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Bandits, Nomads and the Formation of Highland Polities: Hinterland
Activity in Palestine in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age

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ABSTRACT

This study is an effort to view events in the Ancient Near East, especially Palestine, during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age from a somewhat different angle. In a first instance, it will try to move away from concentrating on the movement of ethnic entities. Emphasis will be on the social groupings involved, bandits and nomads being singled out especially as they behave and evolve in a highland environment. Chapter 1 assesses whether or not ancient Palestine in particular offers conditions appropriate for the rise of banditry. Chapter 2 will analyze behavioral patterns among bandits and stress that they can function as wielders of important political and military power. Chapter 3 introduces nomads especially as they are perceived by the sedentary and urban groups, but also as they stand in relation to bandits. Chapter 4 will use these findings to present a picture of the Palestinian highlands as an autonomous hinterland. Chapter 5 will treat the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition more directly. It will point out how these same highlands became an attractive area of refuge during the time of the late Egyptian takeover, the arrival of the Sea Peoples, and, finally, the collapse of the empire. Chapter 6 will move onto the processes of state-formation after that collapse. It will present the capacities of bandits and nomads to develop stronger polities from a sociological point of view, before the concluding chapter 7 takes a close look at first the written, then the epigraphical and archaeological material relevant to the particular Palestinian highland situation, especially treating the question of the power and size of any polity that would have arisen under the given conditions.

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Introduction

The "history of Israel" appears to us to be the Holy Grail of biblical scholarship. The quest for it has led us through equally obscure paths, has presented equally enormous obstacles, and although some have come closer than others it has as yet to be achieved. If this would finally be achieved, so many other things would hopefully fall in place more easily¹. As of now, however, the major achievements of the quest appear to be the realization that the "history of Israel" is wrapped in a setting equally legendary to the Arthurian world surrounding the quest for the Holy Grail. These realizations have taken a long time to come, and even now they cannot be seen as unanimously accepted, although progress is being made. Thus within less than a decade we are able to witness a change of position from "to write a history of ancient Judah and Israel must depend primarily on the biblical record" [Miller and Hayes; 1986:19]² to a position reflected by this recent statement by Davies: "I am construing "ancient Israel" as a scholarly construct" [1992:16].

Legends³ are set in literature, and the case of Israel is no different. Thus dramatic shifts, which have led to a number of monographs in the latter half of the past decade, are much indebted to work and research into the sphere of Hebrew literature [Davies; 1992:13]. After all if we are to drive a "thick wedge between the literary and the

¹We would arrive at the stage where "instead of asking how the history can be explained from the literature, we must ask how the literature can be explained from the history." [Davies; 1987:3-4].

²Davies in fact considers Miller and Hayes' *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* to be "the end of the road for the genre of 'biblical history'" [Davies; 1987:4].

³How we treat the biblical material in relation to legends and the like will be made clearer in the final chapter.

historical 'Israel'" [Davies; 1992:155], it must be pointed out that the realization of this, owes as much to the findings of scholars engaged in the literary approach as to the historian. Through the studies of Gunn [1984], Alter [and Kermode; 1989] and others, it has transpired that the biblical text should be appreciated as literature proper and that its nature is that of a story rather than that of a historical record. The writing of the history of Israel thus had to change accordingly and move away from the old ways of rewriting "the biblical story with a mildly rationalistic tone" [Davies; 1992:25].

Not surprisingly, reliance on the biblical text for historical reconstruction has come under heavy criticism during the last decade [Coote and Whitelam; 1988:2]. As it has become increasingly clear that underlying the early stories of the Hebrew Bible are the political and religious realities of a later period, most probably exilic or postexilic, the actual history-writing concerning the so-called pre-history, in particular the emergence of Israel, but also, as we shall claim, the period of the monarchy, has grown more and more independent of this textual evidence. This move away from the biblical text has opened the door to a new range of alternative sources, changing the face of what, for so long, has been called biblical historiography. Archaeology and the social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology⁴, have accordingly caught the interest of biblical scholarship.

Archaeology is no newcomer to the world of biblical scholarship, but for long archaeology had, next to exclusively, been used to substantiate given theories as opposed to having been free to speak for itself. Although Alt made practically no use of archaeology, Albright

⁴As Davies states: "I am unable to find an agreed or satisfactory distinction. Where, for example, sociology is understood as 'the anthropology of industrialized societies', and in view of the existence of social anthropology, it is hard to see that there is any substantive demarcation. Indeed even 'sociology' tends to be defined differently in British and North American cultures" [Davies; 1992:11-12; fn.1].

found little difficulty in integrating archaeological material into his "conquest" model. For too long it has been judged appropriate to let the biblical text dictate the interpretations of the archaeological record. At its extreme this has been taken so far as to make of archaeology little more than an extra validation for the historicity of the biblical narrative. Unfortunately the situation has been going on for so long that in many circles it is still a respected process. This is best illustrated in general historical or even archaeological guide books, where not only the results obtained but the method itself seem to be uncritically taken for granted. Thus Benesch, after emphasizing the importance as well as political implications attached to archaeology in Israel, follows up by saying:

Aber noch eine zweite Aufgabe ist der Archäologie in diesem Land gestellt: die in der Bibel niedergeschriebenen Ereignisse durch Grabungen zu bestätigen. Zu verkünden, dass die Verheissung des Landes Israel, dem >>vom Gott auserwählten Volk<<, keine Legende ist, sondern eine Realität, die in jeder Messerklinge, jeder Befestigungsmauer sichtbar wird. [Benesch; 1979:117]⁵

Fortunately this situation is beginning to change, as it has become evident that in many instances archaeology raises serious questions about the narratives. This is especially so where Israel's origins outside the land are concerned. The historicity of the conquest narratives, in particular, was undermined when it was discovered that many of the cities claimed to be destroyed under Joshua had indeed been uninhabited at the time. Another important issue at stake is Israel's ceramic as well as

⁵Many books which propose to present a comparative and cross-cultural view of world history or archaeology, in itself a very laudable effort, unfortunately take too much of what is said about the biblical world too uncritically, using only very limited reading material, most of which is beginning to be dated. See for example Manley's chapter on Meggiddo [1993:64-70] and Hayden on Jericho [1993:373].

architectural culture, for the discovery of an alien culture is believed to point to a new ethnic unit, a newcomer onto the scene. Here also it is the text which for long has dominated archaeology and dictated interpretation. Indeed, if it was not for the text, it is doubtful that the label "Israelite" itself would be applied to any archaeological findings. For when we speak of Israelite culture, it is only due to the biblical text that certain pots, jars or housetypes found in the excavations in the Palestinian highlands are qualified as "Israelite". If it was not for the text setting the geographical confines for the location of "Israelite" pottery, this pottery would probably be labeled as "Canaanite". Unfortunately for too long scholars have tried to find "Israelites" where the Bible suggested they should be found, and for too long they were happy to find them just there [cf Whitelam; 1993:20].

Nowadays, however, it has become increasingly clear that the highland culture does not point to a newcomer on the scene, definitely not a new ethnic unit. Over the years interpretation of the archaeological remains has moved away from a distinct Israelite culture and emphasized the indigenous nature of both ceramic and architectural features. Though recognizing variations in the Late Bronze Age urban assemblage and that of the Iron Age highland occupation, these are traced back to socio-economic adaptations rather than ethnic differences. By emphasizing the similarities rather than the differences, it has become obvious that both the highland housetypes and ceramic heritage have developed out of the previously dominant "Canaanite" culture⁶. Variations that there are, are dependent on the new environment and generally poorer conditions with reduced possibilities for production. There are thus few, if any indications, in the archaeological records that would point to an external entry of land-hungry nomads, as both the conquest and the

⁶Note here a warning by Aurenche: "L'archéologue retiendra aussi que l'introduction de nouveaux types architecturaux sur un site ne doit pas nécessairement s'expliquer par des changements brutaux de civilisations, du à des conflits" [1984:14-15]. Cribb presents the same argument especially as related to "the arrival of a new wave of nomads" [1991:66].

infiltration models would have it [Coote and Whitelam; 1988:5]⁷.

Nonetheless there are still those which speak of a definable Israelite culture. Finkelstein's monograph, for example, although a revolutionary study in the archaeological field and as Whitelam says prone to dominate research into the history of Israel for a long period, itself suffers from this deeply rooted fault [cf Whitelam; 1993:3-5]⁸.

But the direction of archaeological research has nonetheless undergone rapid changes. Regional excavation surveys have for example come to replace the former method of digging up major sites that found mention in the biblical text [Lemche; 1990:83]. One of the outcomes is that our geographical horizon has thus broadened considerably. It is now possible to compare the results of highland excavations, to view culture(s) in its diversity and unity, in order to draw conclusions relevant to the understanding of both the urban areas, their rural hinterland, their point of contacts, and the shifts which might occur between them. What becomes clear is that one of the major changes which has effected biblical historiography and its use of archaeology is a

⁷Cribb alludes to the near impossibility of distinguishing nomadic and village cultures on this basis: "The traveller in the more isolated parts of the Near East should not be surprised to see groups of migrating nomads passing through villages whose inhabitants dress in the same manner as the nomads, speak the same dialect, employ the same range of household utensils, possess the same species of domestic animals and, in some cases, claim the same tribal affiliation. Differences there certainly are, but these are often ideological, organizational and economic rather than 'cultural'" [Cribb; 1991:65, also 75].

⁸This matter and the use of labels such as "Israelite" and "Canaanite" will be discussed in more detail below. The attempt to determine ethnic groups by their ceramic and architectural culture has come under heavy criticism [cf Kramer; 1977: 91, 108-109; Kamp and Yoffee; 1980:89, 95; Renfrew; 1982:2; Whitelam; 1993:8]. Hayden also insists at different times on "the basic view that *technology and culture emerged as adaptations to stresses in the environment*" [1993:143, also 148-150] and that "Necessity is the Mother of Invention" [1993:223; Hyams; 1976:82].

trend to move towards a history of Palestine or even greater Syria-Palestine and away from a "history of Israel"⁹ [Dever; 1987:218-219]. The widening of the archaeological zone of interest is but one of the results of the realization that a shortsighted "history of Israel" is not only impossible but also of limited use. Israel has to be seen with the wider spectrum of Palestinian history in mind. In fact, in our opinion, it forms but a part of such a broader history. Consequently, it is the long-term history of the whole of Palestine which should be seen as a predominant factor in the historical events of the Late Bronze Age in the highland regions, events "in which Israel is little more than an inevitable result of movements and developments over which she has no control" [Mayes; 1989:101; cf Whitelam; 1993:2].

Yet this also indicates that archaeology on its own will not tell us the whole story. For archaeology by itself, as some have pointed out, is mute or silent, and with the refutation of the biblical text as historical evidence, people have turned to the social sciences as the new partner to work in consort with archaeology [Dever; 1987:219]. The biblical scholarly world is neither the first nor the only to use anthropology to evaluate the archaeological findings¹⁰. In fact archaeology, as a social science itself, has at times been seen as a sub-topic of the wider anthropological arena. Especially in its main aims and methods, Hayden's recent guide book to archaeology, for example, has a deeply rooted anthropological undertone, especially as he comes to expose and explain the concept of models for reconstructing the evolution of humanity and society [Hayden; esp. 1993:23-26, 74-95, 97-130; cf Hauer; 1987:16]¹¹. No wonder that the likes of sociology and anthropology have

⁹An "obsolete genre" as Davies maintains [1992:11].

¹⁰An increase of the use of social sciences, in particular anthropology and ethnoarchaeology, as well as theories on state evolution, have thus come to influence a number of scholars in the fields of Assyriology and Egyptology, for example [cf Yoffee; 1979; Watson; 1980; Yoffee and Kamp; 1980; Brown; 1986].

¹¹It is also reflected by titles like *Anthropology for*

provided biblical historiography with methodology, models, and patterns appropriate for the study of Palestinian Late Bronze Age society, especially in their ability to render a setting within which to place and interpret the archaeological record. Although he is highly critical of the objectivity that can in fact be reached by such methods¹², Mayes states:

The biblical record is dismissed as deriving from individualistic bias and prejudice, with no significance for the historical and sociological analysis of ancient Israel, while reliable objective knowledge can be found in sociological models, archaeological and other non-biblical sources which are thought to yield objective data for historical and sociological description. [in Mayes; 1989:120]

Mayes describes the use of the sociological approach in biblical scholarship from Levi-Strauss onwards, giving ample evaluations of the important work of Weber and Durkheim. The interest in sociology and anthropology is thus neither new nor restricted to the field of history-writing. Mayes' monograph [1989; also 1988], but also Lang's collection of essays [1985], are witness not only to the longstanding belief in the utility of anthropological research, but also to the variety of its applications. Yet its applicability in the historical field has itself caused a rich debate about appropriateness and choice of methodology, especially as the variety and complexity of the subject has entered religious scholarship ever deeper. It is especially the utility of models and comparative analogies which at times fail to gain approval of a number of scholars [cf Hauer; 1987:17]. Although some advocate the use of cross-cultural analogy over space and time, warnings for caution are voiced by others, while some seriously doubt their usefulness and applicability. Similarly the appropriateness of the use of models and

Archaeologists [Orme; 1981] or *Nomads in Archaeology* [Cribb; 1991].

¹²Hayden devotes a whole passage to "The Myth of Objectivity" [1993:28-32; also Orme; 1981:27].

systematic approaches is cast into doubt by a number of scholars [cf Gilbert; 1975; Watson; 1980:57, 59; Davies; 1992:14]. However, the historian of the Ancient Near East is confronted by the fact that in the absence of proper textual evidence, so often the case, the anthropological tools of comparison and model are the only way of making progress. So, although the limits of all systems must be reckoned with, it is equally important to stress the necessity and validity of such an anthropological approach [cf Herion; 1986:7-8].

One of the major drawbacks of the method is the fact that both analogy and models are heavily theoretical [Hayes; 1987:8-9]. Consequently, the findings will be hypothetical. Often it is the case that the best result possible is to draw up the most plausible hypothesis, which again will be left to others not only to study or work upon, but hopefully to correct and improve. Hauer says that history writing is cumulative in nature, whereas Knauf rightly claims that the best we can expect is a number of competing histories, "eine Mehrzahl zur Diskussion gestellter Hypothesen" [Knauf; 1988:170; 1991:27; Hauer; 1987:15; also Hayes; 1987:6]. Ultimately such a view not only permits us to look positively as well as expectantly into the future, but helps us to appreciate the long standing works of major scholars such as Alt, Albright and Mendenhall. Ironically enough, although Albright was a pioneer in the advocating the use archaeology and Mendenhall the revolutionary force behind the use of sociological tools, the new archaeological approach with its insistence on anthropology often advocates refinements, often substantial, to Alt's theory of peaceful settlement.

Mendenhall's contribution introduced the most noticeable change if not in methodology then in interest. Furthermore, his monograph [1973] opened an outlook which still is predominant not only in Israelite history writing, but also in general in the field of the social sciences. This is the view that history moves in cycles. Mendenhall advocated the importance of such a view, when in the title of his monograph, he

emphasized the role of *The Tenth Generation*. Cyclical processes, such as those of nomadisation and sedentarisation, decline and collapse, rise and fall of trade, the change in settlement patterns, feature highly on the agenda of both the anthropologist and the historian. Already exposed by Braudel's and the school of annales concept of *la longue durée*, this outlook leads us to look for the recurrent and the regular, rather than the unique and the sudden. It represents probably the most practical application of the saying that history repeats itself.

The outcome is a widening not only of the geographical but also of the temporal sphere which ultimately helps us to bring the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age situation in Palestine into a proper setting, thus defining the choice of appropriate comparative material. For on top of the geographical and ecological environment, it is possible to take into account particular political situations and their effects on economic and social phenomena, as well as observing the behavioural patterns of the particular social agents involved or the economic adaptations and physical movements undertaken on their part under given circumstances. The aim is to arrive at a situation where it is possible to operate a model tracing the developments according to a regular pattern.

No doubt the method might at first appear far too mathematical, and it has accordingly been labeled as deterministic and criticized for leaving little space for individualistic choice, omitting that one important factor in history, man [cf Herion; 1986:8]. After all if "man's success is due to lack of specialization, to being able to change habit and diet when occasion demands" [McEvedy; 1967:18], it seems unreasonable to confine this changing animal within a set of theoretical rules. Mayes has given this some thought and promptly asked for an understanding of the individual, the inclusion of "psychoanalytic theory" as a part of an "adequate sociology" [1989:125-128]¹³. Having defined determinism as "a

¹³Davies view has also to be considered. He claims: "First, it is meaningful to talk about societies and not merely collections of individuals...One cannot predict an individual's behaviour, but can predict that of a group, as the social sciences regularly show. This

tendency to think that human values, choices and actions are determined by certain variables in the social and cultural environment" [1989:120], he is, nonetheless, able to maintain:

History is made by men, but it is made in response to given environmental conditions and through the medium of contemporary conventions. This should not be understood to imply only that some charismatic personalities are great and strong enough to break through their social structures (Herrmann: 1984;267f.); rather, for all individuals their relationships to their social and environmental context is one of response to given conditions through the convention of their age. [1989:129] (emph. added)¹⁴

Salzman' earlier analysis of change [1980a] adopts a similar attitude. Change is here viewed as a set of alternatives available to individuals and society. Such alternatives however are given, not entirely new, spontaneous and *ad hoc* concepts, so as to be recorded as a sudden break, but are normative and regulated processes that have been tried before and are a part of the customs of the given society. As there is, however, a whole set and the possibilities of a variety of combinations between the different variants, human choice and individualistic differences are still given enough room so as to leave a considerable amount of freedom in the proceedings.

Again this analysis highlights some of the major aspects which will dictate our study: it shows that change is definitely not necessarily, and indeed quite seldom, a complete break. It is rather a protracted

poses a philosophical paradox, but it is true that people as groups behave differently to people as individuals: here is a kind of social-scientific quantum theory" [Davies; 1992:14].

¹⁴Similarly Knauf claims in his epilogue: "Aber Menschen erleiden nicht nur Geschichte, sie machen sie auch; zwar selten aus freien Stücken, aber immer selbst" [1988:170] (emph. added).

process. Similarly the regular aspect of change, the development according to a repetitive pattern shines through. As society is seen to change through a range of worked out and tried alternatives, it becomes clear that similar situations will be met with similar solutions. Adaptation is therefore not at every moment a totally new event, it is a phenomenon following a recurrent pattern and normative regulations. Obviously new trends will emerge, be it because of technological innovation or not, but again the impact of such originalities will be absorbed in the quasi-unnoticeable due to the longevity of the proceedings. That change is also seen to be working in two directions, i.e. being reversible, validates the point that processes can be seen as operating in cycles. If change works both forwards and backwards and on the other hand operates through a set of regulated alternatives, it can only follow that the same or very similar phenomena will and do reappear periodically.

Change viewed in such anthropological terms has been very influential in the writing of Palestinian history. Not surprisingly, a trend away from such discernible one-time events as conquest and revolt is noticeable. Rather the talk is now about shifts, transformation, and realignment. The search as such is not any more for one society replacing another, but about one and the same society developing from one thing into another. At this point a certain degree of consensus seems to have been reached. Yet it is also showing that the way in which such change happened is still presented under many forms, as demonstrated by Gnuse's claim:

Out of the discussions involving the three models, especially the third internal revolution theory, a new set of perceptions is beginning to arise. Inspired by archaeological work, this new position might be called the *peaceful internal model*. It has several variations. Stiebing (159-165) has proposed an excellent initial typology for, and a very useful response to these new models, which he categorizes as hybrid:

the *frontier society model* of Joseph Callaway, the *symbiosis* or *internal nomadic settlement model* of Volkmar Fritz and Israel Finkelstein. I propose a slightly more complex typology of *peaceful withdrawal* (Stiebing's first category), *internal nomadism*, *peaceful transition*, and *peaceful transformation*. [Gnuse; 1991:59]

Into this spectrum of transformation and transition we place this study, in which we will concentrate on two sets of social actors, bandits and nomads, especially as they evolve politically in a highland environment¹⁵. It might be said that we thus advocate the importance of these groups as well as this particular environment *a priori*. It is also easily perceptible that when we talk of highlands what we have in mind is to a great extent the central hillcountry of Palestine, and thus the area whose settlement in the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition is closely associated with the emergence of Israel. Are we thus still being led by the biblical text and thus reaffirming its historical value, as some would probably point out at this point? Is not our choice of geographical setting and of social actors primarily dependent on Israel's occupation of Palestine, its nomadic antecedents, and the bandit nature of Jephthah and David, as they are seen in the Hebrew Bible [cf. Miller; 1991b:esp. 94-96]?

Not so, we claim, mostly because in fact our study should not be seen as describing the emergence of Israel as such. Our aim is to look at the behavioural patterns of specific groupings that have existed and played a major part in the political setting of New Kingdom dominated Palestine, and furthermore at their reaction and adaptation as this empire began to crumble¹⁶. Considering bandit and nomad groups has not so

¹⁵We thus work, according to Braudel, on two levels of history, "man in his relationship to the environment" and "the history of groups and groupings" [1992:xiv].

¹⁶This is not to say that we make them a cause of that collapse; in fact any causal relationship in the discussion will go in the opposite direction. Nor do we want to play down the importance of other groups

much to do with biblical claims as with the appearance of the groups in external textual evidence and data of historical and anthropological nature emphasizing their role especially in highland environments. Finally the change of objective clarifies that we are attempting to reconstruct a history of Palestinian bandits and nomads, not the prehistory of Israelite forerunners.

