

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

by B. Mazar

THE FIRST QUARTER of the 16th century B.C.E. witnessed the beginning decline of the Hyksos kingdom in Egypt. The long offensive war which the native rulers of Thebes fought to eject the foreign masters ended close to the middle of the 15th century B.C.E. It was Pharaoh Ah-mose, the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who defeated the Hyksos, conquered their capital, Avaris, and laid the foundations of a national-military rule on Egyptian soil, namely, the New Kingdom. Ah-mose did not content himself with the liberation and unification of Egypt, but marched with his troops to southern Palestine where he attacked Sharuhén. This fortress, the full strength and extent of whose defensive works were revealed in Petrie's excavations at Tell el-Far'ah on the Gaza brook, was conquered after a three-year siege.¹ Ah-mose's action paved the way for the extension of Egypt's borders eastwards, and his successors Amen-hotep I (1551/49–1531/29) and Thut-mose I (1531/29 — ca. 1518) followed his example. These two latter Egyptian kings conducted daring military expeditions to Palestine and Syria, apparently without meeting much resistance on their northward progress, for the decline of the Hyksos power had left these countries without any unifying factor or military force able to withstand Pharaoh's armies. Only in Northern Syria did Thut-mose I come up against a strong political factor, namely the Hurrian-Indo-Iranian kingdom of Mitanni, which, from its center in the Khabur Valley in north-western Mesopotamia, had extended its influence beyond Assyria in the east, and across Syria in the west. Though Thut-mose I's campaigns took him as far as the banks of the Euphrates, where he erected a stele commemorating his victories, the Egyptian aim of subduing the Western Fertile Crescent did not materialize. The military campaigns did not end in permanent conquests, Egyptian control of the vital traffic arteries was precarious, while the kings of Mitanni could not be hindered in the consolidation of their position in Syria.²

A decisive turning-point was reached in the time of Thut-mose III

(1504-1450) who was the first king to succeed in controlling most of Syria-Palestine and turning it into an Egyptian province, called at first by the ancient Egyptian name of Retenu. However, in the course of time the Egyptians used generally the name Hurru, no doubt due to the important position the Hurrian element occupied among the Syrian-Palestinian population of that period. Parallel to these names, the name Canaan makes its first appearance in cuneiform written documents, in the beginning as the name of the Phoenician coast and later, in the Amarna period, as the name of the entire Egyptian province. The latter name became familiar in Egypt during the Nineteenth Dynasty, while in the Bible it usually denotes the region which included the Land of Israel.³

At the beginning of Thut-mose III's single rule (1490) the Canaanite kings led by the king of Kadesh on the Orontes, and certainly supported by the king of Mitanni, concluded an alliance against Egypt. Thut-mose's annals contain a detailed description of the campaign during which he inflicted a crushing defeat on the confederates and subjected the country to Egyptian domination. The king left Egypt at the head of a large force, and began his campaign by taking Gaza which he turned into a military base called "That-which-the-ruler-seized." From Gaza he continued along the *Via maris* and encamped at Yaham (modern Khirbet-Yemma) in the Sharon. As for the confederates, they encamped their forces at Megiddo, the strongly fortified royal city situated at the spot where the Wadi 'Āra opens into the Plain of Jezreel. Against the advice of his commanders, Thut-mose did not lead his army by either of the easier routes from the Sharon to the Plain of Jezreel, via Zephath, so as to reach the Valley north of Megiddo, or via Taanach, but by the short and narrow central road along the Wadi 'Āra ('Arûna), "his order of march, horse following horse," and surprised the enemy at the Qina brook (Wadi Lājūn). In the decisive battle that followed the confederates were defeated and a great deal of booty including many war-chariots fell into the hands of the Egyptians, though Megiddo, whither the confederates retired, was conquered only after a seven-month siege.⁴ In the wake of the Megiddo campaign and the conquest of several other fortified towns, including Jaffa (the siege and conquest of which form the subject of an Egyptian story)⁵, large parts of the country surrendered to the Egyptian king. However, Thut-mose was compelled to conduct another sixteen campaigns in Syria in order to establish and consolidate his rule, thereby extending his conquests as far as the northern border of Syria and the Middle Euphrates region, which had been under Mitannian domination.

A pretty clear picture of the position prevailing in Canaan emerges from

Thut-mose III's inscriptions and in particular from the lists of conquered towns.⁶ His topographical list mentions no less than a hundred and nineteen towns in Palestine and southern Syria, probably the same towns he had conquered in his first campaign. This list is incomplete since it does not include all those towns and provinces which had not participated in the alliance against Egypt, such as the Phoenician coastal towns and the royal cities in the country's interior. An analysis of this document and of a few additional pieces of evidence leads to the conclusion that at Thut-mose's time the country was already divided into several districts, no doubt a legacy of the past. Another long list contains a further two hundred and thirty-one names of towns in central and northern Syria. All these lists constitute reliable evidence of the political division persisting from the quasi feudal regime of the preceding period. A "Canaanite kingdom" was generally little more than a fortified city which together with the smaller towns and villages surrounding it was governed by a local ruler (in the Amarna Letters — *ḥazānu*, and occasionally *šarru* — a "king", and in the Bible: kings of Canaan), assisted by the nobles and owners of large estates members of the military caste, i.e. the Maryannu.⁷ Such royal cities were concentrated mainly in fertile areas, or in the districts along the important communication arteries, especially along the *Via maris* and its ramifications, viz. in the coastal area, in the plains of northern Palestine, southern Syria and in Bashan.

Thut-mose III made great efforts to weld the conquered regions into a single administrative unit, so as to realize his colonial plan of exploiting the economic sources of the province and extend Egypt's defence line beyond Syria. In the course of time the regular administration set up by Thut-mose was adapted to the prevailing local conditions, so that the Egyptians succeeded in maintaining themselves in the conquered country for three hundred years, despite the political, social, and economic changes that took place in their own, and in other countries. Thut-mose's administrative methods, which crystallized in the days of his successors, can be summarized as follows:

1. The entire region was turned into Pharaoh country and governed as an Egyptian province. In most administrative centers Pharaoh retained the local ruler or, in case he revolted, replaced him with a brother or some other member of his family. In some instances, however, Pharaoh appointed a governor from among his own reliable men or Egyptian army officers. In various places we find a kind of oligarchy — government by the notables of the town⁸—which seems to apply to Gibeon and the Hivite cities in the center of the country on the eve of the Israelite Conquest.

2. The sons of Canaanite rulers were dispatched as hostages to Egypt. At the Egyptian court the "royal seed" absorbed the atmosphere of reverence and esteem for Pharaoh.

3. In the Land of Hurru, i.e., Canaan, was set up a complex Egyptian administration supported by regiments from the standing army — which included conscripts from among the local inhabitants as well as foreign mercenaries, — and by garrisons stationed in the royal cities and fortified towns. Next to the colonial heads of government, a vital position was occupied by high Egyptian officials who acted on behalf of the pharaohs and bore the title *rābišu* in Akkadian, *sūkinu* in Canaanite (*sōkēn* in Hebrew). They maintained contact with the local rulers, watched over the balance of power in the province, and supervised the collection of taxes and the corvée. They were responsible for the state of the roads along which Pharaoh's caravans travelled, as well as for the political and economic interests of the Egyptian government as a whole.

