

Migrations, Ethnogenesis, and Settlement Dynamics: Israelites in Iron Age Canaan and Shuwa-Arabs in the Chad Basin

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This article discusses issues connected with the emergence and maintenance of cultural identities in multiethnic contexts. Migrations have been shunned during the past few decades as an explanatory tool in the emergence of new cultural entities. It is argued in this article that “migrations” are effective forces of cultural change but they have to be well documented and carefully investigated. The formation of ethnic identity is a complex but dynamic process that does not take place in a vacuum. It sometimes involves “foundational” events, such as key migration, encapsulated in the “social memory”: the trek across the Sinai desert for the Israelites or the move westward along the Wadi-el-Malik for the Shuwa-Arabs to the Lake Chad Basin in West Africa. However, it is more often structured according opposite cultural “archetypes.” The case studies marshaled in this discussion, one archaeological, from the Late Bronze–Iron Age I emergence of Israelites in highland Canaan (ca. 1300–1100 B.C.), and the other ethnoarchaeological, concerning the Shuwa-Arab settlements of northern Cameroon, both offer distinct histories with striking parallels. © 2002 Elsevier Science (USA)

INTRODUCTION

Some 50 years ago, archaeologists were involved in passionate debate about the emergence of great civilizations, their formative stages, cradles, and expansion through successive civilization waves. Distribution maps plotting the spread of specific material traits or items were critical tools forged in the heat of the debates. The set of processes involved in the geographic distribution of the documented traits were generally narrowed to two variants, later called stimulus and demic diffusion. Stimulus diffusion on the one hand involved the spread of cultural products down the line from one neighbor to the next along a clinal gradient, with a minimum of involvement of moving human groups. Demic diffusion on the other hand involved full-scale migration of entire human groups. Gordon

Childe used such models to explain the expansion of agriculture and livestock husbandry in Europe, as well as the development of megalithism in the western Mediterranean (Childe 1928, 1936, Trigger 1980). These different approaches inspired by diffusion as the key factor in culture change were dubbed “hydraulic theories of cultural evolution.” They were generally framed in terms of “streams,” “currents,” and “waves.” Demic diffusion includes a biological and cultural package. It can be peaceful, violent, or both depending on circumstances. Conquests are thus a specific case of demic diffusion. That such dramatic episodes happened time and time again in human history is beyond any doubt, but can such events generate new cultural groups?

In 1973, C. Renfrew published *Before Civilization: The Radiocarbon Revolution and Pre-*

historic Europe. The chronological foundations of Childe's models for the emergence of European civilizations were refuted. Renfrew argued for an independent and local development of Western Europe Megalithic Traditions with tremendous success. Since then many archaeologists, in an overreaction to the excesses of diffusionist theories, worked with the assumption of local if not in situ development of human groups and cultural achievement in their investigations: ". . . It has become unpopular to suggest the movement of peoples as a mechanism for culture change, and most research is endogenously oriented in this respect. But the pendulum may have swung far towards the opposite extreme" (Ilan 1998:300; Stager 1998:332). Migrations, the formation, growth, and demise of cultural entities, short ethnogenesis, and the shift in settlement patterns at local, regional, and supraregional scales are all key structural elements in long-term culture change and social evolution. Can archaeologists discern population movements in the archaeological record? What criteria can they use to achieve high-resolution differentiation of distinct cultural identities? The problems raised by such a research agenda are addressed in this article with two distinct case studies. One is predominantly archaeological and deals with the settlement of the tribes of Israel in Canaan—a complex debate involving different disciplines and scholarship traditions. The other, from an ethnoarchaeological angle, considers the expansion and settlement of Shuwa-Arabs in the Chad Basin and their later sedentarization based on a large data set, including ethnohistory, ethnography, and the ethnoarchaeology of over 25 villages/camps and over 1000 huts.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The problem of Israelite settlement can be viewed in a new light if approached within a comparative framework. Of interest in this case is the range of agricultural

and pastoral economies that characterize one tribal society, the Shuwa-Arabs, who exist in a multiethnic environment south of Lake Chad in northern Cameroon. This multiethnic regional framework provides an uncanny parallel to the multiethnic cultural environment which prevailed in Canaan during the late 13th and early 12th centuries B.C.E. The range of economies practiced by different ethnic groups in the Lake Chad study area includes pastoralists, agriculturalists, agropastoralists, and agrofishermen and their diverse types of settlements. The range of social organizations in both case studies spans egalitarian tribal societies to complex chiefdoms and states. It is against this background of ethnic diversity, variations in economies and settlement patterns, and differences in political organization that the process of sedentarization in the Lake Chad basin and Early Iron Age Canaan can be examined.

A number of issues have to be outlined in dealing with a mosaic of ethnic communities, such as with the Canaan and the Lake Chad Basin cases presented here. These include (a) the identification of the different actors in the respective areas and the clarification of the relationship between the recorded groups, (b) the understanding of how these actors change their economies due to changing social and environmental conditions, and (c) a sustained attempt to identify changing levels of decision making (individual, family unit, village, and central place) as related to processes of sedentarization and site growth. Other important topics, which will only be touched on in this discussion, include the explanation of the range of pastoral and agricultural systems through time and the analysis of the nature of trade and exchange between different ethnic communities.

ETHNOGENESIS

The formation of a cultural group, be it a family, clan, tribe, ethnic group, nation or

state, in the past as well as in the present, fundamentally results from a dynamic but selective process of aggregation, identification, and differentiation. Like Palestine, the Lake Chad Basin has been a meeting ground of different ethnic groups for over 4000 years. In antiquity and today, these Chad Basin groups practiced a wide range of economic pursuits, including full-time agriculture, fishing, agropastoralism, pastoralism, and various combinations of these. In the historical records of the Ancient Near East, variations in socioeconomic pursuits have often been associated with different ethnic backgrounds.

There are a number of anthropological definitions of ethnic groups. Different building blocks make up ethnicity (Nash 1989, Emberling 1997). These include a biological component conceived of as blood, genes, and flesh; a similar language shared by a group of people; and similar general economic orientation, history, and worldview. The making of an ethnic group is therefore a dynamic process; it is not only a sociological category but also a social construct. It involves psychological, economic, social, political, and historical factors and, as such, is better considered "as a variable which in any sociocultural milieu is interdependent with many others" (Holl 1993:42). As a sociohistorical feature, ethnogenesis is a complex process involving many spheres of interaction; these spheres of interaction may concern different economic pursuits, the balance of power between neighboring communities, settlement location strategies, territoriality, and complementary or diverging patterns of social organization. Theoretically, each of the main variables mentioned above follows its own dynamic, which may positively boost or negatively inhibit the others (Briant 1982).

THE ISRAELITES IN CANAAN

This brings us to a general review of the existing theories concerning the emergence

of ancient Israel in Canaan. The development over the past 60 years of four major schools of thought concerning the character of the Israelite settlement stems from different accounts of the settlement process portrayed in the Hebrew Bible. The most useful summaries of these different models have been produced by Finkelstein (1988a, 1988b, 1994; Finkelstein and Silverman 2001) and in a series of studies by Dever (1992a, 1995a, 1998, 2001).

Short Biblical Exegesis

H. Shanks (1992) provides a useful summary of the issues surrounding the emergence of early Israel which is followed here. The story of Joseph is generally thought to have occurred during the Hyksos rule or 15th Dynasty in Egypt, the Middle Bronze IIC period (ca. 1650–1540 B.C.E. or the Second Intermediate Period), when Egyptian traditional social organization underwent a period of upheaval. Thus, under the foreign Asiatic Hyksos rule over Egypt, it was possible for other Asiatics, like the Hebrews, to gain influential positions in Egypt. According to biblical tradition, the cultural identity of the Israelites as a people was forged during this 400-year period in Egypt. When the Hyksos were finally expelled from Egypt, the Hebrews were enslaved and finally escaped bondage under the leadership of Moses (Assman 1997). The Israelites then began the 40-year pastoral trek to the Promised Land through the Sinai desert, a foundational event celebrated during the annual Passover holiday. At this point, the Bible gives two somewhat differing accounts of how the Israelites took possession of Canaan. The first account is found in the last part of the Book of Numbers and in the Book of Joshua. The second account is found in the Book of Judges. The book of Joshua paints a picture of a lightning military campaign that lasted for less than 5 years. Many inhabitants were defeated in Canaan. "Joshua defeated the whole land,

the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings” (Joshua 10:40). After the victories, all of the land west of the Jordan River was allotted among the different Israelite tribes. The story in Judges is entirely different. First of all, the order of events is reversed; the allotment of the territory comes first and then the conquest occurs. In Judges, the conquest is made only by a number of individual tribes or groups of related tribes, not the entire Tribal Confederation. Judges also makes it clear that by no means was all the land conquered. Judges 1 shows a list of some 20 cities whose inhabitants were not driven out by the Israelites. For example, in Judges 2:29, which discusses the tribal conquests, it is said: “and Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.” The emphasis here is on co-existence. The situation was similar at Megiddo, Beth-Shean, Ta’anach, Dor, and Ib’leam and their hinterland village settlements. None of these are mentioned as having been destroyed.

The Conquest Model

W. F. Albright and many of his students established the Conquest Model as early as the 1930s (Albright 1935, 1939, 1950:24–34, Lapp 1967, Yadin 1979, 1982). This model is an almost literal interpretation of the events mentioned in the first chapters of the Book of Joshua. The extensive network of Canaanite city-states is viewed as having been destroyed in a series of violent battles when the Israelites took hold of the land. According to this model, the Israelites were living a nomadic existence in the neighboring desert areas and, after victory, settled down in Canaan. In addition to accepting the Book of Joshua at face value, the Conquest Model posited archaeological support based on supposed destruction levels found at Late Bronze Age (LB) sites mentioned in the biblical narrative such as

Bethel, Hazor, Jericho, Lachish, and Tell Beit Mirsim (Fig. 1). These LB destructions were attributed to the invading Israelite tribes (Albright 1939:20–23).

There are a number of serious archaeological difficulties with the Conquest Model. These problems revolve around the supposed destructions associated with major Canaanite cities mentioned in the Book of Joshua during the LB II period. At Jericho, for example, there is no consensus about the size of the LB II settlement or the date of its destruction (Avigad 1965:851–855). At Ai, there is a complete gap in settlement between the Early Bronze and Iron I period. Callaway (1975:49) has shown that there is no LB occupation at the site or in satellite sites around this center. At Gibeon, while LB material has been found in the cemetery, no LB occupation remains have been found on the mound itself (Pritchard 1962:157–158). At Tel Yarmuth, in the Shephelah, excavations have focused on the lower EB city, and only two difficult to date sherds have been found on the upper Iron Age mound. Thus, there is no conclusive evidence for an LB occupation at Yarmuth. Tel Arad in the northern Negev also has a gap in settlement from the EB II until the 11th century B.C.E. (Aharoni 1993:82–87). In the Beersheva valley as a whole, there is a clear absence of LB II remains from the many excavated tells in the region (Aharoni and Amiran 1964). According to Rast (1978:3), Taanach also seems to have been abandoned during the LB II period.