This also raises a question of unease with even the most recent monographs, that is, the continued use of the name of Israel in historical research in Palestine around the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition. Miller's criticism on this point is most appropriate. He singles out Finkelstein's definition for its circular argumentation, and objects: "Finkelstein calls them 'Israelites', not Iron I people" [Miller; 1991b:99; cf Whitelam; 1993:3]¹⁷. Though not using the term "Iron I people", we are however keen to heed Miller's warning. If our historical reconstruction's are to be independent of the biblical text and all its underlying assumptions, we also have to be independent of the use of the labels of Israel and Israelites, "however much they may be qualified or however much we may try and encode our uncertainties with quotation marks" [Whitelam; 1993:21], although this might in the end mean to loose the old "star item" [Davies; 1992:62]. If the history to be written has moved towards the history of ancient Palestine, it seems clear that our main protagonists will have to be not early, proto or pre-Israelites, but ancient Palestinians¹⁸.

or geographical locations. As the study goes on it will in fact become clearer that nomads and bandits can only be viewed in relation to other groups, such as the peasants and the urban élite, highlands only in relation to the surrounding plains, deserts, even seas.

¹⁷Finkelstein has in fact already changed his stance on this issue in a more recent article [1991:52-53].

¹⁸Neither should we in fact call them "Canaanites": This label also has too many biblical connotations, and, on the other hand, is a very vague term, that cannot be considered to denote any exactly defined ethnos or nation [cf Lemche; 1991]. Beyond the more direct Palestinian problem, the whole notion of applying modern labels of the national kind to ancient societies is being challenged in a number of ways.

We prefer not to give any precise label to our social actors. Notions such as "Iron I people" seriously restrict our freedom in time, whereas "hillcountry settlers" not only limits the geographical outlook, but also refers to an activity which as yet has still to be proven to have taken place. We have preferred to stick to the terms 'bandits' and 'nomads', and to discuss their actions and locations. A further term is necessary, which is that of "highlander" (or hill people), and which needs an accompanying explanation. Use of the terminology from Near Eastern texts only emphasizes the difficulties in terminology when referring to bandit or nomad. First of all, a problem arises because ancient, classical, and medieval scribes and/or historians have never really caught onto this differentiation, working with an anthropological concept of the world that only knew two categories, the sedentary-agricultural mode and all others, including nomadism, pastoralism, hunter-gathering, brigandage, raiding etc. Seldom politically disinterested, but biased ideologically, these records also portray only one view, that of the urbanite or even imperialist onlooker rather than that of the rural agents actually involved¹⁹. One might add to this the fact that no word for "nomad" exists in the Ancient Near Eastern languages [Cribb; 1991:10]. Thus the problem of terminology will be a main feature of our study. It will be addressed in most chapters, questioning not only the validity of ancient terminology, but also our own not dissimilar use of modern constructed categories [cf Knauf;

Eph'al finds it inappropriate for example to talk of the Egyptian realm as an empire like that of the Assyrians or Babylonians; others claim that even the Roman empire was not a nation-state as such [Peters; 1978:315]. Merrillees [1986] on the other hand maintains that Egypt of the New Kingdom, unlike the Hittites and Mitanni, approached the status of a nation-state. For discussions on the general problem of ethnicity, see Kamp and Yoffee [1980].

¹⁹Curiously enough Davies seems to accuse biblical scholarship of something similar when he says: "...biblical scholarship is guilty of retrojective imperialism, which displaces an otherwise unknown and uncared-for population in the interests of an ideological construct" [1992:31].

1985:41]. It is important to try to learn from other periods in history, how to look for the realities behind the language; these findings will help us to follow the social transformations that both groups underwent in the period under review.

The discussion on nomads has nonetheless a longer history and the biblical scholar will by now be aware of the many debates which have centred around nomads, pastoralists, semi-nomads, transhumants, etc. Nomads have always been at the centre of the discussion of the historical processes around the transition to the Iron Age, and at least since Gottwald [1979] everybody should be fully aware of the ensuing complications. Banditry, "an ill-defined word if ever there was one" [Braudel; 1992:64], on the other hand, has not always been at the core of this discussion. The main discussion on its character will obviously follow but it is important to describe shortly the type of bandit under consideration. We are not here talking of a mere robber, somebody who takes what he needs, then disappears till the need to rob arises again. The bandits that are at the heart of this discussion are to be seen as an integrative part of a wider political spectrum. They are engaged in the machinations of control and power; most importantly they are a social entity with considerable military might, thus highly influential in the socio-political scenario.

Finally one might summarize the aim of our undertaking in the words of Davies, who insists on the importance of historical research, but redefines it in the following terms:

...Or we can abandon ourselves to our own curiosity, and wonder just who it was that did live in these central Palestinian highlands, and who they thought they were, and where they got their identity from. We could say that we had found ourselves a subject to study, and set ourselves a programme of research. But where would we pursue this research? Among the pages of the Bible or among the mountains

of Palestine? Having already decided that the Bible is talking about some other society, we had better leave it alone. We shall have to write our history of this unknown population without it, at least in the first instance.

[Davies; 1992:28]

What is presented then is a history not of a powerful nation in the making, but the history of the ups and downs of the people of largely unimportant and disregarded areas, people that at most times seemed so insignificant that they escaped accurate social categorization [cf Marfoe; 1979:3, 35]. Thus at the center of the investigation is a population which has been disregarded for so long that it has remained largely *unknown*. To an extent, it is therefore a relatively new quest, with little known prerequisites other than sparse archaeological and textual evidence that awaits reinterpretation. The aim is to emphasize what minor developments and minor polities have been missed, because for too long efforts have been concentrated on finding major disruptions or the magnificent achievements of perceived peoples and nations.

The only large-scale achievements that will be kept in mind are those recorded for the major forces of the time such as Egypt, the Hitties, and to some extent the Sea Peoples. Even then this study questions the political circumstances that presupposedly reigned during the period in question. Bandits and nomads will be viewed as they reacted to such conditions, as they changed along with them. The study thus concentrates on responses that took place in the interior of the highland region, as the wider world around about took different forms. These conditions and responses are considered to represent some of "the processes at work in the settlement shift which took place during the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition" [Whitelam; 1993:16]. As already alluded to above, it is the military and political sphere that will be of most interest. Here it can be seen how the extent of military might of the social agents influenced how they came to be politically dominated or dominant, dependent or autonomous. On the other hand, it will also show

how this was dependent on the military and political might of outside forces. Ultimately the development of highland polities will be traced back to the ways in which highlanders could profit from the ebb and flow of political power of outside societies.

The aim of the study thus remains socio-political in nature. It does not claim to trace origins of a people or nation, but rather points towards how a society can develop and how it can take more concrete political forms. It is in this way that we will try to rediscover that "unknown and uncared-for population" [Davies; 1992:31], by analyzing those social groupings, which even their contemporaries tried largely to ignore.

Chapter 1

Palestinian Banditry: potential and likely candidates

A major problem in analyzing the role of bandits in ancient Palestine of the New Kingdom period lies with the fact that there is little concrete evidence for massive activity by such groups for this given period. Although it is obviously very important to look at the textual evidence, this chapter will at first try to endorse a rather different approach. With the help of the anthropological material on bandits and their behaviour, we will try to determine whether the Ancient Near East presented the right circumstances for banditry to arise. A number of topics will be touched upon in the process, such as the geographical and topographical features particularly of ancient Palestine, the political circumstances and the possibilities of recruitment for bandit groups. Only in a second step will we then concentrate on the textual evidence where it will be our task to identify the social role played by the 'apiru groups in particular. The plan is to trace parallel developments in their activities and those we have associated with bandit-groups beforehand.

It also will be interesting to see whether ancient Palestine presents a history of bandit activity as Coote and Whitelam hold [1987:92]. First of all we must state that banditry itself is not a recent invention. As Shaw has demonstrated, it presented the Roman empire with an acute problem. Numerous references to bandits and pirates prove that at least within this period of the ancient world banditry existed widely and, given the right circumstances, even flourished [Shaw; 1984]. It would thus be unsound to assume that other empires, such as the Egyptian or Hittite ones, did not face similar problems. It is therefore safe to conclude that banditry does not represent a modern invention, but formed an integral part of the ancient world.

Evidence for bandit activity in the Ancient Near East and more

precisely ancient Palestine in Roman times is abundantly found in the records of the Jewish historian Josephus. In these records Josephus describes the activities of a multitude of bandit groups, gives precise numbers which turn out to be quite impressive at certain peaks of bandit activity, and locates most of their hideaways and refuges in the hill country. His records have widely been used by Horsley and Hanson [1985; Horsley; 1981; 1986] in their reconstruction of the Jewish revolt, where ample importance has been given to the role of bandit groups. They leave no doubt that in ancient Palestine and more particularly the hillcountry, the importance of bandit groups increases under the right political circumstances. Thus, at least from the environmental point of view, Palestine would appear to be able to support the presence of bandits.

An important factor in analyzing the potential of a given territory for banditry is the possibility of recruitment. This begs the question of whether or not the territory yields enough people either willing to take up or likely to be forced into banditry. We will first draw attention to the form of society we are facing. The Ancient Near East is basically an agrarian society under the rule of the urban élite of various city-states, a society where a vast majority of peasants does the bulk of the work to the profit of a minority of tax-collecting élite-members. Within such a society banditry is inherent, but Hobsbawm makes it clear that it never represents more than a small percentage of the rural society. With gangs generally amounting to no more than 10 to 20 men, he considers 0.1% to be an "ultra-generous estimate" [Hobsbawm; 1969:16]. It is therefore not surprising that our evidence for bandit activity in the Ancient Near East is so slight.

A first source of recruitment would accordingly stem from the dissatisfied peasant population itself. For the majority of peasants who will patiently and passively carry their burden, there exists a minority who will stand up and fight their oppressors. Again it has to be stressed that it is but a minority, a minority of individuals who voluntarily

choose resistance and out-of-the-law activity rather than passive acceptance. These individuals are the exception which proves the rule [Hobsbawm; 1969:28-30; Gamst; 1974:48]. Hobsbawm rightfully claims that "banditry is freedom, but in a peasant society few can be free" [1969:24]. What hinders a peasant to be free is his immobility. If a peasant is to rise up he has to abandon his land which is his only means of survival. Furthermore he will leave behind him a family equally dependent on that same land as on the presence of the head of the family. The peasant is too deeply rooted in his land and his family to just go ahead and disappear in the woodlands of the bandit. Again, Hobsbawm states:

Once a man is married and on his holding, he is tied. The fields must be sown and harvested: even peasant rebellions must stop for getting in of crops... The peasant's back is bent socially, because it must generally be bent in physical labour on his field. [1969:24]

Although it must be said that only few peasants turn into bandits through the process of rising up against their oppressors, peasant society has amongst its elements who can afford to do so. Among those are the youth of the peasant population, young males who are so-to-say in their rebellious age, evidently due to the advantage of lacking full family responsibilities. Although they might be harmless enough in isolation, Hobsbawm claims that when they band together it is possible that they turn towards banditry [1969:25-26]. However it is doubtful if this form of banditry, apart from the odd exception, represents more than a temporary escape from boredom. Most of the youth probably return to home and family as well as the normal peasant life after a relatively short while.

However a peasant society does not only include those who are tied to their own land-holdings, be this as owners or tenants. The more mobile

margin of peasant society yields a number of farm-hands and day-labourers or other migrant workers, which have no such attachments [see: Brown; 1990:262]. The formation of this so-called rural proletariat is often caused by rural surplus population, which results in certain members of the peasant society being landless. Especially where there exists a mountainous hinterland, its inhabitants are at times highly interested in part-time work on the plains. Similarly one has to include a certain number of nomads to seek work among the sedentary communities¹. Although they may be needed badly at peak-times of the peasant-calendar, such as the harvest, they might go unemployed for relatively long periods of time. Survival in these times calls for alternative options. In Hobsbawm's eyes banditry is a natural source of income for these elements of the rural society [1969:25]. It is a near impossible task to prove that ancient Palestine faced such a problem of surplus population, but it must be said that the form of society has all the necessary potential for the creation of this mobile part of the peasant's world [cf Coote; 1990:18].

Similarly the sort of governmental system, which has often been termed as feudal, most certainly resulted in a number of people who were forced to leave their normal peasant lifestyle behind themselves. Among them we must count escaped serfs and slaves, peasants ruined by debts, and many others who for some reason or another had to escape from state and authorities. Rather than voluntarily following the path of resistance, these were people forced into marginality where banditry presented a viable means for surviving [Hobsbawm; 1969:27].

Another important source of recruitment is the military sector of a society. Banditry is in many senses a paramilitary activity, and it is therefore not surprising that those with such skills are the most likely

¹Often highland territory is inhabited by pastoralist nomads. In this case the part-time workers from the highlands and those from the nomadic sector are quasi-identical.

to turn towards banditry.

Among such marginals, soldiers, deserters and ex-servicemen played a significant part... Men who come back from afar, masterless and landless, are a danger to the stability of the social hierarchy. Ex-servicemen like deserters are natural material for banditry. [Hobsbawm; 1969:27]

The case of the deserter seems obvious. Not only is he militarily skilled, he is also a fugitive. His step into banditry is not only viable, but often his one and only choice. Returning peasant soldiers do have a chance to rejoin family and village as well as their former lifestyle. Yet Hobsbawm claims that, although temporarily, they are entirely outside the usual village economy and that many of them will choose another path [1969:28]. The knowledge of military skills, discipline, training and also tactics can often raise these people above the average village peasant [Gamst; 1974:45-46]. Although this might profit the person to become a respected member of his community, the monotonous and hard routine of peasant labour presents little attraction to him. These soldiers are likely to go back to a more warlike occupation. A number of such jobs are provided within rural society, such as armed men in the service of a richer land-owner or fieldguards, but the alternative of becoming a smuggler or bandit is equally attractive [Hobsbawm; 1969:28].

What is described here is what could be called the fate of the professional soldier. Mercenaries are certainly the professional soldiers of the ancient world, offering their military skills wherever they are needed. The situation in the Ancient Near East with constant rivalries between city-states and on a larger scale, the fight for supremacy between the opposing empires, however provides ample demand for such men and their services. Problems arise mainly when such demand drops in more peaceful times and mercenaries are basically out of a job. With their

warlike tendencies these professionals know little other way to survive than through war and plunder and the transgression into banditry is but a small and easy step. From plundering soldiers they turn into marauding bands taking whatever they need wherever they find it; indeed the dividing line between mercenary, and as far as this goes also fieldguards and the like, and bandit seems to lie in nothing more than the fact that the one group is employed and the other one works on its own behalf.

Circumstances of political instability add a great deal to this process of soldiers becoming bandits, especially in that they often lead automatically to the transformation of whole soldier-groups, be it regular troops or mercenaries, into marauding gangs of bandits. Shaw has demonstrated that in situations of usurpation and revolt in the Roman empire, whole legions could come to be regarded as bandits.

In the case where one of these local potentates managed to assert his supremacy as emperor, large numbers of soldiers and whole regions of requisition immediately became illegitimate. Whole army units could find themselves classified as deserters, then bandits, and so cut off from legitimate sources of pay and provision. Unless such soldiers were willing to become civilians and recycle through the social system, they were compelled to a life of brigandage. The process can be observed on a large scale during any period of so-called "civil war" in the Roman state, but the plain fact is that it was happening in miniature all the time and in every region. [Shaw; 1984:30]

Again the more or less constant city-rivalries of the Ancient Near East invite us to think that such a process must have been well attested in the period of the New Kingdom.

Another group which has to be treated independently, is that of the

shepherds. This is especially so as there is no doubt that the Ancient Near East, where economic sufficiency often depended on a combination of agriculture and husbandry, yielded many of these figures. We do, in this instance, distinguish shepherds from nomads, although these do evidently act as shepherds especially in the Ancient Near East where sheep-nomadism was the most widespread. Shepherds here refers to those people who take the live-stock of villages, richer land-owners or even the state to the pasture-lands. They can either be a member of the community owning the live-stock or in its employ or that of the land-owner or the state. A minimum amount of horizontal or vertical migration should be involved so that there is a considerable distance between the pasture-lands and the domicile of those owning the live-stock. Shepherds are suitable material for banditry not only because of their superior mobility, but also because of their relative isolation caused by the nature of the territory they normally work in. It is to this special sort of territory that we shall turn now as it increases the shepherds' likelihood to engage in brigandage.

Hobsbawm has pointed out that certain geographical features are particularly suitable for bandit activity. Mountain ranges or dense forests or a combination of the two, are especially attractive to bandits for a number of reasons [Hobsbawm; 1969:28]. First of all they present the gangs with the necessary hideout refuges, without which no outlaw group stands a minimum chance of survival. Natural defenses and the numerous possibilities of runaway tracks within a territory that the bandit in the end had gotten so much more accustomed to than eventual pursuers are vital to the prolonged activity of any bandit group. This is even more so the case when, as in the Ancient Near East, the claim to superiority by regular state troops was heavily based on their use of military means devised for warfare on the plains, but highly ineffective on more difficult terrain. Bandit activity is similar enough to guerilla warfare for the bandit to prefer terrains where the mobility of the small and light group works at its best and the heavy military machinery

encounters most hindrances. Needless to say that a territory which has been referred to as the "Highlands of Canaan" [Hopkins; 1985] presents a rather suitable environment for bandits [cf Rowton; 1976a:29].

Yet geography is not the only factor which leads the bandit in the choice of his territory; equally important are the questions of economic and political marginality of the given region². Although these two characteristics are somewhat dependent on the geographical factor, they have to be viewed independently as well. A given territory slips into marginality often not only because of the difficulty of the terrain *per se*, but rather because the state in charge decides that it would be economically unviable to engage in surmounting these difficulties in order to exploit it.

Economic and political marginality of a given territory thus go hand in hand, in so far as a state only attributes minor importance to the political control of a territory, the economic exploitation of which would only yield minor fruits. A state restricts itself to maintain control over its most important breadbasket especially in times of political instability. Arid or even only semi-arid regions, where economic exploitation and political control meet higher difficulties and costs than the resulting benefits, are thus being isolated and transformed into what is called a "frontier zone".

"Frontier zones" often exist through a combination of harsh geography, economic inviability, and political marginality. This is, however, not to say that they are not inhabited or exploited whatsoever. There might be isolated villages, temporary or permanent minor settlements, where people live on a limited yet self-sufficient economic basis. Yet often they are used as pasturelands for flocks, a way of keeping economic exploitation down to a minimum investment. It is here

²This combination is what Rowton refers generally to as the "topological factor" [cf 1965; 1976a]

that we find shepherds: minimum political and military control within their territory adds not only to their mobility, but also a certain freedom of action often leading them to a live on the margin of legality, raiding and looting being a viable second occupation to them. "Frontier zones" are those mountainous regions where, according to Hobsbawm, "bandits meet shepherds and shepherds consider becoming bandits" [Hobsbawm; 1969:28].

"Frontier zones" are thus natural centres for banditry in many ways. They attract bandit groups, because here they can escape tight political and military control, but also they provide bandit groups with the sort of mobile and relatively free people that can easily be recruited. Others have at times claimed that the harsh life in frontier zones naturally raises a breed of more belligerent people, thus a people more readily apt to take up arms for plunder and pillage:

Finally, the low population density, the abundance of wild cattle in the early colonial period, and the absence of an organization that had a monopoly on violence attracted criminals and vagrants to frontier areas, as Gongora observes. Adept in the rough skills of cattle raising, which as we shall see, were very similar to those of premodern warfare, these men could easily make a living by plundering and by smuggling cattle; they are another source of continuous turmoil of these regions. [Baretta and Markoff; 1978:592; also:588]

To a certain extent the parallel to the inhabitants of the highlands of Palestine seems justified. Harsh terrain naturally trains and roughens people and the lack of any other military control invites them to create some of their own³. The shepherds, like the Latin-American cattle-raisers, have to be skilled in the sort of military expertise

³Chapter 3 will address this problem more directly.

adapted to their environment, be it only to defend themselves against the neighbouring nomads or even other bandit groups [again cf: Baretta and Markoff; 1978:593]. This often results in raiding others or establishing control in a protection racket system, which after all is nothing else but bandit activity.

Finally it is not possible to omit nomads from the question of bandit recruitment. Some nomads, like their peasant counterparts have been seen to form bandit groups [Rowton; 1976a:29; 1976b:14]. Brown [1990:262] indeed claims that in Modern Egypt most bandit groups were of nomadic stock, although peasants were accepted into such groups. Furthermore there are many instances in which nomads act as mercenaries. These people are thus similar to other mercenaries. There is no reason why reintegration into the nomadic-pastoralist life should be any easier than that into a peasant-village environment. This sector of society would thus represent another important pool of potential bandits⁴.

Chaney [1983] has tried to adopt the frontier model suggested initially by Lenski [1980] in his analysis of the emergence of Israel, and others have followed him lately [Gottwald; 1983; Coote; 1991:45; similarly: Halpern; 1983:78]. We think that he has carefully identified the hill-country as a frontier zone where bandit activity could easily spread. In fact the hill-country formed the hinterland to the coastal plains of Palestine, which were the main breadbasket for city-states and captivated the major attention of the presiding empires. The mountainous hinterland presented little economic interest and the costs to maintain a strict politico-military control over it were generally too high in

⁴The deeper problems involved in the nomad-bandit relationship and also the claims made about frontier people a little further above will be addressed in Chapter 3. In relation to shepherds it is interesting to pay attention to the following claim by Knauf: "Wie andere kulturen zeigen, stellen Hirten dank der Freizügigkeit ihrer Lebensweise einen beachtlichen Anteil von Räuberpopulationen. Die Übergänge zwischen der Lebensweise eines *shasu* und der eines *'apiru* waren also nach beiden Seiten fliessend" [1988:109, fn 498].

comparison to expected returns. It was left open for pasturage, becoming the home of shepherds and nomads and attracting marauding bands in search of refuge and hideouts. These groups associated or battled with each other for control in the absence of regular military surveillance in the territory.

