

The Canaanite Landscape during the Late Bronze Age

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1. Introduction

The Late Bronze Age remains an important period for the formation of Israel, whether one accepts the Biblical record or not. If one accepts the biblical story, the Late Bronze age is the time of the exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan, and the period of the Judges. For those who do not accept the biblical story, they still have to make sense of the “proto-Israelites”¹⁾ of Iron Age I from the highlands,²⁾ and the appear-

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- 1) See R. Kletter, “Can Proto-Israelite Please Stand Up? Notes on the Ethnicity of Iron Age Israel and Judah,” A. M. Maeir and P. de Miroschedj, eds., *I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Time* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 573-586. He argues convincingly that we can already speak about “Israelites” in the Iron Age I. W. G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) also refers to some of the people in the hill country of Canaan as “proto-Israelites”(see p. 154 etc.)
- 2) More specifically, there is a clear increase in the settled population in the central hill country (Ephraim) and Transjordanian highlands. The evidence for a substantial increase in the number of villages at the beginning of Iron Age I is not disputed and is found in numerous publications. See especially the summary of A. E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300-199 B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005) and the updated bibliography there. More recently see A. E. Killebrew, “The Emergence of Ancient Israel: The Social Boundaries of a ‘Mixed Multitude’ in Canaan,” A. M. Maeir and P. de Miroschedj, eds.,

ance of Israel in the Merneptah Stele.³⁾

The events that occurred during the Late Bronze Age are illuminated by three types of sources: the Egyptian records, the biblical narratives, and the archaeological evidence.⁴⁾ This essay is one of synthesis and will analyze the Late Bronze Age by focusing mainly on the Egyptian evidence. The archaeological source is promising, especially considering the latest published surveys, but it is my perception that a good understanding of the transition from the MB II to the LB I is lacking in the archaeological circles.⁵⁾ A more major problem is the fact that the results from the surveys are inherently vague; in the best

Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 571. For the demographic surge see also Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 153.

- 3) For a detailed discussion of the Merneptah Stele and a possible association with a relief from Karnak previously attributed to Ramesses II see L. Stager, "Merneptah, Israel and Sea Peoples: New Light on an Old Relief," *Eretz-Israel* 18 (1985), 56*-64*. For a more recent analysis of this Stele and its relationship to Israel see Michael G. Hasel, "Merneptah's Reference to Israel: Critical Issues for the Origin of Israel," R. S. Hess, G. A. Klingbeil, and P. J. Ray Jr, eds., *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 47-60; See also Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites*, 204-208. For even earlier evidence (though disputed) that Israel was in Canaan (c. 1400 B.C.) see the recent article of P. van der Veen, C. Theis, and M. Görg, "Israel in Canaan (Long) Before Merneptah? A Fresh Look at Berlin Statue Pedestal Relief 21687," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 2:4 (2010), 15-25.
- 4) For lack of space, this essay will focus mainly on the Egyptian evidence. It will also take into consideration the few Akkadian letters that are available
- 5) See W. G. Dever, "The Chronology of Syria-Palestine: Current Issues," *BASOR* 288 (1992), 14-17. He suggests a transitional MB III/LB IA period (1500-1450 B.C.), but there is no agreement as to when the transition between MB and LB takes place. In this essay, I will use the following subdivisions: LB IA (1550-1470 B.C.), LB IB (1470-1400 B.C.), LB IIA (1400-1300 B.C.), and LB IIB (1300-1200 B.C.). This is a slightly modified chronology of Albright from A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 B.C.E* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1990), 238-239.

case they make a distinction between a LB I and a LB II occupation of the site.⁶⁾ The situation from the excavated tells is better, but some of the supposed gaps at certain sites (e.g. Tell Beit Mirsim, Jericho, Shechem) have been recently questioned.⁷⁾

The Egyptian records consist mainly of a series of military campaigns, and are useful mostly for the Asiatic toponyms mentioned in them, and the “people” that are encountered in these campaigns. The difficulty comes when one tries to identify these toponyms with known places in Canaan, and when one attempts to figure out the social and political condition of the groups of people mentioned in the inscriptions. The Amarna Letters (c. 1360-1330 B.C.)⁸⁾ offer some solutions, but their shortcomings for illuminating the Late Bronze Age are due to the vagueness in the descriptions (because they assume that the toponyms and people mentioned in them are well known to the addressee),

6) Note also that the findings may be used only as positive evidence. One can establish that people were present at a site during particular periods. The determination of gaps in settlement *e silentio*, by the fact that pottery from certain periods is missing, is unreliable. See M. Weippert, “The Israelite ‘Conquest’ and the Evidence from Transjordan,” F. M. Cross, ed., *Symposia Celebrating the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research (1900-1975)* (Cambridge: ASOR, 1979), 28 and bibliography there for some problems of surface surveys. For a more recent discussion on the problems of the surveys see Y. Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, “Khirbet Qeiyafa in Survey and in Excavations: A Response to Y. Dagan,” *Tel Aviv* 37 (2010), 77. Also, to my knowledge there are no specialist reports published on most of the surveyed sites (e.g. osteologist, paleobotanist, etc.).

7) *Ibid.*, 241 and bibliography. Some of the suggestions for these gaps were made on the basis of the lack of certain ceramic groups. This evidence from silence is inconclusive.

8) For a discussion about the chronology and the type of correspondence found in the Amarna Letters see W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xiii-xxxix. For this essay, the so-called “vassal correspondence” between the officials from Syria-Palestine and the Egyptian court are of special importance.

and to the short period that they cover. Despite the shortcomings of the evidence, in the rest of this article I will attempt to describe the Cananite landscape during the Late Bronze Age in a chronological fashion.