Based on the geographic distribution of the Canaanite cities and of the newly founded Israelite settlements, Finkelstein (1988a:298) has shown that many of the cities mentioned in the Book of Joshua were located in the coastal plain, the Shephelah, and the northern valleys—all in areas that have produced virtually no evidence datable to Israelite settlement during the Iron I and hence to a conquest/occupa-

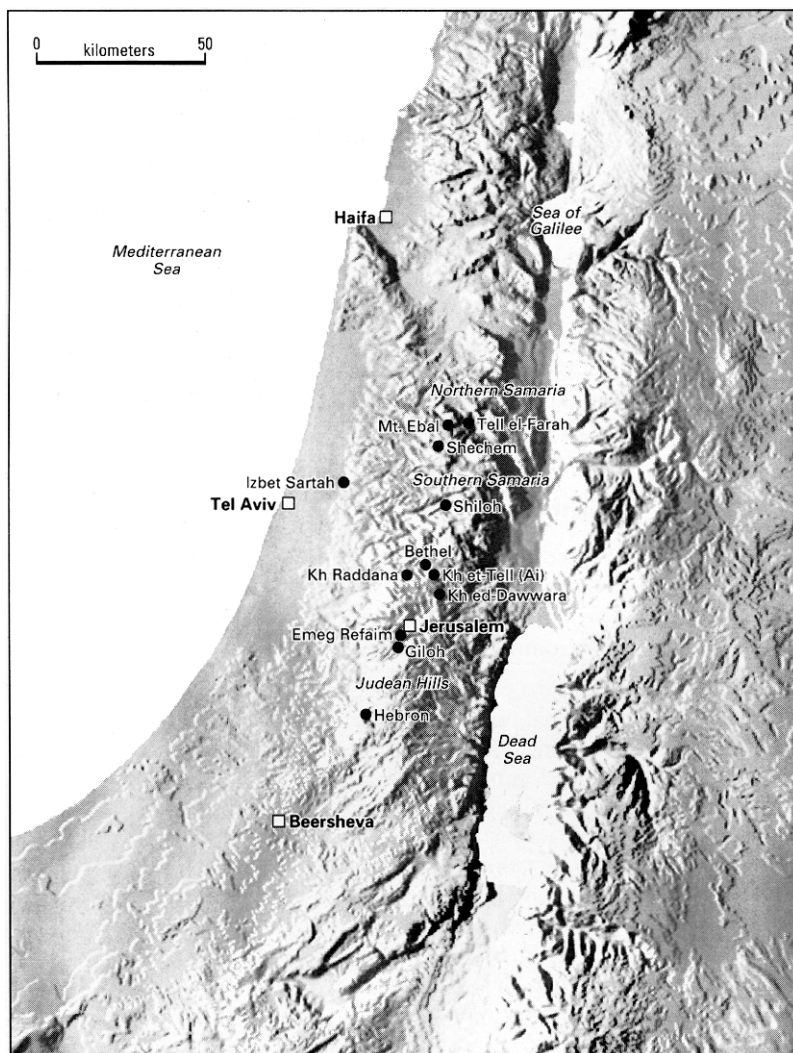


FIG. 1. Map of excavated Iron I sites in Palestine (source: Finkelstein 1998).

tion of the Canaanite lands. Likewise, in the highland region, the heartland of Israelite settlement, there is virtually no evidence relating to the Conquest Model. The expansion of Israelite settlement into the lowlands happened only at the end of the 11th century and during the 10th century, that is, during the United Monarchy (observed in the destructions of Tell Beit Mirsim B3, Beth Shemesh IIa, Gezer VIII, Aphek X-8, and Megiddo VB). Thus, the Is-

raelite settlement represents the filling of an ecological niche or settlement void rather than an all-out military conquest of formerly inhabited lands (Hopkins 1993). In summary, of some 10 Late Bronze Age cities in the coastal plain, the Shephelah, and the northern valleys mentioned in the Conquest narrative of Joshua, all well excavated and identified sites with a high degree of reliability, only two—Dan and Hazor—provide evidence of a new mater-

ial culture superimposed on the ruins of a Late Bronze Age Canaanite city. Indeed, Ben-Tor and Rubiato (1999:38) suggest recent excavations indicate that LB Hazor was destroyed by the Israelites.

The Peaceful Infiltration Model

In contrast to the Conquest Theory, A. Alt (1925) suggested that the ancient Israelites, rather than conquering Canaan militarily, peacefully entered the hill country. Only later under the United Monarchy did the Israelites come into conflict with the Canaanites (and other ethnic groups such as the Philistines) in the more fertile lowlands, when there were military clashes with the local population. Alt and others use the Book of Judges to support their theory. The Peaceful Infiltration Model seems logical until one tries to identify the supposed pastoral nomads in the archaeological record. According to Dever (1992b:30), the infiltration model of Alt may be based on a romanticized 19th-century view of the Bedouin combined with ignorance about the operation of pastoral nomadic systems. In fact, Dever believes that many of the theories on the emergence of Israel as derived from pastoral nomadic origins are questionable. As is shown below, we argue against this view.

For Finkelstein (1988a:303), Alt was the first scholar to recognize the value of geography, ecology, and sociology for examining the question of Israelite settlement. It was Alt's student, M. Noth (1958), who viewed the hill country of Canaan as the key to understanding the emergence of Israel. Noth differentiated early and late compositions. The condensed description of the conquest in the first half of the Book of Joshua belongs to the latter category, and the contradictory traditions scattered in Joshua 15 and Judges 1 to the former one. It was Joshua 15 and Judges 1 that Noth tried to investigate in relation to archaeological data. Field surveys in the Galilee by Y. Aha-

roni in the 1950s led him to support the Peaceful Infiltration Model. The recognition that Israelite settlement was a slow process is the key aspect of this model. It began with the annual pastoralist trek from the desert fringe on the Transjordanian plateau to the summer grazing in the highlands of Canaan. Ties were established with the settled Canaanite population. The new settlers did not interfere with the Canaanites because they established their new settlements in the hill country, where few Canaanite population centers were located. According to Alt (in Noth, 1958) the biblical descriptions of conquests really dated to the period of the monarchy and they were simply embellished and attributed to the early Israelite settlement process when the Bible was finally compiled, around the 7th century B.C.E. (Friedman 1987).

The main criticism of the Peaceful Infiltration Model has come from the Marxist-oriented supporters of the Peasant Revolt Model. G. Mendenhall (1962) and N. Gottwald (1979) argue that Alt's Peaceful Infiltration Model fails to trace the origins of the pastoral groups to the steppe, outside the country. However, Weippert (1979: 32-34) and Hopkins (1993) have suggested that Alt's pastoral groups should be identified with the Shasu, nomadic groups living in the frontier regions mentioned in Egyptian sources from 1500 to 1050 B.C.E. We add to this position below. For Weippert, population growth among the Shasu destroyed their nomadic subsistence base and forced them to become sedentary agriculturalists in the highlands of Canaan. According to W. Ward (1992:V.1167), if the early Hebrews are to be identified with any known group from the Egyptian texts, it would be with the Hapiru (Habiru). However, as is shown below, recent studies of Egyptian epigraphic and relief data from the period under discussion, as well as new archaeological data from southern Jordan, suggest that the early Hebrews may have been part of the Shasu phenomenon.

The Peasant Revolt Model

The third model was developed by G. Mendenhall (1962). He suggested that the Israelites emerged not from outside Canaan, but from local urban sites. Accordingly, the Exodus from Egypt, if it occurred, involved a very small population. According to this model, the people who became known as Israelites were really lower class Canaanite peasants who revolted against their urban ruling class in the LB cities of Canaan. After their uprising in the lowlands towns, they fled to the central highlands, where they joined others groups, among them probably a few pastoralists, and coalesced into a people called Israel under the new deity *Yahweh*. The Peasant Revolt Model was developed and expanded by N. Gottwald (1979). He agrees that the Israelites emerged from within Canaanite society, but, using a Marxist approach, believes that the reasons for fission were economic and not theological. This model's appeal resides on the fact that it is based on sociological and anthropological analogies inspired from research on other societies. This is especially the case for scholars (Davies 1993) who consider that there is no reliable history in the Bible until the Exile to Babylon.

There are a number of problems with the Peasant Revolt Model. First there is a striking lack of concern for the environmental characteristics of Canaan where the Israelite settlement took place. In addition, both Mendenhall (1962) and Gottwald (1979) virtually ignore the archaeological record, specifically the material culture and regional settlement patterns. Both Mendenhall and Gottwald diminish the importance of the natural landscape of Palestine, a fact that limits their appreciation of the economic potential of the different environmental zones of the country. They also fail to appreciate the dynamics of pastoral systems in the Near East by dismissing any role for pastoral-based societies in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age because of

their assumption that Bedouins could not have existed at that time. This position is based on their view that the camel was not domesticated at that time. Thus, no population could have subsisted in the remote deep desert areas of the Near East during the LB. More recent data show that the camel was probably domesticated by 3000 B.C.E. (Zairns 1992), making it indeed possible for deep penetration of the Near Eastern deserts as early as the Early Bronze Age. In short, Mendenhall makes no use of archaeological evidence, while Gottwald relied solely on data from the large Canaanite tells, without considering the new data from settlement pattern studies.

The Symbiosis Model

The fourth model that has gained in importance for understanding the emergence of Israelite settlement is V. Fritz's (1987) Symbiosis Model. It stresses aspects of the Peaceful Infiltration Model, but with a number of modifications. Fritz, like Gottwald and Mendenhall, focuses on the local Canaanite city origin of the Israelites. He does not view the groups that settled in the highlands from the 12th century B.C.E. onward as former nomads. Instead he sees a kind of fluctuation in economic pursuits, which varied from a partially sedentary life interspersed with nomadic existence. That is how he explains "the wide-ranging adoption of Canaanite culture during the last phase of the Late Bronze Age . . ." (Fritz 1987:98; Hopkins 1993, Halpern 1992). Dever (1993:30) is critical of the Symbiosis Model because it stresses a Canaanite pastoral ancestry of the early Israelites, suggested to have emerged from what M. B. Rowton (1974) calls "enclosed nomadism." The idea is that there was a "cultural dependence of the Israelite tribes on the Canaanites" because of their prior close relationships before the 12th century. This form of nomadism, radically different

from the historic Bedouin in the desert, entails a partly sedentary life, triggering an economic and political symbiosis as well as the adoption of similar cultural goods. According to Fritz (*ibid.*) the typical Israelite four-room courtyard house was derived from Bedouin-like “tent prototypes,” a suggestion he uses to bolster his argument of a connection between the Israelites and a nomadic background. Dever (1993:31) disagrees and suggests a different scenario:

a . . . satisfactory explanation of Israelite origins would derive the first generation of frontier homesteaders from the fringes of Late Bronze Age urban Canaanite society. Among these people would have been former urbanites and 'Apiru-like people from the countryside but also many farmers and stockbreeders from rural areas who were long familiar with the poor soil, fractured terrain, and unreliable rains of Palestine—in short, experienced agriculturalists.

Several bodies of evidence point to a pastoral background for early Israel. It is, however, important to emphasize that more contextual and dated evidence of faunal remains are needed to determine the diversity of species of domestic animals herded and consumed by early Israelites. It is known that the species composition of herded animals is one of the determining factors of the selected socioeconomic systems, which may range from mixed farming to specialized nomadism, including agropastoralism and seminomadism (Cribb 1991, Levy 1983). Archaeological research and the work by Biblical historians such as D. N. Freedman (1980), R. E. Friedman (1987), W. Propp (1999), and Z. Zevit (2001) provides the basis for a rigorous and systematic evaluation of the early stages of the formation of Israelite ethnic identity. The following discussion focuses on two main aspects of the historical record, namely key elements of the social memory (Assman 1997, Tonkin 1992) and different classes of archaeological evidence.

Element of Social Memory: The Song of Deborah

In his 1980 article entitled “Early Israelite History in the Light of Early Israelite Poetry,” D. N. Freedman shows that some parts of the Bible are indeed of great antiquity, extending back to the beginnings of the Iron Age. This is the case for the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15:1–18, 21 and The Song of Deborah in Judges 5. Freedman (1980:131) has shown that the original composition of these two poems can be dated with some confidence to the 12th century B.C.E. Of the two, the Song of the Sea, in Exodus 15, is older and describes a period in which pan-tribal existence began for Israel and is dated to around 1175 B.C.E. The Song of Deborah describes the major Israelite victory over the Canaanites near Taanach next to modern Afula in the Jezreel valley (northern Israel). The result of this battle was the confirmation of Israelite control of this part of Canaan. Freedman dates this to the third quarter of the 12th century, but no later than about 1125 B.C.E. Stager (1989) points out that not all of the tribes answered Deborah’s call to battle. Of the tribes mentioned, Reuben, Gilead/Gad, Dan, and Asher did not respond.

The fact that the responsive tribes were all village agriculturalists, whereas Reuben and Gilead/Gad were herders, is of interest. The “specialized pastoral economy, in contrast to the economy of many comparable forms of agriculture, itself cannot provide even all the immediate requirements of nomads” (Khazanov 1984). Trade is thus essential for any type of nomadism and pastoralists are more in need of these exchange relationships than agriculturalists. The pastoralist economies of Reuben and Gilead/Gad were inextricably intertwined with sedentary populations, leaving these two tribes far less independent than their fellow tribesmen in the hills, whose mixed economy of farming and herding made them more economically independent

(Stager 1989). Dan and Asher did not respond to the Deborah's call for different reasons; their economies were trade-based seafaring systems. The point here is that diverse socioeconomic systems, ranging from coastal trade sites to agricultural-based mixed farming and pastoral-nomadism, were already attested among early Israelites and that by the time of The Song of Deborah was composed, ca. 1125 B.C.E., the tribes were in different stages in the sedentarization process.