It thus seems that ancient Palestine and its hinterland hillcountry in fact present a suitable environment for the development of banditry. It certainly holds the potential for recruitment with deprived and exploited peasants, marauding groups of mercenaries and veterans and shepherds living on the margins of society. It, especially the hinterland itself, also is characterized by the right topographical features, being a difficult mountainous terrain, where bandits can dwell away from strong military control. Political instability adds to the remoteness of the region when the lowland military élite is busy trying to keep a grip on the fertile plains. Finally we have seen that the highlands are actually to be seen as forming a "frontier zone", where banditry has high chances of developing, surviving and flourishing. There are therefore multiple reasons to believe that bandits played a major role within ancient Palestinian society.

It remains to be seen if bandits are detectable in the textual record too. A first candidate are the *habbatu*, which indeed have been seen as being thieves and robbers. They were also referred to by the ideogram SA.GAZ., which links them immediately to another group of people, which has attracted far more interest⁵, the 'apiru [cf already: Knudtzon; 1964:1136; Loretz; 1984:60; Ahlström; 1986:13]. A long debate ensued as to the precise meaning of these 'apiru. Some progress had been

⁵Interest arose primarily because many came to see in them the precursors, if not the ancestors, of the Israelites, as links were drawn between the 'apiru mentioned in the Amarna letters from Jerusalem and the later 'ibri (Hebrews). Much ink has been spilled on this subject. The most extensive study is that by Loretz [1984; see also Lemche; 1979; Na'aman; 1986].

made early on, such as whether the term refers to an ethnic or a social grouping. As such Knudtzon could still maintain:

Von den Habiru und den (Sa.) Gaz-leuten ist oben als sicher angenommen, dass auch sie eingedrungene Fremdlinge sind; wir wissen aber gar nicht, wo sie hergekommen sind. Nun ist ja auch angenommen worden, dass wir es in jenen beiden Fällen bloss mit appellativischen Bezeichnungen zu tun haben. Dies darf aber als ausgeschlossen gelten;... [Knudtzon; 1964:46]

But what Knudtzon stated to be *ausgeschlossen* was soon adopted as an adequate explanation for the use of the term 'apiru. Sustained by the availability of more textual material from the Hittite sources as well as from Mari, Nuzi, Alalakh and Ugarit, other scholars were able to point to the fact that the 'apiru made their presence felt over a vast period of time as well as operating in many various locations [cf Halligan; 1983:21]. Thus they moved away from the ethnic interpretation and more and more agreed on the appellative nature of the term [Stiebing; 1983:9]. Yet, although one question was answered in such a way, it soon raised many others. Having established that the term referred to a social grouping, it was not so easy to say where within the strata of a society the grouping is to be found; and, although a lot of material has been written on the topic, one is nonetheless left with rather broad and general terms, such as social outcasts or refugees, without any further detailed explanations. There is still only little known about the history and main activity of the 'apiru.

In some ways the fact that we are dealing with an appellative creates many of the problems itself. As every other appellative the term 'apiru is open to much subjective interpretation. This obviously complicates the researcher's work. At times it will distract from the actual meaning to be attached to the given term. Furthermore did the term 'apiru always refer to the same thing at all times? As we look back on

the textual evidence at hand, it shows that at times it was used quite differently. To assume an exact meaning of the term for the Amarna period, for example, is near impossible. It is doubly complicated because the development of the meaning in the periods beforehand is extremely hard to follow.

On the other hand, although the 'apiru occur many times in the El Amarna Letters, only very little information can be gathered about them even for that period. We are told that they are most closely associated with Abdi-Ashirta and his sons, and Lab'ayu, and that they are considered to be a military threat by Rib-Addi and Abdi-khepa amongst others. From this we may assume that Abdi-Ashirta, his sons, and Lab'ayu used them as military servicemen. But this is to a great extent as far as it goes. Nothing is said about what the 'apiru were up to when they were not engaged in the petty warfare of city-state kinglets. Neither is there any mentioning of where they come from, nor how they came to be in the service of Abdi-Ashirta. Did he merely hire marauding armed gangs or did he raise them in a levee. Again, did he describe these troops as 'apiru, or was this just Rib-Addi's subjective view of these people?

Under these circumstances, it seems not very promising to us to assess the nature of the 'apiru by concentrating on the Amarna period alone. In fact we think that more light can be shed on their history and activities by having a look at some other material than that in which they are so preeminently present. They already figure in the campaigns undertaken at the beginning of the New Kingdom period. The following extract stems from the record of Amen-Hotep II's Asiatic campaigning:

....List of the plunder which his majesty carried off:
princes of Retenu: 127; brothers of princes: 179; Apiru:
3,600; living Shasu: 15,200; Kharu: 36,300; living Neges:
15,070; the adherents thereof: 30,652; total: 89,600 men;...
[ANET; 247]

It might be concluded that in this case the 'apiru were inimical forces that figure in the military context of a campaign, consequently enemy military personnel. Their status appears quite elevated, as they are mentioned straight after the "brothers of princes". Cazelles would thus like to see them as a military élite [1973:12]. Furthermore, as they are mentioned in such numbers, "it is quite clear that the Egyptians recognized the Apiru as a distinct entity from other peoples, clearly countable" [ANET; 247: fn.47]. That they still remained a military threat to the New Kingdom Egyptians even at much later times can be gathered from the following information taken from the Beth-Shan stela. However it appears that they are here viewed as a rather inferior entity:

...The Apiru of Mount Yarmuta, with Teyer..., [have ari]sen in attack upon the Asiatics of Rehem. Then [his majesty] said: How can these wretched Asiatics think [of taking] their [arms] for further disorder?... [ANET:255]

We can thus hardly deny the importance of military activity for 'apiru groupings. Even earlier than Amen-Hotep II's campaign such a role seems to be attested for 'apiru bands in the Mari documents. Here they serve as readily available mercenaries, often swopping allegiance and apparently of considerable importance as one of the bands reached the number of 2,000 members [cf Cazelles, 1973:8; Jagersma; 1982:11]:

The next day word of the enemy came as follows: "Yapah-Adad has made ready the settlement Zallul on this side on the bank of then Euphrates River, and with two thousand troops of the Hapiru of the land is dwelling in that city." [ANET;483]

They are clearly a distinctive entity at Mari distinguishable from the normal populace. Their military and mercenary nature is furthermore substantiated by further texts from Hatti, Alalakh and Nuzi [Cazelles;

1973:8-9; Jagersma; 1982:11]. Jagersma's overview of 'apiru-activity has thus led him to the following conclusion:

First of all, attention should be drawn to the militant attitude which the 'Apiru seem so often to display. Furthermore they are almost everywhere, and apparently settle as aliens of unknown origin. Next we should note the phenomenon that these 'Apiru are often in the service of a king, the state or a person - perhaps as prisoners. Finally we should note the fact that the 'Apiru are very widely distributed not only geographically, but also chronologically. [Jagersma; 1982:11]

Unfortunately there seems to be no chronological order in the use of the term, so that we would be able to trace back a development going from one meaning to another. Rather the term appears to be used in reference to different groups at different times. As such, from the 19th till the 13th centuries B.C., they make their appearance as prisoners, workmen, soldiers, and mercenaries. Interestingly there seems to be a differentiation to be made in the 'apiru's social status, dependent on whether they perform military activities, especially on the authorities' side, or whether they are engaged in different activities. When the former pertains their place on the social scale seems to be high. Other duties are also performed against payment, and even when prisoners they are able to buy themselves out of that situation even if a drop in status is often noticeable [Jagersma; 1982:10-11]. At times they are compared to fishermen, carpenters, thieves, and evildoers, even horses and sometimes also seen as inferior to slaves [Cazelles; 1973:9, 11, 14]. Yet at Nuzi they are differentiated from the slave (*wardu*), although they can sink to this level. Even then they are seen to enter this condition freely. Cazelles gives the following commentary:

The Habiru are not slaves, although their masters exercise

lordship (*ewerutu*) over them...sometimes the master has to pay a price to acquire the right of lordship over them.

[1973:10]

There might be an explanation for this double stance in the records; a mercenary, although he might be despised as a foreign element who sells the use of force for cash, is nonetheless a force to be reckoned with. The close association between military power and political power makes the mercenary a powerful agent, which comes to be reflected in his position on the social scale. On the other hand, if the 'apiru is not engaged in military activity, his major characteristic is that of a foreign element. Although retaining more power over his own private life than a slave, he does not wield any important political power. As alien hired labour his social status does not exceed that of a peasant or a day-labourer; further his alien nature makes him naturally untrustworthy.

How, however, are we to attest for that alien nature of the 'apiru? We have already seen that they are in a way differentiated from the normal populace; it is not so easy to explain why this is so. An ethnic explanation has been excluded. Mendenhall has stated that only little associates the 'apiru with extensive constant movement, and thus excluded them from being true nomads [1973:129]. Further the presence of other terms employed to designate nomads or bedouins, such as *shasu* or *sutu*, points to the fact that the 'apiru are to be differentiated from them [cf Coote and Whitelam; 1986:108]⁶.

Such restrictions on available explanations have led a number of scholars to look for alternatives and it is within these alternatives that we find the appearance of terms like outcasts, outlaws, and refugees, "various persons and groups on the fringes of society" [Miller and Hayes; 1986:67] used to describe the situation of the 'apiru. Mendenhall added the notion of loss of status as being at the basis of a

⁶But again see the discussion in Chapter 3.

person's entering the condition of 'apiru. By loss of status he mainly referred to a person's exclusion from, or, as far as this case goes, refusal to, being controlled by a given authority. This means that the person is exempt from the legal obligations and duties normally imposed on the populace. At the same time he also loses the protection and privileges such authorities are normally supposed to offer their subjects [Mendenhall; 1973;131-132; McCafferty; 1988:236].

The way in which people can escape such control by authorities is mainly by withdrawal, be it to another approximate state or to more peripheral areas within a given state's boundaries. The receiving state of such refugees naturally sees such incomers as foreigners and intruders, not part of the normal populace and therefore not easy to integrate on the social ladder. They are not slaves, yet they do not have their proper place among the indigenous populace. As such the situation of the 'apiru seems to be controlled by the view of that state, which does not know how to deal with them or where to situate them within their society. Although it can integrate them in as much as employing them for statework or military activities as mercenaries, it nevertheless isolates them as a group; thus the 'apiru will always be regarded as an alien element, whose status might well vary with the need of a given state for such extra labour or military force. They become increasingly untrustworthy and dangerous, when they are not employed and, in order to survive, they turn their military prowess against the state by swapping allegiances or by engaging in selfinterested raiding and marauding.

If, however, these people wanting to escape control do so by taking refuge in the more peripheral areas of a given state's boundaries, the situation is somewhat different. For here the state theoretically still has control over these people, although practically it might prove impossible for it to exercise such control in any consistent or even relevant manner. In times of political turmoil or upheaval this situation rapidly deteriorates; in order to protect at least its central and more

important or viable areas, the state loses more and more of its ability to exercise power in peripheral areas. As control decreases, the state will be forced to abandon enforcing civil duties or taxes upon such areas, and its inhabitants become regarded as freed from the legal obligations towards the state, as 'out law', thus in the same situation as the 'apiru.

Within such peripheral areas control is even harder for the state to exercise, if these people do not opt for a settled occupation. Some actually might settle down as peasants, where the area seems sufficiently out of the reach of the state's power. Others, especially in areas where agricultural exploitation of the soil is hindered by the nature of the terrain, might well opt for additional security in taking up a more mobile occupation. Peripheral areas offer a number of such occupations: one might become a travelling day-labourer or a shepherd guarding the herds of a village or a wealthier landlord. Again there is the attraction of self-interested marauding bands which can take the form of either mercenaries or bandits'.

Mercenaries and bandits are of particular interest to us, as both groups, each in its own way, can be seen to share some of the characteristics of the 'apiru. They represent an alien and yet partly integrated element within a society. We have already associated the 'apiru with mercenary activities and stressed their position, in which they might serve a given state, but still are differentiated from that state's regular troops and not always seen as particularly outstanding in loyalty. Bandits, who formerly might have been peasants, do maintain relations with the rural population, yet they are seen as a particular entity, at least so by the state, whose control they escape. Both groups have to be reckoned with by the authorities because of their military power. They are thus isolated entities, yet have to be dealt with, which

'A person can also seek tribal affiliation with nomads, who themselves can engage in any of the mentioned activities.

means that to some degree they have to be integrated. Finally bandits often offer their services as mercenaries, especially when agreements with authorities have been struck. Similarly mercenaries, who eventually run out of wars, easily are able to engage in bandit activities. It thus becomes extremely difficult to differentiate between bandits who act as mercenaries and mercenaries who behave like bandits; both might well come to be referred to by the same term, which in this case would be 'apiru.

Finally we would like to draw attention to a study by Shaw on the same problem in the Roman Empire, the outcome of which gives witness to a similar development of the latin term *latro* from the meaning of mercenary towards that of bandit. Reflecting on the legal situation of bandits in the Roman Empire, Shaw sees them "as men apart" [1984; 21], who, like pirates, had "no 'state' recognition" [1984; 22]. He goes on to make observations about their relation to legal obligations, which are reminiscent of those we have made earlier about the 'apiru, when he states:

There existed quite separate definitions of them that placed bandits in a penumbral category between persons within the scope of the law (criminal and civil, largely overlapping) and enemies of the state. They were, quite literally, 'out-law'. ... It (= Roman law) denies to bandits all legal rights of citizens, even those normally retained by criminal defendants. [Shaw; 1984:22]

What thus links the Roman *latro* to the 'apiru is their standing outside the legal norms which pertain for the normal populace. In Mendenhall's words they have experienced a 'loss of status', with all it entails as far as their legal obligations and privileges are concerned. It is thus worth noting that uses of the word *latro* are reminiscent of the different meanings to be attached to the term 'apiru. There exists considerable overlapping especially as far as occupational patterns are

concerned.

Shaw first draws our attention to the fact that, at least in the etymology of the Greek *lestēia* and *lestes*, the terms did not at first carry the pejorative meaning associated with brigandage. They rather referred to plundering and raiding as one means of survival amongst others, intimately related with the institution of warfare [Shaw; 1984:24]⁸. He then stresses that further Greek terms of the same *LATR root as the Roman *latro* and *latrocinium* did not bear any relation to bandits. They are rather associated with hired labourers, as well as denoting the status of inferiority generally to be connected with such duties. He also mentions the importance of connotations such as wage/labour, hire/employment implied in the meaning of the terms [Shaw; 1984:26]. These Greek *latreia* are thus very similar to some of the 'apiru, especially where they perform labour services for payment. Both groups have little to do with banditry.

Turning more precisely to the Latin words, Shaw notes that in the earliest instances they refer to "military labour or service given for pay" [1984:26]. Such is, of course, the situation of the mercenary. Shaw goes into detail about the ideological reasons which lie behind the Roman citizen's military activity, reasons which may not pertain in the Ancient Near East in that form. Nevertheless the situation is still very similar. The bulk of the army of an Ancient Near Eastern state is made up by the peasant inhabitants. They make up the regular troops and they are unpaid: this is their corvée-duty in return for the protection they enjoy on the part of the state. Specialized forces, the *maryannu* chariot troops, are formed by the aristocracy, proud nobles who excel in the art of war. Wage is the major distinctive factor between these state-soldiers and the mercenary, as it is between the Roman *miles* and *latro*. Again the

⁸Hobsbawm has also noticed this problem of distinguishing between legalized raiding or *razzia* and unlawful bandit plundering [1969]. Again this issue will be the main concern of chapter 3.

situation of the *latro* reflects that of the *'apiru*, and Shaw points to the same principal characteristics for this mercenary-type:

...he was a man who 'belonged' to a state via the mediating factors of violence, legitimation, receiving pay for fighting, and being an outsider to the community of the state that employed him. [Shaw; 1984:27]

Attention is also paid to the attitude reigning toward the mercenary. Shaw stresses that the mercenary was despised as an outsider with no ideological attachment to the state and community. A pejorative undertone is to be found quite early in the use of the Roman *latro*; some of the texts lead us to think that the same is true for the *'apiru*-mercenary. Shaw relates the increase in this pejorative attitude towards the mercenary to the eventual transformation of the Roman citizen army itself into a professional army. Such a development did not only lead to a less differentiated role between the *miles* and the *latro*, but also to the gradual overtaking of the *latro*'s job by the *miles*, which lead so far as to leave the *latro* unemployed; where the regular troops turn professional, the use of paid outsiders is not only despised, but also becomes rather more unnecessary.

The major difference between the *miles* and the *latro* was the remaining fact that the *latro* was an outsider. Nevertheless he also remained a man of violence, a power whose legitimation remained in the hands of the state. It thus becomes easy to see that bands of armed *latrones*, which the state gradually refused to employ, came to be regarded as illegitimate. Their use of armed force, once legitimate through their service to the state, now turned unlawful, like that of bandits. The development is indeed inherent to the occupation and behaviour of mercenaries and to the problem of sanction by the state for such activities. Mendenhall has detected this problem of the illegitimate use of force with the *'apiru*.

Professional soldiers and mercenaries hang around in encampments or maraud in armed bands. They often provide for themselves by plundering especially in times of war. It represents a legitimized activity as long as this happens under the umbrella of the sanction of the state. The peasant victims are probably not too happy about either group behaving that way, but the alien mercenary is doubly despised. Once he exits the service of the state, he enters into illegitimate activity though his activities themselves have not changed. Shaw states:

Increasingly, therefore, there was little except the sanction of the state that separated the roles of 'regular soldier' and 'mercenary' or *latro*. At the other end of the spectrum any private person who had access to, or actually resorted to, instruments of force was a *potential* bandit. In this case too state sanction made all the difference. [Shaw; 1984:28]

Again, deprived of their usual job, mercenaries, similar to veterans and deserters, are often unlikely to give up their violent activities [Hobsbawm; 1969; Shaw; 1984:29]. Furthermore, as they are now unemployed and therefore unpaid, their survival becomes more dependent on plundering, so that the difference between their activities and brigandage vanishes. Thus the *latro-mercenary* slips more and more into the role of the bandit.

Given the connections we have established between mercenaries and bandits in general and the parallels we have stressed between the role of the Roman *latro* and the 'apiru, it seems to us reasonable to suggest that a similar shift in the use of the term might have occurred in the Ancient Near East. The stateless 'apiru refugees, especially when in military service, came to be regarded as an illegitimate violent group, once a given state found no more use for them. The 'apiru once mercenaries were now seen as engaging in brigandage. The groups were still referred to by

the original term 'apiru, but this now came to be associated with their new occupation of banditry. Eventually this secondary meaning may have taken over, so that all bandits came to be called 'apiru.

A connection between the 'apiru and the bandits has been suggested by Chaney [1983] as well as Coote and Whitelam [1987]. It is not possible on the basis of the current textual evidence to confirm that such a shift took place in the Ancient Near East. We assume that, if it did, it was a slow process rather than sharp and drastic. Yet it is impossible to determine when exactly we are facing an actual 'apiru-bandit as opposed to an 'apiru-mercenary. Too often the pejorative attitude that textual records hold against all sorts of alien forces and the fear that they express when unknown armed men approach blurr the actual picture. Any kinglet of the Amarna period would, for example, describe any group that caused him a nuisance as 'apiru. It is unknown, however, whether these groups are bandits or mercenary troops, albeit in the service of a rival kinglet.

Our most extensive evidence, the El Amarna Letters, are thus no clearer. Rib-Addi clearly refers to various groups in highly pejorative terms. For him they are to be despised and none should associate with them as his opponents do. But his view is not the only one [cf Halligan; 1983:21]. One other city-king Biryawaza writes to the Pharaoh that he will meet his troops with "my Habiru" (EA:195). In this letter the 'apiru still appear as a group, whose services could be legitimately required and used, thus as mercenaries rather than bandits.

However Rib-Addi's pejorative use of the term must be accounted for by more than just his negative attitude he had of them because they represented his enemies. His use of the term as a metaphor for describing Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru, are clearly meant to bring his political opponents into disrepute at the Egyptian court. For this reason it seems that there was something inherent in the term, which meant that one did

not want to be equated to a 'apiru. This would suggest that it is a pejorative term which does not refer to mercenaries alone. Rib-Addi's accusation that Abdi-Ashirta is like the 'apiru makes little sense, if 'apiru refers merely to mercenaries, who, though despised, were in common use. The term must carry something more, if it is to be useful as a political weapon in rhetoric.

In this situation the meaning of bandit seems to make more sense. He preys and plunders, lives outside the law, is a constant factor of disorder and disruption. Rhetorically it carries more weight accusing Abdi-Ashirta to be a bandit than a mercenary. Furthermore, the political use of the bandit-metaphor is widely attested, unlike that of the mercenary. Shaw discerns exactly the same use of the term *latro* in Roman political oratory:

It became a powerful metaphor in itself, used deliberately to cast doubt on hostile persons, principally political enemies. As a weapon of accusation it appears fully developed in the writings of Cicero and Sallust in the late Republic, coming into particularly intense usage during times of political stress and upheaval in the central state. [Shaw; 1984:23]

It is only in this way that Rib-Addi's accusations make sense to us, if they were to influence Pharaoh's judgement upon Abdi-Ashirta. Mendenhall also sustains our view of Rib-Addi's use of the term as a metaphor, drawn from the "real" 'apiru, which he sees as appearing in the letters EA 185 and 186. His own description of these plunderers leaves no doubt that this is a reference to bandits engaged in illegitimate use of force [Mendenhall; 1973:135]. Mendenhall furthermore acknowledges that even within the letters the meaning of the term varies somewhat due to different backgrounds involved [1973:123].