2. The LB I Period

The Egyptian texts pertaining to Western Asia are few in number and difficult to use prior to the reign of Thutmose III (c. 1479-1425 B.C.E.),⁹⁾ especially because of the ambiguous toponyms.¹⁰⁾ However, these texts can help us understand the Egyptian interests in Canaan, and can at least give us an idea about the cities that were still inhabited during the campaigns mentioned in these texts. They can also give us some valuable information about the people groups that Egypt encountered in Western Asia.

The first king of the 18th dynasty, Ahmose, expelled the Hyksos rulers from Avaris and then undertook one or two campaigns in Asia.¹¹⁾ The first campaign is mentioned in the autobiography of Ahmose son of Abana, and the only Canaanite town mentioned is Sharuhēn, which was besieged for three years before being conquered.¹²⁾ There is strong evidence that the identification of this site with Tell el-Far‘ah (S)¹³⁾ is correct.

9) In this essay I am relying mainly on the Egyptian chronology given by N. Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 392-393.

10) See J. Weinstein, "The Egyptian Empire in Palestine," *BASOR* 241 (1981), 5.

11) *Ibid.* For the opinion that Ahmose undertook two campaigns in Asia see D. B. Redford, "A Gate Inscription from Karnak and Egyptian Involvement in Western Asia During the Early 18th Dynasty," *JAOS* 99 (1979), 274-275.

12) See M. Lichheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 12-13. Also see J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), 233-234.

13) This is about 12km south-east of modern Gaza. See Weinstein, "Egyptian Empire,"

The biographical inscription of Ahmose Pennekhbey refers to the capture of a prisoner in Djahy, but this information does not help in reconstructing the settlement pattern in Canaan. Djahy is usually just a term for the Asiatic region in general at this time.¹⁴⁾ A few other inscriptions from the 18th dynasty mention the following toponyms: Kedem, “lands of Fenkhu,” Tunip, Upper Retenu, God’s Land, Naharin, the land of Mitanni, Niy, and the Euphrates river.¹⁵⁾ The term “lands of Fenkhu” probably refers to Canaan in general or Phoenicia, while the rest of the toponyms suggest involvement in Syria, rather than Canaan.¹⁶⁾ A campaign against the *Shasu* is known from the reign of Thutmose II (c. 1493-1479 B.C.), and was usually thought to have taken place in the Negev, but a reasonable case has been made for locating the *Shasu* region in southern Syria or northern Canaan.¹⁷⁾

The key event for the building of the Egyptian empire in Canaan is considered the expedition of Thutmose III (c. 1479-1425 B.C.E.) to Megiddo in the 22nd year of his reign.¹⁸⁾

6 for the identification of Sharuhēn with Tell el-‘Ajjul (about 4 miles south-west of Gaza). The identification with Tell el-‘Ajjul has been challenged by J. K. Hoffmeier, “Reconsidering Egypt’s Part in the Termination of the Middle Bronze Age in Palestine,” *Levant* 21 (1989), 183-184, and in James Weinstein’s “Egypt and the Middle Bronze IIC/Late Bronze IA Transition: A Rejoinder,” *Levant* 23 (1991), 117-118. He argues well for the identification of Tell el-Far‘ah(S) with Sharuhēn. This is also supported by A. F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), 74-75.

14) *Ibid.*

15) These campaigns are discussed in more detail by Weinstein, “Egyptian Empire,” 5-8. See also the discussion of Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 63-76. In this essay I am mainly interested in the toponyms and the groups of people mentioned in the texts.

16) Weinstein, “Egyptian Empire,” 5-8.

17) *Ibid.*, 6. A more detailed discussion about the *Shasu* is given below.

18) For an excellent recent discussion of the wars of Thutmose III in Palestine see D. Redford, *The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose II* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

This campaign was directed against the cities of western Canaan, the Plain of Esdraelon, and the territories farther north and east, whose princes gathered together at Megiddo to make a united stand against the Egyptian king.¹⁹⁾ What is of special interest for this essay, is the topographical list of Syro-Palestinian toponyms from the temple of Amun at Karnak. The basic list contains 119 place-names of which about 65-70 names have been plausibly identified.²⁰⁾ What is a striking aspect of this list is that it apparently does not mention any sites in south-central Palestine, in the eastern Shephelah, in the hill country, or south of Wadi Hasa on the eastern side of Jordan.²¹⁾ According to the texts related to this list, it seems that Thutmose III did not destroy Megiddo, and he did not attack each one of these places individually.²²⁾ Megiddo was the gathering place for the

19) Ibid., 10-11. See also de presentation of Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 65-69.

20) See Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible* (London: Burns & Oates, 1979), 159-164.

For some corrections see K. Kitchen, "The Egyptian Evidence on Ancient Jordan," P. Bienkowski, ed., *Early Edom and Moab* (Sheffield: J. R. Collis Publications, 1992), 23-26. For a more disorganized presentation of the Canaanite toponyms from the list of Thutmose III see S. Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984). For a harsh critique of Ahituv's work see E. A. Knauf and C. Lenzen, "Review of Ahituv, Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents," *ZDP* 105 (1989), 174-177.

21) See Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 155. He lists one city in the hill country: *rbt*. This is probably the Rubute (see Joshua 16:50) of the Amarna letters, and it is almost on the border with the Shephelah.

