 203269)

with at least 65 hectares built-up area and more than 10,000 inhabitants. North of Hazor, Kumidu, an important city-state and Egyptian provincial capital, was situated in the Bekaa Valley.

East of the Jordan. Here the situation is not clear, partly because the Amarna letters are not very informative, partly because the northern part of the area east of the Jordan is not so well investigated. But at least some city-states can be identified, as several names are mentioned in the letters.

Ashtarot (Tell Ashtara), north of the Yarmuk river, controlled by king Ayyub (Amarna letter 256; Albright [1943] 9-15; Helck [1971] 184), bordering on Pella.

Garu, a land mentioned in Amarna letter 256, east of Lake Tiberias in Jaulan (Albright [1943]); the capital is unknown.

Zarqu, mentioned in Amarna letter 256 as lying between Pella and Ashtarot, could be a city-state, if the identification with Tell el-Fukhar in Wadi Shellale (PG 239222) is correct (Kamlah [1993] 101-27). A large palace was found in the excavations there, and while it is from the period immediately following the Amarna Period, it could well be a successor to a palace from the period, as a number of heirlooms from earlier periods in the Late Bronze Age were found in its destruction layer (Strange [1997] 402).

Pella (Tabaqat Fahl PG 207206), south of the Yarmuk river, controlled by king Mutbalu (Finkelstein [1997] 237).

Still other names are mentioned in the Amarna letters, but it is very doubtful how many of them represent city-states (cf. map Helck [1971] 188).

Population. As mentioned in the list above, Finkelstein has estimated the size of the population in the city-states; his accumulated number for western Palestine is 89,500 in 323 settlements with a total built-up area of 446.8 hectares, with a density coefficient of 200 people per built-up hectare (Finkelstein [1997] 244), to which should be added a number of people from pastoral groups, living in symbiosis with the settlers of the towns, but who have left no trace in the archaeological record. This number is of course arbitrary. First of all the estimate of the actual size of the settlements in the Late Bronze Age is to a large degree dependent on surveys, and not on excavations, and is consequently quite arbitrary (Finkelstein [1997] 227; cf. Palumbo [1994] 1, 14f.). Furthermore, the coefficient of 200 persons per sq.km. is little more than a guess. Others have used 250, and the estimates

for the population of Late Bronze Age Palestine range from 200,000 to 46,000 (Finkelstein [1997] 244).

The population density varied considerably, ranging, according to Finkelstein's estimates, from 19.4 persons per sq.km. in the fertile lowlands to 1.9 person per sq.km. in the mountainous woodlands and the deserts (for details see Finkelstein [1997] 246f).

Ethnic and political identity. There is no information as to the ethnic and political identity of the inhabitants of the city-states.

Settlement pattern. There seems to have been a three-layer system or perhaps a four-layer system, if the Egyptian military strongholds were a level above the city-states. From the Amarna letters, however, it seems that the kings of the city-states reported directly to Pharaoh's court.

Of the first rank were the capitals of the city-states, many of them fortified; under them were – presumably – the larger settlements, towns with between 1 and 5 hectares of built-up area (category C); and below that villages (category A and B). On the map the categories are A: up to 0.3 hectares; B: 0.31-1 hectares; C: 1.1-5 hectares; D: 5.1-10 hectares; E: over 10 hectares. Many of the names of the towns are mentioned in the Amarna letters, while others are not mentioned at all, corroborating a difference in importance.

Citizenship. We have no real information on citizenship in the later sense of the word. Probably citizenship derived from birth or residence in a particular place, with certain privileges for freeborns as against slaves (Bruce [1992]). Attention must, however, be brought to the Habiru or SA.GAZ, a class of people, known all over the Near East from the 19th to the 12th centuries BC. It is a social category of refugees, hardly ever belonging to the place where they live, mostly coming from other places. They were employed as craftsmen, soldiers or the like, but they were also outlaws outside the control of the states. They were especially numerous towards the end of the Bronze Age (Lemche [1992]).

Urbanization. The emergence of city-states coincides with the urbanization of Palestine.

Economy. The economy of the city-states was first and foremost based on agriculture. The Egyptian texts and paintings testify to a considerable export of agricultural products: thus we hear of grain, cattle, sheep

and goats, and also horses (Helck [1971] 370-74). Wine especially seems to have been a great export article. It has been possible to reconstruct the wine industry and export to a considerable degree (Wengrow [1996]): the wine was produced in the highlands and transported in a special kind of vessel, collared-rim-jars, to the coast from where it was exported. Also beer is mentioned (Helck [1971] 396). Other products include timber (Helck [1971] 374-79) and copper (Helck [1971] 384-86), although the Egyptian temple at Timna in the Araba Valley points to the fact that production was in Egyptian hands and out of reach of the city-states (Rothenberg [1972] 125-207; [1993]).

This brisk trade was of course not only directed towards Egypt; undoubtedly it was also directed at other markets in the Eastern Mediterranean. This is evident from the many shipwrecks from the Late Bronze Age found in the sea (Renfrew and Bahn [1991] 327-29; Demakopoulou [1999]), and also from imports illustrated, e.g., by the enormous amount of Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery found in Palestine (Amiran [1969] 167-190; Leonard [1994]). In the Late Bronze Age Palestine with its city-states was as a part of the Egyptian empire, integrated into the international community of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East (Strange [1987] 2-7).