The Egyptian Record—The Merenptah Stele

Discovered by Sir Flinders Petrie in 1896 near Luxor, the Merenptah Stele dates to the last decade of the 13th century B.C.E. and contains the earliest nonbiblical text mentioning Israel. In the bottom two lines, it says, "Canaan has been plundered into every sort of woe. Ashkelon has been overcome; Gezer has been captured. Yanoam was made nonexistent; Israel is laid to waste, his seed is not." The unpronounced determinative attached to place names in this hieroglyph indicate that Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yanoam were cities and that Canaan was a foreign land. On the other hand, the determinative for Israel indicates the term referred to a people. Thus, as Shanks (1992:18) notes, the Merenptah Stele shows conclusively that a people called Israel existed in ca. 1212 B.C.E. in Canaan and that the Pharaoh of Egypt knew about them and boasted about defeating them in battle. The fact that they are referred to as a people suggests that they were not urban dwellers at this time, yet had a social organization strong enough to unite them into an identifiable enemy of the Egyptians.

This kind of identification from outsiders reflects the presence of the Israelite ethnic group in Canaan; a group whose social structure has been shown by A. Malamat (1973) and L. Stager (1985) to be rooted in a tribal organization. The warrior traditions embedded in ancient Israel, as seen in both

Joshua and Judges are associated with an emphasis on a "pastoral warrior identity" (Meeker 1989). It can be suggested that most pastoral peoples have this warrior identity and that it was one of the central unifying features of ancient Israel and all contemporary pastoral nomads in the region. Thus, the existence of a tribal confederation in Canaan can be inferred in the 13th century B.C.E. based on archaeological evidence, namely the Merenptah stele.

Israelite Elliptical Sites and the Transition to Sedentarization

Finkelstein (1988a:238) expanded Fritz's (1987) suggestion and proposed a new approach for identifying the transition to sedentism in the archaeological record of Canaan. He relied on the excavation at Izbet Sartah Stratum III, probably the earliest known Israelite site dating to the late 13th or very early 12th centuries B.C.E. (Figs. 2 and 3). The idea is based on a careful examination of late-19th- to early-20th-century ethnographic accounts of the layout of Levantine Bedouin camps. Ethnographic photographs and plans (Katakura 1977:73, Kay 1978:143, Musil 1928, Shmueli 1980) show that when more than one extended family camped together the tents were laid out in an elliptical fashion with a large central open courtyard area where herd animals could be corralled at night (Fig. 4). Finkelstein (1988a) suggests that the elliptical plans of Early Iron I sites in the marginal zones of Palestine such as the highlands, the Central Negev, and Judean deserts (Fig. 5), provide evidence of a similar spatial organization. Izbet Sartah is laid out in an elliptical fashion with a site area measuring 47×60 m. The open central area measures ca. 1450 m^2 of a site total area of 2200 m^2 , a ratio of 65:35. The area covered with buildings equals 750 m^2 . The dominance of the large central open area is crucial for determining the socioeconomic character of the settlement based on the utilization of this

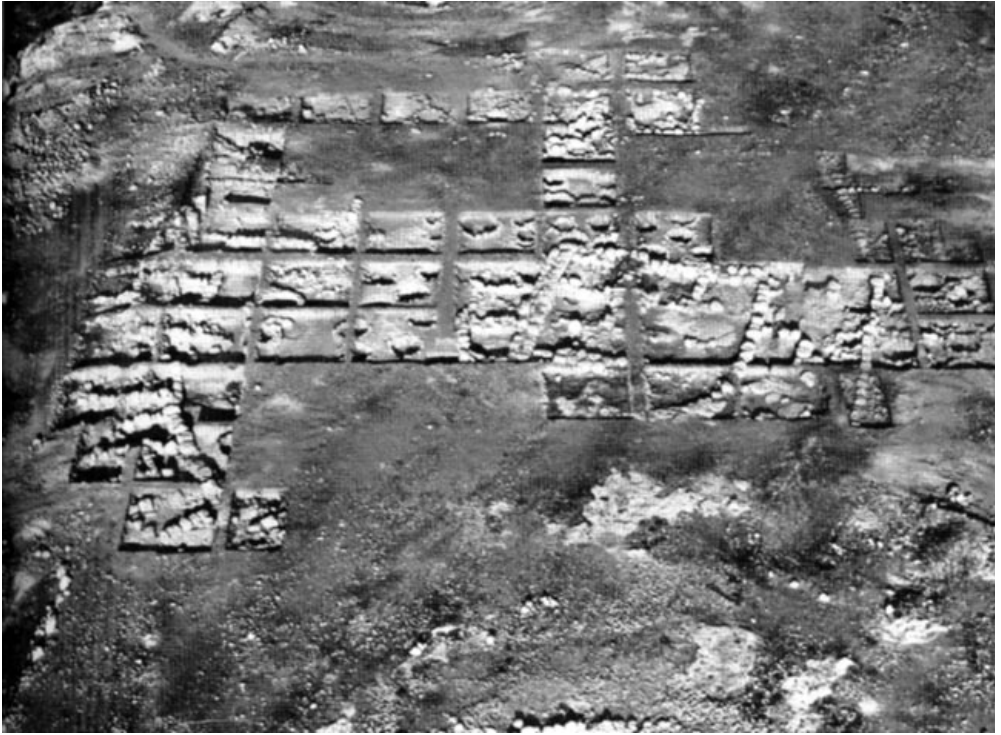


FIG. 2. Aerial view of Isbet Sartah (source: Finkelstein 1988:75).

open expanse. In Stratum II, at the end of the 11th century B.C., as the site became more sedentary, the layout changed with the central area crowded with buildings. Other Early Iron I sites which follow this pattern are Horvat 'Avot in the Upper Galilee, Khirbet et-Tin in the Western Galilee (Finkelstein 1988a:239–240), enclosures in the Judean Desert (Bar-Adon 1972:118), Tell Esdar Stratum III, a site in the Wadi el-Hasa in southern Transjordan, and Beersheba Stratum VII (Herzog 1984). A variety of factors dictated the elliptical arrangement of Bedouin camps. These include their establishment in hostile territory, local climatic conditions, and geographical conditions (Amiran *et al.* 1979:658; Ashkenazi 1957:146; Ben-David 1978:52; Bar-Zvi 1979:623; Burkhardt 1831:33; Dalman 1939:27; Dickson 1949:33; Marx 1974:148; and Musil 1928:73).

Scholars such as Kempinski (1978), Fritz (1981, 1987), and Herzog (1984) suggest that the four-room Israelite house or the pillared four-room house has its origin in the Early Iron Age from presedentary nomad tent prototypes. According to Kempinski, the tent plus courtyard became the broadroom plus courtyard that was later further subdivided. The best example of this process has been defined in Building A at Ramat Matred. If this data is taken in conjunction with the larger elliptical site layout of Early Iron I sites, the pastoral background to these “Israelite” sites seems plausible.

Given the discussion above, which is based on biblical texts, extra-Biblical textual data, and archaeological site and house plans, it is fair to assume that a separate ethnic community, with a pastoral economic tradition, was called Israel and existed during the late 13th to early 12th

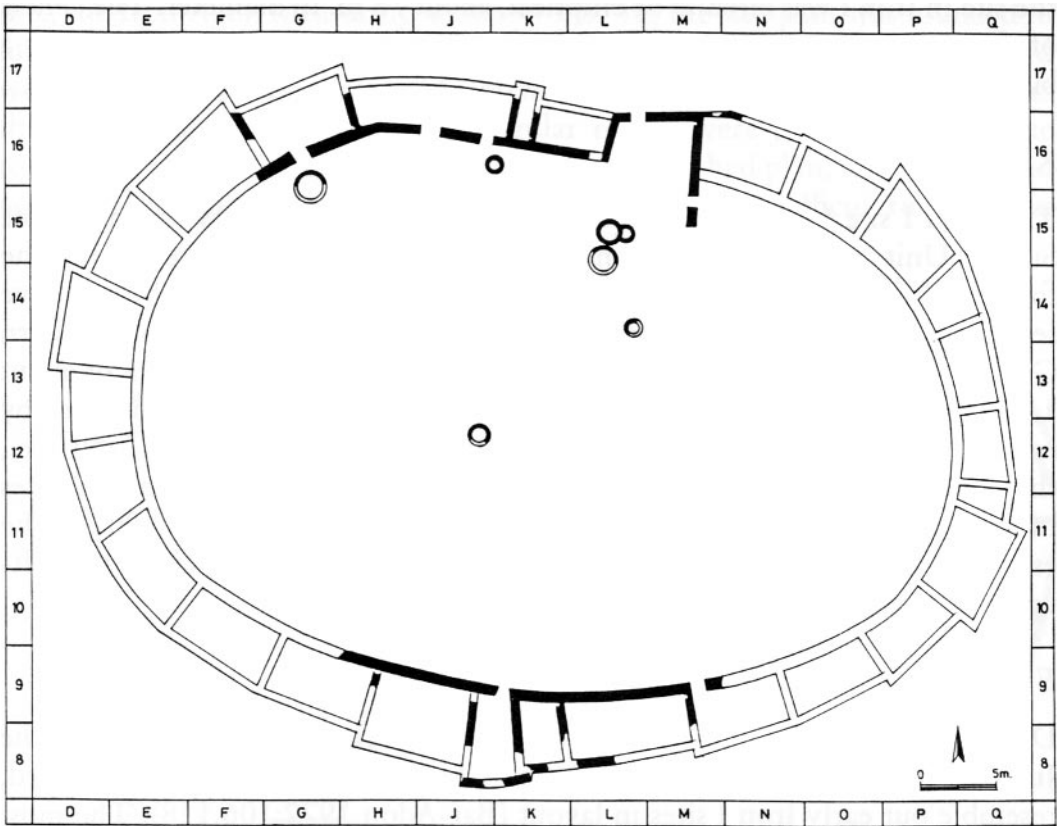


FIG. 3. Isbet Sartah: plan of the Iron I occupation (source: Finkelstein 1988:239).

centuries in Canaan. How then did this community maintain its identity and metamorphose into the first state organization in Canaan known as the United Monarchy?¹

The Early Israelites: Nomadic Foundations

The archaeological and historical data described above and recent analyses of the victory poem of Merenptah's stele and the newly identified Merenptah reliefs at Karnak by Anson Rainey (Rainey 2001; Stager

1985a; Weippert 1979; and Yurco 1990) add important new insights concerning the nomadic roots of earliest Israel. This is especially significant as it helps address the question as to the desert origins of the early Israelites and how that relates to the ethno-genesis model proposed here. As noted above, elliptical site layouts from sites identified as Israelite (as well as the four-room house) point to a pastoral-based society undergoing the transition to sedentism (Finkelstein 1988). Ancient Israelite tradition as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible is clear that Jacob and his sons were pastoralists and that the Israelites in the wilderness were pastoralists. The Song of Deborah, as discussed above suggests that once the tribes occupied the land, there were still a

¹Recently, the historicity of Solomon and David's United Monarchy and its archaeological visibility has been a source of debate (cf. Dever 2001; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001).