22) A recent debate about the role of Egypt in the destruction of Palestine can be found in Hoffmeier, "Reconsidering Egypt's Part," 181-191. This was challenged by both W. G. Dever, "'Hyksos', Egyptian Destructions, and the End of the Middle Bronze Age," *Levant* 22 (1990), 75-81, and Weinstein, "Egypt and the Middle Bronze IIC," 105-112. The responses of Hoffmeier appear in *Levant* 22 (1990), 83-89 and *Levant* 23 (1991), 117-222. See also Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 67-68. They agree that "it cannot be assumed that all the names on the list represent towns that were captured by force or destroyed." For this essay it is largely irrelevant who destroyed the Canaanite cities at the end of the MB

Asiatic princes of all these towns, therefore the defeat of Megiddo was followed by a swearing of allegiance of these princes to the Egyptian king.²³⁾ Prisoners and booty were also carried off from these places,²⁴⁾ but there is no mention of destruction of any of the cities mentioned in the list of Tuthmose III.²⁵⁾ However, it is usually agreed that following the battle of Megiddo, we enter a new phase in the history of Canaan; this is a phase in which Tuthmose III followed up on his conquests and established a series of military forts and administrative centers in Palestine and southern Syria.²⁶⁾ Therefore, it seems that according to the texts, even if the cities of Palestine were not destroyed, they were more impoverished as a result of the tribute paid to the Egyptian king following their capitulation. Some cities lost part of their population which was taken prisoner, and they were all bound by an oath to the Egyptian king.²⁷⁾ All these cities were along the major trade routes between Egypt and Syria, along the Jezreel Valley, and some on the King's Highway. The following campaigns are too general, and were directed at northern Syria; thus they do not give us any important information about Canaan.

Before discussing the Egyptian texts dealing with the campaigns of Amenhotep II and Tuthmose IV, I will analyze the

IIC.

23) See J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET), 3rd ed. with supplement (Princeton: Princeton University), 238: "...my majesty shut them up,..., before they came out in the open, pleading to my majesty and saying: "Give us breath, our lord!..."

24) Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 238, 242.

25) See note 25. It should be noted that this section of my essay deals mainly with texts, and the Egyptian texts by themselves do not support the notion of a widespread destruction of MB IIC Palestine. On this point, both Weinstein and Hoffmeier agree. See Weinstein, "Egypt and the Middle Bronze IIC," 111.

26) Weinstein, "Egyptian Empire," 12.

27) Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 238.

few Akkadian documents discovered in Canaan that can help my analysis. A series of Akkadian letters were discovered in the archives of the prince of Tanaach, and are believed to have been composed earlier than the Amarna letters, probably during the time of Amenhotep II.²⁸⁾ A second letter from Gezer is dated slightly later, probably to the time of Tuthmose IV.²⁹⁾ Both of these letters are dated to the first part of 15th century and offer some clues about a few cities in Canaan. The following cities are mentioned in the Tanaach letters: Rubute, Gurra, Gaza, Megiddo, and Rehob/Rahabu. It seems that the town of Tanaach was one of the important towns in the Jezreel Valley, which dominated at least part of the region. In letter no. 5, the ruler of Tanaach is asked: "...give charge to thy towns and let them do their work, anyone injures my person who attacks (thy) town."³⁰⁾ At the same time, it is visible from both the Tanaach letters and the letter from Gezer, that these towns are under some form of Egyptian authority. They are expected to provide troops and tribute, and to appear before the Egyptian official: "Send my brethren together with their chariots, and send me the horse(s) as thy tribute and special gifts (for me). And as for all the captives who are there with thee, send them to me tomorrow in Megiddo."³¹⁾ However, it seems that the Egyptians did not enjoy a complete obedience from these subjects, the prince of Tanaach did not respond positively to his

28) For an early discussion of these letters, see W. F. Albright, "A Prince of Tanaach in the Fifteenth Century B.C.," *BASOR* 94 (1944), 12-27. A more recent treatment of these letters is found in A. Malamat, "Campaigns of Amenhotep II and Tuthmose IV to Canaan," C. Rubin, ed., *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 8 (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1961), 219-231. A more recent analysis of the Tanaach letters can be found in Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 75-76.

29) See W. F. Albright, "A Tablet of the Amarna Age from Gezer," *BASOR* 92 (1943), 28-30 and Malamat, "Campaigns," 228-231.

30) Translation of Albright, "A Prince of Tanaach," 22.

31) *Ibid.*, 23-24. The translation is from letter no. 5.

request.³²⁾

Therefore, at this point it can be inferred that both Megiddo and Gaza were cities which at least acknowledged the Egyptian authority. Tanaach and Gezer seem to have been important regional centers, with authority over smaller towns around them. Rehob and Gurra are most likely located in the plain of Esdraelon, while the location of Rubutu is uncertain, but could be the biblical Rabbah in the northern Shephelah.³³⁾

Papyrus Hermitage 1116A³⁴⁾ mentions eleven toponyms, of which seven can be placed in northern Palestine: Megiddo, Kinnereth, Achshaph, Shimron, Ta'anach, Mishal, and Hazor. Ashkelon is also mentioned, Sharon (as a political entity), and a different text refers to Lachish. Two toponyms cannot be identified. It seems that envoys from these towns were in Thebes sometimes in the second half of the 15th century, therefore these cities must have existed at this time, and were under clear Egyptian domination.³⁵⁾

During the reign of Amenhotep II (1427-1400 B.C.E.) we have Egyptian evidence for new campaigns in Palestine. Three military campaigns took place in Canaan and northern Syria during the time of Amenhotep II. The first campaign was to

32) This is clear from letter no. 6: "Further, in the garrison there are none of thy retainers, and thou dost not come to my presence, nor dost thou send thy brother. Further, I was in the town of Gaza and thou didst not come to me." Ibid., 24-25.