4. Various towns of strategic importance as well as vital stations on trade and maritime routes were turned into fortresses garrisoned with Egyptian troops. Gaza, the most important administrative and military center and key position on the way to Egypt, never ceased to serve as such during the whole time Egypt ruled Canaan. Jaffa — also an Egyptian fortress — contained royal depots.⁹ Such fortresses were also found along the Phoenician coast, as far north as Šumur. It appears that at the beginning Megiddo was also under direct Egyptian rule, but in the course of time it reverted to its status of a royal city, the residence of a Canaanite dynast loyal to Pharaoh.¹⁰ Beth-shean became a stronghold of the Egyptian government during the reign of one of Thut-mose III's successors, and since then it played an important part in the defence system of the Egyptian province.¹¹

5. In a number of towns the Egyptian authorities set up sanctuaries dedicated to local as well as Egyptian divinities. The remains of a sanctuary discovered at Lachish, possibly built at the beginning of Egyptian rule, appear to have been the product of the local ruler's initiative, as were, no doubt, the sanctuaries of Megiddo, Hazor and Shechem.¹² In contrast, the cultic center in the Beth-shean fortress, erected in the first half of the 14th century B.C.E., should be attributed to the Egyptians who kept it in use until the end of their rule. In the temenos of the earliest sanctuary of Beth-shean was discovered the Egyptian dedication stele to Mekal, the god of the city. The Egyptian inscriptions found in the successive sanctuaries dating from the 14th to the 12th centuries prove that the Egyptians were interested in fostering Mekal's cult, probably to emphasize their sovereignty

over the locality by patronizing the local cult. Egyptian sources from the time of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties provide evidence of the existence of Egyptian sanctuaries in Canaanite towns.¹³

6. During the period of Egyptian rule the Akkadian language and cuneiform writing, which had been used in the Western Fertile Crescent for a long time, continued to be used as the international language, especially in trade and diplomacy. Even the correspondence between the Canaanite rulers and Pharaoh's court was conducted in Akkadian, a fact which proves that the Egyptians had adapted themselves to the conditions and traditions of the country.

Although Thut-mose and his successors established a long-lasting regime, they were obliged to undertake from time to time military campaigns to consolidate their rule in Palestine and Syria. Amen-hotep II's (1450-1424) own inscriptions provide detailed information of his campaigns.¹⁴ During one of these campaigns he got as far as northern Syria, whence he returned by way of Kadesh on the Orontes and the Valley of Lebanon (the Beqa'). On reaching the Sharon plain he caught a messenger of the king of Naharin (Mitanni) who had apparently been sent to instigate a revolt of the Canaanite kings.

Another campaign was directed against the rebellious cities along the *Via maris*. Amen-hotep subdued an alliance of rulers at the northern end of the Sharon, and on his northward progress conquered the city of Anaharath (Tell el-Mukharkhash), situated in the north of the Plain of Jezreel, which seems to have been the center of the revolt. Also worth noting is the list of prisoners Amen-hotep II brought to Egypt, which included several hundred rulers, their brothers and sons, as well as *maryannu* and "Canaanites" (Kn'nw, probably meaning merchants) — all members of the upper classes — besides thousands of prisoners from the lower classes, including 36,300 Hurru (inhabitants of the Hurru, i.e. Canaanite province), 15,200 Shasu and 3,600 'Apiru. In addition to other sources, this document provides a cross-section of the ethnic and social composition of Canaan's population. The permanent population was mixed: West Semites ("Canaanites") who constituted the bulk of the country's population, and Hurrians, including an Indo-Iranian element which was specially prominent among the aristocracy, but in the course of time was absorbed by the West-Semitic speaking population. Next to the aristocracy — a legacy of the quasi-feudalistic regime of the Hyksos period — the majority of the population consisted of small farmers, called *hupšu* (cf. *hofshi*, I Sam. 17:25), who were lower class freemen attached to the soil.