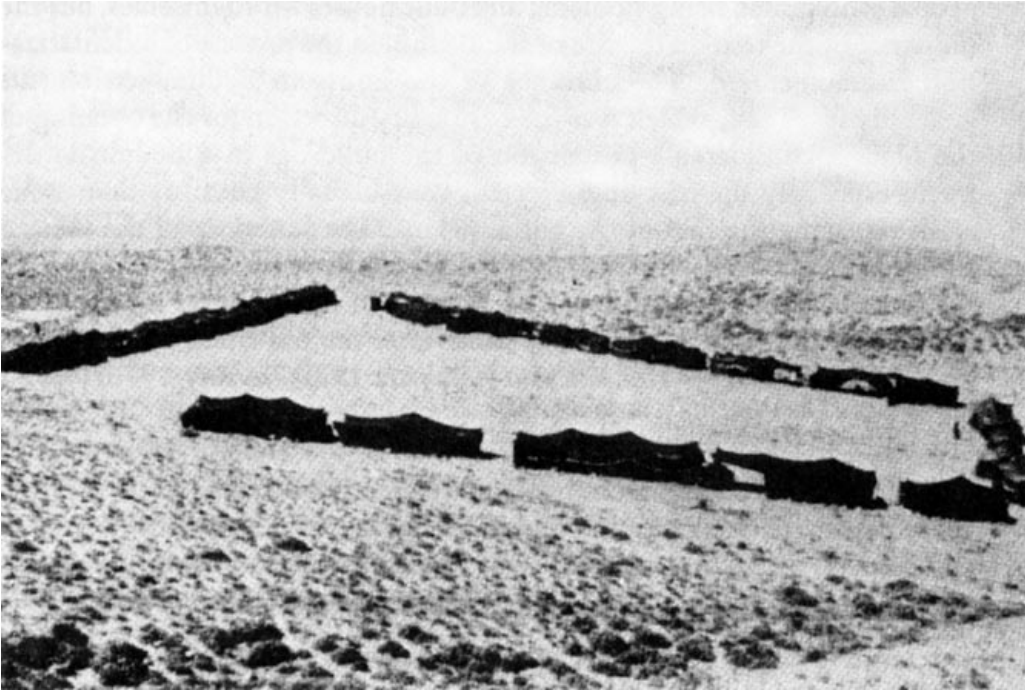


FIG. 4. View of a large Bedouin camp cluster (source: Finkelstein 1988:246).

number of tribes that remained tied to pastoral economies—especially in Transjordan (i.e., Reuben and Gilead/Gad). The Hebrew Bible can also be examined in a crude way to substantiate the common-sense impression that the Bible attributes to the Israelites a pastoral nomadic heritage. This can be done through the counting of words linked to pastoral economies. Note that the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy use the term *'ohel* (tent) 215 times, the term *so'n* (small cattle; sheep, goat; flock) 116 times, and the term *baqar* (large cattle) 98 times. In contrast, the succeeding six books Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings mention *'ohel* 54 times, *so'n* 34 times, and *baqar* 34 times. These statistics come from the program *Bible Windows 5.1* (note that Joshua–2 Second Kings is ca 13% shorter than Genesis–Deuteronomy). Granted, this is a very cursory way of studying the biblical text; however, it does help to show

through a rough linguistic analysis the importance of pastoral linked terms in the formative narratives of the ancient Israelites. As is outlined here, if asked, “where did the Israelites come from?” the existing historical, biblical, and archaeological data suggests Transjordan. However, this view does not attempt to deal with the problematic question of the historicity of the Exodus from Egypt—it simply places Israelite nomadism in its historical and archaeological context.

In this article, we support the hypothesis articulated by Finkelstein (1988, 1998) that the highlands of Canaan were settled in the Early Iron Age by nomadic populations from the “east” (i.e., Transjordan) for many of the reasons outlined above. Until recently, what has been lacking in the quest to “track” Early Iron Age nomadic pastoralists is archaeological data that reflect the presence of these groups in the desert zones of the southern Levant. This has led S. Rosen

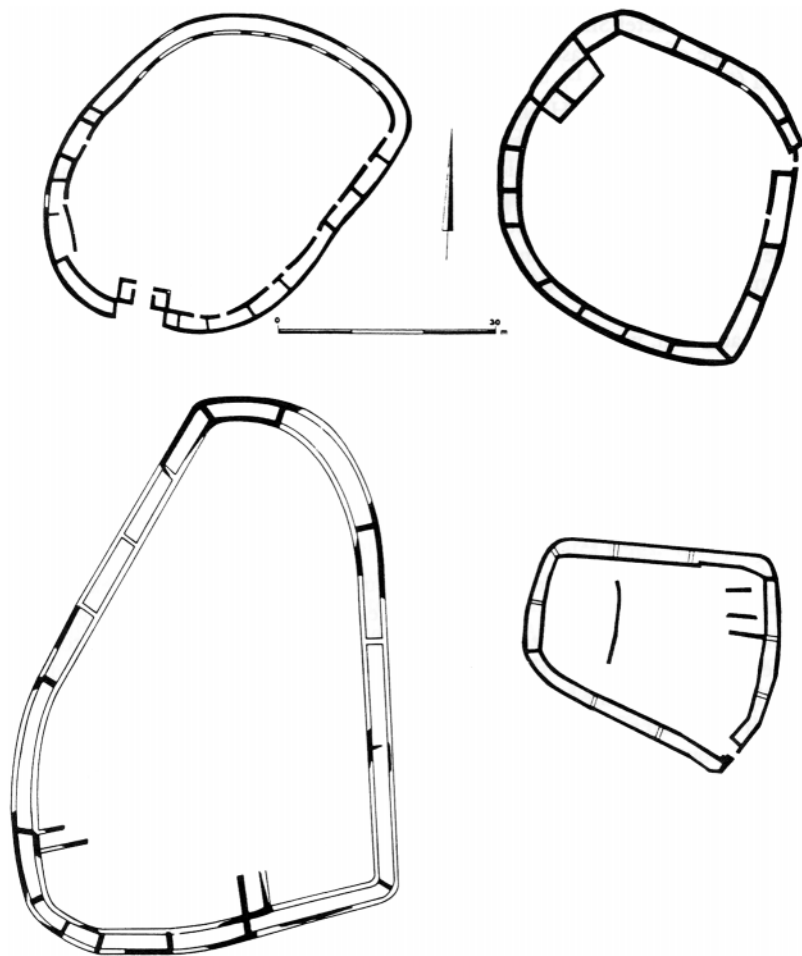


FIG. 5. Sample of Iron I village plans (source: Finkelstein 1988:241).

(Rosen 1992), who has carried out extensive archaeological surveys in the central Negev desert, to argue that if material culture related to nomads is absent in the archaeological record of a given period of time, then this absence means the region was uninhabited at that time. This contradicts Finkelstein's (Finkelstein and Perevolotsky 1990) alternative position, which is based on a range of 19th- and 20th-century historical sources for the Negev and Sinai that clearly document the presence of pastoral nomads and an absence of material remains that reflect the large populations that are

known to have occupied these areas at the time. Finkelstein's interpretation of some of the formation processes that affect the pastoral nomad archaeological record make more sense given the known 18th- to 20th-century C.E. large population figures for Negev Bedouin tribes and tribal wars which, ironically, leave no archaeological fingerprint and yet are documented both in ethnohistorical and historical sources (al Aref 1937; Bailey 1980). In our work in the Lake Chad Basin (Holl and Levy 1993), the "archaeological visibility of nomad issue" arose. We observed that among the contem-

porary Shuwa-Arab pastoralists, large numbers of annually built dry-season camps, constructed of brush wood and thatch built around large corrals, disappear each year as the marshland (Ya'ere) is inundated with water each wet season. The ravages of overbank flooding each year effectively erase most traces of the pastoral camps in the Ya'ere. We were able to record the extensive traces of Shuwa-Arab dry-season camps because we arrived on the scene before the wet season. Similarly, with regard to Late Bronze–Early Iron Age nomadic groups in the southern Levant, it is important to bear in mind Finkelstein's model when examining the socioeconomic nature of these groups in relation to the available historical and archaeological data. In the deserts of the Middle East, A. J. Frendo (1996:13–18) has outlined some of the reasons field archaeologists may have difficulty tracing the material remains of pastoral nomads. These include (a) they may be hidden by sediment, (b) corrals may have been built of brush and thorn bush fences rather than stone and mud-brick architecture, (c) natural site formation processes due to erosion and sedimentation, (d) cultural formation processes due to human activities, and (e) lack of knowledge of what to look for. As is suggested below, we might add that some regions, such as vast tracks of Edom, have not yet been systematically surveyed, leading to unrepresentative sampling of the archaeological record. All of these factors can lead to a failure to locate the remains of ancient pastoral nomads. As Frendo (1996:23) concludes: “no matter how refined one's field techniques are, there are times when the material remains of nomads are no longer visible to the archaeologists.”

In a careful examination of the Merenptah stele and reexamination of the newly identified Merenptah reliefs, Rainey (2001) points out in his reading of the stele that it is most likely that the Israel depicted there corresponds to the Shasu nomads de-

picted on various registers on the newly identified Merenptah reliefs at Karnak (cf. Yurco 1986). The Shasu were a social group of nomads known from Egyptian texts and wall reliefs and monuments dating from the 18th Dynasty (ca. 1550–1295 B.C.) through the Third Intermediate Period (ca. 1069–747 B.C.). The Egyptian sources report the Shasu from vast tracks of the southern Levant. Thus, it can be assumed that the Shasu people were not an ethnic group tied to only one specific region. Rather, the Shasu seem to represent a social class of nomads who reflect an ancient equivalent of the term “Bedouin,” which crosscuts different ethnic groups and relates more to a generic socioeconomic subsistence organization devoted to pastoral nomadism. Ward (1992) presents a detailed summary of all the ancient sources that make reference to the Shasu. With regard to the region of Edom, he states:

Another group of texts places the Shasu in S (outh) Transjordan. Short lists of place-names in Nubian temples of Amenhotep III and Ramesses II record six toponyms located in “the land of Shasu” (Giveon 1971). Those that can be identified are in the Negeb or Edom (Kitchen 1964; Weippert 1974). One of the six, Seir in Edom, is found elsewhere in connection with the Shasu. A monument of Ramesses II claims that he “has plundered the Shasu-land, captured the mountain of Seir;” a 19th Dynasty model letter mentions “the Shasutribes of Edom;” Ramesses III declares that he has “destroyed the Seirites among the tribes of the Shasu” (Giveon 1971). From the Egyptian viewpoint, then, the Shasu were a prominent part of the Edomite population.

Recently, Levy and R. B. Adams (Levy *et al.* 1999) excavated an Early Iron Age cemetery that reflects a population with a pastoral nomadic economy that can provisionally be linked to the Shasu. This is an important discovery because it provides some of the first evidence for Iron Age pastoralists in Edom. A total of 62 circular graves were excavated in a cemetery called Wadi Fidan 40 located on the north bank of the Wadi Fidan in the Jabal Hamrat Fidan

region of Edom. Based on the surface distribution of grave structures, an estimated 3500 graves are present at this mortuary site. The absence of settlement sites in the vicinity of the cemetery, the absence of ceramic grave goods, the presence of wooden bowl offerings, and other attributes all point to the cemetery as belonging to a pastoral group. Using the Egyptian historical sources outlined above, there is some confidence in ascribing the cemetery to the Shasu nomads. Given Rainey's (2001) reading of both the Merenptah inscription and reliefs from Karnak, we would agree that "Israel was evidently one group among many Shasu who were moving out of the steppe lands to find their livelihood in areas that would permit them to obtain their own food." As seen from the discussion here of the growing biblical and extrabiblical textual sources and archaeology, the pastoral roots of ancient Israel played a central role in their process of ethnogenesis.

ISRAELITE ETHNOGENESIS: THE LONGUE-DUREE

The discussion on the genesis of Israelite cultural identity and settlement has to be framed within a precise historical context that will allow clarification of the impact of many of the variables outlined above. Social memory permanently updates its content. "The cultural memory is constantly reworked in oral tradition. Those elements about the past that no longer meaningfully correspond to actual concerns are discarded and in the long run are forgotten" (Assman 1997:215–216). This may explain the lack of reference to any Shasu "origin" or "connection" to the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible. All-important cultural texts create distinctions that have to be constantly present and remembered "in order to render permanent the space which they construct" (Assman 1997:3). The Bible is such a "grand narrative" and, in Assman's terms, a master

story that underlies and informs innumerable concrete tellings and retellings of the past. It is an element of the debate that is not to be ignored but not to be heavily relied upon either. The political and economic context of the Levant during the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. is characteristically that of shifting interaction between an imperial power (Egypt), Canaanite chiefdoms and city-states, and more or less autonomous agriculturalists and herders from the peripheries.

From the decisive battle of Megiddo launched by pharaoh Tutmoses III in ca. 1482 B.C.E., Palestine served as a vital ground for military, political, and commercial undertakings for the Egyptian Imperial system (Hopkins 1993; Cline 2000). Egyptian domination impacted all spheres of life in Palestine. "Palestine and the route through Transjordan (the later "King's Highway") were wholly Egyptian possessions. It was here that the policy of deporting to Egypt huge numbers of the autochthonous population, whether hostile or not, was chiefly put into effect, and reached its apogee under Amenophis II, who carried off over 85,000 men, women, and children of all social strata. In consequence the hill country was virtually depopulated and the country severely weakened" (Redford 1992:168–169). Garrisons and administrative centers were created at strategic localities such as Gaza, Jaffa, Bethshean, and Yeno'am. In such an imperial context, "in response to the demands of the pharaohs, their emissaries and on-site administrators, the kings of Palestinian city-states were required to collect and deliver the annual tribute, to prepare supplies for Egyptian troops, to furnish contingents to campaigning Egyptian forces, and to recruit the locals for *corvée*. . . . The cost of Egyptian imperial administration and garrisons were subvented entirely from Palestinian production" (Hopkins 1993:201). Tutmoses III's administrative and military policy altered the politicoeconomic and material base of

the southern Levant profoundly. The formerly independent, economically competitive polities became imperially dominated vassal city-states (Bunimovitz 1998:325).