33) The identifications are made by Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 169. Rehob is identified with Tell es-Sarem. See also Albright, "Prince of Tanaach," 16-25 and Weinstein, "Egyptian Empire," 12-13.

34) The discussion of this text follows Weinstein, "Egyptian Empire," 13.

35) Ibid. Weinstein suggests ca. 1433 B.C. for the presence of the envoys in Thebes, and he believes that these towns were under Egyptian occupation at this time. I am not sure what he means by "occupation," and I prefer to use the term "domination" at this point because I do not believe that the texts support the idea that the Egyptians were occupying these cities.

northern Syria, but on the way there, Amenhotep II mentions the hacking up of the city of Shamash-Edom, a city that should probably be identified with Adamah of Naphtali.³⁶⁾ The second campaign is more relevant for the situation in Canaan. In his 9th year, Amenhotep II proceeded to Retenu in a campaign directed only against the Sharon and Jezreel Plains. The city of Aphek³⁷⁾ surrendered, and four cities around Socoh, in the Sharon plain were captured: Mepesen, Khetjten, Adorain, and Migdal-yene(t). It is not clear from the text if the city of Yaham was captured. The city of Anaharath³⁸⁾ was plundered, and the prince of Geba-Somen was brought with his family and retainers to Amenhotep II in the vicinity of Megiddo³⁹⁾ and replaced.⁴⁰⁾

The plunder taken in this expedition is important for the information about the population makeup that it offers. In his list of plunder we find: 127 rulers of Retenu, 179 brothers of the rulers, 3600 Habiru, 15,200 living *Shasu*, 36,300 Hurru, 15,070 living Neges, and 30,652 families thereof. The total number of prisoners in this list comes to 101,128. This is an unusually high number and poses a problem which “remains an enigma.”⁴¹⁾

36) Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 166. Adamah of Naphtali is today's Qarne Hittim.

37) Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 246. This city is most likely Ras el-'Ain in Palestine. See Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 70.

38) According to Rainey and Notley, (*Sacred Bridge*, 71), this is to be located “in eastern Lower Galilee in the valley leading to Mount Tabor to the Jordan River.”

39) He was brought to Huakti. Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 168, locates it in the vicinity of Megiddo. Rainey and Notley, (*Sacred Bridge*, 71), agree with this identification.

40) For the locations of the main cities in this section see the map of Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 71.

41) So S. Ahituv, “Economic Factors in the Egyptian Conquest of Canaan,” *IEJ* 28 (1978), 104. Weinstein, “Egyptian Empire,” is in agreement. There are various explanations for this high number. It is possible that the figures should be taken seriously as reflecting a change in policy from earlier selective deportation to mass deportation. This is the explanation of Amir Amer. See J. K. Hoffmeier, “Aspects of Egyptian Foreign Policy in the 18th Dynasty in Western Asia and Nubia,”

The Egyptian stele found at ancient Chinnereth, by the Sea of Galilee, has been connected with one of Amenhotep II's campaign. This probably took place to check the advance of the empire of Mitanni, and it is possible that at this point Egypt controlled Canaan only as far as Chinnereth.⁴²⁾ It should be noted that so far, the military efforts of the Egyptian kings were concentrated around via Maris, Sharon, and northern Palestine and Syria. There is no mention of the Judean hills, the hill country, or the regions to the south.

3. The Amarna Age of LB IIA Period

The reign of Tuthmose IV(c. 1401-1391 B.C.E.)and most of the reign of Amenhotep III(c. 1388-1351 B.C.E.) do not shed much light on the population of Canaan at this time. Amenhotep III's reign has been peaceful and prosperous, with no military campaigns reported in the Levant.⁴³⁾ However, the Amarna letters, some of which belong to the end of Amenophis III's reign, are of considerable importance for the situation in Canaan. As I have already mentioned, these letters date to ca. 1360-1330 B.C.E., and are mostly connected with the reign of Akhenaten(c. 1351-1334 B.C.E).⁴⁴⁾

These letters are important because they mention a number of cities from Canaan which can be identified, and they give a hint about the population makeup and the existing political

6, accessed for other possible explanations. January 12, 2012.

<http://www.riversideghs.nsw.edu.au/slowly/riverside%20maat/NKE/hoffmeier%20foreignpolicy.pdf>

42) Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 168.

43) Weinstein, "Egyptian Empire," 15.

44) See note 10. The Amarna letters belong to LB IIA.

situation. The following Canaanite cities can be identified with a high degree of certainty:⁴⁵⁾

Bashan-Aduru, Araru, Ashtaroth, Busuruna, Halanu, Kenath, Siri-bashan, Hayyunu, Shahimi, Tubu, Udumu, Yabiluma.⁴⁶⁾

Jordan Valley-Hazor, Yeno'am, Beth-Shean, Pehel, and perhaps Zaphon.

Jezeel Valley-Megiddo, Tanaach, Ahtiasna/Ahtiru(m)na, Shim'on, Shunem, Gina[th], Burquna, Japhia, Hannathon, Harabu, Gintikirmil.

Coastal plain-Gath-padalla, Joppa, Ashkelon, Gaza, Yurza, Gath.