In that period the Habiru ('Apiru in Egyptian sources, or Hapiru in

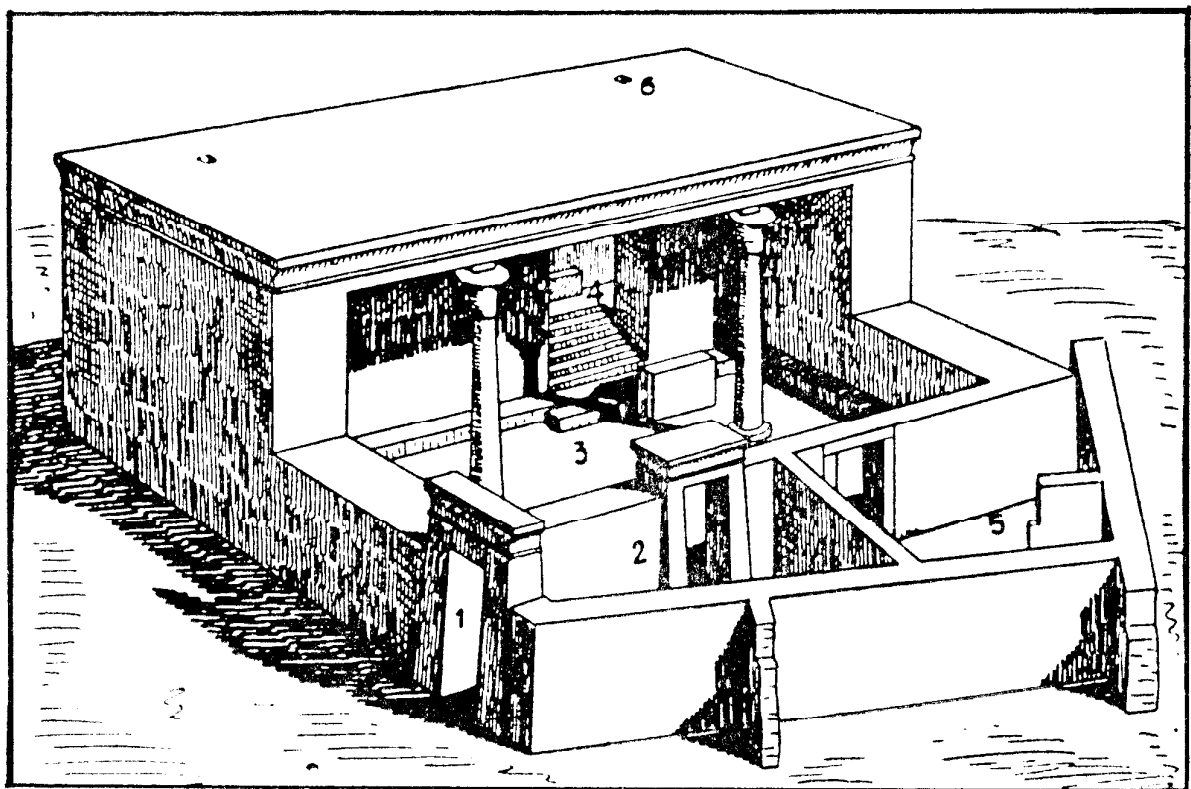
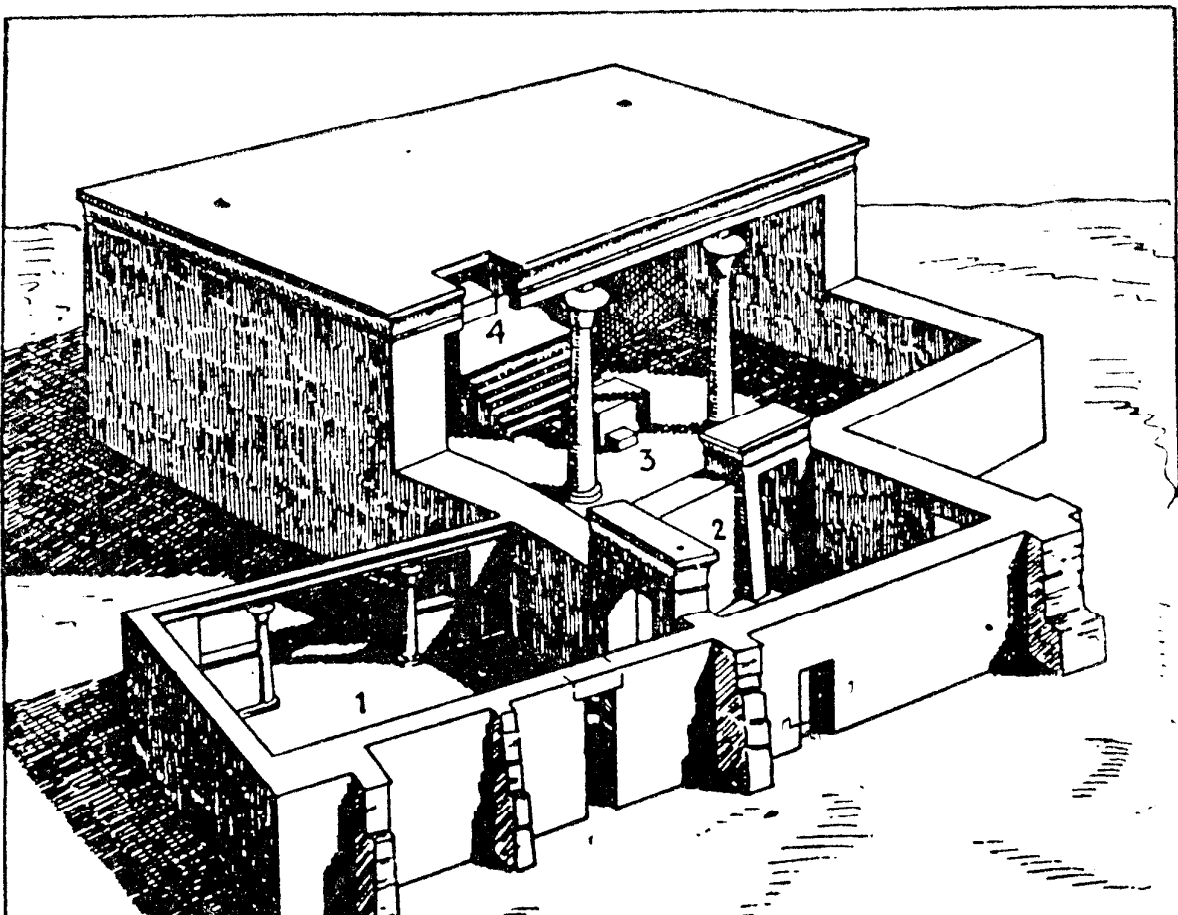


Fig. 1. Jericho. Plan and section view of a tomb of the Middle Bronze II period.
Prof. K. M. Kenyon, London.

Fig. 2. Beth-shean. Reconstruction and section view of the Late Bronze period temple.
A. Rowe, *The four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan*, Philadelphia, 1940, fig. 4



cuneiform writing) of whom we shall discuss later, constituted a distinct class. In the life of the country's border districts the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, called *Shasu* in the Egyptian sources, occupied an important place. We also know of various kinds of dependents, servants and slaves, including the *ḥanīkīm* (Gen. 14:14; in a document from Taanach—*ḥanakū*) soldiers who served in the ruler's army, and the *asīrū*, i.e., prisoners of war. From the above emerges the picture of an ethnically and socially heterogeneous and divided population.

It appears that the time of Amen-hotep II's successors — Thut-mose IV and Amen-hotep III — was a period of security and stability in Egyptian ruled Canaan, despite administrative weakness and oppressively high taxation. It is a fact that in this time, and particularly during the rule of Amen-hotep III, shipping and trade prospered on the eastern Mediterranean sea-board, new harbors were founded (e.g. Dor, Zalmonah — now Tell Abū Huwām) and commercial relations with Egypt, Cyprus and the lands of the Aegean Sea developed considerably. The imports from these countries into Canaan rose considerably, as proved by the large amounts of Cypriot and Mycenaean vessels, as well as Egyptian products, discovered in the excavations carried out in this country.¹⁵

At the same time trading caravans plied the overland routes between Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, the safety of which was ensured by the Canaanite rulers who shared in the benefits of that traffic.

Much information about the political and social regime and culture of the country during the Eighteenth Dynasty is to be found in the Taanach Tablets¹⁶ and a few other tablets discovered in different parts of the country, and in particular in the Tell el-Amarna Letters, from the royal archives of Amen-hotep IV — Akh-en-Aton (1376–1359), the reformer of the Egyptian religion.¹⁷ To these documents must be added the rich epigraphical material from Ugarit (cf. the chapter "The Ugaritic Writings" in the volume *The Patriarchs* in the same series) which proved itself a true mine of information about the political, social, economic and especially the spiritual life of this important North Syrian harbor-town. Except a number of letters written by the kings of states bordering on Egypt, the majority of the Tell el-Amarna Letters represent the correspondence of Canaanite rulers with their suzerains Amen-hotep III — at the end of his reign — and Amen-hotep IV; a few letters are from Pharaoh to these rulers. Nearly all the documents are written in Akkadian which displays the influence of West Asiatic languages; particularly in the letters from Canaan, spoken "Canaanite" (Northwest Semitic) is discernible through the cuneiform written Akkadian.

Already at the beginning of the Amarna period — toward the end of Amen-hotep III's reign and the beginning of the reign of Amen-hotep IV—the situation in Canaan began to deteriorate as a result of Egypt's weakness and the shortcomings of its rule. That process was especially affected by the apparition on the political arena of a new power, the Hittite empire, which challenged both Egypt and Mitanni's positions. The Hittite king Shuppiluliuma won a decisive victory over Mitanni (in ca. 1370), and pursued his campaign right into the heart of the defeated kingdom, a large part of which he annexed; in the east, Assyria, freed of Mitannian pressure, was also growing stronger. This alteration in the balance of power brought changes in Syria in its wake. The Hittites established themselves in the north of that country, extended their influence over central Syria, but came into collision with Egypt by competing for the rule of Canaan.¹⁸ In this conflict special importance was attached to the character of Amurru, a buffer state located in the Lebanon and Mt. Hermon region. Its founder, 'Abd-Ashirti, hewed it out for himself in the days of Amen-hotep III, and his son Aziru — who betrayed Egypt and was for some time a vassal of the Hittite king — succeeded in gaining control over extensive areas between the Phoenician coast and the Syrian desert. The part which these two rulers played in the struggle between Hatti and Egypt is clearly reflected in the Amarna Letters, as well as in other Egyptian sources, and later in the Hittite royal archives. Information about the Amurru state continues until the time of its destruction at the beginning of the 12th century.¹⁹ Proof of its existence is also preserved in a biblical source: "... , all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongeth to the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites" (Josh. 13:4). From this we learn that already in the middle of the 14th century the area dominated by Egypt had shrunk and its influence in western Asia was declining. This development had repercussions in the Egyptian province proper, sometimes called Canaan (Kinahna, Kinahhi), in the Tell el-Amarna Letters.