We thus feel justified in relating the activities of the 'apiru in

the El Armana period to that of bandits and confident that their identification is to be held on the grounds of Rib-Addi's political use of the term. This, however, does not necessarily mean that Abdi-Ashirta's men were bandits; the same political accusation could have been launched by Rib-Addi against Abdi-Ashirta's servicemen as against the man himself. On the other hand, neither does it exclude that the 'apiru mentioned were actual 'apiru-bandits performing mercenary service on behalf of Abdi-Ashirta. That matter itself cannot as yet be resolved. Our main argument, however remains that the political use of the term calls for an entity standing behind the metaphor, which is to be equated with bandit groups. This same entity makes its appearance in other letters, clearly active as bandits and also referred to as 'apiru. Thus the two points of outstanding importance for our study are the fact that bandits were present in Syria-Palestine at the El Armana period and that they were known by the appellative 'apiru. The complexity of the problem, however, will be the subject of the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Bandits: image and reality

The most important study of banditry done so far is that by E J Hobsbawm [1969]. Unfortunately, it is now dated and in need of revision. Several scholars, however, have expressed some valuable criticisms on some of Hobsbawm's views in smaller articles. This chapter will try to reconsider some of Hobsbawm's arguments in the light of recent criticisms in order to see their implications for understanding Ancient Near Eastern social structures.

One of the major problems with Hobsbawm's study lies in the fact that he is concerned mainly with "social banditry" in Europe. This, however, is an ideal type. He has constructed this ideal type on the basis of popular tales and mythology. It emphasizes the attachment that the bandit has for the populace, especially the impoverished peasant world. He is often seen as originating from the peasant community and wages war against the injustices that this community and himself have suffered. Although Hobsbawm admits that reality might differ from the myth [1969: 12, *passim*], his study is nonetheless heavily dependent on the ideal type he has created. We, however, have no right to assume that it was this particular form of banditry which persisted in the Ancient Near East¹. Also, as Hobsbawm has pointed out himself [1969:13-14], the theoretical distinction he draws between the social bandit and other less morally inclined criminals is not always as clear in reality. We are inclined to think that the types are much more intermingled than Hobsbawm's study would lead us to think [cf Shaw; 1984:4-5, fn.4-7] and that the peasant-bandit relationship only very seldomly took this ideal form. Shaw has pointed out that the peasants can easily be mistaken in

¹Out of interest it might be noted here that as early as the period of Roman hegemony in Palestine, Horsley is able to identify actual terrorists in the *sicarii* [1979].

their judgement about the bandits [1984:5]. His view is rather similar to that of Blok, when he says:

Behind the mirage of 'the good thief', he argues, lies a reality dominated by violent anti-social men who are either wholly secessionist or who actively prey on the peasant populace whose interests they are supposed (in popular myth) to protect. [Shaw; 1984:4]

Coote and Whitelam express the same sort of thinking, when they maintain that bandits do not always act as the protectors of the poor, but might even exploit the peasantry in much the same way as a ruling élite would [1987:93]. They justifiably compare the bandits to a 'rural military élite', whose political and military power parallels that of the urban élite [Coote and Whitelam; 1987:92]. Shaw again stresses the integration of bandits into society, which draws them closer to the rich and the élite, a factor which he claims Hobsbawm has not given enough attention [1984:30-34]. Such descriptions provide a rather different image of the bandit. It has little to do with the Robin Hood of popular tales; it is rather reminiscent of the situation portrayed in such films as "The Seven Samurai" or "The Magnificent Seven". Bandit activities must therefore not only be more widespread, but also considerably more complex. Brown describes existing relationships as such:

Egyptian peasants had to confront three plagues: bandits, rulers and occupiers. They cannot be considered to have been represented by any of them, and perhaps there was little difference among them for the peasants. All of them represented external coercion, appropriation, and control. Bandits, rulers, and occupiers were rivals in many ways, but symbiotic relationships developed among them. [Brown; 1990:280]

It is interesting to note here that with the 'apiru as bandits, the Palestinian kinglets as rulers, and the New Kingdom Egyptians as occupiers, the socio-political situation of ancient Palestine reflects that exposed by Brown. Stressing the integrative and exploitative sides of banditry leaves a picture which sees a person engaging in banditry not so much because of his rebelliousness as his conscious striving for economical advantage. Although this certainly has not escaped Hobsbawm's study, it is nevertheless not taken fully into account. There is little in his study which would be indicative of the fact that the economical advantage is more determinative in a person's choice to become a bandit than his rebellious character or his preoccupation with justice. Nor is there any concrete reflection on the fact that such economically orientated thinking might come to determine a bandit's career much more than his solidarity with the peasant population. This chapter will thus address two questions: whether groups such as the 'apiru can be qualified as social peasant bandits or whether they represent something different. We must reexamine the relationship between these groups and the peasantry, as well as with the élite.

First it must be pointed out that the equation of the 'apiru with social bandits, undertaken by Chaney [1983:77-78], has to be seen in the light of the fact that it was meant to lend support to the view of the emergence of Israel by ways of a peasant revolt' [Mendenhall; 1962, 1973; Gottwald; 1979]. Chaney, however, shares with Mendenhall and Gottwald a certain idealism concerning the revolutionary intentions of the

'Let it be said here that peasants are not normally inclined towards revolt; they generally are rather conservative and passive.

His disinclination towards revolt springs from the same reasons that make him a poor recruit for banditry. He does not enjoy the necessary mobility, is too much tied to land and work [Hobsbawm; 1969:24; Wolf; 1971:264]. Even in times of severe conditions his first thought will be that of survival, and accordingly his actions will not be dictated by plans of resistance. Rather will he attempt to rely on retreat into subsistence production [Wolf; 1971:265; Halligan; 1983:17].

impoverished part of mankind'. He therefore works with that sort of ideal type of bandit as a rebel eager for justice and all too ready to take the side of his fellow peasants in the event of a revolt. That this can be the case is effectively demonstrated for instance by the case of Pancho Villa, yet in Chaney's case the argument is weak. Too often do bandits operate in the ways we have alluded to, a side which has been ignored by Chaney.

In fact there is little about the 'apiru, which would allow us to categorize them as social bandits and even less that points to them as revolutionary activists. They might well be opposing a number of city-rulers, as well as representing an important military force, but this does not prove that they are to be seen as revolutionary guerilleros with a social programme [vs Chaney; 1983:81]⁴. Nor does the fact that these

³In fact Scott has demonstrated that a number of opposition techniques, which might be classified as passive resistance [Shanin; 1971:259], are at the disposal of the peasant population [Scott; 1987]. When compared to overt violent resistance, they prove much less risky as far as subsequent retaliation goes [Scott; 1987:421, 447]. He thus claims: "By itself, the peasantry's most common and durable weapon is an everyday resistance that stops short of the more dangerous forms of overt protest and confrontation. By itself, the peasantry has been less concerned with formal, legal changes in the arrangements governing, say, property and taxation, than with attempts to defeat, block, escape, and mitigate the most harmful effects of those arrangements. Typically lacking the institutional access necessary to influence legislation and administrative regulation, the peasantry defends its interests at the enforcement stage. If social movements, in the strict sense, are rarely found among peasants, this is in large part the result of a prudent, calculated, and historically tested choice favouring other strategies more attuned to the particular social structure, strengths, and defensive capacities of this class" [Scott; 1987:421-422].

⁴Hobsbawm himself argues that banditry only rarely turns into or participates in open revolt [also Horsley; 1981:412; Horsley and Hanson; 1985:77]. Bandits, he says, may be a sign of social upheaval, but they are not proper revolutionaries. They might be seen as avenging injustice, but even then they are reactionary, keepers of the

'apiru might have been composed of refugees or other kinds of impoverished peasants pushed into banditry (in Hobsbawm's terms social peasant bandits) ultimately lead to the conclusion that they were mainly concerned about regaining their land or overthrowing a feudal system [vs Liverani; 1979:17]⁵. In fact, we are rather inclined to reverse Chaney's statement that in the Amarna period different sorts of bandits "were propelled into social banditry" [1983:79] and claim that any banditry, which might have started as social banditry, profited from the reigning conditions to ensure its own self-interests.

Nonetheless we have to approach the often made claim that at times groups of peasants and even whole cities were said to "become 'apiru" [Mendenhall; 1973:125-126; Chaney; 1983:78]. Mendenhall maintains that this should be equated with a joining up with the revolutionary elements and accounts for the swelling of the 'apiru-groups [1973:126]. But the transition of a *hupsu* towards an 'apiru can be explained differently and so can any potential increase in the numbers of the 'apiru.

"To become an 'apiru" can be related to the element of state-sanction rather than having to do with actual revolutionary activity by

good old ways, rather than people with a new social plan such as an "agrarian reform". They do not want to overthrow their overlords, but are happy to restore the times, when a peasant could peacefully work his fields and keep enough for himself to survive. As such they are traditionalists rather than revolutionaries [Hobsbawm; 1969:20-21].

⁵This is another shortcoming with the revolt hypothesis. It is indeed doubtful that the system of Palestine was as feudal and intolerable as has at times been presumed. Redford [1992], amongst others, emphasizes that most of these cities were really nothing more than villages, the kinglets nothing more than headmen or mayors. In no way can Redford agree with Mendenhall's view of these village headmen as an exploitative, feudal aristocracy. He in fact pictures them as relatively destitute, military weak, and, especially the further one moves away from the plains, never the clearly dominant party. Little thus points to "a peasants' revolt against the network of interlocking Canaanite city-states" [Mendenhall; 1962:107].

those so qualified. It has been noted frequently that especially Rib-Addi uses the term 'apiru rather loosely [Mendenhall; 1973; Liverani; 1979; Chaney; 1983] and it seems that not everybody who was qualified as a 'apiru by Rib-Addi had to be involved in any direct 'apiru-activity. The fact that peasants defected from him in order to escape famine does not mean that they all engaged in revolutionary or even military activity. For Rib-Addi, however, these people had now escaped his controlled area and found themselves in territory controlled by groups which he clearly considered to be illegitimate. At this moment we can see processes at work as we have described them in Chapter 1, namely that Rib-Addi equated those people with the illegitimate groups, as they also were outside his own legitimating power. Furthermore he also came to see them as enemies, as they, at least territorially, were on the side of his opponents. These defectors thus did not meet any longer with the sanction of Rib-Addi's authority; to him they were all 'apiru. How much these people really acted as or like 'apiru and whether they themselves, or in this case also Abdi-Ashirta, saw themselves as such remains more or less unknown. Shaw has noted the same process for the Latin *latro*:

The fact is that once bandits had been defined as men who stood in a peculiar relation to the state, the label *latro* was available to be passed on any 'destated' person. [Shaw; 1984:23]

"To become 'apiru", as such, does not necessarily mean that a *hupsu* became a bandit or a rebellious guerrillero, but only that this person came to experience a loss of status in relation to Rib-Addi's state sanction, just like bandits do. It is thus doubtful that the mass of the peasants who went over to Abdi-Ashirta's side, did so in order to take up arms on his behalf; probably most just went, because there was food on his side.

A swelling of the actual 'apiru-groups might nonetheless be

possible, but again it would have little to do with clearly socially orientated revolutionary activity. In his study Shaw has pointed towards "the deliberate creation of banditry by the landowning classes" [Shaw; 1984:40]⁶. We think that partially at least this also holds true for the 'apiru and Abdi-Ashirta. Deliberate creation of banditry means using the pool of potential bandits to a far greater extent than under normal circumstances. People who otherwise would have turned to different occupations, are encouraged to join bandit groups by the opportunity of anarchic situations such as civil war. Again state sanction is a very important factor in this process, which Shaw describes as such:

During any period of upheaval such as civil war the whole process whereby legitimacy flowed downwards through the political system by a process of state definition, finally to be invested in the hands of the individual soldier, could be reversed. In periods of the near total collapse of central state authority it could theoretically be reversed all the way back up the system. In practice the reversal could be made deliberately and consciously by the state in cases where it extended legitimacy to men whom it would otherwise have defined as outlaws. [Shaw; 1984:34]

In such a situation there was a definite need for military forces by certain authority-holders. They thus encourage peasants who are potential bandits to take up arms. The conditions being promising for accumulation of booty and power and the protection of at least one patron, i.e. some sort of legitimacy, being guaranteed, it is easy to see that potential bandits are more readily persuaded to engage in such activity than under normal circumstances. The fact that neither Abdi-Ashirta nor Aziru ever refer to their troops as 'apiru [Mendenhall;

⁶It is interesting to note that Coote claims that ancient Palestine witnessed endemic gang warfares, and that often they were fostered by patrons [1990:22-23].

1973:123] seems to support the argument that they at least considered them to be legitimate troops.

Shaw also points out that the Roman landlords especially made use of their slave-shepherds as freelance bandits [Shaw; 1984:31,40]. If Liverani is correct in his assumption that Abdi-Ashirta controlled an area with less of an agricultural base, but dominated by pastoralism [Liverani; 1979:14], this would explain why he made ample use of the 'apiru. If the assumption is correct that many of the refugees who fled to the mountains engaged in mobile occupations such as shepherds, the argument that Abdi-Ashirta could easily also use them in his military activities becomes even more solid.

The association between shepherds and bandits is an old one; it has already been noted by Hobsbawm and he would certainly agree that "the equation 'shepherd equals bandit' comes close to being one that is true for all antiquity" [Hobsbawm; 1969:28; Shaw; 1984:31]. Like the association between mercenary and bandits it creates many problems. We again face the problem of having to differentiate between quasi-legitimate raiding as one means of survival and unlawful bandit-pillaging. The whole process of legitimation again enters the debate. Shaw stresses that authorities had great difficulties in dealing with such slave-shepherd-bandits, as in theory they were still attached to a *dominus*, thus had to be treated as slaves rather than bandits [Shaw; 1984:40, fn.110]. The same problem seems to be reflected in EA 185 and 186, where Amanthabi, a city-ruler, is acting as patron to some 'apiru and is therefore held responsible for their activities [Mendenhall; 1973:135], although nothing else but raiding and looting is involved. Again we can see why Rib-Addi could refer to some groups as 'apiru, whereas his opponents did not, nor do we know if anybody else did.

What the case points to is that in the Ancient Near East there was a high percentage of integrated banditry. The 'apiru we have looked at

are rarely seen in any real connection with the peasantry, but on the contrary are related to the élite, in whose service they fight and raid. They seem to be motivated less by social protest and more by self-interest. There is of course no further evidence available as to what the 'apiru were up to when they did not perform military services for some kind of lord, but as far as our evidence goes there appears to be no reason why, in more peaceful times, they should have been less opportunist than their Roman equivalents, the *latrones*. The evidence rather shows that where there is a possibility they attach themselves to the powerful. Their motivation thus being far less ideal than Hobsbawm would have us believe, their relation to the peasantry must also differ from his ideal model.

As in many other societies the captain of an 'apiru-band has to strike a balance between opposition to and cooperation with the existent authorities, if his gang is to survive. In this way the importance of the bandit's relation with the power stratum exceeds that of his ties to the rural peasant population. Against this assumption it has been said that the bandit rarely robs the peasants. Yet this is a weak argument. In a first instance the situation stems more from the simple truth that the peasant has but little of high value to offer than from any friendly arrangement between the two parties. Secondly it often can be seen simply not to be true. Shaw comments thus on the Roman *latrones*:

Whereas it is true that bandits are found attacking the house and villas of the wealthy and powerful, both in historical and fictional accounts of their activities, the real problem is to assess the value of using the mention of these targets in isolation as a measure of the bandit's social motivation. Bandits would naturally direct some of their attacks on accretion of wealth in a mode similar, at least on some planes of behaviour, to common criminals.

He goes on to conclude:

Thus it does not seem that reports of attacks on centres of wealth are to be taken as *such* -as touchstones of social protest- especially when the raiding activities of bandits so vividly portrayed in the novelists mix such targets together with the killing and pillaging of ordinary commoners as part of the same process. [Shaw; 1984:41]

Shaw does not deny that bandits do have some support in the rural areas, especially when they themselves are from that area. He constantly refers to the difficulties the Roman law encountered in dealing with *receptatores* or collaborators [Shaw; 1984:14, 36-37], thus admitting that the phenomenon existed. Yet he insists that the bandits preferred the protection of the powerful and wealthy to the support of the weak and poor [1984:36]. Although the Roman law for example mentions the role of kinship ties within their system of punishing the collaborators, there seem to be nonetheless a greater number of laws in which these are identified as the wealthy and powerful [Shaw; 1984:32, 37].

The ambiguous position which the bandit thus held, in that, although he might in the first instance actually be recruited from the poor, he inevitably was drawn more and more into the world of the rich [Hobsbawm; 1969:76], seems to indicate that his concerns for the poor lessened considerably with time. Ultimately it was his own accumulation of wealth and power that interested him most and to achieve this his dealings with the rich were more important, be it by arrangements or by accepting patronage. Popular support might however not disappear altogether, but it must not be seen as based on an intimate and permanent attachment of the peasants to their "bandit-champions".

Any relationship thus must arise out of far from noble considerations and for a bandit-captain one way to ensure his own success

and survival is to gain some sort of control over territory and inhabitants of the area in which he operates. To achieve this he has several options, all of which include relations with existing authorities to some degree or another. At the one end of the spectrum non-interference, or at least little and ineffective interference, on the part of the state is the minimum requirement for a bandit group to be able to claim control over a territory. Again we have to talk about the same sort of territories as described in the preceding chapter. Mountainous regions with difficult access, economically unviable areas, frontier zones, where the costs of control exceed its benefits, leave the authorities uninterested and, thus, the bandits able to establish themselves.

Such a situation is conducive to the establishment of protection-rackets. Although we know the terminology of protection-money mostly from within an urban context, as linked to Mafia-like organizations, there is no reason to believe that similar proceedings do not occur in a rural context [Brown; 1990:258, 263]. The clever bandit-captain will soon enough realize that a regular income is more advantageous to his gang than sporadic and irregular pillaging. As a steady food supply probably is of foremost interest to the bandits, their primary target must be the food producing peasants.

A relationship is thus established between the two parties, which has little to do with friendship and admiration, but is mainly based on the economical needs of the bandits. These guarantee for themselves a permanent food supply and possibly shelter, especially for the winter months when bandit activity is at its lowest. Whatever else riches they need, they obtain from their dealings with the powerful and wealthy, who, unlike the peasants, have use for their booty [Hobsbawm; 1969:25, 72]. In return, they offer their protection to the peasant community. Especially in remote areas the population might stick with the local bandits, not so much, because these are particularly favourable to them, but because it

proves in the end more viable even to the peasants. Hobsbawm himself has mentioned the preference of remote populations to deal with local bandits than with the authorities [Hobsbawm; 1969:77-78]. A certain animosity between city and rural society, central authorities and remote populations probably also holds true as does the fact that dealing with bandits is more common than relying on authorities which are often an alien and unpredictable element to the rural population.

Protection in this case though is a term to be used fairly loosely, as often it is not primarily directed against any third party, but is mostly a promise by the bandits not to prey indiscriminately on the village concerned. Protection is thus hardly more than another tax imposed on the peasants by a militarily stronger entity. Bandits, as such, start to act like any other military élite. This is all the more so if we consider that states are expected to guarantee protection in return for taxes.

Conversely one of the reasons why peasants would enter such a relationship also lies within the range of the connection between taxation and protection. For it is true to say that where states are unable to maintain control, they must also be unable to offer adequate protection to potential tax-payers. Ironically in such a situation the peasant often ends up buying protection from predators, such as bandits, from which the state is supposed to protect the peasant in the first place. Although basically the peasant again suffers exploitation, certain advantages result if he chooses to agree to such an arrangement. One of these is obviously damage-limitation; indiscriminate pillaging and plundering often is accompanied by some destruction of housing and fields, eventually even rape and murder. Regular payment of tribute does away with these side-effects. If not always friendly, at least proceedings will be peaceful, ensuring that the peasant can go back to his work after a short while without having to invest in heavy repairs. The saying "Better to feed them than that they should steal!" [Hobsbawm;

1969:39] thus has little to do with amical ties between bandits and peasants, nor does it indicate that the peasant could not morally bear to see a bandit actually stealing. It simply means that he will do so anyway, but this time leaving behind him destruction, maybe death.

Furthermore, where in remote areas bandits maintain a nearly permanent presence, arrangements with them simply prove more practical than those with state authorities. Where, as was the case in the ancient world, the major policing force of a state is the army itself [Shaw; 1984:18], providing protection against bandits to the hinterland population, mainly takes the form of pursuits or even maybe campaigns aimed ideally at the annihilation of operating bandit groups. The presence of effective state protection thus is sporadic and in this form it is costly to the peasant, as there is yet another added marauding group, which needs feeding and tramples the fields [Hobsbawm; 1969:77]. The bandit, however, is ever present, and after the troops have gone, especially if they fell short of their goal, he will be back, with a vengeance. Even if one group has been successfully exterminated, another one will most certainly fill the vacuum and the whole process is repeated.

It is not surprising that under such conditions the peasant should choose to reach an arrangement with nearby bandits rather than to rely on faraway state authorities. Such arrangements make sure that things will go by peacefully and silently. Recourse to state authorities, however, not only bring upon the wrath of the bandit groups, but lead to hectic activities among the fleeing and the pursuers. Not only do the peasant's fields and crops suffer damage, but his working routine gets hampered in these times of violence, which in the end are exactly what the peasant wants to avoid and be protected from. Peasant support of bandits against the state stems from this desire for stability, when some sort of tax will have to be paid to one group or another anyway and, in the end, it proves more viable to lodge and feed bandits. After all they do not build

temples and palaces or expect corvée duties.