Shephelah-Gezer, Rubute (between Gezer and Jerusalem), Ajalon, Zorah, Lachish, Keilah.

Hill country-Shechem, Jerusalem, Manahath, and apparently Beth Horon.

In contrast to the Egyptian topographical lists, the Amarna letters include towns from the Shephelah, the hill country, and a number of cities east of the Jordan river. Southern Transjordan and the Canaanite cities in the Negev are still missing. This conspicuous gap is consistent with the gap from Egyptian topographical lists (though smaller), and is visible on both sides of the Jordan, roughly between Pehel and the Dead Sea. The city of Shechem is the only city in the later territories of Benjamin and Ephraim, and only Zaphon can be plausibly placed in Jordan, south of Pella/Peheil.⁴⁷⁾ Therefore, it seems (considering

45) The following list is an update with the help of Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 388-392; and Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 77-87. See the excellent map on p. 79 with the kings of Canaan in the Amarna age.

46) It should be noted that many of the cities in this group can be located in a very general manner: east of the Sea of Galilee. See Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 388-392. Kitchen, "Egyptian Evidence," 26, agrees with placing these cities in this region.

47) Albright, "the Amarna Letters from Palestine," *CAH* 2:2, 107.

the texts) that the hill country of Palestine was still sparsely populated.

It has been suggested that at this time Syria-Palestine was divided in three large administrative districts whose headquarters were at Gaza, Sumur, and Kumidi. Thus the cities south of Galilee were under the jurisdiction of Gaza (on both sides of the Jordan), and the cities to the north were controlled by Kumidi. Sumur probably controlled the northern Lebanese Beqa', the Phoenician coast, and Amurru.⁴⁸⁾ A network of six garrison cities were left to administer and rule the land: Gaza and Joppa in the south, Ullasa and Sumur in the north, Beth Shean in northern Palestine, and Kumidi in the south of Beqa' valley of Lebanon.⁴⁹⁾

It is important to recognize that the major cities of this period were small, considering the amount of military help that they request. Thus the prince of Megiddo wants 100 men (EA 244), while the princes of Gezer and Jerusalem are satisfied with 50 each (EA 237; 289; 295).⁵⁰⁾ From the texts, it seems that only Hazor and Shechem can be considered territorial kingdoms at this point. Other important city-states in Palestine were Jerusalem, Gezer in the northern Shephelah, Ashkelon on the coast, Lachish, Gath(?), Gath-padalla in the Sharon region, Rehob, Megiddo, Shim'on, Acco, and Achshaph in the northern plains.⁵¹⁾ It seems that in general the cities in the hill country and the Shephelah (areas which seem to have been more sparsely

48) This is a slightly modified division from that of Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 164. My division takes into consideration the latest studies, most of which place toponyms 89-101 from Tutmosé III's list in the Transjordan, and not in northern Galilee. See Redford, "A Bronze Age Itinerary," 55-74 and Kitchen, "Egyptian Evidence," 25 and Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 78-79.

49) Na'aman, "Amarna Letters," D. N. Freedman, ed., *ABD* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1992), 177.

50) Albright, "Amarna Letters," 108.

51) Na'aman, "Amarna Letters," 177.

populated) ruled more extensive territories than the cities in the plains where the cities were closer to each other.

4. The 'Apiru and Sbasu of Amarna Age

Two groups of people are of importance when discussing the settlement of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age: the 'Apiru,⁵²⁾ and the Sutu.⁵³⁾ The 'Apiru, the (SA.)GAZ of the Akkadian texts, are mentioned as early as the Third Dynasty of Ur, at the end of the third millennium B.C. Our concern is mainly with the 'Apiru of the Amarna texts. It is clear from these texts that the term 'Apiru is not an ethnic designation, but rather a "pejorative term" used for people who did not accept Egyptian authority or who wished to throw it off.⁵⁴⁾ They were a class of stateless and reputedly lawless people in both Palestine and Syria.⁵⁵⁾ Many times they were hired soldiers, especially by the kingdoms in the hill country (Shechem, Hazor), to attack other cities (e.g. Megiddo in EA 246). Two questions would be useful to be answered regarding these people: what percentage of the population of Canaan did they represent, and where were they settled? The first question is impossible to answer with a reasonable degree of certainty because we lack the adequate textual sources. A possibility would be to calculate the percentage of

52) The 'Apiru (some have *Hab/piru*) have been discussed extensively in literature. For a detailed discussion with bibliography see N. P. Lemche, "Habiru," D. N. Freedman, ed., *ABD* III (Toronto: Doubleday, 1992), 7-10. Note also the analysis of M. Greenberg, *The Hab/piru* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1955), and the treatment of N. Na'aman, "Habiru and Hebrews: The Transfer of a Social Term to the Literary Sphere," *JNES* 45 (1986), 271-288. A very important recent discussion is found in Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 88-89.

53) For the 'Apiru see especially EA 113, 185, 271-274, 286-290, 305, and 318. The Sutu are mentioned in EA 16, 40, 122, 123, 169, 195, 246, and 318.

54) Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 392.

55) Albright, "Amarna Letters," 110-111; Greenberg, *Hab/piru*, 75. See also Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 88-89.

'*Apiru* taken as prisoners by Amenhotep II from his list of slaves during his second campaign. In this case the '*Apiru* would represent 6.5 percent of the population, a reasonable figure.