In the general restlessness the Habiru bands ('Apiru in Egyptian) which used to rove across the whole country played an active part. They perpetrated hostile actions or committed robberies, usually in the service of local dynasts or in alliance with them. The latter undermined the Egyptian government and strove to extend the limits of their own rule and increase their political and economic power. Bands of Habiru were also hired by rulers loyal to Pharaoh. One of the faithful rulers, Rib-Addi, King of Byblos, complains in his letters to Amen-hotep III: "Since your father has returned from Sidon, and from that time on the countries have made league with the Habiru people." He also points out that 'Abd-Ashirti and

his sons were their allies. Biridiya of Megiddo writes as follows: "Behold I guard Megiddo, the city of my lord the King, day and night. With chariots and with soldiers I guard the walls of the King, for mighty is the enmity of the Habiru." He refers to those Habiru bands which had joined up with his enemy Lab'ayu, a powerful ruler from the region of Shechem. The latter, who was trying to gain a measure of independence through alliances with other rulers and by means of various intrigues, had extended his rule and influence far beyond the territory of Shechem, and even destroyed cities in the Plain of Jezreel, among them Shunem. 'Abdu-Heba, ruler of Jerusalem, who was faithful to Pharaoh, denounces "Lab'ayu, who gave the land of Shechem to the 'Apiru." Despite his actions, Lab'ayu never ceased to proclaim his loyalty in his letters to Pharaoh. Although well aware of Lab'ayu's aggressivity and influence, Pharaoh nevertheless entrusted him with the protection of the royal caravans travelling to Mitanni and Babylonia. When caught by his enemies, and about to be dispatched by boat from Acco to Egypt and be handed over to Pharaoh, Lab'ayu freed himself by means of bribery. His sons continued their father's policy; one of them — Mut-ba'lu — is mentioned as the ruler of Peḥel (Pella) in the Jordan Valley, and as one of the few to bear the title of king (*šarru*). Mut-ba'lu maintained friendly relations with the governor of Ashtaroth in Bashan, and was appointed by Pharaoh to supervise the caravan trade with Mesopotamia.

The complicated relationship among the rulers themselves and with the Egyptians can also be inferred from the letters that deal with the period when Shechem concluded an alliance with Gezer, an important center in the northern coastal plain, as well as from the information that Bethshean was garrisoned with people of Gath-carmel, whose ruler was the father-in-law of the governor of Gezer. The allies were, no doubt, mainly interested in watching the principal trade routes.

The same picture of Egypt's waning power and Pharaoh's inability to keep order in the province of Canaan emerges in other parts of the country also. Thus, we hear that the "king" of Hazor — one of the most powerful rulers in the north of the country — had brought under his control the whole area between the land of Geshur in Golan and the coastal strip; Abimelech of Tyre complained about him to Pharaoh to the effect that he had left his own city and joined the Habiru. There must have been good reason to say of this city (Josh. 11:10), "For Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms" (the royal cities in Galilee).

At that time Jerusalem was an important political center in the south of the country, where Pharaoh had stationed a garrison of Nubians.²⁰