Nor should it be forgotten that strong bandit groups are in fact capable of providing adequate protection against eventual third parties. These would include other bandit groups, nomadic raiders, or even inimical outside village communities. Again, the fact that the bandit is more or less constantly present make him a better choice than state authorities. It is, however, interesting to see how much the state itself can act as a third party in this case. The question arises whether bandit groups can effectively hold off the official tax-collectors, if they can afford to do so, and what the state is going to do about it.

It is surely possible, and it has been known, that very remote areas never knew the implementation of taxation [Hobsbawm; 1969:70] and it might well be possible that bandit groups here managed to frighten off the tax-collectors altogether. However, this is highly dependent on the degree of remoteness of the territory, on the state's interest in the territory, and finally on whether the state involved is weak or strong. Whereas the bandit may be able to withstand official power in the very inaccessible hinterland, on the fringes the state will begin to assert its claims. The least we can expect in such a situation is that villages in the region are subject to a double taxation, from the state and the bandits. Yet the stronger the state, the more able it is to push these fringes further back into the hinterland. The interests of bandits and authorities now clash heavily and it is here that their involvements with each other take more expressive forms.

It must be stated here that where the state is in fact strong enough, it will not enter into alliances with the bandits, but rather seek to extinguish banditry and maintain control with appropriate forces of its own. Against a strong state, banditry cannot assert control over large territories and often will be reduced to pillaging and highway robbery. It is only where the state is relatively weak and faces further

problems, such as civil wars or other political turmoil, that it will try to reach agreements with bandits and use them to its own advantage.

A popular tactic is to use bandits as a policing force. It has long been known that in the absence of a strong army contingent local authorities have little official armed personnel to deal with banditry:

Apart from the occasional recourse to special army commands in the case of serious large-scale outbreaks of banditry, all evidence points to the conclusion that governors of unarmed provinces were at the mercy of whatever local support they could muster in the repression of outlaws. [Shaw; 1984:19]

Such an absence of any official provincial and local policing force leads to the creation of what we might best call "vigilantes". What this group however represents is nothing more than yet another marauding armed force in the rural regions. The fact that they mostly are drafted from the same part of the population as bandits makes them a highly conspicuous entity. One such group called *diogmitai* has been described as "somewhere between a posse of vigilantes and professional enforcers and regulators - as such they were very close to the bandits themselves as a category" [Shaw; 1984:18; fn.35]. Indeed the difference between *vigilantes* and bandits again seems to lie mainly with the fact that the latter enjoy no legal sanction while the former do. This is made even clearer when *vigilantes* and bandits simply become interchangeable, as in the case of the Greek *armatoles* and *klephts*. The constant flux from one group into the other is thus described:

The *klephts* and *armatoles* were the product of insecurity of life and property, conquest, foreign rule, and a terrain and economy that favoured lawlessness in general and brigandage in particular ... The *armatoles* were former outlaws who had been amnestied and employed to suppress banditry. Setting a

thief to catch a thief, a ploy ever used since rulers sought to protect their exposed territories and frontiers without keeping standing armies, was common practice. Armatoles were charged with the safety of mountain passes and maintenance of law and order in the districts of their jurisdictions, the armatoliks ... The klephts were mainly fugitives, debtors, outlaws, misfits, adventurers, men not attached to the land by property or other obligations, who took to the hills and became brigands ... As members of a band of outlaws, klephts were driven by two primary considerations: survival, which was no easy matter, and amnesty, which often entailed enlistment in a band of armatoles ... Once amnestied and invested with authority to keep the law, they used all means at their disposal to stay in power; when deposed, as most ultimately were, they reverted to brigandage and tried through violence and guile to re-emerge as armatoles.

[Koliopoulos; 1989:194-196]

As with mercenaries, we find groups of violent and armed men who can easily switch from a pro- towards an anti-authority stance. Their allegiance is at best tangential and, although they might fulfill their part of the bargain as long as their immediate interests are thereby served, there is little doubt that when opportunity knocks, they will follow their own pursuit of power.

As long as this process takes place on a local scale, there will be no real long-term consequences for the state-apparatus. In the end it is nothing more than another aspect of the protection market, with the difference that the buyer is to be placed within the realm of official authority [Baretta and Markoff; 1978:593]. The higher authority-holders of the state often need to know little about the actual details of the arrangement. Often such agreements are born out of the local official's desire to render a picture of peaceful existence within his jurisdiction

to the central government, which, on the other hand, cares little about who collects taxes and keeps the peace as long as it is done [cf Brown; 1990:263]. Local officials only need to be clever enough to play different bandit groups against each other, by employing the one and deposing the other, to make sure that no particular group gains too much power or that groups ally. Furthermore the narrow scale of local areas should keep *vigilantes* of one locality busy enough keeping at bay their counterparts of the neighbouring one. As a last resort, if things get out of hand, local authorities can still call upon the state and the army, although they might somewhat discredit themselves in doing so.

On a larger scale and with the knowledge and approval of the state itself, things might turn out quite differently. When large regions are deliberately left in the control of such bandits turned law-enforcer because of the weakness of the state, their captains instead of having close connections with local officials, become evermore independent from such authorities. If the situation goes on long enough, lower authorities become unimportant in the process, and contact will be maintained only at the highest level, i.e. between the captain and the state. In fact the captain himself might claim quite rightly to be the highest authority in the region. Finally, if the state fails to assert its claims over such a territory in any convincing manner, in the very long run the region will try to detach itself from that state and achieve, if not total independence, at least autonomy. Shaw describes the process within the Roman empire:

During the metamorphosis of Roman state structure in the mid-third century A.D. when the power and authority of the central state came most into question, local men of power who otherwise would have been stigmatized as bandits usurped aspects of state power (for example, the ideology and imagery of strength, protection, beneficence, and dispensation of justice) and gradually entered the realm of formal state

Again the process does take place with most ease in those territories where state control has always been the weakest. Where frontier zones are left alone long enough some people will eventually realize the possibilities in setting up their own internal political organization, which will steadily grow less dependent on the adjacent, original state power. From being frontier zones, entire regions thus develop into at least autonomous enclaves with a quasi state-like status. Bandits are involved in this process in that they stand a high chance of making up the military strata of these new political entities; this is even more so where they formerly had been employed as law-enforcers, as they are already a politically recognized power. Although it is possible for them to do so, bandit-captains do not need to be at the very head of such happenings. Former local men of power often have their hand in such proceedings; they use the bandits, who thus graduate from a policing force into the personal armies of state pretenders.

We see on this occasion the development not so much of overt revolt in the face of foreign rule, but of opportunistic secession, which takes place comparatively peacefully. We call such societies in the first instance autonomous, in so far as, although for all practical purposes they might be independent, technically speaking the authorities still consider them to part of the state. Shaw points to a dichotomy which exists between state and society, stressing that they, at least in the Roman case, never fully coincide. As such the central state administration lays a political claim on territories and its inhabitants, which, however, are never fully integrated into its society [Shaw; 1984:41-42, also Hobsbawm; 1969:70].

On the other hand, as our former definition of frontier zones has demonstrated, it must be admitted that such zones are by their nature open to dissidence and prone to breed as well as attract banditry

[Baretta and Markoff; 1978:592]. It seems plausible enough to assume the involvement of strong bandit groups as part of the rural military élite, wherever such enclaves manage to hold out against a state wanting to superimpose its grip. But there are also cases where the process is one of gradual evolution and here bandits might well be seen as the main instigators:

However, very large bandit gangs that were able to operate for long periods within the empire itself could, given the appropriate conjuncture of forces, approximate to the "Haiduk" type in their institutionalization of their own power. Such were the large bandit gangs in Judaea in the middle decades of the first century A.D., the *Saturiani* and *Subafrenses* of the late empire, and the *Maratocupreni* raiders of northern Syria. [Shaw; 1984:43]

Indeed Hobsbawm devotes Chapter 5 of his study to this particular group of bandits, which he chooses to call the *Haiduks*. It is interesting to note that some of their characteristics are reminiscent not only of what Shaw has said about the Roman *latrones*, but also of the behaviour and organization of the 'apiru. The geographical location for *Haiduk* and 'apiru alike is that of mountains and empty plains, the less densely populated areas [Hobsbawm; 1969:61]; Shaw has furthermore identified the bandit gangs of Judea of the 1st century A.D. with *Haiduk*-like groups [Shaw; 1984:43]. Yet the geographical location is not the most striking parallel between the *Haiduk* and the 'apiru, after all many non-*Haiduk*-bandits chose similar locations for their activities. A number of characteristics for both groups can however be isolated from this description by Hobsbawm:

What made this collection of the socially marginal, the men who chose not so much freedom as against serfdom, but robbery as against poverty, into a quasi-political movement, was a

powerful tradition, a recognized collective social function. As we have seen, their motives for going into the mountains were mainly economic, but the traditional term for becoming a *haiduk* was 'to rebel', and the *haiduk* was by definition an insurrectionary. He joined a recognized social group.

[Hobsbawm; 1969:64]

We first notice that like the *'apiru* the *Haiduk* are seen as a classifiable social entity of a marginal character. Their origins are similar too, both groups stemming from outcasts, escaped serfs and alike, who chose to take up arms and organize themselves in groups or gangs [Hobsbawm; 1969:61]. Both *'apiru* and *Haiduk* also organize themselves along the lines of the brotherhood [Redford; 1992; Hobsbawm; 1969]. It is also interesting to see that they are mainly a collective form, isolated leaders are seldomly mentioned [Hobsbawm; 1969:61, 64-65]. Mendenhall has made exactly the same remarks about the *'apiru* [1973:124; Albright; 1975:115]. Only two occurrences refer to Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru (EA 91:3; 67:17), and here it should be seen as being applied metaphorically by Rib-Addi, so as to stress the trouble that they are causing him. But both leaders do represent an overlord to which the *'apiru* attached themselves, a usual procedure also for the *Haiduk*. Again both groups do so with a certain degree of disloyalty [cf Hobsbawm; 1969:62]. It is also worth noting that the *Haiduk* attach themselves to a lord in return for being given the status of free men [Hobsbawm; 1969:61]. We have seen that something similar existed with the *'apiru*, who accepted lordship, yet were superior to slaves. Finally where the *Haiduk* attached themselves to the emperor himself, land was given to them in compensation [Hobsbawm; 1969:61-62]. The mention of the land of the *'apiru* in some texts and their staying in their own encampments under the orders of their own leaders seems to reflect a similar situation [cf Halligan; 1983:21]. *Haiduk* also kept their own chieftains and were generally formally structured under leaders [Hobsbawm; 1969:62, 66].

Given these parallels it is interesting to note that the motivation to become a *Haiduk* was not mainly ideological, but strictly economical. "...with luck, brigandage was a better financial position than peasant life" says Hobsbawm [1969:62-63]. Even for Hobsbawm they represent a much less ideal type of bandit and connections with the peasants are said to be extremely loose. Their victims are not only the wealthy, but anyone they could get their hands on. During their *Haiduk*-career they were often separated from their kin. Their limited relationship with peasants Hobsbawm also sees arising from the fact that most of them were herdsmen or at least of some semi-migratory nature [Hobsbawm; 1969:63-64]. Nevertheless they were not totally without support. They also managed to pass the wintertime in some friendly village; they were even able to return to their kin [Hobsbawm; 1969:69].

The picture of the *Haiduk*'s motivation, lifestyle and relation with the peasant population is thus far more reminiscent of the picture of banditry discussed above than is Hobsbawm's ideal social bandit. Contact with village communities is tangential, in the campaigning season hardly existing and certainly not altogether friendly. *Haiduk* seem much more organized like bands of soldiers and it is arguable that like them they preyed on the villages for food when campaigning. Hobsbawm insists that they represent a much more institutionalized and permanent challenge to official authority [Hobsbawm; 1969:62, 66]. But that is not to say that they were much inclined towards social revolution⁷. As Hobsbawm himself states:

⁷Again we must heed the warning given by Hobsbawm: "For banditry itself thus to become the revolutionary movement and to dominate it, is unusual. As we have seen (pp. 19-21) limitations, both technical and ideological, are such as to make it unsuitable for more than momentary operations of more than a few dozen men, and its internal organization provides no model which can be generalized to be that of an entire society... Banditry is therefore more likely to come into peasant revolutions as one aspect of a multiple mobilization, and knowing itself to be a subordinate aspect, except in one sense: it provides fighting men and fighting leaders" [Hobsbawm; 1969:86]. In most cases such mobilization is, however, very hard to achieve.

We need not suppose that they spent all their time fighting, let alone trying to overthrow, the oppressors. The very existence of bands of free men, or of those patches of rock or reed beyond the reach of any administration, was sufficient achievement. [Hobsbawm; 1969:70]

This statement we consider to be of major importance when we come to analyze the role of bandits within the scope of the emergence of highland polities. It shows that these groups were quite capable, given the right conditions, of institutionalizing power of their own in areas where state-control was lacking. Shaw has identified a number of "barbaric entities" with the *Haiduk* and pointed to the fact that they represented "foreign enclaves within the Roman state". If these enclaves manage to constantly escape state control, they eventually come to achieve a quasi-state status for themselves [Shaw; 1984:42, also 43]. This means that considerably large territories, which permanently and effectively refute attempts by the state to regain control, might after a while obtain the recognition of being an independent region by that same state.

The role of groups like the *Haiduk*, in our case the 'apiru, would be important as they certainly represent the most uncontrollable group, as well as being the fiercest opposition to the state's claims of authority over the region. Furthermore being the military and therefore political power of the area, they are the ones the state has to deal with. This assumption gains support from the fact that the *Haiduk* are often seen as a "military strata sprung from the free peasantry" to be compared with what Coote and Whitelam call the "rural military élite". Their importance in keeping control over a region, while also holding off that of central state authorities, cannot be overestimated. Nor does their role end with the gain of some sort of relative independence, but we will follow their activities also as related to the formation of

state-like societies. Thompson has followed the movements of another brigand-group of antiquity, the *Bacaudae*, and concluded:

If Aclianus and Amandus had been able to win permanent independence for Armarica, they would not have been able to introduce any fundamental change into the class structure of their society. They would merely have started afresh that process which had caused the ownership of vast areas of land to concentrate into a few hands and which had brought about in Roman society the very state of affairs against which they themselves had revolted in the first place. [Thompson; 1952:20; compare Mendenhall; 1983:101]

It is our belief that it is possible to assume that the 'apiru of the Ancient Near East were similar to the *Haiduk* type and that the operations of Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru in Amurru were part of such proceedings. It is after all especially in the Amarna period that much 'apiru-activity is not to be attached to the social phenomenon of robbing from the rich, but is clearly linked to the political machinations of the different city-rulers. Mendenhall himself has made it clear that those who, like Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru, required the services of the 'apiru, were deriving their authority primarily from their having been put into power by Egypt [Mendenhall; 1973:125]. They would have had little desire to trigger a social revolution; their interests lay in extending their territories and power, not in improving the lot of their peasant population. Liverani maintains that Abdi-Ashirta is of a different kind than the surrounding city-rulers, in that he did not control an agriculturally based region and did not have a capital. He thus claims that he is more of a nomadic chieftain leader-type and, given this social background, might have offered a more egalitarian view of society to the peasants inhabitants of other areas, as we can detect in his "social programme" (cf esp. EA 74) [1979:15, 18-19]. Yet even he admits:

It is obvious that the promise of 'peace' has a strong utopian overtone; also under Abdi-Asirta the villages would have 'mayors', and the economic situation would not be substantially altered. Thus the promise of peace has a clearly propagandistic character, having the function of raising hopes and of accentuating the social contrasts, while it would have had hardly any real implementation. [Liverani; 1979:19]⁸

Abdi-Ashirta's promise of peace was little more than a political manoeuvre cast to draw the peasants of a given city-state onto his side, an opportunity which the peasants, besieged and threatened by famine, were all too ready to take. Yet beyond the restoration of a more peaceful state of affairs, enabling the peasantry to return to their crops, the "pax Abdi-Ashirta" had little to offer to the rural population. Nor is there anything indicative of the 'apiru being more inclined to revolution than was their leader. It is arguable that they might have been themselves convinced by Abdi-Ashirta's propaganda, but beyond that little can be added to the argument. It is on the other hand also possible that the 'apiru took the opportunity of the strong leadership of Abdi-Ashirta in order to come out of their remote highland strongholds and accumulate power and wealth.

⁸Abi-Asirta's promises and his position as a leader are nevertheless interesting, for leaders and an ideology which can unite the diversified peasant elements are essential for a peasant revolt to happen. Leaders and ideology, however, mostly do not originate from the peasant mass itself, they are often made up for the peasants by people from an altogether different class [Jenkins; 1982:512]. In the words of Shanin what is needed is "guided political action", where an "external uniting power-élite" provides an "exogenous organizing factor" which can move the whole of the peasant mass into action. Danger arises when the peasant mass, like the urban mobs, is used by various richer elements to support their political struggles rather than "led to achieve its own aims" [Shanin; 1971:257-258; cf also Coote and Whitlam; 1987:60-61]. This, however, seems to be what is happening in the case of Abdi-Asirta and the 'apiru.

Abdi-Ashirta's case will in the first instance serve as a guideline, as it represents, at least quantitatively, the best illustrated case. Still there is much guesswork to be done concerning this personality, especially as to what role he played before he is mentioned in the El Amarna letters. It is thus impossible for us to know whether he started off as a successful bandit-captain, or whether he always had some sort of official power and influence and only attached himself to 'apiru-forces somewhat later. We cannot conclude whether Abdi-Ashirta started his career in the control of protection-rackets, a power for which he then managed to gain official recognition, or whether he began as a local official, who rose to greater power by using 'apiru as a vigilante and mercenary force.

By the time he makes his appearance in the El Amarna letters it seems that his authority, as his contacts with the Egyptian court prove, is officially recognized, and that his policing of his territory with the help of the 'apiru finds no real objection at the court itself. Hachmann describes the relation between Abdi-Ashirta and the Egyptian government as such:

Abdiasirta und sein Sohn Aziru hielten sich zwar gelegentlich längere Zeit in Sumur auf, doch nicht mit einer mit der Stadt verbundenen offiziellen Funktion. Es hat indes den Anschein, dass Abdiasirta den Auftrag hatte, die Stadt Sumur und deren Umgebung, d.h. das ganze Land Amurru, zu schützen (EA 60,21-28). In diese Position scheint er regelrecht eingesetzt zu wesen zu sein (EA 101,30f.). Er war aber dennoch in dieser Aufgabe vom Stadthalter in Sumur abhängig (EA 60,20) ... Abdiasirta scheint praktisch aber der Herr des ganzen Landes Amurru geblieben zu sein, und er konnte sich dort halten und sogar noch seine Macht erweitern, weil er offenbar dem Pharao keinen Anlass gab, an seiner Loyalität zu zweifeln (EA 65,7).

It is made clear in this description that Abdi-Asirta holds much more of an official position than Rib-Addi's correspondence would have us believe, yet it also points to the fact that Abdi-Asirta enjoys considerable freedom in his actions. His dependence on the governor of Sumur seems for all practicality, to be nonexistent once he leaves the city-walls; furthermore, his powerbase does not really lie with the city, but with his mobile military contingents, the 'apiru. Liverani has stressed that Abdi-Asirta differentiates himself in that he has no capital city, no court and no bureaucracy; as such he gives the impression of a chief rather than an urban city-ruler [Liverani; 1979:15].

Abdi-Asirta thus resembles both, the "parasocial leader", and the "dimorphic chief" as they are described by Rowton. He displays characteristics of the parasocial leader in that he is heavily associated with the uprooted element of the Ancient Near East, the 'apiru [Rowton; 1976b:17 and passim; 1977:182, 190 and passim], an element which is similar to *Haiduk*-type bandits. His activities, however, can be related to that of some dimorphic chiefs, as he maintains links with a city, yet himself does not live there, but leads a non-sedentary life in the countryside, where his power seems little restricted [Rowton; 1973:209-210].

It is this blend of outsider and official recognition, relative freedom of action and ties with the authorities, that make Abdi-Asirta such an interesting case. Although not a city-ruler, Egyptian authority chooses to acclaim his political power, and the role of his 'apiru as the military élite in the open countryside. Conversely, he remains less controllable exactly because his powerbase is mobile and not contracted in a city, but nevertheless organized enough to engage in more than isolated raiding and pillaging. Such organization among outside forces

is, however, to be found primarily with the *Haiduk*-bandits. As we have seen, compared to other forms of banditry these groups appear to be of a more permanent existence and a far more institutionalized presence of power, a quasi-political movement. Also noticeable are their formalized structures, mostly on a military basis [cf Hobsbawm; 1969:64-66].

Hobsbawm gives different reasons why this may be so:

It is not easy to say whether this was so because certain geographical or political conditions made possible such permanent and formalized banditry, and therefore automatically made it potentially more 'political', or whether it was certain political situations (e.g. foreign conquest or certain types of social conflict) which encouraged unusually 'conscious' forms of banditry and thus structured it more firmly and permanently. [Hobsbawm; 1969:66]

In Abdi-Asirta's and his 'apiru's case it seems to us that a major role is played by both geographical and political conditions, in that they engender the necessary freedom of action, which leaves formerly disorganized and isolated bandit-groups to develop into the more formally structured *Haiduk*-units. Geographically this is not only a classic frontier zone, but also a buffer zone between the Hittite and the Egyptian empires. This, however, represents exactly such an area, where *Haiduk* often sell their services to protect military frontiers [Hobsbawm; 1969:61-62], and, on the other hand, it is here that *vigilantes* and bandits are most interchangeable [Koliopoulos; 1989:217]'. Politically, the very fact that Egypt employs these 'apiru as their vigilante border troops, institutionalizes them as a political power; for in doing so Egypt recognizes them as a legitimate military élite in control of their area of jurisdiction. It is thus not so much the case of the *Haiduk* being

'One might further notice that Hobsbawm classifies the *klephts* as bandits of the *Haiduk*-type [Hobsbawm; 1969:61].

a "military strata sprung from the free peasantry", as Hobsbawm would have it [1969:61; also Koliopoulos; 1989:193], but rather is such a *stratum* set up by the responsible authorities, wherever they cannot afford to put up one of their own.