Their places of habitation are also hard to determine, but it is clear that their concentration is in areas in or close to the mountains.⁵⁶⁾ It seems that there is only one clear case where the '*Apiru* are stationed in a city, and that is for defensive purposes: "The '*Apiru* captured Mahzibtu, a city of the ki[n]g, my lord, and plundered [it] and sen[t] it up in flames, and then the '*Apiru* took refuge with Ama[nhatp]e (ruler of Tushultu in Syria)."⁵⁷⁾ In most cases, it is generally agreed that the '*Apiru* are living outside the cities. Thus Na'aman refers to the '*Apiru* and the *Sutu* as "nonurban elements,"⁵⁸⁾ and Bottero sees the '*Apiru* as a group of people "entre nomads et sédentaires."⁵⁹⁾

The *Sutu*⁶⁰⁾ appear in a few cases alongside the '*Apiru*,⁶¹⁾ and the term was the Akkadian appellation for nomadic pastoral elements.⁶²⁾ They are also hired as mercenaries, sometimes on the side of the Egyptian king (EA 195), but usually with the '*Apiru* against the interests of the king of Egypt (EA 246 and 318). Both the *Sutu* and especially the '*Apiru* seem to have been a major problem for the cities in Canaan which were "loyal" to the Egyptian kings.

The *Shasu* are another group of people that have to be dis-

56) Lemche, "Habiru," 8.

57) EA 185. Moran, *Amarna Letters*, 265.

58) Na'aman, "Amarna Letters," 178.

59) J. Bottero, "Entre nomads etsédentaires: Les Habiru," *Dialogues d'histoireancienne* 6 (1980), 201-213.

60) The *Shasu/Shosu* in Egyptian are the tribal pastoralists called *Sutu* in cuneiform. So Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 89.

61) See EA 195 and 318.

62) Na'aman, "Amarna Letters," 179. Albright, "Amarna Letters," 111, sees the *Sutu* as a generic term for *beduwin*, and the '*Apiru* are less nomadic than the *Sutu*.

cussed in relation to the Canaanite population during the Late Bronze Age.⁶³⁾ It seems that they should be identified with the *Sutu* of the cuneiform texts.⁶⁴⁾ The *Shasu* are encountered already by Tuthmose II in the 18th Dynasty, but the more important encounters are those by Tuthmose III, Amenophis II, and Seti I.⁶⁵⁾ From the second campaign of Amenophis II, already mentioned above, we see that he took as slaves 15,200 *Shasu*.⁶⁶⁾ This is a substantial number, and if we calculate the percentage from the total number of prisoners, the *Shasu* represent 27.5 percent of the total, the *'Apiru* 6.5 percent, and the rest 66 percent. This could conceivably represent more or less the population of the country in the late 15th century.⁶⁷⁾ A linguistic analysis of the non-Egyptian names found in the Amarna letters show that 52 percent bear clear north-west Semitic names, 33 percent certain or probable Indo-Aryan names, 5 percent certain or probably Hittite names, and 10 percent uncertain, but not Egyptian names.⁶⁸⁾

By analyzing all the texts which mention the *Shasu*, Giveon has concluded that they are Bedouins, as it is obvious from the title of his book. Their means of subsistence are those of

63) The most detailed discussion about the *Shasu* is found in R. Giveon, *Les Bedouins Shosou des Documents Egyptiens* (Leiden: Brill, 1971). For some different conclusions see W. Ward, "The Shasu 'Bedouin'," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 15 (1972), 35-60.

64) See note 59. Note that in the text of Amenophis II (Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 247), the *'Apiru and the Shosu* appear in the same order as the *'Apiru* and the *Sutu* in EA 195.

65) Giveon, *Les Bedouins*, 9. It is possible that the *Shasu* appear earlier in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, but it is unclear if these should be identified with the *Shasu* of the New Kingdom. See Ward, "Shasu," 36-37.

66) J. B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 247. See also Giveon, "*Les Bedouins*," 12-15.

67) Cf. Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 169.

68) The analysis belongs to Albright, "Amarna Letters," 109. His analysis of the letters from Tanaach shows 61 percent north-west Semitic names. It should be noted that the sample of names in these letters is very small: 23 names.

a semi-nomadic people.⁶⁹⁾ However, the texts also speak of the *Shasu* as living in the cities during the time of Ramesses II.⁷⁰⁾ By analyzing all the evidence Ward concludes the following:

All of these descriptions—semi-nomadic shepherds, town-dwellers, desert Bedouin—are compatible with the definition of Shasu as a social class whom the Egyptian encountered primarily as soldiers-of-fortune. Some Shasu were sedentary, others were not...⁷¹⁾

While Ward is certainly correct to point out that the *Shasu* can be found in cities, it is clear from the rest of the texts, all of the texts before Ramesses II, that the *Shasu* have usually a non-sedentary way of life. The classical example which points to the pastoralist way of life for the *Shasu* is Papyrus Anastasi VI: “We have finished with allowing the *Shasu* clans folk of Edom to pass the fort of Merneptah that is Soccoth, to the pools..., to keep them alive, and to keep alive their livestock.”⁷²⁾ The conclusion should be that the *Shasu* were mostly a semi-nomadic people, sometimes settled, who were characterized by warlike tendencies, because the Egyptians encountered them mostly as bands of robbers and mercenaries.⁷³⁾ The word *Shasu* could derive from Hebrew, with the meaning “to plunder, pillage,” or from Egyptian, with the meaning “to travel, wander about.”

It is clear from the texts that the Egyptians usually associated

69) Givon, *Les Bedouins*, 240f.

70) *Ibid.*, 115.

71) Ward, “Shasu,” 54.