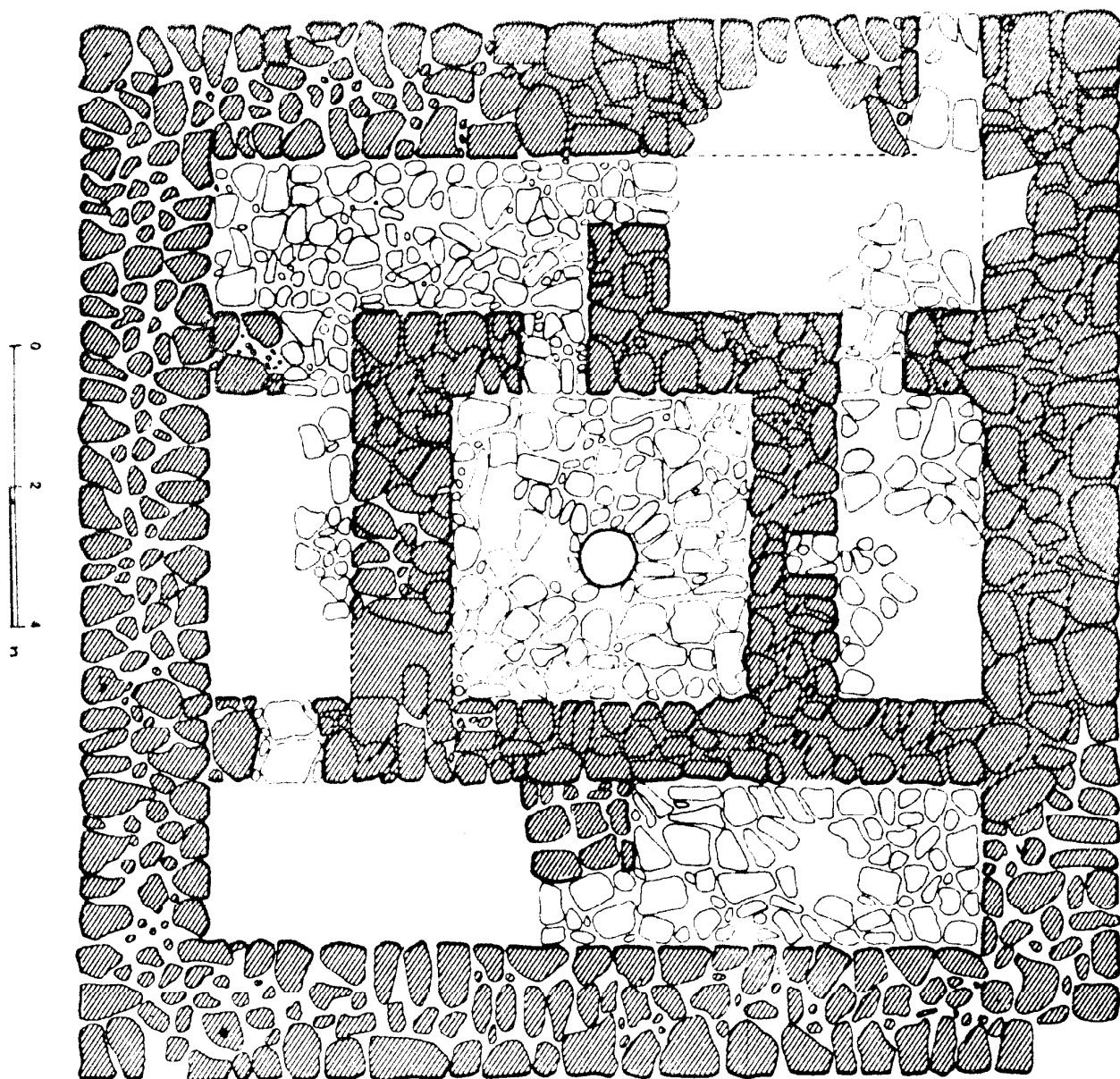


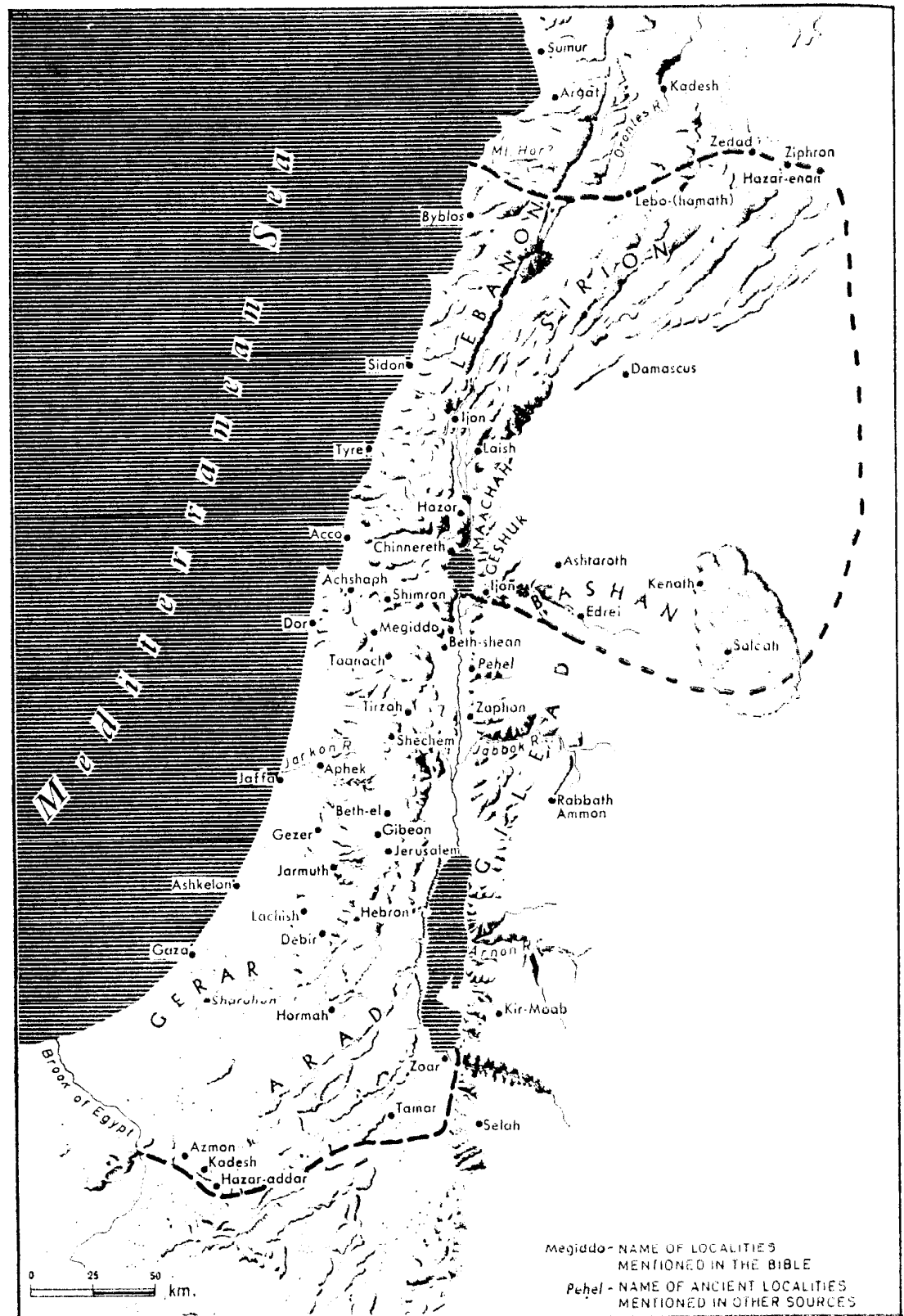
Fig. 3.
Rabbath-Ammon. Plan of the Late Bronze temple.
J. B. Hennessy, *PEQ*, 98 (1966), 158 fig. 2.

‘Abdu-Heba, the loyal ruler of that city, frequently described in his long letters the difficult situation prevailing in the country, imploring Pharaoh to punish the hostile princes and curb the Habiru. He was on particularly bad terms with the ruler of Gezer and with another ruler from the south of the country who bore the Indo-Iranian name Shuwardata. Things came to such a pass that his two enemies concluded an alliance, invaded the Jerusalem region, and threatened the city’s very existence. On the other hand, at an earlier time, perhaps in the days of Amen-hotep III, ‘Abdu-Heba and Shuwardata fought together against the Habiru. During that action the rulers of Acco and Achshaph in the Acco plain rushed to their aid with their war-chariots, no doubt at Pharaoh’s orders.²¹

From several instances mentioned in the Tell el-Amarna Letters it transpires that the general lack of security affected particularly the traffic on the roads. In one of his letters, ‘Abdu-Heba complains that a caravan he had sent to Egypt was plundered in the Valley of Aijalon. More serious is the complaint of Burnaburiash, the Kassite king of Babylonia, that the caravan of the Babylonian merchant Ahutab had been attacked at Hannathon in Lower Galilee, the merchant killed, and the caravan plundered. Burnaburiash accuses of this crime the governors of Acco and Sham-hūna (Tell Samuniye near Nahalal) and demands their punishment.

In this period of ebb the principal concern of the Egyptian administration was to hold on to Canaan by any possible means. Complicated diplomatic intrigues, reinforcement of garrisons in the various fortresses and cities, and the dispatch of punitive forces, when necessary, were employed, while further efforts were made to collect taxes and to safeguard the overland and maritime trade routes. Only the ominous advance of the Hittites and the general restlessness in Canaan were able to stir Egypt from its torpor and compel Pharaoh to dispatch a large force to consolidate his rule and suppress the rebellious elements. The campaign was undertaken by Tutankh-Amon’s military commander, Hor-em-heb, who later usurped the throne of Egypt (1345-1319/7).²²

The rise to the throne of Ramses I, the founder of the Nineteenth Dynasty, represented a political turning-point in Egypt’s relations with the province of Canaan. Seti I (1315-1304), Ramses’ son and successor, undertook a series of military campaigns to suppress rebellion in Canaan and consolidate Egypt’s position vis-à-vis the Hittites. Since he intended to use the caravan route running through the desert to Canaan, he had fortresses built and wells dug along it and punished severely the nomads (Egyptian: Shasu) who threatened the safety of that traffic. The inscription on one of Seti’s stelae, discovered in the sanctuary of Beth-shean, is very



The borders of Canaan in the New Kingdom period.