The exaction of the Egyptian imperial system resulted in the general impoverishment and depopulation of the Palestinian countryside, with the ensuing concentration of urban population in a smaller number of Late Bronze central cities. The rising cost of the maintenance of the Egyptian imperial system combined with competition from the expanding Hittite Empire set the conditions for the collapse of the Egyptian domination of Palestine. The shifting distribution of human settlements in the hill country cannot be accounted for simply as phased with ecological cycles of environmental degradation and climatic change. The distribution of population through in- and/or out-migration was a common feature of Palestine/Canaan history during the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. (Redford 1992).

Surveys conducted in the central hill country indicate a third wave of settlement beginning in the late 13th century and peaking during the 12th–11th centuries B.C. Two hundred fifty-four small Iron Age I sites have been documented (Finkelstein 1998:355). The number of sites increased to 520 during Iron Age II, as did their average size (Fig. 6). Such dramatic changes probably resulted from a conjunction of factors that Finkelstein (1998:259) fails to take into consideration, locked as he is in an antimigration position. From 1185 B.C., the Philistines, a component of a larger confederation known as the “Sea Peoples” (Stager 1998:332), expanded along the coastal plain of southern Canaan and created the Philistine Pentapolis that endured for nearly 600 years. They conquered Ashod, Ashkelon, Ekron (Tel Miqne), Gaza, and Gath. The Philistine occupation strategy was that of total extirpation or displacement of many of the Late Bronze Canaanite inhabitants. “The settlement process for highland Israel

began a generation or two before the Sea peoples arrived on the coast [considering the short distances involved]. It is difficult to believe that an event of such magnitude did not have the powerful effect of increasing enrollment in the Highland polity of Israel as the indigenous Canaanite population was being squeezed out of the plains” (Stager 1998:348).

The Egyptian records emphasize pharaohs’ military successes; the Merenptah stele considered above mentions Israel as a confederation of tribes. Ramesses III defeated the Sea Peoples, reasserted Egyptian control over much of Canaan, and recruited the defeated enemy as mercenaries for the garrisons in the Levant as well as Nubia. In the Papyrus Harris, Ramesses III claimed to have defeated and destroyed the Seirite clans of the *Shasu*. “I have destroyed the Seirites of the clans of the *Shasu* people. I plundered their tent camps of people and possessions and their cattle likewise, they being without number, they being bound and carried away as captives as tribute of Egypt” (*in* Hopkins 1993:200). It is obvious from the above quote that pastoral-nomadic groups generically termed *Shasu* were targets of Egyptian military expeditions between ca. 1182 and 1151 B.C. They were dwelling in tent camps and herding cattle. At first glance, the identity of the *Shasu* seems to be crucial for the clarification of the ethnic affiliation of at least some of the Levantine pastoral-nomadic peoples. This is unfortunately not the case because the term *Shasu* refers to different groups occupying widespread locations in Moab and Edom in southern Transjordanian land and in northern and southern Palestine as well as Syria. It thus appears that “the term was a generic designation of non-city-state, that is, tribal peoples who were linked with a variety of territories across the Egyptian sphere of influence” (Hopkins 1993:200).

Such peoples living beyond the control of Egyptian imperial administration were fill-

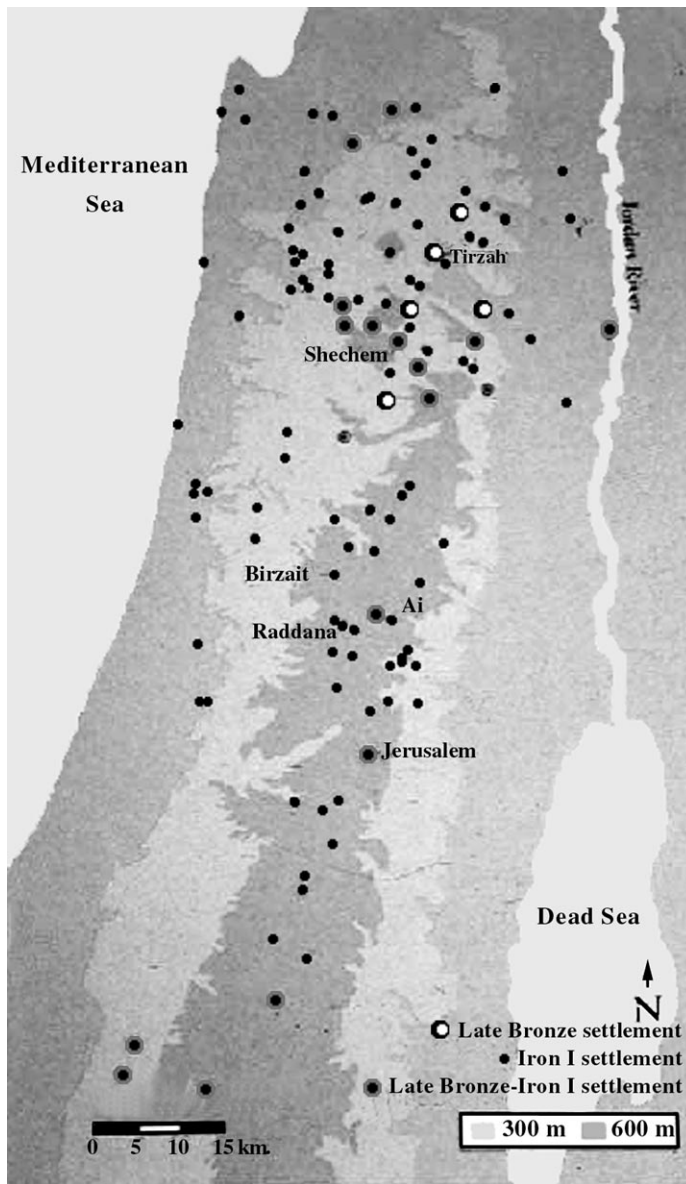


FIG. 6. Distribution of Iron Age sites in the highlands (after Shanks 1992:11).

ing the vacuum between remnant LB city-states. Canaanites from the coastal plain displaced by the Philistine occupation merged with smaller sedentary, seminomadic, and pastoral-nomadic groups from the hills and the hinterland. They probably had diverse ethnic backgrounds. They

merged into a dynamic cultural entity united by common enemies, the Egyptians and their Philistine mercenaries (Assman 1997). The new emerging cultural entity rose to prominence after the collapse of Egyptian domination to produce the Unified Monarchy at the very beginning of the

10th century B.C.E. "The depiction of Israelite settlement as a singular event in the Annals of the country turned up centuries after the Iron Age I. It was influenced by the history of the Judean Monarchy in the Late Iron Age II, and was shaped in accordance with the ideology and interests of a fraction of the population of its capital city—Jerusalem" (Finkelstein 1998:362).

The dynamics of pastoral-nomadic socioeconomic systems are much more erratic than urban agricultural-based ones (Levy 1983, Cribb 1991). Rapid growth and sharp decline of the herds, the species composition of herds, the needed labor force, the extension and contraction of territorial ranges, and the grazing lands requirements are always combined and may generate unpredictable sociopolitical situations. If the main types of economic pursuits attested in the historical and archaeological records of Palestine from 1500 to 1000 B.C.E. are considered within an agricultural-pastoral continuum, the recurrent mentions of the *Shasu* may therefore indicate a phase of pastoral expansionism during the Late Bronze Age:

The fragmented settlement pattern of the final phase of the Late Bronze Age, with its amalgam of selective urban prosperity and rural neglect, manifests an intensely disrupted agricultural sector favoring nomadization. Sedentary communities turned toward nomadic pastoralism both as an escape from centralized exactions and as means of resilient subsistence in a hard pressed environment. (Hopkins 1993:209)

The fabric of ethnic identities in such circumstances certainly result from the interaction of many other social factors such as patterns of marriage, kinship, postmarital residence, and descent rules, which are well beyond the capacity of contemporary archaeology (Emberling 1997). All the research models briefly reviewed in the first part of this article, Conquest, Peaceful Infiltration, Peasant Revolt, and Symbiosis, have things to offer. Obviously, however, some of them cannot be supported or even evaluated with the available archaeological

record. In this regard, the ethnoarchaeological study from the Lake Chad Basin provides an important model for examining the process of sedentarization of pastoral nomads, which is germane to the Israelite settlement. It shows how a new ethnic group can enter a region, live in close proximity to other ethnic groups (the distances can be as small as several hundred meters), and maintain a separate identity, while a full range of exchange relationships takes place.

THE SHUWA-ARABS IN THE CHAD BASIN

According to ethnohistorical records collected at Alaya I, a Shuwa-Arab village in N. Cameroon studied in 1991, the ancestors of the village's inhabitants arrived in the Houlouf area 300 years ago from the locality of Bokoro, situated in the east of the Chad Republic, near the Sudan. The details of the process of migration are not known; but it is specified that the dispersion of Shuwa-Arabs tribes and factions was a consequence of drought and disputes. The earliest mention of the presence of Shuwa-Arabs in the Chad Basin is dated to 1391–1392, A.D. in a letter from Sultan Uthman b. Idris, King of Bornu, to the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt Al-Zahir Abu Sa'id Barquq and published by Al-Qalqashandi (Levtzion and Hopkins 1981:346–348):

. . . For the Arabs who are called Judham and others have snatched away some of our free people, women and children, infirm men, relations of ours, and other Muslims. Some of these Arabs are polytheists and deviate from true religion. They have raided the Muslims and done great slaughter among them because of a dispute, which has occurred between our enemies and us. As a result of this dispute they have killed our King 'Amr the Martyr b. Idris, the son of our father al-Hajj Idris son of al-Hajj Ibrahim. . . . These Arabs have devastated all our country, the whole of al-Barnu, up to this day. They have seized our free men and our relatives, who are Muslims, and sold them to the slave dealers (*jullab*) of Egypt and Syria and others. . . .

In addition to the exaggeration, which is to be expected in 14th-century diplomatic correspondence, it is clear from this letter that Shuwa-Arab expansion in the Chad Basin had started several decades before the end of the century. It is also apparent that this migration has no clear link with the expansion of the new faith through holy wars (*Jihad*). It was basically an incremental infiltration process with serious clashes from time to time but no frontal battles. Harsh climatic conditions may have triggered troubles following disputes over water sources or grazing rights. Unfortunately, the ethnohistorical record (Zeltner 1979) is silent about the nature of the dispute, even if one may suspect that land for pasture and water may have been a bone of contention between nomadic pastoralists and settled agriculturalists. According to Zeltner (1979, 1980), the Banu Judham were one of the dominant tribes of Yemen at the end of the 7th century and they were among the first Arabs to settle in Egypt after the Moslem conquest, where they were granted the rulership of some provinces. Under the Shi'ite Fatimid dynasty, Judham was a powerful tribe and enjoyed important privileges up to the second half of 12th century. With the advent of Salah al-Din and the Ayyubid dynasty, they started to lose their status and consequently initiated several revolts. From 1171 to 1250 A.D., with the changing balance of power in Egypt under the Ayyubids (1171-1250) and Mamluk (1250-1517) sultans, there were a series of skirmishes and strong pressure was exerted on the nomadic Arab tribes such as the Banu al-Kanz to move beyond the borders of the kingdom. In 1317, many Arab tribes such as the Djuhayna, Bali, Tayy, and Judham had expanded from the region of Asyut toward the desert hinterland, the Darfur in Central Sudan, and the Chad Basin (Garcin 1985, Kropacek 1985, Fischer 1977).

Under the Mamluk sultans (1250-1517), the situation was much more disastrous for the Arab nomads as they had to face

Egyptian and Nubian attack and were castigated as savages, uncivilized, rebels, "urban," and "bedouins." According to Kropacek (1985:437), Mamluk Egyptian troops launched an important series of military campaigns against the nomadic Arab tribes in 1302, 1351, 1353, 1375, and 1395 in attempts to crush their rebellion. The alternative left to the nomads was to seek refuge in Sudan, where they sacked and destroyed some of the Nubian Christian kingdoms. The expansion of the Banu Judham from the Nile Valley to the Chad Basin followed the route along the Wadi al-Malik (Zeltner 1979, 1980).