72) Kitchen, “Egyptian Evidence,” 27. See also Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 259, which translates *Shasu* as Bedouin. For more evidence of the pastoralist way of life of the *Shasu* see the text from Ramesses III, Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 262.

73) See especially Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 254. Note that Rainey and Notley (*Sacred Bridge*, 89) call them “tribal pastoralists” and believe that the proto-Israelites probably stem from them.

the *Shasu* with the rugged hill-country east of the Jordan valley and the Wadi Arabah, and perhaps the desert which lies beyond. Two sources specifically identify the *Shasu* with Edom and Mt. Seir, but the Egyptians also encountered these people west of Transjordan, from southern Syria to the Negev. Therefore, the *Shasu* can be safely placed in Palestine and Edom.⁷⁴⁾

5. The LB IIB Period

The campaigns of Seti I(c. 1294-1279 B.C.E.), Ramesses II(c. 1303-1213 B.C.E.), and Merneptah(c. 1213-1203 B.C.E.) take us into the LB IIB period. Their military campaigns and the archaeological remains from this period point to a clearer military occupation of Canaan than before. Seti I encountered both the *'Apiru*(from Mt. Yarmuta in northern Palestine) and the *Shasu*, usually in the context of war as enemies.⁷⁵⁾ By analyzing the city lists from these campaigns, it seems that these kings campaigned as usually mostly in Syria.⁷⁶⁾ But, Seti I conquered Beth-Shean, Rehob, Yeno'am, Kedesh in Galilee, and Hammath in northern Palestine.⁷⁷⁾ Ramesses II conquered Kerepna and

74) For an excellent archaeological analysis of the *Shasu*, see T. E. Levy, R. B. Adams, and A. Muniz, "Archaeology and the Shasu Nomads: Recent Excavations in the Jabal Hamrat Fidan, Jordan," W. H. C. Propp and R. E. Friedman, eds., *Le-David Maskil: A Birthday tribute for David Noel Freedman* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 63-89. They argue that the *Shasu* were a social group of nomads who reflect an ancient equivalent of the term *Bedouin* (see pp. 65-66). Thomas Levy makes a very strong argument that part of the Shasu should be linked with the later Edomites. See T. E. Levy, "Pastoral Nomads and Iron Age Meta Production in Ancient Edom," J. Szuchman, ed., *Nomads, Tribes, and the State in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2009), 147-178.

75) Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 254-255.

76) For Seti I's campaign see the map in Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 180.

77) Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 177.

Merom (both places are probably in Upper Galilee), Acco, Gath-Asher (in western Galilee), and mentions Hazor, Acshaph, Adamin, Kiriath-anab and Adurun (both in Bashan),⁷⁸⁾ Shechem, and Megiddo. Merneptah mentions the destruction of Ashkelon, Gezer, Yeno'am, and the "laying waste" of the people of Israel.⁷⁹⁾

Stele of both Ramesses II and Seti I have been found at Beth Shemesh. A stele of Seti I has been found at Tell el-Shishab, north of the Yarmuk, and one of Ramesses II at Sheikh Said (just north of Tell el-Shishab) showing Egyptian lordship over this region. What is more important for my essay is the explicit references to Moab and to Seir/Edom from Ramesses II through Ramesses III and later. Ramesses II plundered the mount of Seir, and mentions the capturing of the towns of Butartu (probably Raba Batora) and Dibon in the land of Moab.⁸⁰⁾

From the campaigns of these last three mentioned kings, the raids in Canaan are consistently located along major routes (as in previous times), along the coast and in the Jezreel Valley. Peleh/Pella in central Jordan is mentioned several times, but it was also named in previous campaigns. An increase in the importance of Galilee is sensed because of the mention of Hammath and Adami. But, the most important developments seem to have taken place on the eastern side of the Jordan. Edom is attested, and Mt. Seir seems to have been important enough to attract the vengeful presence of Ramesses II. Moab has at least two cities during the time of Ramesses II which were worth capturing. At the end of the Bronze Age, on the western side of Jordan, Israel is recognized as a group of people

78) Cf. EA 256, 24, 26. Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 176-184.

79) Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 378. For the Merneptah Stele see note 3.

80) For a compelling discussion about these identifications see Kitchen, "Egyptian Evidence," 27-28.

distinct from the Canaanites (at least different from the Canaanite city-system) by Merneptah. These later campaigns do not seem to shed any light on the hill country of Judah, the Shephelah, and Negev.

6. Conclusions

It is clear from this essay that the Egyptian texts are indispensable for a good understanding of the Late Bronze Age in Canaan. However, only the texts are inadequate for a more comprehensive view. The reason is quite simple: the Egyptian campaigns and texts are usually focusing on the major routes and cities of Canaan because that is where Egyptian interests and influence were found. That is because the New Kingdom Egypt wanted the main ‘highways’ to be secure for both economic and military reasons. In the few cases when we have documents from the cities of Canaan (during the Amarna period), we get a more complete picture and we learn something about the fringe areas (e.g. the hill country), and about the non-sedentary groups which usually acted against Egyptian interests. Therefore, the information gathered from archaeological excavations and surveys is indispensable for a more complete understanding of the Canaanite landscape during the Late Bronze Age.⁸¹⁾

However, from the information found in the Egyptian texts, the following brief sketch is possible and generally accepted⁸²⁾

81) See the following articles and their bibliography for two excellent examples in which archaeology helps with the understanding of Late Bronze Age Egyptian-Canaanite relations: Y. Gadot, “The Late Bronze Egyptian Estate at Aphek,” *Tel Aviv* 37 (2010), 48-66; A. A. Burke and K. V. Lords, “Egyptians in Jaffa: A Portrait of Egyptian Presence in Jaffa during the Late Bronze Age,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 73:1 (2010), 2-30.