instructive in that it relates the suppression of a rebellion in his first regnal year.²³ The rebel was the governor of Hammath (Tell el-Hammeh in the south of the Beth-shean valley) who attacked the loyal ruler of Rehob (Tell eṣ-Şarem south of Beth-shean) and tried to conquer the fortress of Beth-shean. He was apparently assisted in his design by the ruler of Peḫel. Pharaoh replied by dispatching to Hammath, Beth-shean and Yanoam (apparently Tell el-'Ubeydiye near a Jordan ford) Egyptian units which defeated the rebels in a single day. Even more interesting is another Seti stele from the sanctuary of Beth-shean. The inscription mentions a factor which was to bring about a decisive change in the life of the country.²⁴ It refers to the activities of the Habiru of a mountain named Yarmuta (Jarmuth-Kaukab el-Hawa) who, together with the *Ta-ya-ru* tribe attacked a group of nomads called Rehem. Pharaoh sent an expeditionary force to this mountainous region situated north of Beth-shean, and put a speedy end to the disturbances. The document indicates that already then nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes represented an important proportion among the inhabitants of the Galilean highlands, and that at times of Egyptian administrative weakness it was they who threatened the peace in the Plain of Jezreel. Further, the Egyptian documents report that at Seti's time the Egyptian government was forced to engage in a difficult war against the Shosu tribes in the country's interior, in the border districts, and especially in the Negev.²⁵ It seems reasonable to assume that in this period the Semitic tribes of Transjordan, who were ethnically close to the Israelites, had already reached a certain degree of national cohesion and settled in the land to a considerable extent. This development resulted in the emergence of three kingdoms: Edom at Mount Seir, Moab on both sides of the Arnon river, and Ammon on the upper course of the Jabbok river. However, all three kingdoms being established in areas outside the boundaries of the province of Canaan proper, Seti's activities were not directed in their quarter but mainly toward consolidating Egypt's position on the Phoenician coast and in southern Syria, which were threatened by the increasing power and influence of the Hittite king. His campaigns restored Egyptian rule in such important centers as Hazor and Tyre, and extended it as far as the Valley of Lebanon (Beqa') and the Land of Amurru, the vulnerable spot in the Egyptian defence system vis-à-vis the Hittite empire.²⁶

Seti I left his son Ramses II (1304-1237) a greatly consolidated and strengthened empire, and fully restored authority over the province of Hurru (Canaan). According to one of the documents, the province of Hurru extended then from Sile (a fortress near Qanṭara) to Upi (the

Damascus area). The change in Egypt's policy towards the East found its expression in the shift of the Egyptian capital from Memphis to the north-eastern Delta, namely to Tanis (Avaris), the old Hyksos capital. This is the royal city the Egyptians called Per-Ra'mses (House of Ramses) and which according to the generally accepted view is the store-city Ramses of the Israelite tradition. No doubt this action emphasized the fact that the Nineteenth Dynasty continued the policies of the Hyksos rulers, hence its encouragement of the cult of Seth, who was identified with Baal, and the strengthening of relations between Egypt and Canaan. Under the Nineteenth Dynasty the Canaanite element and the influence of Canaanite cultic practices increased in Egypt proper, while the Egyptians reinforced their position in Canaan by restoring and building fortresses, by erecting cities in honor of Pharaoh, and by developing overland and maritime trade connections.²⁷

The initial period of Ramses II's reign is marked by the hard struggle with the Hittite empire and with the Canaanite elements hostile to Egypt, while the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes continued to penetrate in growing numbers in the border districts and the interior of the country. This complex situation, which foreshadowed the decline of Egyptian rule in Canaan, forced Ramses to build up his army and reinforce it with Canaanite auxiliary units and mercenary troops, mainly from among the Sea-Peoples. Conspicuous among these were the Lycians (Lukka), the Danuna (Denyen) and the Sherden, which are the first foreign groups on Canaanite soil mentioned already in the Tell el-Amarna Letters.

The wars waged against the Hittites in central Syria lasted for a great many years. The famous battle near Kadesh on the Orontes, described in detail in both Egyptian and Hittite sources, was fought in Ramses's fifth regnal year. We tend to imagine it as a major conflict in which both sides concentrated tremendous forces, including auxiliaries and much chariotry, and employed the best tactics of those days. Though Ramses describes the campaign as an Egyptian victory, the sources show that actually it did not end in a decisive manner and that, in fact, he was forced to withdraw and return to Egypt, probably because of the heavy losses suffered and the increasing weakness of his army.²⁸ The Hittite king, who knew how to exploit the newly created situation, subjected the king of Amurru and undertook a military expedition to the Land of Upi, the center of which was the Damascus oasis, but which apparently included also areas in northern Transjordan. This was certainly a heavy blow to Pharaoh's prestige, who felt compelled to prepare for a resumption of the struggle. Quite possibly this expedition to the north-east of the Canaan province

had also another historical significance. It could have had some connection with the events taking place in Transjordan on the eve of the war of the Israelite tribes against the Amorite kingdoms in Gilead and in Bashan. According to the Bible the Amorites controlled northern Moabite areas in the period between the establishment of the Moabite kingdom and the penetration of the Israelite tribes into Transjordan (Num. 21:26). It would seem that the kingdom of Jaazer in Gilead and the Amorite kingdom in the Bashan were established at the same time. From the reports of various sources one might assume that the Hittite invasion, in which the Amorites took apparently an active part, brought about the far-reaching upheavals in Transjordan which the Israelites exploited. According to this argument the momentous events which took place at the beginning of Ramses's reign projected the Israelites into the mainstream of historical events with all the struggles and consequences implied.²⁹

At least until his tenth regnal year, Ramses was obliged to engage in fierce battles with the Hittites in the north of the province of Canaan, and suppress at the same time rebellions in Canaan itself, fight the Shosu tribes of Mount Seir and the Moabites as well. The extent to which Pharaoh's hold on the country hung in balance is best illustrated by the fact that, despite its proximity to the Egyptian base at Gaza, the large coastal city of Ashkelon rebelled and was reconquered in an assault. Ramses's topographical lists lead to the conclusion that he was particularly concerned in restoring order along the coastal roads, on the sea-board and along the roads leading to northern Canaan, toward the positions held by his great enemy — the Hittite empire, — while in the interior Egyptian rule had in fact grown lax or ceased altogether.

The continuous wars between Egypt and Hatti weakened both these mighty kingdoms at a time when new political and national forces, which were destined to replace them in Syria and in Palestine, were looming at the horizon. In face of these dangers Egypt and Hatti engaged in negotiations which resulted in the peace and friendship treaty signed in the twenty-first regnal year of Ramses II (ca. 1280 B.C.E.). This treaty, which has been preserved in both the Egyptian and Hittite formulations, remained in force until the end of the Hittite empire.³⁰ It was in this period that the borders of the province of Canaan were clearly defined, i.e. "The Land of Canaan according to its borders," which is identical with the area ruled by the Egyptians in western Asia, and whose northernmost limit is Lebo'-hamath (Lebweh in the Beqa' [Valley of Lebanon], Num. 34:8).³¹

Papyrus Anastasi I, which is written in the form of a satirical letter sent by Hori, an Egyptian official, to the military scribe Amen-em-Opet, sheds

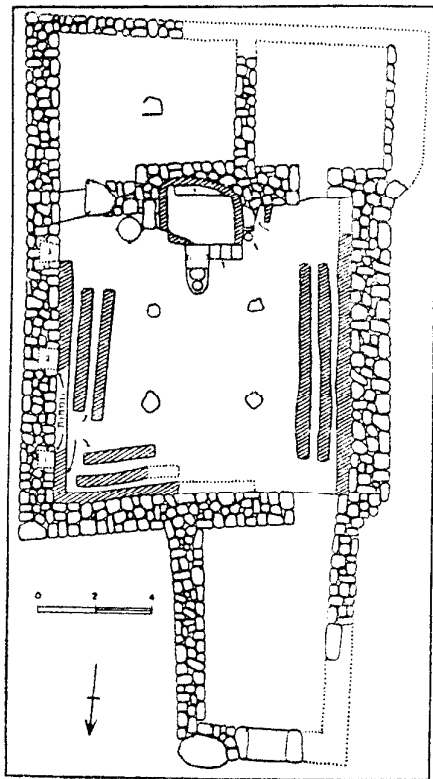


Fig. 4.
Lachish. Plan of the Late Bronze temple (phase III).
Encyclopaedia Biblica, pl. 509.
Design "Carta", Jerusalem.