Such cost-reduction, however, can backfire on the state, when such groups, already confident of their newly gained political freedom and power, are left alone long enough to develop political aims of their own. Judging from Egypt's reluctance to send troops against him, it seems most obvious that Abdi-Asirta enjoys enough freedom for a long enough time to increase his political influence; in fact the constraints placed on him by Egypt seem so slight, that we cannot view his decisions and actions to be any other than that of a considerably autonomous chief.

Egypt must have seen his actions as being little more than ambitions towards expanding the territory falling under his jurisdiction, and as long as he performs his duties well, this is no real reason to depose him. Her interests lie in having her border zones correctly patrolled and protected, less with who does it [compare Hyams; 1976:189-192]. It is also reasonable to presuppose that Abdi-Asirta was interested in increasing his autonomy at the same time. Liverani has stressed the utopian character of his promises, their propagandist nature and the very low chance of any real implementation of social changes [Liverani; 1979:19]. By promising peace, what Abdi-Asirta really emphasizes is stability under his protection, the very same stability and protection which generally are the responsibility of the state. Abdi-Asirta thus bears clear similarities to "men of power" usurping "aspects of state power (for example, the ideology and imagery of strength, protection, beneficence, and the dispensation of justice)" and thus clearly wanting to enter the realm of state authority [Shaw; 1984:35-36].

Abdi-Asirta's success might have been partial only, but at least under Aziru and his brothers, some of their dreams must have come true,

as a changed relationship between Egypt and Amurru seems to prove [Hachmann; 1982:39]. The fact that Egypt sees no more point in establishing a governor in Sumur speaks for the degree of autonomy that Amurru has reached under Aziru [Hachmann; 1982:27]. Hachmann speaks furthermore of Amurru's independence, which goes so far as to offer protection to the political enemies of Egypt [1982:40]. Nonetheless political relations with Egypt are maintained, but they are subject to Amurru's special status and also treatment (=besondere Stellung; Sonderbehandlung), when compared to other districts of the Egyptian empire [Hachmann; 1982:41-42]. It would appear that Amurru's autonomy has considerably increased, and the former Egyptian province has developed into a quasi independent state-like enclave within the territory of the Egyptian empire. Hachmann's final description of the developments in Amurru is as follows:

Sumur war im wesentlichen Verwaltungszentrum der syrischen Küste. Die Zuständigkeit des Statthalters von Sumur reichte im Süden über Byblos hinaus und schloss im Norden ursprünglich Amurru mit ein. Als Abdiasirta als Herrscher in Amurru an Bedeutung gewann, begann der Einfluss des Statthalters von Sumur zu schwinden. Nach dem Tode des Abdiasirta mag dieser wieder für kurze Zeit an Bedeutung gewonnen haben, bis Aziru die Stadt Sumur eroberte. Damit löste sich dann der Verwaltungsbezirk auf, da der Pharaoh davon absah, einen neuen Statthalter zu ernennen, und so die Rolle, die der Aziru übernommen hatte, stillschweigend anerkannte. [Hachmann; 1982:46]

Abdi-Asirta, Aziru, and Amurru present a classic case of a former province, being for all practicable purposes lost to an empire because men of power at the head of *Haiduk*-type bandits, were left to operate freely long enough to develop their own state-like ambitions. When Aziru finally took over Sumur, Egypt and Pharaoh still did not react. This only

adds to the picture of great autonomy that he enjoyed in his activities¹⁰.

Most interesting is that none of this represented anything vastly extraordinary. There is no violence which exceeds that normally expected of such a situation where city-states exist in constant rivalry; there most certainly is nothing which we could compare to a revolt or a nationwide uprising. The whole process runs by rather unnoticed, at the top of the social level, where one ruling strata is replaced by another, the irony being that the latter are the long-time employees of the former. Rather than associating the *Haiduk* with insurrection, as Hobsbawm does, we prefer to link the 'apiru from Amurru to this process of peaceful secession, which takes place within the permissible limits of a social interaction, where the wielding of power at the outside of society easily allows for admittance into the realm of official recognition by that same society.

We have used Abdi-Asirta's and Aziru's case as an illustration. Needless to say the same process did not take place everywhere where 'apiru were present. However the flight of several officials, such as Amanhatbi (EA 185; 186) to the 'apiru or even "the land of the 'apiru", the fact that land is given to the 'apiru (EA 289), points to the fact, that in these cases also, similar enclaves achieved at least enough autonomy to be able to offer protection to such refuge-seekers. Idrimi's case is most illuminating, as he had to flee his country, yet after years

¹⁰It is here interesting to note that Bottéro made the following claim about the 'apiru: "...nous les voyons combattre pour un certain ordre politique, et jouer de ce fait un rôle capital, puisqu'ils semblent avoir pris la tête, en Syrie et en Palestine, de la résistance à la domination étrangère du Pharaon, et du mouvement pour l'autonomie du pays" [Bottéro; 1980:210]. He then says that they are not really brigands-*habbatu*, a claim that can be paralleled by that of Rowton that for the 'apiru "genuine banditry is not as yet attested" [1965:386]. The lengthy discussion above should put this into a new perspective. In fact, it points towards the fact that the difference *habbatu*-*'apiru* is similar to that between simple bandit and *Haiduk*.

of refuge made himself King of Alalakh. He gives the following description of a period of his hiding years:

I stayed in Ammia in the land of Canaan; in Ammia lived (also) natives of Halab, of the country Mukishkhi, of the country Ni' and also warriors from the country Ama'e. They discovered that I was the son of their overlord and gathered around me. There I grew up and stayed for a long time. For seven years I lived among the Habiru-people...[ANET; 557]

Chapter 3

Brigands, Nomads, and Barbarians

Within our discussion on bandits and parasocial elements we now have reached the point where the phenomenon of banditry definitely enters the much wider socio-political arena. It is at this point that Hobsbawm alluded to a problem when he argued to omit from his discussion of "social banditry" those communities for which raiding forms a part of their normal life, such as for instance for the Bedouin [1969:14; cf Rowton; 1977:186]. We have so far tried to treat in isolation the shepherd and the nomad in their relationship to banditry, yet at this point shepherds, bandits and nomads meet and become highly confused. For Hobsbawm went on to say that some pastoralist groupings can in fact yield a rather large number of bandits. Noteworthy is also that especially the *Haiduk*, with whom we have identified the 'apiru, came from a background of "herdsmen and drovers, i.e. semi-migratory men whose links with the settlements are intermittent or tenuous" [Hobsbawm; 1969:64]. Thus Hobsbawm iterated the following warning:

In studying such regions it is hard to say at precisely what point the practice of raiding and feuding passes into social banditry, whether in the form of resistance to the rich, to foreign conquerors or oppressors, or to other forces destroying the traditional order of things --all of which may be linked in the minds of bandits, and indeed in reality.
[1969:15]

It is as such also the point where topology enters the debate in a far more decisive manner, for here the geographical environment comes to determine activities, influence characterisation, and finally define the political panorama. At this point Shaw [1984] introduced the notion of barbaric entities and Minor [1979] began to speak of robber-tribes. Ultimately at this point it becomes quasi impossible to treat the bandit

separately from the nomad. Both come to be seen as a depraved mode of existence and feared as a barbaric threat.

Knauf [1985] and Staubli [1991] detected something similar, but approached the whole problem from the opposite angle. They insisted that among nomadic elements one has to count merchants, artisans, gypsies and not least bandits [Knauf; 1985:42; Staubli; 1991:34; cf also Dyson-Hudson; 1972:24; Rowton; 1976b:15; Betts; 1989]. All these people lead a way of wandering and constant movement, they are thus technically speaking nomadic. Nomads are thus not only pastoralists, although this is how they usually figure in our imaginations. To be nomadic involves movement and as such marauding bandit bands are to be classed as nomadic. The problem now arises that it becomes very difficult to differentiate the two groups. It is especially hard to know when one faces a nomad raiding activity or proper banditry. Not surprisingly the record holders of ancient empires were not altogether meticulous when deciding which appellation to use. In any case both entities appeared to them as highly barbaric. The French historian Briant has contributed two major studies to this phenomenon [1976; 1982]¹. Although he concentrates mainly on the Persian, Macedonian, and Greco-Roman periods, he has pointed out that most empires of the ancient world shared this worldview. As for the Ancient Near Eastern case, he insists:

..., il apparaît assez rapidement que l'ethnographie mésopotamienne, hittite ou égyptienne fonctionne sur des pré-supposés qui ne diffèrent que par le détail de ceux de l'ethnographie gréco-romaine. [Briant; 1982:35]

Not surprisingly Briant puts the *Shasu* and the *'apiru*, both of whom he finds to be associated with pillage and brigandage, into the same category as the above mentioned "barbarians". This argument gains support

¹He has concentrated his study largely on a reinterpretation of the records by classical historians, such as Strabo, Herodotus, Hieronymus and Diodorus.

from a recent study by Staubli, who concentrates on the representation of nomads in the iconography of "Israel"'s sedentary neighbours. He claims that they present a picture "die nur ihre städtische, oft imperiale oder koloniale Sichtweise wiedergeben" [1991:6; cf Kamp and Yoffee; 1980:89]. As such they would also be subject to a political situation very similar to the ones that Briant proposes himself to find behind the ideological language of the classical writers [cf 1982:38-39]. Such findings help to shed new light on the relations between hinterland populations and the institutions of central government in Egyptian dominated Syria-Palestine, and may alter our view on the events of the resettlement of the Palestinian highlands.

Two antitheses are regarded by Briant as lying at the base of the labelling in his classical sources. First, geographically there exists the opposition between plain/lowlands and mountains/highlands. The second concerns the way of life of the agents involved. The right way of life is usually located within the sedentary mode, agriculture and cultivation of lands being singled out and associated with city-life. Opposed to this are other forms of subsistence, such as hunting and gathering, pastoralism and pillaging or brigandage². As such, it is easy to see that mountainous regions with difficult access caused by rocky terrain and dense forests, inhabited mostly by nomads and/or bandits, mainly qualify for such labelling. In fact an equation "highlander"³ = "barbarian/brigand" can be discovered in much classical imperialistic historiography. But again one must insist that much of this labelling is part of an accepted "general theory", based itself on a certain

²A remote example can be taken from Weissleder, who analyzes the situation in Eastern Ethiopia. He claims: "As far as the sedentary farmer is concerned, be he peasant or lord, there is "a kind of social crime" (Lattimore; 1962:417) associated with being a nomad, a disparagement of the nomadic way of life, balanced, it seems, to me, only by the nomad's own profound distaste and contempt for all those who commit agriculture" [Weissleder; 1978:277].

³We will here use the term "highlander" to roughly translate Briant's "montagnard". It enables us to speak of all the inhabitants of mountainous regions without having to qualify them either as villagers, nomads or bandits. Unfortunately it does not fully render the pejorative undertone of the french term. Another term to use could be "hill people", or even, "hill-billies" [cf Briant; 1976].

geographical determinism, by which the degree of civilisation of a people varied with the altitude at which it lived. Briant never fails to point out that a critical analysis is needed; according to him, it will present a rather different and far more complex picture of reality [1982:67].

What else lies behind such qualifications is the fact that the conquering empires encounter considerable difficulties in subduing these particular regions. In the end, the inhabitants are mainly considered barbarians because they manage to escape integration into the "civilised" society of the conquerors. That these regions are mainly the mountain-ranges only stems from the fact that these represent the worst hindrances to heavy armies, unacquainted with the terrain and not trained for mountain warfare. The statement made by many ancient writers that hill-people are naturally aggressive and bellicose must be associated with the fact that, unlike people living in the plain, they are offered a possibility of resistance by their terrain and appropriate techniques of warfare.

We are dealing with a form of urban paranoia⁴, be it warranted or not, and a certain degree of reality concerning the independence of highland populations. At the base of it is nothing other than the fear of the unknown. Lowland people, used to the confines of what they conceive of as civilisation, basically the sedentary-agricultural mode of life, tend to view everything outside this confine as not only hostile and barbaric, but essentially unorderedly or chaotic. Within the parameters of such unorderedly forces, unexplored and/or unsubdued mountain ranges are to be included alongside forests and desert areas [cf Briant; 1976:172, 174]. Staubli summarises the Egyptian position on this matter as such:

⁴Briant uses the terms "paranoia obsidionale". We have found the following definitions: "(lat. *obsidionalis*, m. s., de *obsidere*, *assiéger*). Qui concerne le siège d'une ville.... \square Fièvre obsidionale, nom donné parfois à la mentalité d'une population assiégée" [Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Quillet; 1975:4668]. In this case it must be related to the fact that plain and urban people found themselves to be surrounded and taken under siege by chaotic and inimical forces from the mountains and/or the deserts.

Kurz: Die Schasu-Nomaden gehören in den Bereich der unkontrollierbaren und dämonischen Chaosmächte, zu denen ja die Wüste überhaupt gehört, und die zu jeder Zeit mit Worten und Taten unerbittlich bekämpft werden müssen, aber auch nie ganz besiegt werden können,... [1991:37; also: 69]

Our second point is already presented here, the fact that, as mentioned above, such regions and its inhabitants are not easily vanquished, and then seldom completely. A vicious cycle of argumentation can be detected here. Mountain and desert are being regarded as barbaric and unordered by self-declared agents of civilisation and order, precisely on the grounds that these entities prove too difficult to be integrated into the orderly world. As no conqueror has managed to bring order to these areas, they remain widely unexplored and therefore unknown; the unknown however is again held in fear. Moreover the resistance presented to any would-be conqueror by the population, in itself often nothing but an act of defence, is viewed as aggression and barbarism.

Thus nomads have often been seen as possessing an inherent bellicosity. In fact the notion sometimes appears as having been adopted straight from our ancient and classical, as well as medieval and colonial, records where nomads and tribal organisations appear as barbaric warriors and invaders. Yet it must be stressed that this is in many ways only an accident of transmission. The documents themselves are all too often interested in military activities, and accordingly the nomads involved are described as engaged in military performance. Furthermore a tendency can often be detected by which it is the unusual rather than the usual which catches the interest of the scribal transmitter. Consequently the belligerent nature which emerges is heavily emphasised and exaggerated.

Otherwise it must not be forgotten, especially in the scope of this

study, that we are here not dealing with the camel-riding bedouin⁵, or the horse-raising hordes⁶ of later times. We are here talking of sheep-nomads, capable of only limited and, most importantly, comparatively slow migrations. This hinders the military potential of the nomads in two aspects. First there is, of course, their reduced mobility, not having the luxury of an effective transport and riding animal. Secondly, on the battlefield itself such a mobile platform is the equivalent of a specialised weapon which translates itself into a serious advantage. But one has to wait for some time to detect such a weapon on the arena of the battlefield. Even with the domestication of the camel this situation is not reached. Knauf insists that it is not before the appropriate saddle, such as the *sadad*-saddle [1988:11], was invented, that the use of the camel became highly efficient for military use [cf Knauf; 1988:10-12; Lemche; 1985:132]. We cannot speak about a meharist tradition for the period under review, nor of its application and effectiveness in the military sphere. Furthermore, even the presence of the domesticated camel would not have changed the situation in the highlands. Camels are not only militarily ineffective in a mountain environment [Lemche; 1985:200], but also find it hard to survive without appropriate vegetation.

Yet, although on the one hand we seriously undermine the military superiority of the sheep-nomads, it is not as clear on the other that we

⁵Knauf [esp. 1988] admits that a primary domestication of the camel was undertaken during the 3rd millennium B.C., yet insists that this was done by a sedentary culture, which remained largely independent of the camel. During the 2nd millennium the phenomenon would have spread into East- and West Arabia. He is even willing to argue for the appearance of camel caravans along the Mediterranean coast of southern Palestine in the final stages of the Bronze Age. However he goes on to say: "Das heisst jedoch nicht, dass wir zu dieser Zeit schon mit Beduinen zu rechnen hätten. Beduinen sind reiterkriegerische Kamelnomaden. In der Entwicklung des Beduinentums lassen sich eine protobeduinische Phase in der ersten Hälfte des 1. Jahrtausends v.Chr. und eine frühbeduinische seit der zweiten Hälfte des 2. Jahrtausends v.Chr. von der vollbeduinischen seit dem 2./3. Jahrhundert n.Chr. unterscheiden" [1988:10]. Of the *shasu*, he claims that it is "ein Begriff, dessen Übersetzung mit "Nomaden" leicht falsche Vorstellungen erzeugt (...) und dessen hin und wieder anzutreffende Wiedergabe als "Beduinen" schlicht falsch ist" [1988:102].

⁶The camel and the horse have elsewhere been singled out for being the only animals to make a notable contribution to warfare [Orme; 1981:173]. It is also worth mentioning that the first real use of cavalry occurred under Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884 B.C.) [Burney; 1977:4].

can render them as simply not belligerent. Lemche insists that there is no reason to assume that sheep-nomads are anymore pacifistically inclined than camel or horse riding nomads. Although they might be militarily inferior to such groupings, they in turn are still superior to peasants for example, who because of their lack of mobility are vulnerable to attack [Lemche; 1985:132-133, 153, 200; also Thiel; 1980:25]. Again, as our period does not show the presence of bedouin-like tribes, sheep-nomads consequently range rather high on the military échelon.

However, a second look at nomad bellicosity is appropriate. Bearing in mind what has already been said about the way nomadic military activity has been reported throughout history a further warning has been given by anthropologists. Not all types of military activity can in fact be equated. There is an important difference between inter- and/or inner-tribal feuds, occasional attacks and raids and large scale military activity as practised by warring nations or states. Although nomads, of any nature, might be the absolute masters of the first, this does not automatically mean that they are equally adept at, or even interested, in the second. Bulliet, on nomadic warlike instincts, thus states:

Numerous objections may be raised to this theory, but perhaps its greatest weakness is that it assumes an equivalency between intertribal raiding for the seizure of livestock or satisfaction of bloodfeuds on the one hand and organised military campaigns in distant countries on the other. Insofar as the sketchy history of pre-Islamic Arabia shows any natural inclination toward violence on the part of the Arab nomads, it is violence of the former type restricted, by tribal customs and usages and clearly related to the social and economic framework of nomadic existence. While the violence of organised conquest --particularly when it was successful-- may indeed have provided a certain pleasurable experience for some of the warriors or at least have

contributed to the tribe's store of tales praising the bravery of its members, it really differed completely from the first-mentioned type of violence. The Arabic historians unconsciously reflect this difference when they term the pre-islamic "battles" (often involving only a handful of men) *ayyam aEcarah*, the days of the Arabs, as opposed to the *futuh*, or "conquests" of Islam [Bulliet; 1980:37-38]

A nomad's warfare is that of minor and shortlived skirmishes, of fast hit and run attacks; these are the characteristics and essentials of both feuds and raids. Both forms of engagement are often amongst the nomads themselves. After all the prime aim of raids is livestock, easily transportable and the prime carrier of capital and prestige among nomads [Parker; 1987:48]. No wonder other nomadic groups are an attractive victim. Feuds on the other hand are often the result or the answer to a previous raid. Mostly the ensuing battle, if it can in fact be called a battle, remains on a limited scale involving no more than the numbers of exactly what is needed for a raiding party. Although sometimes blood relatives or whole descent groups might become involved, we do not have here operations at the scale of army movements [Goldschmidt; 1980:50-51].

Nor should it be forgotten that some of these proceedings of warlike engagements are quasi institutionalised and a matter of prestige rather than the outcomes of any real intentions for war [Orme; 1981:194-199]. Raiding and pillaging is not only a recognised mode of survival in the thinking of the classics, but amongst nomads a part of the lifecycle. Youth go on raids and cover themselves with honour and glory as well as gaining livestock capital and it is an equally important honourful duty for the victimised party to respond [Parker; 1987:48]'. Yet, although some of the skirmishes might become rather violent and bloody, this is not full-scale warfare.

⁷Goldschmidt in fact qualifies aggressive raiding as "semisportive" [1980:52].

Indeed this might provide the nomad with some fighting training, yet it is of a limited nature as he fights with other nomads within their own and common environment. He does not stand in front of a fortified city or face a charging chariot attack. Neither does raiding isolated peasant communities or attacking a merchant caravan provide the same kind of challenge. Villages are not fortified cities nor are they defended by trained military personal, and caravans will be attacked at chosen points playing to the advantage of the attacker. Again we face nothing but local skirmishes, which often end to the advantage of the more mobile nomad⁸.

Thus, although one might agree that a nomad is a man who knows his ways, belligerent if one insists, it is made equally clear that he is not automatically a superior warrior all the same⁹. Nonetheless one cannot ignore that many of our records show the nomad, sheep or camel, mountain or steppe, as quasi-invincible. But again an accident of transmission, a distortion springing from the "language of conquest", is mostly responsible for this notion. Nomads are in fact not as such invincible, but rather unconquerable in their own territories. Aided by their terrain and mobility, nomads are the absolute masters of defensive warfare. It is true especially of mountain nomads that they not only have the possibility to retreat till the pursuing troops give up, but possess the necessary natural bastions to make long and tiring stances¹⁰.