There also seems to have been internal trade: at Tell el-Fukhar in northern Jordan the excavators found a cooking pot from the Late Bronze Age II Period, shown by NAA analysis to have been made in the region of Gaza (McGovern [1997] 423f.), perhaps testifying to the production of pottery there for export to other markets in the Levant.

The pattern of international trade indicates that the rather small city-states on the coast were, primarily, trade centers.

Religion. The religion of the city-states seems to have been the common Levantine religion (Day [1992] with literature), as it is known from, e.g., the Ugaritic texts; furthermore the religion is well attested as syncretistic by the great number of statues, reliefs and seals depicting the various gods (see Weippert [1988] 293-317; Keel und Uehlinger [1993]). There is no evidence of the special cult of a god or goddess as patron of the individual city-state. On the other hand, it is remarkable that at least from the Middle Bronze Age and onward, the temples, especially the "Langhaus-temples", are often built in close proximity to the royal palace. It may be inferred that there was a close connection between the king and the gods, perhaps in

the form of divine kingship (for temples, see Weippert [1988] 276-93).

Defence. In the Middle Bronze Age the defence of the cities was based largely on glacis systems and huge, elaborately constructed embankments or ramparts with a straight-axis gateway flanked by two or three piers (Kempinski [1992] 175-77; Finkelstein [1992]; Bunimovitz [1992]). This was an innovation first seen in northern Syria, e.g. Ebla/Tell Mardikh (Matthiae [1992] 118-19; [1997] 181; Bunimovitz [1992] 223; see however Parr [1968]), but it spread all over the Levant. In Palestine the finest example is at Hazor (Yadin [1975] 129-142), but such fortifications are found at many other places too, e.g. Jericho, Lakish, Megiddo, Shechem and Apheq. Whether the ramparts were solely for defensive purposes is, however, a moot point; it has recently been suggested that the real purpose was propaganda or prestige (Finkelstein [1992] 212-214; Bunimovitz [1992] 225-228).

Whatever their main purpose, some of these fortifications were still in use in the Late Bronze Age, if they were intact, but others had decayed, and the cities were then without proper fortifications, or they had a row of houses along the perimeter of the old ramparts, e.g., at Megiddo and Timna (Tell Batashi PG 141 132), where the interior of the town was filled up with debris (Gonen [1992] 217f.; Herzog [1992] 848). The reason for this is presumably that the Egyptian overlords considered new fortifications to be a preparation for rebellion and had them banned (Gonen [1992] 218).

In the Amarna letters we read about aggression and wars between the kings of the city-states, and time after time the weaker part appeals to Pharaoh to order his governor (*rabisu*) in Palestine to send help. The number of soldiers requested is surprisingly small; 50 bow-men seem to be sufficient to decide the issue (Na'aman [1992] 176-7).

Government. In the Amarna Age the texts show us that the government was monarchical; each city-state had a king, although the Egyptian overlords called him *hazannu* – ruler – like an Egyptian mayor of a city (Na'aman [1992] 178). In earlier periods kingship is attested by the numerous palaces found in all excavated cities (see Weippert [1988] 160-66, 228-33, 271-76). For the Middle Bronze Age this is at least a reasonable inference. For the Early Bronze Age, however, it is impossible to ascertain whether the palaces are evidence of a kingship, or whether they should rather be understood as élite residences, the

élite perhaps connected with the temples (Joffe [1993] 84-86).

Self-government. During most of the time, the city-states of Palestine were almost certainly independent, although we have no direct information. The only period for which we have good evidence is the Late Bronze Age, especially the Amarna Age. In this period, after the conquest of Tutmosis III in 1453 (low chronology, cf. Kitchen [1987]), Palestine was under Egyptian domination (Redford [1993] 125-213). The control exerted by the Egyptians was usually rather loose. Most of the time they just maintained their overlordship over the local kings of the city-states, and over the roads. In the Amarna Age at the end of the XVIII Dynasty this control threatened to break down completely. However, the strong Pharaohs at the beginning of the XIX Dynasty, Sety I and Ramesses II, reasserted Egyptian power through a regular military occupation, and tight administrative control as is witnessed by the numerous Egyptian “governor’s residences” all over Palestine (Weippert [1988] 271-274), and by Egyptian garrisons and immigrants in some places (Singer [1988]; Weinstein [1992] 17-22). This control waned towards the end of the Dynasty, when Palestine entered the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age Intermediate Period (Strange [forthcoming a] and Strange, *infra* 136).

By means of rank-size distributions it may perhaps be possible to prove that the city-states of at least the southern part of Palestine were subject to a central power also in the Middle Bronze II B Period (ca. 1750-1550 BC), the so-called Hyksos Period or the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt (for this, see Ryholt [1977]), where we find signs of an administrative integration under the city Sharuhén, the main Egyptian stronghold in southern Palestine (Bunimovitz [1995] 322-323 with further references). Sharuhén was probably a provincial capital in the Hyksos state with its capital Avaris (Tell el-Daba') (for this city and its influence, see Bietak [1996]; for Sharuhén, see Oren [1997]).

Another integrated system in the Jezre'el Valley in the north of Palestine seems to have been centered around Megiddo and Shimron (Bunimovitz [1995] 323).

For other periods of the Bronze Age we have no evidence to show dependent status, and we have to assume that, as a rule, the geographical fragmentation of Palestine favoured self-government. From archaeological considerations Finkelstein has postulated a system of peer-polity centers covering Palestine west

of the Jordan in the Early Bronze II Period and another in the Early Bronze III Period ([1995 b] 57-64).

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