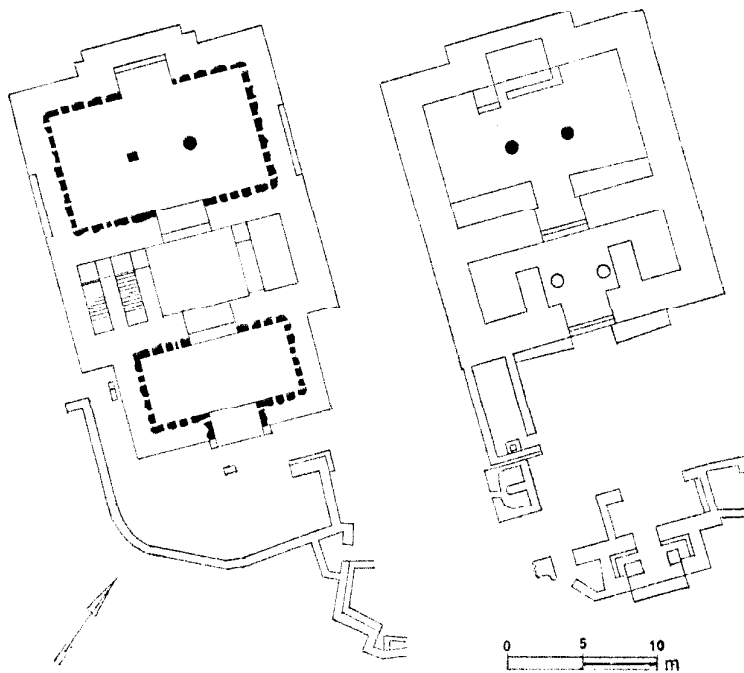


Fig. 5.
Hazor, Lower City. Plan of the Late Bronze temples from stratum II (right),
stratum IB (left).
Prof. Y. Yadin, Director of the Hazor excavations.
Design "Carta", Jerusalem.

some light on this period. Hori derides his friend and proves that his knowledge of Canaan is scant. The letter comprises a kind of guide to Canaan, listing the roads and towns which the Egyptian officials were in the habit of touring. The entire coast with its rich towns as far as Şumur in the north, as well as northern Canaan and southern Syria were under Egyptian control. However, in various parts of Canaan, especially in the Lebanon, there roved bands of Shosu who robbed terrified wayfarers of their possessions. Danger threatened the man who travelled along the Wadi 'Āra from Megiddo to the Sharon for there "the Shasu hide behind the bushes." Incidentally he mentions an event which befell the chieftain of Asar (Asher?). On the basis of this source and the mention of the name Asar in other sources some scholars are of the opinion that at that time the tribe of Asher was already living in the north of the country.³²

The rebellion which broke out in Canaan after Ramses II's death was forcefully suppressed by his son and successor Mer-ne-Ptah (1237-1229). The hymn commemorating this victory of the pharaoh mentions among other things:

"Plundered is Canaan with every evil;
Carried off is Ashkelon, seized upon is Gezer;
Yanoam is made as that which does not exist;
Israel is laid waste, his seed is not;
Hurru is become a widow for Egypt."³³

The text proves that important Canaanite centers — from Ashkelon on the south coast to Yanoam near the Jordan fords south of Lake Chinnereth — as well as Israelites participated actively in this attempt to shake off the Egyptian yoke.

Further, we have to assume that the Israelite tribes and those who had joined them constituted already an important factor in the struggle against Egypt, since their expansion, which was preceded by a slow penetration, ended in an offensive war and the destruction of Canaanite cities, the latter fact supported by archeological evidence. The presence of the Israelites was destined to change the composition of the population, mainly in the interior of the country. However, the Egyptian rule was not threatened by the constant upheavals in Canaan only, or, the mere rise of Israelite tribes, but mainly by the migration of the Sea-Peoples who were leaving their homelands around the Aegean and erupting in increasing masses into the countries on the eastern board of the Mediterranean.

Though Mer-ne-Ptah succeeded in defeating the Libyans and the Sea-Peoples who had advanced as far as the Delta, new waves surged continuously upon the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and at the gates