We can thus see nomadic military superiority in a new light. Being

⁸Even the more developed warfare by the Arabs in Roman times is described as such: "The nomadic Arabs, on the other hand, relied on speed, surprise, and missile weapons; they lacked any siege equipment but could raid the caravans, herds, and unfortified settlements of the frontier. Most incursions were probably small-scale plundering raids that could be met with limited forces" [Parker; 1987:48].

⁹This, despite the fact, that some of them, like the Yarahmadzai of Baluchistan actually "prided themselves on hardiness in response to their harsh environment and fierceness in opposition to surrounding people" [Salzman; 1980b:98].

¹⁰Salzman also insists: "In addition to nomadism, the mobility of the tribesmen was a defensive stance that could be activated in the face of attack, reducing vulnerability through retreat" [1980b:98; also Asad; 1973:71].

in his own territory, he plays this to his full advantage, drawing pursuing troops or invading armies to fight at his own level in a first instance. The ensuing skirmishes, at which he is a master, result not only in the loss of human lives, but in a severe sinking of morale on the behalf of the pursuers. It is furthermore made impossible for the pursuers to fight a final all-deciding battle as the nomads are usually able to flee and start all over again. If pushed to the limit, however, nomads will hide away in impenetrable natural fortresses [Goldschmidt; 1980:52]. To dislodge them from here will again be costly. Not only is it militarily very difficult to do so, but the pursuers have to be nourished and maintained. Nomads will survive: Briant has shown that when pushed back to these refuges they transform themselves into cave dwellers and hunter-gatherers. The following army will have more difficulties not being naturally disposed to such a lifestyle. Even if at some stage the army might prove itself the greater power, it will be impossible for it to have a final, all encompassing victory. First of all, it will be impossible for it to dislodge all the nomads from all their hideouts. The nature of the terrain and the possibility for the nomads to disperse argue against this. Secondly, short of genocide nothing can prevent the nomads from reforming. After all, the army has to go, while the nomads will stay.

The classical historiographers however seriously misunderstood this situation and drove their theory of geographical determinism *ad absurdum*. They insisted that the more remote an area, the less known it is, the more barbaric and savage their inhabitants are likely to appear. That a number of sociological misrepresentations thus found their way into their reports is not surprising, given the little they actually really knew about mountain societies, and the ideological premises with which they worked. A prime example is the troglodyte lifestyle, an adaptation by mountain-nomads alluded to above. For the classical historiographers the degree of civilisation of the different populations conveniently diminishes with the increase in altitude and the change of lifestyle

[Briant, 1976:169; 1982:28]. They thus argued that travelling highest, one encounters people living in caves and reduced to the state of gatherers and hunters. They went on to sharply distinguish between three entities, the sedentaries, the nomads, and the troglodytes, and thought of them as different ethnicities.

Reality, as we have seen proves to be rather different. In fact the mountains do not contain two different groups, one of them pastoral nomads, the others hunters and gatherers. Nor does the first group live in tents, while the second uses caves. Finally there are no ethnic distinctions as such. Quite to the contrary, it is often one and the same group which switches from one lifestyle and habitat to the other [see also Digard; 1979:38]. Although their main occupation might be pastoralism, highland inhabitants make extensive use of caves as a refuge in times of trouble, trouble often being conquest by a would-be civilise [Goldschmidt; 1980:52]. They represent their last strongholds offering both shelter for the families and possibilities of defence. Survival in these rough regions, however, depends on adopting the ancient ways of gathering plants and hunting animals.

This example, however, shows the profound inability of classical scribes to understand the full range of activity of their subjects. Rather than acknowledging the many ways of adaptation of mountain people, they opted for the easier solution to split them into different entities, which they then proceeded to qualify as increasingly more barbaric and savage. Most of all, they fail to accurately portray the fact that it was many of their own armies' activities in or around a certain area which forced highland populations into a number of adaptive strategies.

It becomes more and more obvious that the Greco-Roman historiographers were speaking in typologies. These typologies were in some way founded on a belief in a certain geographical conditioning of population groups. Any geographical location had attached to it different

expectations of economic achievement. Again, as agricultural land was used as the referent, it makes sense that rocky mountain terrains appear as precondition for a life in poverty. People living in the mountains are considered to be poor as it is not possible for their land to be ploughed. Affluence and agriculture go together and they lie in the plain; the mountains, however, offer no decent lifestyle.

Logic seems to take the classical historiographers further, and poverty is swiftly linked to both nomadism and brigandage. Strabo is an especially stern proposer of such deterministic anthropologies. For him, as nomads do not possess cultivated lands, their territories must be poor; there is little valid interpretation of the actual ecological setting, the link is rather quasi-mechanic [Briant; 1982:27]. Brigandage is equally traced back to the origins of poverty and made into a necessary outcome of life in the highland regions; highlanders must raid, pillage, steal and plunder for survival, as their own soil does not grow them any food [Briant; 1976:169; 1982:26-28]. Evidently in this case, the stages of the pastoral mode is somewhat bypassed, or not deemed capable of providing for a man's and his society's survival. This is not surprising; in fact the classical sources only know of two life-styles, the agricultural one, and, opposed to it, all other modes of subsistence. Nomadism and brigandage are thus grouped together under the second heading. Both are of little value, nothing but a degraded existence, both a necessity of poor soil and climate. The highlander's fate is thus sealed for him by an outsider. As a non-agriculturalist, he stands outside civilisation; his habitat confirms this position. Both combined make up for a life in poverty; the next step is seemingly obvious. Briant states:

D'où cette division que l'on rencontre chez tous les peuples d'Asie vus par les auteurs classiques: paysans et brigands. D'autre part, si, à l'origine, les peuples brigands ne sont pas rendus responsables de leur condition, il est clair que

leur milieu naturel et leur mode de vie transforment leur nature même: ce n'est plus leur existence qui est sauvage, c'est eux qui le sont. [1976:170]

We thus see the development of the equation mountaineer or highlander equates barbarian or brigand. The persistence of the image is immense. More than 2000 years later it is said that the inhabitants of France referred to the "'evil disposition' of the mountain-dwellers, to their 'insubordination' and 'treacherousness'" [Bercé; 1990:299]. Baretta and Markoff again find the same "image of the barbarian" in Latin-American cattle-frontiers [Baretta and Markoff; 1978:597 & passim]¹¹. Most interestingly the picture was not created by the classical authors. A few centuries earlier, and about the same numbers of centuries later than where our concern mainly lies, the Neo-Assyrian perception of mountainous countryside betrays a very close notion of geographical typology:

Ce terme de montagne est certes une indication géographique, mais elle se colore en outre de toutes les évocations mythologiques et littéraires qui, de tout temps, en ont fait, pour les Assyriens, un lieu très particulier. L'opposition montagne-pays enemi et plat pays-pays civilisé plonge ses racines au plus profond de la tradition akkadienne. [Malbran-Labat; 1980:19]

Staubli's view is similar; he exposes several negative connotations that are associated with mountains and deserts in the ancient Mesopotamian perspective [1991:68-69]. He also does not fail to stress that the Assyrian wars against the Arabs, not to speak of the aggressive image of them, are mainly the outcome of the fear of the unknown and the strange [1991:73, 139]. He furthermore interprets the reliefs featured on the "white obelisk", dated as far back as the 10th century B.C., as

¹¹The title of their article indicates even further how closely related the problem is to our findings: "Civilization and Barbarism: Cattle Frontiers in Latin America".

depicting nomads as more closely related to the wild animals of the steppe than to other civilised and urbanised enemies of Assyria. A similar image emerges from the representation of the Arab wars under Assurbannipal. Staubli insists that the massacre of the inhabitants of a nomad tent-village indicates that the nomads are not only seen but also treated like animals [1991:74, 93-94, 97; also Malbran-Labat; 1980:21, 24-25]. This latter realisation gives us another interesting parallel with the classical texts, where fighting the highlander is not actually considered as war, but as a "hunt", which, after all, cannot convey anything else but portrayal as an animal [Briant; 1976:172-173, 1982:20-22].

Given such parallels it seems more than obvious that the classical and the Assyrian sources were in fact speaking about the same entities. Yet it is striking that the classical writers often did not consider the pastoral mode as an alternative for the mountain dweller, but only speak of him as a brigand, at most a cave dweller in the hunter-gatherer stage. Not that being a nomad would have shown him in any better light. As mentioned above nomadism and brigandage are of the one and same kind, but this must not draw us away from the fact that the classical sources actually prefer to use the epithet brigand, not nomad, for highlanders.

The importance of this will show when, in a first instance, we will now turn back to the Assyrian sources. As has been pointed out by a number of scholars, there is in fact no ancient Near Eastern, and this includes Akkadian, equivalent for the word nomad. So, as to find the ancient Near Eastern "nomad", we are left to look for "<<quelque chose comme un nomade>>, un type humain dont nombre de caractéristiques sont celles du nomade" [Malbran-Labat; 1980:12]. The characteristics that Malbran-Labat then presents are however nothing else than the description of people living by the means of raiding and pillaging, people seen as barbaric and hostile, inhabitants of distant and remote areas and thereby invincible and unsubduable [Malbran-Labat; 1980:18-22]. In fact, we are

faced with the same type of barbaric enemy that the Greeks and Romans described as a brigand; admittedly the Assyrian sources do not really describe a pastoralist nomad, but a warlike brigand. The notions of pastoralism and nomadism are in fact as much inferred by Staubli and Malbran-Labat as they are by Briant.

There seems to be two reasons for identifying what is described as brigands with pastoralists, perceptible in the interpretation of both the Assyrian and the Greco-Roman period. First of all there is the association of these people with animal livestock, traceable through the written evidence recording forms of tribute, as well as through the iconographical evidence. Yet the connection between mountain dwellers and pastoralism also arises from the description that is given of those entities who clearly appear as nomads in the written records, the camel-riding Arabs and also the Scythes. These are, to follow Briant's terminology, "*des nomades proprement dits*" [1982:30].

That the nomad is generally cast in pejorative terms, and that he inhabits the same kind of disorderly country, has already been seen. Yet it cannot be stressed enough how parallel the terminology concerning mountaineers and nomads runs. Both Briant and Malbran-Labat clearly show that the nomad is portrayed as the same ferocious, savage and barbaric enemy as the mountaineer. Nor do nomads escape the final outcome of poverty, the shift to brigandage. The epithets *lestai* or *habbatu*, continually used for the highlander, appear in the nomadic context with comparable frequency [Malbran-Labat; 1980:27-28, Briant; 1982:30-32]. Most interestingly, under the Assyrians, there is no real attestation of pastoralism for these *nomades proprement dits* either:

Il est caractéristique que la seule de leur activités à être mentionnée soit le pillage; aucune allusion n'est faite à une possible économie pastorale; aucune particularité de leur mode de vie n'est relevée. Les chameaux, si caractéristiques

du nomadisme arabe, ne sont cités que dans la liste du lourd butin rapporté par Assurbanipal. [Malbran-Labat; 1980:29]

What really links so-called mountain brigands with pastoralism thus is the fact that known pastoralists such as the Arabs are often themselves qualified as brigands. It follows that if known pastoralists are most frequently qualified as brigands, those who are similarly qualified can indeed be pastoralists themselves. It is necessary to consider carefully the development of the image of low esteem attached to both the mountaineer and the nomad. A lot is due again to a combination of language and accident of transmission. Apart from the general negative attitude towards nomads and mountain people, it has to be said that most texts are interested in military activities of war and conquest. Briant has therefore used the terms "language of conquest". It is clear that such language throws a particular *a priori* perspective on the records. These texts concentrate on the warlike activities of mountain people or desert nomads not only because war is their main concern, but to legitimate the actions undertaken against such groups, as well as the often intended conquest of their region of habitat.

Another outcome of the intensive use of this "language of conquest" is that many interpretations have indeed insisted on the fact that all nomads fight. Yet this situation only pertains, when the nomads are forced to take extreme measures to defend their very own existence as illustrated earlier on. An example taken from Briant's study will help to illustrate the point. In fact Briant [1976:178] has noted that among the Mardians women as well as men are involved in the fighting, claiming that women wear a hairband that alternatively can be used as a sling. Although we do not contest the conclusion that a woman will use her hairband with some effectiveness for defensive purposes, it is the case that the same woman will not be found among a raiding group or a vendetta war party. Again it is possible that the circumstances of defensive warfare are more responsible for this warlike appearance of the Mardian women than any

full-time association with the military occupation. Pushed back and under attack, it is but understandable that the women lend a hand, not only because hidden on high plateaus, protected by rocks, it is relatively easily done, but because it becomes a necessity of survival for the whole group.

Yet is it possible to extend the argument to the male population as well? Is the fact that many of our witnesses seem to consider the whole male part of a tribe as engaged in military warfare comparable to the case of the Mardian women? Again the fact that often it is only the military activity of the nomads that has been recorded is responsible for the false assumption that the whole tribe is involved in warfare. Organised along their clan and lineage affinities when fighting, it is normal that to many this could represent nothing else but a militia organised along the lines of the nomadic society and therefore comprising the entire nomadic community in arms. But is this really the case?

More recently such a notion has been challenged. The levying of troops among the population, the "all fight" phenomenon has in fact been seen as a characteristic of peasant rather than nomad communities. Nomads on the other hand are seen to prefer to operate with a soldier-cadre. Especially for aggressive operations, such as raiding, it is not the mass of all able-bodied men, but rather, for example like the Sebei, a selected age-group which partakes in the operations¹³ [cf Goldschmidt; 1980:52-53]. These are quite simply people not only at the best age for fighting purposes, but also, assuming they are drawn amongst the young adults, eager for adventure and needing to secure honour and capital. But again this is not full-scale war and these are not professional soldiers. Nor does their range of performance ask them to be so. They are not equivalent to a trained and expert military element. In fact they are pushed into this warrior role by natural circumstances rather than by

¹³Conversely after sedentarisation previous nomadic communities are seen to adopt the peasant system involving all men in fighting operations, which is not the "traditional Nilotic military organization" [Goldschmidt; 1980:53].

their military aptitude. They are no better fighters than the rest of the nomadic mass except for their youthful energy. For the immediate needs of a nomadic society, however, these methods are highly effective.

Yet beyond the selected age-group it is at times possible to detect other elements who form a nomadic community's soldier-cadre or paramilitary sector. The role of out-of-kin groups should be emphasised. Rosenfeld for example has noticed the use of "manumitted slaves and mercenaries" in the role of body-guards and shocktroops [1965; see also Rowton; 1977:187, 190-191, 194]. It is important at this point that bandits must also be seen amongst such out-of-kin groups. In fact, the relationship that we assume to exist between mercenaries and bandits would validate the proposition. Interestingly Redford claims that membership in the clans of the *shasu*-nomads was not at all exclusive, but that "outcasts and ne'er-do-wells" could in fact be integrated [1992:278]. It is thus possible that 'apiru-bandits gained admittance into *shasu*-communities as a military force. As such they would have the principle responsibility for raiding, pillage and war, due to their full-time expertise. Other *shasu*-nomads could meanwhile concentrate on other productive means, such as herding. As a consequence, the 'apiru-element of a *shasu*-community would appear in the textual record far more often, if, indeed, Briant's "language of conquest" theory proves correct. For then the ancient scribes would be more inclined to report warlike and brigand activities rather than the day-to-day routine of herding duties.

The opposite phenomenon is equally possible. As we have seen, nomads can become proper bandits [Peters; 1978:318]¹³. Rowton has studied this occurrence among tribal societies. It is part of nomadic tactics for the splintering off of unwanted elements. Such tribal disintegration has not always profited from the same sort of attention given to its sedentary and urban counterpart. Yet Rowton has clearly shown its

¹³Remember Knauf: "Die Übergänge zwischen der Lebensweise eines *shasu* und und der eines 'apiru waren also nach beiden Seiten fliessend" [1988:109, fn. 498].

existence as well as its importance. As such, he has also identified at least part of the 'apiru phenomenon as not solely related to sedentary state societies but to a similar phenomenon within the tribal sector [Rowton; esp. 1976b and 1977; cf Asad; 1973:66; Anbar; 1991:106]. In fact Rowton is most insistent on the phenomenon that nomads adopt brigand attitudes, claiming that: "the probability that many of the uprooted and destitute among the detribalised would opt for that mode of life is almost self-evident" [1977:186]. Thus we can understand how Coote and Whitelam come to view tribal and bandit leaders as "not necessarily different persons."

It can happen on the individual level, but it is equally possible that whole subgroups come to be splintered off. With it comes the loss of tribal rights, such as the access to pasture or the right to protection, both commonly held responsibilities in the nomadic tribal sector. We are thus confronted with something more important than the timely sloughing off of individual households who, due to a lack of animal capital, do not see the nomadic-pastoralist lifestyle as viable anymore. For the victims of such tribal disintegration are not only economically at risk, but their survival is also threatened socially and politically due to a lack of an appropriate place in society. After all their loss is that of common capital and rights. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of these tribal outcasts follow the way of their peasant counterparts and take up a life of marauding and brigandage. In fact they are very likely to do so, as the loss of pasturage has to be made up for on the economical sphere. But, as pasturage has become forbidden territory, its appropriation can only be assured by the means of violence. What tribal disintegration thus creates is a sector of subunits, in which the necessity for raiding activities and military strength is much higher [cf Rowton; 1977:193].

The problem lies in how far these units are still to be considered to form a part of the tribal nomad-pastoralist world. After all, these

are tribal groupings rather than isolated marauding bandit bands, and it is at least their desire to remain organised along tribal lines. Rowton claims that, even when joined by similar outcasts from the sedentary sector, they tend to form "tribal splinter groups" [1976b:14]. Some groupings might be adopted by a different tribe. Others might in time resume viability and power and be reintegrated into the old or a new tribe. It is also possible for several of these groupings to come together and form a new, quite important, tribe of their own [Rowton; 1977:185]. Harsh competition can however arise with these societies, where entire new tribes are created. For the sloughing off of groups reduces the labour pool, but it cannot increase pasturage. As such, if splinter groups do not decide to enter the sedentary peasant sector, or otherwise move into the service of state societies, conflict over available land will arise. It is, however, very likely that the newly formed tribe in fact has the upper hand in terms of military development, having had to exist from raiding and brigandage for a considerable time. In this case, the old order might be heavily disturbed in that the new tribe will come to paramount importance.

This begs the question of whether some of these groupings will remain predatory in nature over the long term. Such a phenomenon is to be detected when there is talk of "Raubnomaden" [Dus;1991], "tribus pillardes" [Briant;1982] or robber-tribes [Minor; 1979]. It seems unlikely, nevertheless, that a tribe, including families and livestock, can effectively lead a predatory life on anything more than a temporary or sporadic basis. For both families and livestock seriously reduce the mobility and above all the speed which would be essential to a group constantly engaged in raiding activity [cf Asad; 1973:71]. They would be exposed constantly to the threat of retaliation in regions habitated and dominated by other nomadic groups. Similarly, constant raiding activity by one and the same tribe opens the way to more precisely aimed reprisals by sedentary forces. If, on the other hand, the predatory activity is only sporadic, it is difficult to see any real point of differentiation

between a robber-tribe and any other nomadic tribe.

Conversely, if families and livestock are omitted from the group, can we in reality still speak of a tribe? It must be admitted that any such group, which in fact only includes the raiding warrior element is more closely related to a band or a gang, as such more of a bandit grouping than a nomadic tribe. It is, furthermore, doubtful that the group in question will be able to maintain itself in sufficient numbers to be classified as a tribe. What is true for such bandit groups must also be true for nomadic outcasts turned brigands, namely that the predatory lifestyle is a viability only and as long as membership in the group is limited in numbers. At the most one might expect an organisation along the lines of a brotherhood of companions. Although this notion carries a somewhat tribal undertone, it is, however, not possible to view such a community as the equivalent of a tribe.

There remains the possibility that the predatory nature of the group is in fact a temporary (rather than sporadic) phenomenon. In this case, however, it would seem logical to compare the whole phenomenon with the processes discussed above. With only a slight variation on the theme it is conceivable that such groupings can exist as a sub-unit of a tribe or even a sub-tribe of considerable importance within a tribal confederation, as opposed to existing in isolation. It is difficult, indeed, to draw any clear and sharp distinction from what has been described above. Such sub-units or tribes are more or less tolerated on the fringes of the larger society as possessing particularly predatory inclinations. The Danakil present such a case; other nomads consider them to be cruel bandits [Thesiger; 1993]. They are thus less accepted than strong groups which come to supplement the already existent tribe, yet probably enough to be sure of their loyalty in times of need. Tribes like these could, of course, rise to prominence if they were able to realise their full potential¹⁴.

¹⁴Compare Rowton's view: "Speaking of the process of tribal aggregation, Barth focuses mainly on splinter groups leaving one tribe for another. But

Why should the phenomenon of robber-tribes then catch the attention of anthropologists and historians at all? Again it is possible to consider the phenomenon as the creation of a subjective classification in our ancient records. Minor's and Dus' studies point to this conclusion. *Raubnomaden* cannot be interpreted to be anything other than simply those nomads who do not serve the state or responsible central authority [Dus; 1991:31, 34]. As for the situation in Isauria, nomads that at most times behave quite peacefully suddenly take to brigandage when the Roman interest is redirected towards subduing their territories. It is at this stage that Minor speaks of these so-called bands of brigands as robber-tribes. With all that has been said before, we should now be aware of how unreliable such qualifications are.