There is a major bias in the historical record in which normal life and peaceful interaction are often not noticed. In the Chad Basin, the expansion of Shuwa-Arab pastoralists seems to have been above all peaceful, but their nomadic way of life was probably alien to the settled communities organized in competing peer-polities. As the Shuwa-Arabs could easily shift their alliance from one ruler to another, from the beginning of their settlement in the Basin they played an important role in the shifting balance of power in the region. In almost all the polities, they had to pay an annual tribute in horses, cattle, sheep, and goats to the Barma in Bagirmi and Kotoko settled rulers. In all cases, the Shuwa-Arabs were in the position of the dominated. However, through economic specialization based on intensive cattle husbandry, the payment of annual tribute to established political elites, peaceful infiltration, and fluctuating alliances with stronger polities, they succeeded in occupying relatively empty, annually flooded, space in marginal environments of the Chad Basin and maintained a degree of relative independence.

Peoples of the Houlouf Region

As is shown here, the pastoral identity still helps to define the Shuwa-Arab as a separate ethnic identity, even if their language is the *lingua franca* used by all inhab-

itants of the study area. Six different ethnic groups have been recorded in recent censuses of the study area; these include the Kanuri, Massa, Mousgoum, Sara, Kotoko, and Shuwa-Arabs. There is no shared settlement between the Kotoko and the Shuwa-Arabs, while both share some settlements with other ethnic groups with similar socioeconomic systems. The Massa, who are pastoralists, are preferentially associated with the Shuwa-Arabs, while most of the Sara and Mousgoum, who practice agriculture and fishing, are preferentially associated with the Kotoko (Fig. 7 and Table 1). The Kanuri do not have a settlement of their own and are associated with the Kotoko, Massa, and Shuwa-Arabs.

Unlike the other ethnic groups of the study area, the Kotoko claim possession of the land through their mythical ancestors, the "Sao" (Lebeuf 1969). They were the earliest settlers and developed the strongest and the most structured sociopolitical organization in the region from ca. 500 A.D. to the present. Past Kotoko societies were organized into competing peer-polities fighting against each other for political domina-

tion and control of the southern part of the Chadian plain. In such a context of changing balances of economic and political power, new settlers, like the Shuwa-Arabs pastoralists, were sometimes a threat and/or an opportunity for alliance with these relatively centralized polities. The Shuwa-Arabs' relationship with different principalities and kingdoms of the Chad Basin has a very complex history that is as yet poorly understood. During the 19th century in some areas, such as the Lagwan kingdom (with the mound site of Houlouf as one of its northern district centers; Lebeuf 1969; Holl 1988, 1996, 2002), they were preferentially enrolled as soldiers and border guards, while in the neighboring kingdom of Bornu, some Shuwa-Arabs were among the highest officials of the state.

Traditionally, the Kotoko attitude toward the Shuwa-Arab pastoralists is explicitly characterized by systematic exclusion and paternalism. According to oral information collected in the field, Shuwa-Arabs are considered untrustworthy, thieves, violent, and bad Muslims. On the other hand, Shuwa-Arabs view the Kotoko as dangerous

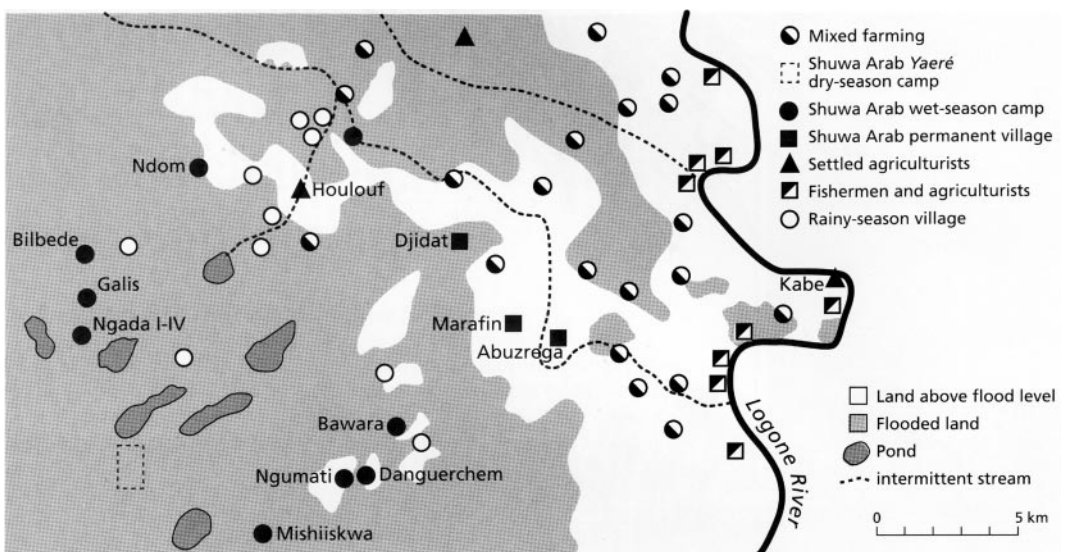


FIG. 7. The Houlouf study area, northern Cameroon: settlement and ethnic groups.

TABLE 1
Ethnic Affiliations and Economic Activities in the
Houlouf Study Area

Ethnic groups	Number of villages			
	A	A/F	P/A	P
Kotoko	2	1	—	—
Mousgoum	7	4	2	—
Massa	—	3	2	—
Sara	—	4	—	—
Shuwa-Arabs	—	—	20	20
Bornuans	—	1	—	—
Total	9	13	25	20

Note. A = Agriculturalists; F = Fishmen; P = Pastoralists.

witches, chauvinistic, and motivated by greed for power and wealth. However, both ethnic groups live in the same region and must share and use the same space. The range of socioeconomic interaction is very interesting. Exchanges take place at weekly markets organized in the Kotoko settlements of each cluster of villages. Shuwa-Arabs come from the hinterland to participate in these markets. Shuwa-Arab women sell dairy products, dried fish, and calabashes, and Shuwa-Arab men perform some craftwork such as blacksmithing. From the Kotoko perspective, a small number of males operate a mill for grinding sorghum and corn and women sell Kotoko-made pottery vessels, peanuts, and locally grown vegetables. It is also noteworthy that local Arabic is the *lingua franca* used among peoples of the entire southern Lake Chad Basin, even among the Kotoko from different settlements. However, the Shuwa-Arabs have never had access to higher regional political offices. Their respective villages are ruled by a chief (termed *Bilama*, a Kanuri term for "chief") elected among the elders, who is subordinate to a local chief (the lower order *sultan*), always a Kotoko inhabiting Houlouf or any of the Kotoko settlements. Above this chief is the paramount chief (the *Sultan*), Prince of Logone-Birni. It thus appears that the exclu-

sive control of higher sociopolitical offices by the Kotoko is one of the main reasons for their paternalism toward the Shuwa-Arabs.

With rapid changes in the regional distribution of population and shifts in the balance of power during the past decade, there have been interesting transformations in settlement patterns. An ethnoarchaeological project was initiated by Holl and Levy to uncover the material translation of these changing situations at different levels: (1) that of the regional distribution of settlements, (2) that of settlement spatial patterning among both sedentary and pastoral peoples, and (3) that of selected material culture items. From 1987 to 1991, 30 Shuwa-Arab settlements, ranging from dry-season camps to semipermanent and permanent sedentary villages, were investigated (Holl 1993, Holl *et al.* 1991, Holl and Levy 1993).

Site Location Strategies

At the regional level, Kotoko settlements, such as Logone Birni, Kabe, Kusseri, and Gulfey, are located exclusively on land situated above the flood level in the optimal areas of permanent settlement and on the shore of the Logone river (Fig. 7). While most of the Shuwa-Arab pastoral-based villages are located on that portion of the land exposed to annual flooding during the rainy season, others are located on the grasslands of the *Yaéré*. This patterning is congruent with the different subsistence systems practiced in the region. These include (1) the Shuwa-Arab and Massa cattle pastoralists who inhabit the grasslands (the *Yaéré* area, Fig. 7) and (2) sedentary Shuwa-Arabs practicing a mixed economy and inhabiting the arbustive savana microzone shared with Kotoko agriculturalists and fishermen from the different ethnic communities (Table 1).

Whatever their subsistence system, pastoralism or mixed farming, the settlement system of the Shuwa-Arab is composed of three major kinds of sites: permanent and

relatively dense settlements, semipermanent villages, and dry-season camps located in the *Yaéré* marshland. The location of the dry-season camps shifts from year to year and people from the same village normally settle each camp. These camps are clustered according to kinship, alliances, or friendly relationships between villages. The territorial range of nomadic moves from permanent and semipermanent villages to dry-season camps is relatively short, varying from 5 to 30 km for people from the Houlouf region to much more (about 70 to 100 km) for groups from Afade and the neighboring state of Nigeria. Semipermanent villages are abandoned by all their inhabitants each year for 2–4 months. Only a minor part of the population of permanent settlements, confined to few senior individuals still accustomed to the “traditional” lifestyle of their childhood and younger herders families, move to the dry-season camps each year.

Spatial Patterns of Sedentary Kotoko Settlements

The Kotoko have centralized sociopolitical institutions characterized by the existence of a paramount chief (*Sultan*), lower order local chiefs, and villages' *Bilama*. Before and during the colonial period, the Kotoko peer-polities were organized in a three-tiered settlement hierarchy. The spatial organization of Kotoko political centers shares the same basic structure studied by ethnographers at a number of settlements such as Makari, Gulfey, Kusseri, Logone Birni, Wulki, Houlouf, and Kala-Kafra (Lebeuf 1969). An earthen rampart encircles each and the spatial patterning is focused on the Sultan's palace (Fig. 8). Habitation units are organized into distinct and connected walled compounds composed of courtyards and various numbers of dwelling units according to wealth, political position of the headmen, and the num-



FIG. 8. The Logone Birni Sultan's Palace: from view from the west (photo T. E. Levy).

ber of members of the household. Houses, built with sun-dried bricks, are rectilinear in shape with flat roofs. Aggregates of compounds are organized into distinct quarters or wards, separated from each other by narrow streets. A chief elected or appointed among the elders rules each ward. These elders are often members of different councils that manage community affairs under the Sultan's leadership. The Sultan's palace is located at the center of the settlement. Some of the highest ranked elders have impressive two- or three-story residences. The central location of the Sultan's palace, however, indicates the leading position of his office within the Kotoko sociopolitical system. The palace of the Sultan of Logone Birni is an impressive multistory building with one high tower located at the southeastern corner with the guards' room (Fig. 8). In this palace, a place was constructed with all the accoutrements of a royal institution: the Sultan's reception room; women quarters; guards' rooms; and special function rooms to store royal drums, arms, and other paraphernalia. The Friday Mosque and the *Ghumsa* (Queen Mother) palace are next to the Sultan's palace. The Queen Mother does not have a precise position in the Kotoko political hierarchy but she is one of the king's most influential advisers.

The spatial patterning of Houlouf, 30 km north of the Logone Birni and the sole Kotoko settlement in the area, shares the same major spatial characteristics presented above, but at a smaller scale. The Houlouf sultan's residence, the largest habitation unit of the village, is situated at the central position next to a large plaza with a well, a large grinding stone, and numerous large trees. The elders meet formally and informally under a shelter built next to the Houlouf palace. The Friday Mosque and the residence of the highest ranked officials are situated on the southern side of the plaza, close to the palace. Before the installation of a deep bored pump in 1985, the well was the informal meeting place of

women of the whole village, and a variety of information was exchanged and dispatched. Sedentary Kotoko settlements are therefore characterized by their particular spatial patterning structured along a ranked arrangement of residences, with the Sultan's palace in central position, followed by those of high-ranked office-holders. Residential units are walled compounds composed of quadrangular houses with flat roofs and courtyards. Sun-dried mud-bricks are the principal building material.