82) See more recently Gadot, “The Late Bronze Age Egyptian Estate,” 50-61.

about the Canaanite landscape. After the expulsion of the Hyksos, the Egyptian policy was not clearly developed and relied mainly on periodic military campaigns concentrated around via Maris, Sharon, Northern Palestine and Syria. The rebellion against Egypt centered at Megiddo was “the wake up call” that led to “new and more aggressive imperial measures to regulate the region through tighter control of local princes, having regular shows of force, and establishing treaties and marriage alliances.”⁸³) During this period (LB I) there is clear evidence of an increasing Egyptian authority over Canaan which was concentrated over the major trade routes and cities (e.g. Megiddo, Gaza, Gezer, etc.). However, the information about the fringe areas⁸⁴) is almost inexistent.

The LB IIA takes us into the more turbulent Amarna age. During this time, the Egyptians paid little attention to events outside their borders, most likely due to internal weakness. It is clear from the Amarna letters, that the major cities were fairly small, and there were constant threats from the *‘Apiru* bands and other outcasts which seem to roam freely in areas that used to be under firm Egyptian control. Now, for the first time in LBA, we get some understanding of the settlements in the hill country. The few ‘great cities’ of the hill country (e.g. Hazor and Shechem) were territorial kingdoms which rules more extensive areas.

During the LB IIB period, the 19th dynasty took a more active role in Canaan as the Egyptians tightened their control by the establishment of various administrative centers to oversee their military and economic interests. Public security seems to have been restored and the threat from non-sedentary groups seems to have been contained. However, the archaeological evi-

83) Hoffmeier, “Aspects of Egyptian Foreign Policy,” 6.

84) Here I am referring to the south-central Palestine, eastern Shephelah, the hill country, and south of Wadi-Hasa on the eastern side of Jordan.

dence at the end of Late Bronze Age, demonstrates that there were a series of destructions during the reign of Ramesses II that were only partially recovered by Merneptah.⁸⁵⁾ This was the context in which the emergence of Israel seems to be detected in the archaeological record in the hill country of Palestine.

It should be noted that there are two Egyptian texts that deserve further analysis for the understanding of Late Bronze Canaan and in connection with the emergence of Israel. Both of them were briefly mentioned in this survey. The first one comes from the campaign of Amenhotep II's 9th year (c. 1418 B.C.E.) where he lists more than 100, 000 prisoners. While this list is usually believed to be exaggerated,⁸⁶⁾ it fits fairly well with the evidence we have from archaeological data for a considerable decline in the population of Canaan.⁸⁷⁾ The second disputed text is the Berlin statue pedestal relief 21687 published by Peter van der Steen, Christoffer Theis, and Manfred Görg.⁸⁸⁾ If their reading is correct, it means that we have an attestation of Israel in Canaan close to the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. In that case, the Israelites could be partly responsible for the troubles of Amarna age, and later for some of the destructions at the end of the Late Bronze Age. In my opinion, these texts deserve further consideration and analysis to see if they are also supported by the archaeological and epigraphic evidence, even if Israel's presence in Canaan this early upsets most current models about its emergence.

85) See Gadot, "The Late Bronze Age Egyptian Estate," 6

86) See the discussion above and note 41.

87) Note that there is strong archaeological data that supports a considerable decline in the size of towns, as well as in the population of Late Bronze Age Canaan. See more recently S. H. Savage and S. E. Falconer, "Spatial and Statistical Inference of Late Bronze Age Politics in the Southern Levant," *BASOR* 330 (203), 31-45.

88) See note 3.

Abbreviations

- ABD* D. N. Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6, New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- ANET* J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with supplement, Princeton: Princeton University, 1969.
- BASOR* *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
- CAH* *Cambridge Ancient History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- EA* *El Amarna*, with tablet nos.
- IEJ* *Israel Exploration Journal*
- JNES* *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
- ZDPV* *Zeitschrift des DeutschenPalastina-Vereins*

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<Abstract>

The Canaanite Landscape during the Late Bronze Age

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This article sketches the Canaanite landscape during the Late Bronze Age by relying mainly on the evidence from Egyptian texts. It proceeds in a chronological fashion starting with the expulsion of the Hyksos and ending with the last kings of the 19th dynasty. The texts suggest a significant population decline in Canaan with many of the major cities being small and with a sparsely populated hill country. After the expulsion of the Hyksos, the Egyptian policy relied mainly on periodic military campaigns concentrated around the major routes. The rebellion against Egypt centered at Megiddo led to more aggressive imperial measures to regulate the region through tighter control of local princes. The LB IIA(c. 1400-1300 B.C.E.) takes us into the more turbulent Amarna age. During this time, the Egyptians paid a lot less attention to events in Canaan, and it is clear from the Amarna letters that the major cities were small, and most were facing constant threats from non-sedentary outcasts who seem to have roamed freely in areas that used to be under firm Egyptian control. Now, for the first time in LBA(c. 1550-1200 B.C.E.), we get a better understanding of the settlements in the hill country. During the LB IIB the 19th dynasty took a more active role in Canaan as they tightened their control by the establishment of various administrative centers. However, the archaeological evidence at the end of Late Bronze Age, dem-

onstrates that there were a series of destructions toward the end of LBA. This was the context in which the emergence of Israel begins to be detected in the hill country of Canaan.