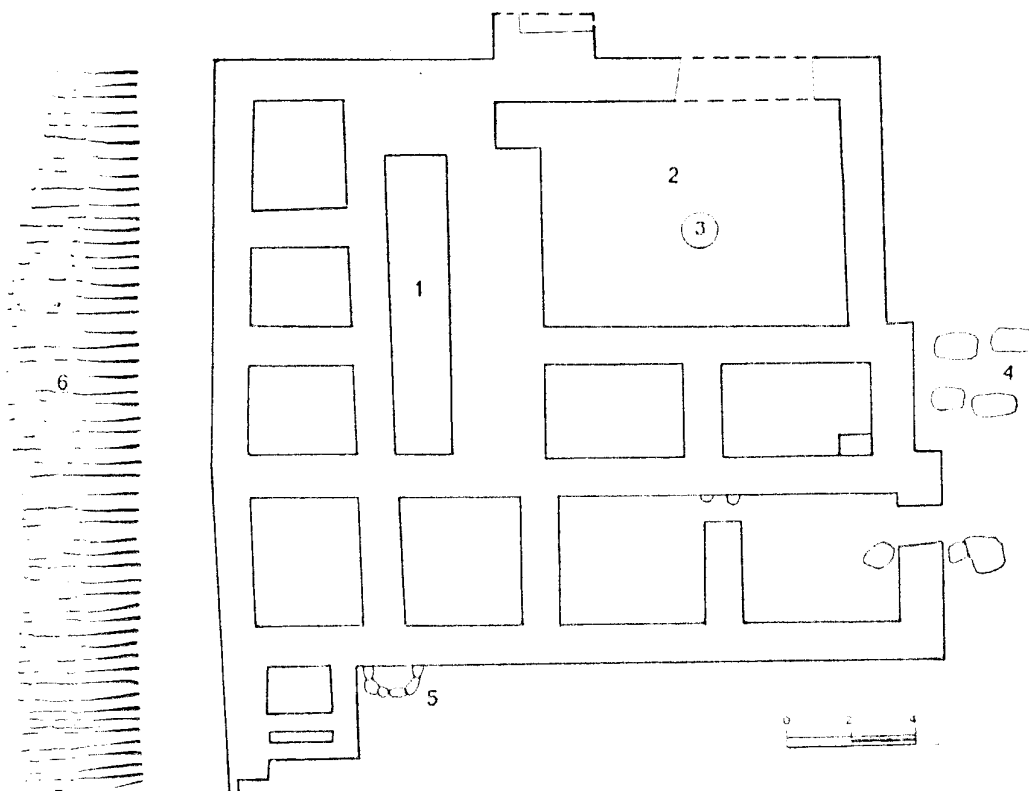
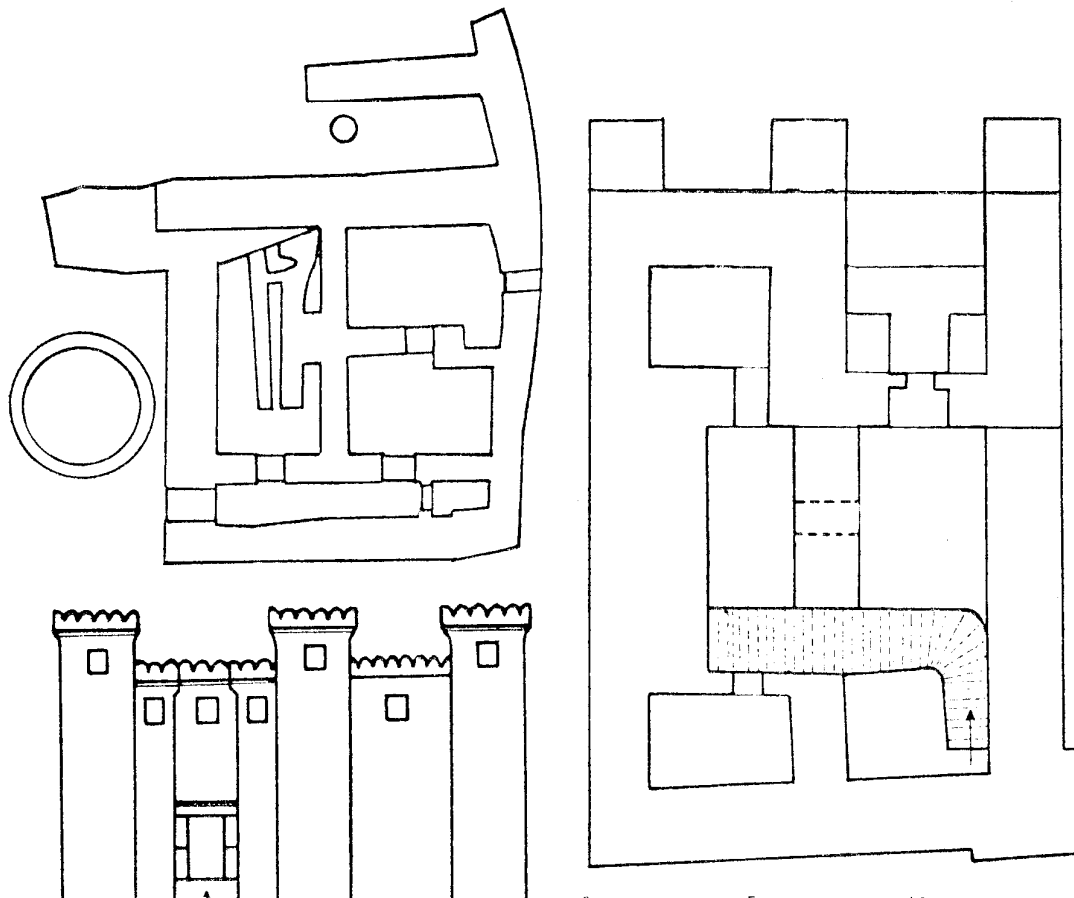


Fig. 6.
Taanach. Plan of the western palace during the Middle and Late Bronze periods.
G. Watzinger, *Denkmäler Palästinas I*, Leipzig, 1933, fig. 6.

Fig. 7.
Beth-shean. Plan of the Late Bronze citadel and reconstruction of the citadel's façade (bottom left).
A. Rowe, *The Topography of Beth-Shan*, Philadelphia, 1930, fig. 2.



of the Egyptian kingdom. At the beginning of the 12th century the tremendous assault of the Philistines and other Sea-Peoples brought in its wake far-reaching changes in the Western Fertile Crescent, such as the destruction of the Hittite Empire,³⁴ and later on the total collapse of Egyptian rule in Canaan.

Canaanite civilization at the time under discussion — the Late Bronze Period — is well reflected in the archeological discoveries from the many tells of Palestine and Syria. Remains of city fortifications and the Egyptian illustrations of Canaanite towns show that the governors were able to recruit many people for the *corvée*. In general the fortification techniques remained the same as in the previous period, namely the last phase of the Middle Bronze II Period. But the strength and dimensions of the fortifications and buildings are much inferior when compared to the achievements of the latter period. Only in respect to sanctuaries new types were introduced, and in some of the temples — such as those of Lachish, Hazor and Amman — a vast amount of local and foreign objects was discovered. The comparative wealth of the ruling class of that time, particularly during its initial phase, is reflected in the palaces, sanctuaries and residences. The culture of the country at that time was much influenced by Egypt and the countries of Western Asia, while the contact with the Aegean and Cyprus was so close that the products of Mycenaean culture had become usual in the country since the beginning of the 14th century B.C.E. Epigraphic sources as well as archeological finds prove the close links of Canaan with its neighbors. Among these the important harbor cities along the East Mediterranean coast, especially Ugarit, had become prosperous centers of international trade.

In this period Canaan proper was a predominantly agricultural and pastoral country. Its main exports were agricultural products such as oil, wine, honey, spices and timber from the Lebanon; the imports consisted mainly of metals, precious objects and manufactured goods. But at the same time various crafts such as the dyeing of purple and blue cloth, the production of metal ware, and even ivory carvings continued to develop in Canaan. This prosperity in all the economic spheres was accompanied by a cultural development in religion and in literature. Its concrete expression is found in the Ugaritic literature, echoes of which can be found in epigraphic Akkadian and Egyptian sources as well as in the biblical literature. During this period several kinds of script were in use in Canaan. Akkadian, written in cuneiform characters, was the international language for diplomatic and trade purposes. On the other hand, Egyptian inscriptions found in Canaan were in the main official documents — particularly those carved on stelae

put up by Egyptian rulers and their officials — or inscriptions on objects brought from Egypt. Further, the Ugaritic alphabetic cuneiform writing had been adopted also outside that city, as proved by three documents discovered in Palestine.

The so-called Proto-Canaanite alphabetic script was already widely used in the country in this period. Various excavations have brought to light alphabetic documents, of which three inscriptions were found in Lachish. We have also evidence, particularly from excavations in Byblos, of pictographic writings, so far undeciphered, which clearly show the influence of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing.³⁵

The archeological finds in Canaan point to an economic decline in the second half of the 13th century. The outward signs of this process are: the destruction of cities, the weakening in the fortification system, the pooriness of the houses, and a low standard of life as compared with the preceding period. The oppressive Egyptian rule, heavy taxation, the lack of security on the roads and the waves of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes that swept over large parts of the country and settled there, all these were no doubt the main factors which rocked the foundations of the Canaanite regime under Egyptian suzerainty and led to momentous changes in the political and cultural life, as well as in the ethnical character of Canaan.