Spatial Patterns of Shuwa-Arab Settlements

To varying degrees, all Shuwa-Arab settlements (dry-season camps, wet-season villages, and permanent villages) are circular to subcircular in shape, reflecting their origin in a pastoral-based economy. Site layouts are structured in relation to livestock. Livestock enclosures are located inside the circle of habitation houses that are consequently situated on the periphery, on the threshold between the community and the outside (Fig. 9). House entrances are all oriented toward the center of the settlement. Houses devoted to habitation and/or livestock are organized into clusters inhabited by extended families:

The basic unit of social organization among the Shuwa seems to be the household. . . . Thus, among the Shuwa when we say the household . . . we actually mean an extended household, comprising the head of the household and grown-up sons. To this we must add the head's brothers who also have grown-up sons, and so on until in fact, you find a fairly large agnatically linked community working and co-operating together in such essential matters as herding, the seasonal movements and above all, defense and military matters. (Tijani 1986:70).

Habitation houses are characterized by the presence of sleeping, storage, cooking, food consumption, and heating facilities. The bed, used by all the members of the family (father, mother, and young children), is made with short forked poles and sticks. It is raised ca. 50 cm above the ground and



FIG. 9. Mishiskwa: view of a Shuwa-Arab semipermanent village (photo T. E. Levy).

covered by an ornate canopy made of sticks. It is always located at the center of the house, perpendicular to the entrance, and covers approximately half of the house surface. The cooking hearth (ca. $1.0 \times .70$ m) is usually made of clay or mud-bricks with multiple niches and is always located to the right of the entrance. The main storage area is situated along the wall, on both sides of the cooking hearth on the right side of the doorway. In many cases, it is on a raised bench supporting series of shelves. Different kinds of containers, including large jars, pots, and calabashes as well as enamelwares used for storing, cooking, and serving food and other domestic activities, are piled on the shelves. Finally, a small hearth located next to the bed is used for heating during the cold nights of the rainy season and to keep mosquitoes and flies away. It is a featureless structure attested in the material record by a thin concentration of ash and charcoal and sometimes partly

burnt logs. There are a varying number of communal shelters in each settlement. They are often huts without walls where people from different households meet for tea and discussion (Fig. 10).

Pottery is the most frequent material item found in the houses. It is, however, manufactured by Kotoko female potters. Variation in pottery shapes and decoration between households and sites results from differences in the procurement network. Some individuals, families, or households may have their favorite potters. At the regional level, products of the same pottery-making tradition are found in all the settlements, Kotoko and Shuwa-Arab alike, in sedentary as well as semipermanent villages and dry-season camps. A large sample of animal figurines in clay representing herding activities was found at Ngada II, under the family bed. The figurines, probably made by children, consisted predominantly of cattle to the exclusion of small

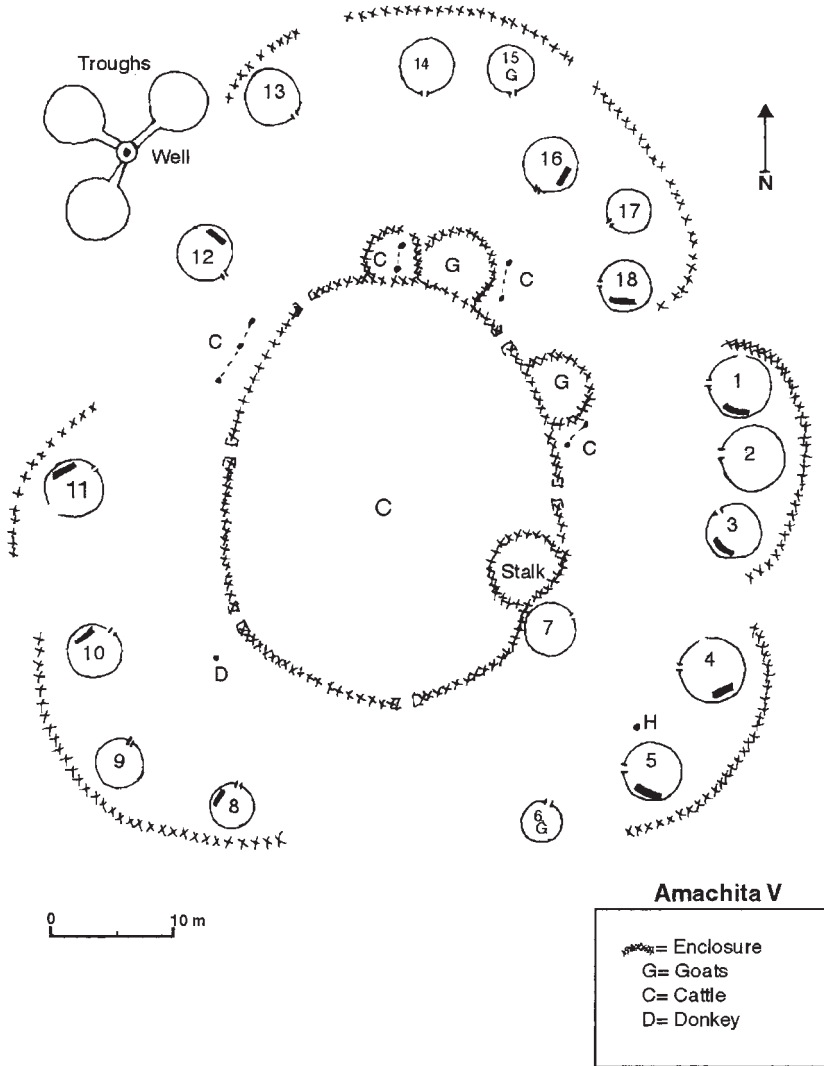


FIG. 10. Plan of a dry-season camp.

livestock. Herders are represented riding horses. It is, however, the production and manufacture of calabashes and special multiniche and decorated hearths that are specific to the Shuwa-Arabs. Only married couples are allowed to have a multiniche hearth in their house; unmarried adults have simple hearths made with three clay "hearthstones."

The patterns of hearth decoration vary from house to house and from settlement to

settlement. When interviewed on the meanings of the decoration, many informants smiled and replied that it is simply aesthetic, to make the hearth beautiful. However, in all studied sites, in dry-season camps and semipermanent and permanent villages, the upward vertical arrow is the most recurring motif. According to women informants, the arrows on the hearths represent the stirring wooden stick used to cook the sorghum dish. Hearth decoration

in this case is thus redundant. It emphasizes the "obvious," signals food preparation activities, and highlights one of the key roles of the family unit reflected in the construction of the house and its installations.

There are, however, some important differences within Shuwa-Arab settlements that are not discussed in detail here; they include (1) the presence/absence of fences around household clusters, which is characteristic of sedentary settlements, a feature that seems to indicate greater concern about households differentiation; (2) the presence/absence of central livestock enclosures; (3) the presence/absence of built or open-air mosques; (4) the degree of reliance on grain farming; and (5) variation in clan affiliation of settlements. As far as the material record is concerned, the introduction of a new kind of building material, such as sun-dried mud-bricks, associated with new techniques and architectural designs is one of the most significant indicators of change. The shift from circular to rectilinear houses with flat roofs is the most striking architectural development. This remarkable transition is reminiscent of Flannery's (1972) study of the process of sedentarization in the Near East from the Natufian to the Early Neolithic period. In some pastoral villages there are a few examples of circular huts built with sun-dried mud-bricks. In general, however, houses are built with wood and straw. It is in permanent villages that the number of rectilinear buildings increases dramatically (Fig. 11). The change from a circular to rectilinear form is therefore a good indication of the transition from nomadic to sedentary communities.

The architectural design, building techniques, and the materials used and the settlement patterning and their associated material record strongly emphasize Shuwa-Arab cultural identity. In pastoral settlements, the site layout reflects a self-sufficient, relatively autonomous and disconnected social entity in strict conformity with the pastoral-nomadic political system. In the Houlouf region, the Shuwa-Arab so-

cial organization is devoid of any superordinate sociopolitical decision level; each settlement is a self-contained social and political unit. Such an autonomous pattern was countered by the centralizing tendencies of the Kotoko political system. Through the implementation of a tax system, the Shuwa-Arabs had to pay for different kinds of annual tribute. They were also integrated into the dominant political system as soldiers and border guards in the Kotoko polities.

In pastoral groups, the socioeconomic system focuses mainly on livestock; accordingly, in the context of modern Cameroon, the spatial patterning of their sites is above all dependent on the decision-making organization concerning matters of herding and relations with the neighboring societies. Because of their total exclusion from the pan-regional political system, pastoral site patterning is inward-oriented in an attitude of self-exclusion; the outside is clearly kept aside. In this regard, one may easily understand the Shuwa-Arab attitude toward the sedentary Kotoko, a relationship that may be characterized as "negative reciprocity" (Sahlins 1968). The Shuwa-Arab pride and their reputation of "untrustworthiness" contained in Kanuri and Kotoko folk wisdom (Tijani 1986) are metaphorical expressions of the symbolic and ideological features resulting from their long-term interaction with their different neighbors. Patterns of interaction are partially translated and "fossilized" in the material record, settlement location and patterning, as well as items of material culture.

PROCESS OF SEDENTARIZATION: AN ETHNOARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

From a processual perspective, the centrality of pastoralism as the Shuwa-Arab main economic activity has served to maintain and reinforce their identity as a separate ethnic group. The sedentary and urban Kotoko, with their agricultural-

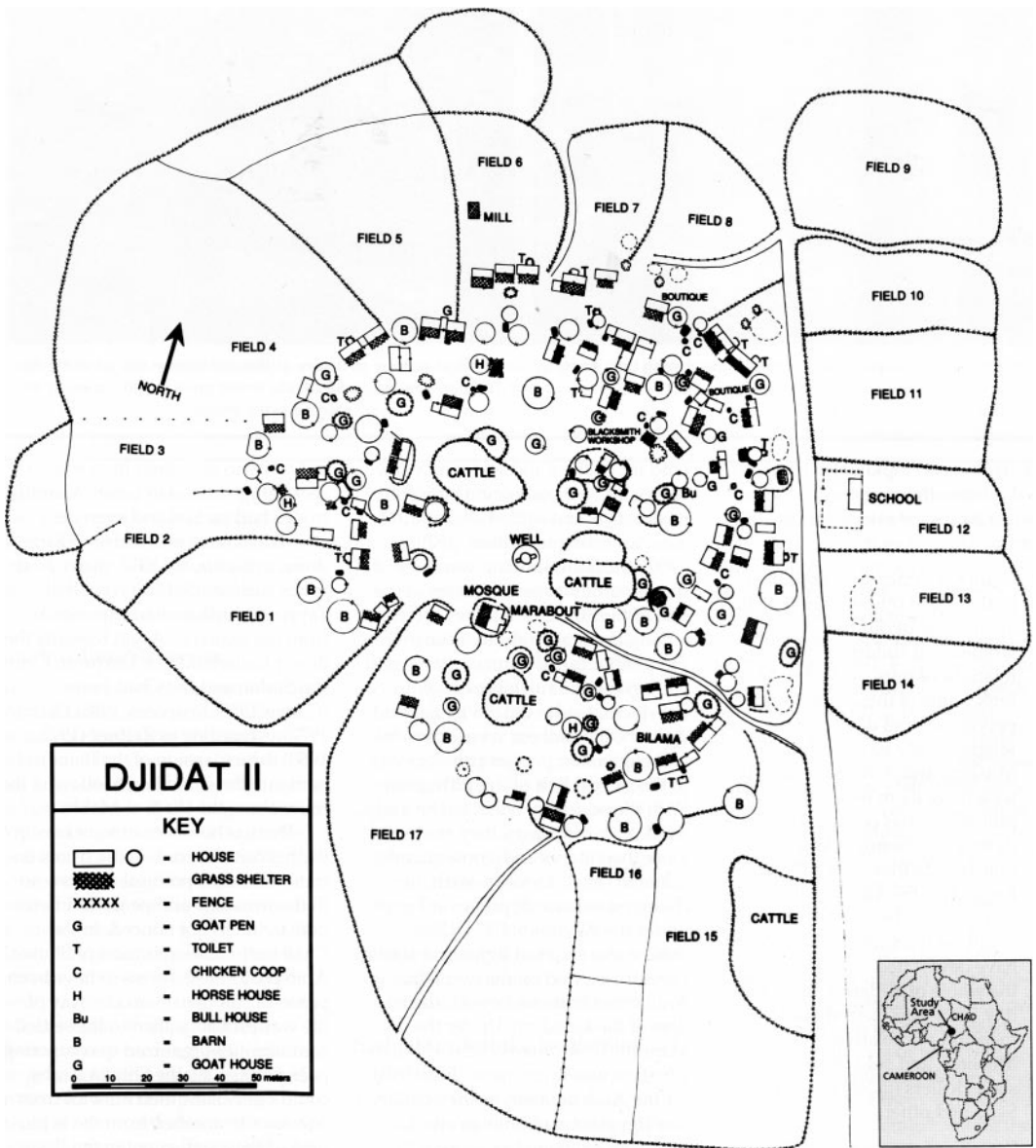


FIG. 11. Djidat II: plan of a permanent settlement.

based economy and rank social system, have traditionally controlled the political power structure in the southern Chad basin. Their reliance on intensive gardening and extensive sorghum agriculture left a vacuum for other societies willing to exploit nonagricultural lands, such as the *Yaéré*. With the arrival of the Shuwa-Arabs

from the Nile Valley in the 14th century, a new ethnic group filled the vacuum incrementally. While large-scale, i.e., community level, interaction between the Kotoko and Shuwa-Arab has been articulated by the incorporation of Shuwa-Arab mercenaries within the Kotoko Sultanates, on a day-to-day basis, weekly markets have

provided the forum for interaction between these peoples.

Until recently, the traditional setting for these markets was inside the walls of the Kotoko towns and villages. Demographic records indicate that a numerically higher Shuwa-Arab population has characterized Kotoko/Shuwa-Arab interaction for the past 20 years. In the 1980s, there were radical changes in the Cameroonian political system at local levels. According to the new stipulations all local chiefs have to be elected according to the rules of a pluralist democracy. The new electoral system accelerated the collapse of the traditional Kotoko Sultanate power structures.

The sedentarization of the nomadic Shuwa-Arab has been facilitated largely by the introduction of a new technology—the installation of deep-bored wells and pumps. The establishment of stronger and overarching power structures, first with the German and French colonial systems, followed by the Cameroon state administrative organization, reduced, eroded, marginalized, and finally wiped out all the sociopolitical features formerly used by the Kotoko rulers to maintain control and power over the local landscape. From 1980 onward, the Shuwa-Arab permanent village of Djidat I-II, emerged as a rival non-Kotoko settlement center that is gradually superceding Houlouf, the traditional second-tier social, economic, and religious center on this part of the Chadian plain. Demographics aided by political reforms altered the nature of the power balance between the Kotoko and the Shuwa-Arab.

From a materialist perspective, this change in Shuwa-Arab social, economic, and religious organization is associated with (1) the building of public religious institutions (mosques) and schools, thus providing the needed education and services to fellow tribesmen; (2) a new concern with private property and personal space (fenced areas); (3) an increase in the size and number of fenced agricultural fields; (4) a shift

from circular to rectangular architecture; (5) the widespread construction of permanent toilet facilities within each household cluster; (6) the installation of engine-pulled and hand-operated mills; (7) the rise of “entrepreneurship” reflected in small shops (boutiques); (8) intensification of market-oriented goat-milk production; and, finally, (9) the establishment of craft specialists in the new Shuwa-Arab center at Djidat I-II (Fig. 11). By establishing an alternative center at Djidat, with all the services previously available only at Kotoko centers such as Houlouf, the entire Kotoko power structure may be in its final stage of disintegration.

Although Shuwa-Arab social organization and economy is also in state of flux, their ethnic identity as an historical pastoral people is reinforced by the circular layout of their villages (even though rectilinear architecture is rapidly replacing the circular), the continued importance attached to traditional hearths and hearth designs, their language, and other features. This settlement process can be identified in the Shuwa-Arab material culture and provides archaeologists with a useful model to monitor how ethnic identity, economy, and social change can be linked to material remains.

Through peaceful infiltration with, however, some violent clashes from time to time; the payment of an annual tribute to traditional owners of lands; the exploitation of a formerly empty ecological niche of the annually flooded grasslands; and, finally, a fast-growing population, the Shuwa-Arabs have succeeded within ca. 300 years to achieve a relative political supremacy in the Houlouf region. The last aspects of this long-term process were observed in the field during the past decade. In 1984, after the death of Mai Hassana, the last sultan of Houlouf, the council of Elders met with an assembly consisting of all the *Bilama* (village headmen) of the whole region (the Houlouf Canton). The meeting and discussions were “chaired” by the *Galadima* (Chief of land of Houlouf, the second in the re-

gional political hierarchy) and took place in his compound. For 6 full years, from 1984 to 1990, no agreement was reached and the assembly was unable to appoint a new sultan. Kotoko elders, relying on a "deep time" tradition in which the succession to sultanship is hereditary from the male line within the same family, were reluctant to comply with the new regulations and rules of a pluralist democracy, "one man, one vote." They were sincerely unable to understand why the Cameroonian government would create such an unnecessary problem. In Houlouf, the sole Kotoko settlement of the Canton, the implementation of the new rules gives an automatic majority to the Shuwa-Arabs. Confronted with this serious and unexpected difficulty, the paramount Sultan of Logone Birni, Sultan Mahamat Bahr Maarouf, said, "only Allah can solve such an intractable problem."

After 6 years of debates and under the strong pressure of the *Prefet*, the Cameroon state representative, a new chief, a Shuwa-Arab, was elected in 1990. However, the elected Shuwa-Arab did not dare take the title of Sultan and did not move to the Houlouf Sultan residence. The Kotoko of Houlouf have consequently lost their traditional monopoly of the regional power structure. They decided to secede, withdrew from the system, and elected their own sultan. Similar events happened in the neighboring Kotoko polity of Kala-Kafra in 1988. A whole historical power structure is collapsing. A Shuwa-Arab-dominated region is emerging from the disaggregation of

the previous Kotoko political structure. It is possible to argue that without the deterring effect of Cameroon state administration, and given enough time, the formerly dominant Kotoko may have been easily turned into the dominated group and their walled central settlements conquered or destroyed. Or alternatively, they may have launched military campaigns and called on other Kotoko polities for a strategic alliance.

As for Shuwa-Arab settlements, some technological innovations, such as deep-bored water pumps, have boosted the process of sedentarization. In general, however, the ethnoarchaeological research conducted in the Houlouf region documents an interesting case of the Peaceful Infiltration Model, based on the exploitation of unused ecological niches with its ensuing socioeconomic complementarity. The range of Shuwa-Arab sites thus cover three categories of settlements, dry-season camps, rainy-season villages, and permanent villages, among which Djidat I-II recently emerged as central.

The first category of site is almost exclusively devoted to herding activities; in each of the studied camps, the largest feature is always the central cattle corral (Fig. 10), supplemented by varying number of additional smaller enclosures for sheep, goats, horses, and donkeys. Ratios of livestock space relative to total site surface range from 0.13 to 0.50, while those of livestock space versus built areas vary from 0.72 to 0.90 (Tables 2 and 3). The situation is much more diversified in rainy-season villages.

TABLE 2

Spatial Structures of Shuwa-Arab Settlements: Ratios of Livestock Space Relative to Total Site Surface

Site category	<i>n</i>	Min.	Max.	Mean	Range	Standard deviation
Dry-season camps	11	0.13	0.50	0.29	0.37	0.12
Rainy-season villages	12	0.06	0.41	0.21	0.35	0.10
Permanent settlements	4	0.04	0.08	0.05	0.04	0.01

TABLE 3
Spatial Structure of Shuwa-Arab Settlements: Ratios of Livestock Space Relative to the Built Area

Site category	<i>n</i>	Min.	Max.	Mean	Range	Standard deviation
Dry-season camps	11	0.72	0.90	0.81	0.18	0.04
Rainy-season villages	12	0.88	0.49	0.70	0.39	0.10
Permanent settlements	4	0.32	0.46	0.38	0.14	0.05

Depending on the size of villages' herds, and what may be termed cooperation and communal ethic, the ratio of livestock space relative to site surface is variable. In general, in all the recorded cases, and in comparison with the patterns of allocation of space documented in dry-season camps, the space devoted to livestock decreases. In permanent settlements, at first glance, the proportion of community space devoted to livestock seems to decrease sharply, supplemented by greater compactness and higher densities of built features devoted to other activities, with ratios of livestock space relative to total site surface varying from 0.04 to 0.08 (Table 2). A closer examination of the distribution of livestock among houses shows a more complex picture; animals' space is often fragmented into smaller domestic areas and widely distributed in household habitation complexes, with some of these areas used for habitation as well as many other activities (Tables 2 and 3). The figure from Tables 2 and 3 thus support the findings from some Palestine Iron I settlements presented above.

The studied permanent settlements are elliptical to circular in shape and, as noted above, the other remarkable feature is the high frequency of rectilinear sun-dried mud-brick houses with flat roofs. The quadrangular shape appears to be more flexible and easily adaptable to the changing size of domestic units (Agorsah 1985, Holl 1987; Fig.11); they are therefore more congruent with sedentary life. Even if there are subtle differences in spatial patterning between sites among the three recorded set-

tlement categories, the general trend of decreasing space allocated to livestock within settlement space seems to be an accurate feature connected with the process of sedentarization.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Lake Chad data also indicate that site settlement plans are indeed one of the most telling indicators of the socio-economies of communities. The shift from full-time pastoral activities to sedentary agriculture is accompanied by changes in the settlement pattern. A point-to-point comparison between both case studies has been discussed at length in this article. The Shuwa-Arabs trekked from the Nile valley to the Chad Basin. In the process they married local women and became "Africanized," but avoided assimilation. Different components of the expanding Shuwa-Arab social mass have different histories. Those from the Houlouf region succeeded in gaining the upper hand after approximately 3 centuries. In describing the emergence and formation of the entire Israelite identity, the Conquest and Symbiosis Models are the least reliable. The Peaceful Infiltration Model is anchored on the Exodus and structured in three steps: (1) the expulsion from Egypt, (2) the 40-year trek in the Sinai, and (3) the Israelite takeover. It is the inverted mirror image of the Conquest Model. The process of becoming Israelites and separating from the larger Shasu nomadic social group involved a profound "contrast" with Egyptians (Assman 1997)

in manners, customs, and worship (i.e., monotheism vs polytheism). It probably peaked and crystallized during the Late Bronze–Iron I period within the context of Philistine expansion and renewed imperial Egypt expansion and reflects the process of ethnogenesis discussed here. The biblical “amnesia” regarding on Egyptian dominion, Egyptianized Canaanites (Redford 1992: 259–263), and the Israelite/Shusa relationship and the virtual “absence” of reference to Israel in Egyptian records are, culturally, no accidents. They highlight the profound alterative nature each of these cultural universes had of the other. The archaeological record of the hill country during Iron I, when looked at dispassionately, indicates simply a new evolutionary step within the Canaanite population and cultural mosaic. The fluidity of pastoral socioeconomic systems allows for an easier absorption of newcomers and displaced groups, but great difficulty in tracking these segmentary societies both historically and archaeologically. The “sudden” surge in settlement in the highlands is certainly not independent from the Philistine and Egyptian wars of the 12th and 11th centuries B.C. A coalescence of small mixed-farming groups, with an important pastoral component and refugees from Canaanite coastal towns and even from the Transjordanian desert, is probably at the core of the formation of the highland Israelite identity. The new sociopolitical entity grew into strong competing Iron II peer-polities and later, under the leadership of the most powerful among equals, formed a unified territorial state, the United Monarchy. Ancient Israel emerged from cultural interaction between Near Eastern societies during the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C.

Like the changes observed in the Iron I elliptical settlement system, the Lake Chad data indicate that as settlement becomes more sedentary, the ratio of large open livestock corrals areas to built-up areas diminishes. However, the original elliptical-to-cir-

cular settlement plan, embedded in the former pastoralist identity, still forms the basis for the general settlement organization at these newly sedentarized communities. Finally, from different but mutually supportive data sets, this article highlights the partial pastoral background of Iron Age Israelites. By linking early Israel to the greater world of pastoral nomadic societies epitomized by the Shasu and studying the ethnoarchaeology of Shuwa-Arab society today, it is possible to understand that “migrations” are effective forces of cultural change. Based on the ancient Egyptian documents, “migrations” are best viewed as a process linked to the necessities of a mobile lifestyle rather than an “event” in the Braudelian sense. The same process rings true in light of the ethnohistory of the Shuwa-Arabs in the Lake Chad Basin. Migration must be well documented historically and archaeologically and carefully investigated. Both the Shuwa-Arab and Israelite data sets support this more processual interpretation of the available data. Thus, the formation of ethnic identity is a complex but dynamic process that does not take place in a vacuum but is intimately linked to social interaction between different ethnic groups.

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