It would be interesting to know whether nomads themselves know of such distinctions. Finally there is the possibility that nomads describe rival tribal groupings as predatory organisations as readily as rival petty kinglets accuse each other of rebellion and banditry. Briant has pointed out that Zagros highlanders accused "des tribus pillardes" of not having followed their heeding and attacked Alexander's city. In fact, at times they can find it advantageous to qualify other fellow tribalists as robbers. First of all, it leads to a certain dispersal of responsibility. It is always a good policy to be able to blame groups on the periphery. One avoids punishment and generally draws attention away from oneself. It is also job-creative, as the presence of robber-elements makes policing necessary. The robber-tribe phenomenon, whether the creation of

I also have to reckon with a different process. Splinter groups of this kind, together with the parasocial element on the fringe of tribal society, form into entirely new tribes. That is the subject I am mainly concerned with in the present article. For this process of tribal reintegration would have had the effect of obscuring the significance of tribal disintegration. When a tribe disintegrated not all the detribalized would disperse among urban society. Many would revert to tribal life, new tribes taking the place of old ones. But during their formative period, for at least a few generations, these newcomers would hardly amount to genuine tribes. At their inception most would be little more than a band, often a predatory band, the larger groups a tribal rabble of heterogeneous splinter groups and individual families. During this phase a new tribe of that kind would belong to the parasocial element, rather than with the tribal society" [Rowton; 1977:184].

terminology alone or partly reality, may function as an excuse and pretext vis-à-vis the sedentary forces. Dus reports such a situation:

Die Nomaden aber wissen, wie wichtig und geradezu unentbehrlich sie für den König als billige und treue **Krieger** sein werden. Abgesehen davon, dass der von ihnen geforderte Naturalzins nicht bedeutungslos ist, werden sie das Territorium des Stadtstaates vor allen Raubnomaden verteidigen, wodurch sie das Prestige des Königs sowohl in der Wüste als auch im Kulturland festigen werden. In dieser Funktion können sie weder durch die Kriegshelden des Königs (cf.3.) noch durch irgendwelche Söldner ersetzt werden.
[1991:34]

The interpretation of this situation would seem to be that a chosen group of nomads comes to protect state territory from other nomads. In reality, the latter are probably no more of a robber-tribe than the former. As with bandits and mercenaries, the difference lies mainly in the fact that the first exercise legislated power, while the second work primarily on their own. This is an essential part of the relationship existing between state and tribe; the state employs nomads as an auxiliary military force, either fully integrated in the state's army or left behind as a policing force. In a first instance, it must be said that the state presents both a threat to and a magnet for predatory activity. Yet in the long run it will make little sense for nomads to risk their whole populace through predatory and ensuing protective activities, as it makes little sense to state societies to constantly launch their armies against an unconquerable enemy. Neither party is interested in such continual warfare. It is in the interests of both groups to develop a paramilitary sector of nomadic origin. The state will not only acquire cheap warriors, but gain a certain degree of control over them, whereas the nomadic tribe can continue to use most of its population for normal herding activities, while at the same time reducing

the labour pool. It must not be forgotten that such arrangements will most certainly take place at the top of the social ladder, where military experts play a far more pre-eminent role.

The whole phenomenon thus gives rise to further points of confusion. Is it more appropriate for example to qualify such a marauding group as brigands, insisting on their predatory activities, or as nomads, and thus emphasising their tribal origins? Conversely, do we characterise bandit groups who find employ and acceptance with nomads as nomads or bandits; and what if the bandits were of tribal origin in the first place? Most of all it proves impossible to us to know how the ancient and classical record-holders approached this problem. And if indeed the nomads themselves started to distinguish among themselves rather arbitrarily as to who was a bandit and what groupings were to be seen as robber-tribes, the matter of confusion is reinforced even further. It becomes almost impossible to draw the lines of distinction especially, as we have seen, when banditry itself is after all a nomadic activity.

Let us illustrate the point with one last example. Although the service of nomads seems at first sight to be of a more voluntarily nature than for example the levy of peasant armies, malcontents do exist and no doubt there are tribal deserters [cf Anbar; 1991:148], as of course there are veterans of tribal origin. There is, however, no reason to assume that reintegration into normal nomadic sheep-herding life is any easier than reintegration of peasant soldiers into the peasant life. It is more than probable that some of these elements will at first join bands and groupings of the parasocial world. Ironically as such they rejoin a world in which they can be reinstated as mercenaries or police forces by the state (as seen in chapter 2), or be reinstigated as an expert military force among tribal nomads (as seen above). Again, how can we be sure which of these forces to qualify as of nomadic as opposed to bandit stock?

Thus a new perspective from which to view *shasu*, 'apiru, and the hill-countries of Syria-Palestine emerges. We have seen that the Egyptians share the Assyrian and classical concept of mountains, deserts, and ultimately of their inhabitants, and pointed out further points of confusion. Thus it is possible to reinterpret this statement by Lemche:

In geographical terms the *sutu-sasu* seem to be associated with regions which cannot be held to be *habiru* territory; thus we are forced to seek them in the marginal areas in the south and to the east....Nor is there anything to indicate the presence of a nomadic population element in the mountainous regions in the central parts of the country. There is no reason for amazement in this connection since this region was heavily forested and thus a suitable home for bands of outlaws; it must have been rather uninviting to nomads. [1985:422]

This assumption must now be seen in a different light. The previous discussion has shown that often the nomadic-pastoralist inhabitants of highland regions are qualified as brigands or barbarians. In the Palestinian case *sutu/shasu* are called 'apiru/Sa.Gaz. Thus it is not possible to simply exclude the *sutu/shasu* elements from amongst the inhabitants of highland regions as Lemche maintains¹⁵. As in the Assyrian and Greek case, the pastoralist occupation of the highlander is omitted only so as to stress the barbaric brigand nature¹⁶. Na'aman [1982] had already realized that the Egyptians at times confused 'apiru and *shasu*

¹⁵Contra Lemche, Knauf maintains that the Egyptians knew of *shasu* "im zentralpalästinischen Bergland" [1988:102]. Earlier he states of the *shasu*: "Ich stelle mir darum, ohne dies hier näher begründen zu können, die "nomadische" Bevölkerung Palästinas vor der Landnahme nach dem Modell der Sawawi von 'Uman vor: kleine bis kleinste Gruppen von Viehzüchtern in gebirgiger Umgebung mit kleinem bis kleinstem "Streifgebiet", und ohne übergreifende Stammesverfassung [1985:44-45] (emph. added).

¹⁶Rowton, who defends the presence of woodland in mountainous areas in the Bronze Age, in fact insists that this accounts for the presence of good grazing land. Thus, although he insists that the mountainous hinterland remained attractive to "uprooted social elements, the *hapirû*", he also emphasizes the presence of nomads and tribesmen, as well as the independence they would have enjoyed in the Bronze Age [1967:263, 277].

elements. He maintained that the Egyptians themselves often used the appellative *shasu* to describe the troublesome elements that in Palestine would have been qualified as *'apiru* [1982:30-31]. This chapter, however, would emphasise that the process also worked in the opposite direction. Indeed our findings stress that at times *shasu*-nomads may well have been classified as *'apiru*.

Textually speaking there is thus little reason to maintain that, because the highlands were *'apiru* territory, there were no nomad pastoralists present. Interestingly Staubli's interpretation of the iconographical record often makes a case for the fact that defeated *shasu* retreated onto a "Fliehelsen" [1991:for example 50, 51]. Such tactics have been described at length above. They are applied by nomadic people all over the world. It also indicates however that *shasu*-nomads were at home in the mountains and acquainted enough with highland territory to be able to seek refuge here. The iconographical record would thus point towards the association of *shasu*-elements with mountainous areas. Staubli's translation of the text accompanying the relief called "Einnahme von Kanaan" [1991: Abb.31:50-58] reinforces such a notion:

Die Hügel der Rebellen konnte [man] nicht überqueren wegen
den Schasu-Feinden [Text II; 11-13:52]

Die Schasu-Feinde zetteln einen Aufstand an, ihre
Stammesführer versammelten sich an einem Ort auf den Hügeln
der Charu [Text IV; 4-6:54] (emph. added)

Thus we can see the difficulty in attributing clear-cut labels and activities to the *'apiru*/*SA.GAZ* and the *shasu*/*sutu*, as well as the *habbatu*. We see a prime example of the phenomenon in the Amarna Letters where Dagantakala announces:

"Aus der Hand der Sa.Ga.Az-Leute, der Räuber-Leute, der Sutu-
Leute ja rette mi[ch], grosser König, mei[n] Herr!" [EA

A number of deductions on the role of the 'apiru have been based on this passage. We will look at two of them before adding our own commentary. Albright used Dagantakala's statement to claim that the 'apiru were neither *sutu*/"bedouin" or *habbatu*/"bandits", but indeed somewhere in between, sharing however characteristics with both groups [1975:112]. A second conclusion, somewhat dependent on the first, claims that their parallel use in the same document at least attests to the fact that the terms are not synonymous and that we are indeed faced with different entities [Coote and Whitelam; 1987:108].

We are here in fact not contesting the conclusions drawn by Albright or Coote and Whitelam, but would like to add to it. We accept that the *sutu* are different from the 'apiru, and these probably not entirely similar to the *habbatu*. Whether all three groups were, however, in reality oppressing Dakantakala is another question. In view of all that has been exposed above, it is possible that in fact only one group was at the heart of his miseries, but that he simply could not tell in all certainty which one it actually was. Although it is not possible in a definite manner that this was the case, he could simply have listed three of the groups which he associated with marauding activities¹⁷. Na'aman gives a similar interpretation of EA 297:11-16 and EA 299:17-26, although here only the *sutu* and the 'apiru are mentioned, stating: "It is reasonable to assume that the same group was intended by this double name" [Na'aman; 1982:29].

This would not even deny the actual existence in the Amarna times of the three different groupings (as they are all three mentioned)¹⁸, yet

¹⁷Compare this to the many different descriptions that are given of the strongman Aqiili Agha in Ottoman Galilee as either brigand or tribal leader, or government official indeed [Zenner;1972].

¹⁸Again see Na'aman: "It should be emphasized that the tribally organized groups (*Shosu*, *Sutu*) and the splinter groups which were organized as independent bands ('*Apiru*) were not identical" [1982:30].

it shows that they were not always clearly identifiable even to their contemporaries. The passage thus illustrates our point, that we have to remain highly suspicious of the use of the Ancient Near Eastern labels and appellatives, when "the Amarna scribes did not take the trouble to specify the precise name of the trouble-makers from among the various social groups then living in the Land of Canaan" [Na'aman; 1982:29-30].

Chapter 4

The Palestinian highlands in the Late Bronze Age

The previous chapter has shown how the ideological undertone of what Briant has called the "*langage de conquête*" can seriously mask a given actual political situation. Numerous authors warn us against taking ancient and classical records too much at face value [Clavel-Levêque; 1976; Wolski; 1976:281-282; Kotula; 1976:337; cf Liverani;1983], especially where whole populations are regarded as engaged in brigandage. It is important to remain alert in trying to read between the lines and discover the reality behind such negative attitudes and pejorative terms. Far from being the poverty-driven brigands that the authors would like us to see, Briant draws a picture of mountain dwellers who have taken full advantage of the potential that their territory has to offer. Far from portraying cave dwellers in arid mountainous zones, Briant stresses the importance of intermontane valleys with conditions open to both pastoral and at least limited agricultural exploitation. Thus instead of warlike and aggressive barbarians in the need of civilization, Briant stresses a comparative prosperity and lack of direct aggressiveness on behalf of the hill-tribes. Both realizations considerably affect Briant's view of the relationship of these highlanders with the existing authorities.

It is important to consider Briant's findings in order to provide a different perspective on the actions of and against *shasu* and *'apiru* groupings in the period of Egyptian hegemony in Syria-Palestine. We have seen that the Egyptians held a similar view of deserts, mountains, and their inhabitants to that of the Assyrians and classical sources. Consequently we have extended the meaning of *'apiru* to cover the notions of highlander and barbarian as well as those of bandit or brigand. It will now be interesting to portray an actual political situation comparable to that described by Briant for the Zagros highlanders under the hegemony of the Assyrians, Persians, and Greeks.

The previous chapter has also alluded to the fact that there is one point at which reality and the much described urban paranoia of remote elements meet. At this point stands the so-called "invincibility" of nomad and highland populations. We have seen how this notion of invincibility stems from the advantage provided by the terrain of desert and highland territories. Secondly, given the numerous possibilities of finding refuge in various hideouts, it is virtually impossible to completely vanquish such a highland population. Victories by outside forces represent normally only temporary setbacks to mountain inhabitants. Their forces and numbers will regenerate soon enough, and people will regain their normal zones of habitat and resettle in their normal routine of life as soon as the armies of the would-be conquerors leave the mountain areas.

Ultimately, it must be admitted that mountainous regions present major obstacles to would-be conquerors. Although this does not mean that they are predominantly populated by barbarians and of a hostile disposition, they nonetheless form a major problem for proper integration. Often it is said that such remote hinterland can only come under "nominal control" by aspiring state authorities [cf Bates; 1971:117-118]¹. Briant chooses to call them "pockets of resistance" (= *poches de résistance*)². We think that he thus proposes a valid alternative to Rowton's notion of nomadic enclaves. The topological factor, so often stressed by Rowton, is maintained, the particular terrain of the highlands giving rise to the particular political situation pertaining [Rowton; 1973a; 1973b:247]. Although we thus see some straightforward similarities between Rowton and Briant, it is not

¹A comparison can be drawn from the situation in and attitude taken by India and Iran towards Baluchistan. Salzman portrays: "(Baluchistan) was a large, unattractive frontier area inhabited by wild, uncivilized and recalcitrant savages. Not much was to be gained by control of such an area, and considerable expense would be expended in any attempt at control. In general, containment was the main goal of Baluchistan's developed neighbours; occasionally, mechanisms of indirect rule were instituted for limited areas of Baluchistan, but these tended to be short-lived" [1980b:97].

²Another expression, used by Kotula, is "flots de résistance" [1976:345].

evident that Rowton's important idea of "enclosed nomadism" is necessarily to be equated with Briant's analysis [Rowton; esp. 1974]. Briant's "pockets of resistance" function in relative isolation. In fact, as mountainous areas, they are set apart from the adjacent plains, the effective realm of control of the state. The plains however present the actual sedentary zone, and it is debatable to what degree one has to view the Palestinian nomadic enclaves to be set within this zone [Rowton; 1974:1]³.

Indeed relative isolation, or better only partial integration, lie at the heart of the autonomy enjoyed by mountain people. It cannot be stressed enough in this matter that it is not only inability, but a considerable degree of disinterest that leads to this situation. This can be seen by the ultimately poor efforts of so-called civilization undertaken by Alexander the Great. If the ultimate mode of civilization is considered to be urbanization, then attempts to "civilize" the Zagros mountains was a failure. In fact Alexander did nothing but pass through the areas, dealing with opposition mainly on the way to greater things, the sack of Persepolis and eventually the conquest of India. He did precious little to totally subdue or reduce the military potential of the regions he passed through. Nor is there indeed much evidence that he had a plan of urbanization for the regions. On the contrary, where urban sites were established their purpose was to surround and delimit mountainous areas rather than to urbanize them [cf Kotula; 1976:346]. Briant insists that Alexander hardly changed the situation which prevailed in the Persian period. Cities were present on the outskirts of mountain territory in order to control and protect against their populations. According to Briant, this was a true "*limes* of civilization", a product of the politics of exclusion as much as of the guarantee of autonomy to the mountain people.

³Rowton however is very insistent on this aspect: "Here, instead, emphasis is on pastoral enclaves within the sedentary regions. The dominant factor is not the peripheral tribe, but the tribe within the sedentary zone. It constituted an autonomous polity inside firmly established states" [1974:17].

It is interesting then to note that the situation in Palestine of the New Kingdom period was very similar. The situation within the hill country centering around 'apiru activities and the two contestants of power, Lab'ayu and Abdi-khepa, is illuminating. Yet, however we are to view the situation of the central Palestinian highlands of the time, it must be stressed that it is neither new, nor about to change drastically in the near future, or at least not as far as the Amarna documentation goes. It follows that the political status of both the Lab'ayu and the Shechem region and Abdi-khepa and the Jerusalem region are accepted by the Egyptian authorities. Redford [1992:269-270] argues that in Shechem with Lab'ayu they recognized and upheld the local dynasty, leaving it with the responsibility over of a considerable area, encompassing the Jordan caravan-crossing to Gezer and then reaching northward all the way to Megiddo. The case of the Jerusalem area is somewhat different in that here the Egyptians intervened to bypass primogeniture, and brought to power Abdi-khepa, who being Egyptianized, was conceivably more to their liking.

The Amarna Letters do not themselves indicate how this state of affairs was reached; yet as they are set within the reigns mainly of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, who both engaged in little campaigning of their own, it is a reasonable assumption that it must have existed at least prior to their advent, possibly in the early periods of the formation of the New Kingdom Empire. It is obviously difficult to state an exact period, but it would appear that the establishment of proper Egyptian domination with Tuthmosis III cannot be too far off the mark [Leonard; 1989:13]. But like Alexander's passage in the Zagros mountains, Tuthmosis' passage in the highlands must share the characteristics of a byproduct on the march to greater things. Subduing remote and secluded hill people cannot have been Tuthmosis' prime target. The major objective was to secure sources of timber, thus to guarantee a firm hold on the Phoenician coast and to maintain it by creating a buffer zone [Na'aman;

1981:181; Strange; 1987:5]. Indeed, for a long time the Palestinian highlands especially profited from the fact that the real struggle took place further to the north.

Though Tuthmosis in his dealings with the Palestinian hill people was first of all intent on showing his might and potential punitive capacity, he or one of his more immediate successors nonetheless realized that some form of control needed to be imposed. But there was little interest in direct domination, accompanied no doubt by the realization that, for all the reasons mentioned in chapter 3, and especially with things still heating up in the north, effective subduing and consequent policing was an impossible task⁴. The best result would have been to keep the hill people at bay. This was achieved first of all by granting a certain degree of autonomy to chosen local strongmen under the condition that they control their own territory; in the Amarna period these local representatives were Lab'ayu for the north, and Abdi-khepa for the *mâtat Ursalim*, "lands of Jerusalem" [Redford; 1992:269] to the south.

Beyond this desire to keep relative peace in the highland area, Egypt felt apparently little inclined to force, or even want, further integration of people who were in their eyes impoverished barbarians with few riches to plunder, or to put it diplomatically, to submit to taxation [cf Irons; 1979:372]. Accordingly Egyptian civilization somewhat bypassed the hill country. This is most noticeable in the lack of urbanization that the truly mountainous hinterland underwent. Lemaire thus noticed that the Amarna Letters, apart from Shechem itself, mention no city between Jerusalem and the Shephelah settlements of Gezer and Aijalon to the south, and the Dothan and Jezreel valleys to the north [1990:219; cf Ahlström; 1991a:29]. He then turns to Egyptian toponym lists covering the

⁴This is a common shortcoming in the building of empires. Stability all around is needed, before the authorities turn towards the mountainous subregions. Again compare the Roman situation in the Taurus mountains: "The campaigns of Servilius Isauricus (78-79) lay the foundations for Roman dominion in southern Asia Minor but the Third Mithradatic War and the prolonged Roman civil wars prevented the full subjugation of the region until the reign of Augustus (30 B.C.-14 A.D.)" [Minor; 1979:119].

period from Thutmosis III to Ramesses III, to come to the same conclusion:

On notera aussi que, à la différence de celle de Shéshonq Ier, ces listes ne mentionnent généralement aucune ville de la montagne d'Ephraïm ou du territoire de Manassé, sauf éventuellement celles qui sont, en limite de la plaine de Yizréel: Ibleam, Burquna, Taanak, Beth-Shéan, Pella...
[1990:220]

In the south, it is striking that Judah, or the *mâtat Ursalim* of Amarna times, undergoes a similar fate. Apart from Jerusalem, the major settlements of Gezer, Lachish and Aijalon are not in the hillcountry, but are mainly situated in the Shephelah. One might add as a last instance Megiddo in the north, again situated on the fringes of the Carmel range rather than within hillcountry territory *per se*, to confirm the impression that the Egyptians deliberately left the highlands surrounded by settlements, whilst at the same time doing nothing to promote urbanization within it. This is highly reminiscent of a *limes* of civilization, imposed not solely by barbaric refusal, but also as a result of lack of interest in the area beyond the upkeep of a state of law and order.

Thus the Egyptian central authorities probably took a double political stance. They made efforts towards partial integration of the highland regions, probably aimed foremostly at keeping the dominant military forces on their side. On the other hand, they pushed no further, thus leaving the highlands somewhat excluded, in accordance, in our opinion, with existing city-state policies. It is difficult to see how deliberately Egypt maintained this policy, although it is possible to point to some advantages that spring from it for an *ad hoc* system of dominance. By not "civilizing", or not fully integrating the remote highlands into an urban network, they profited from the urban paranoia,

in that leaving a "barbaric entity" in existence, kept the city-states reduced military might oriented towards the mountain enemy rather than against Egyptian occupation and, as the Amarna Letters indicate, left them partly dependent on Egyptian military support. It also prevented closer associations taking place between mountain and plain polities to produce a united front. As such, it appears to be a very intelligent alternative to or even a sub-policy of the more commonly advocated "divide and rule" theory [cf Weinstein; 1981:16; Leonard; 1989:20]. Finally, and this will be discussed later, the presence of a "barbaric entity" always guarantees a good reason for military intervention.

It should be clear by now that the Palestinian highlands could be classed in Briant's terms as a "pocket of resistance". The previous chapter has shown that the population are viewed as "barbarians", while the Amarna letters suggest that the surrounding political configuration and climate were appropriate. In the Amarna period, as Redford observes, neither Egypt nor the city-states to the west had a firm hold on the highlands, but "the 'apiru and nomadic dissidents always had the upper hand" [1992:268; Chaney; 1986:66]. This state of affairs was, however, regarded differently by these two entities⁵. Whereas the petty kings of Palestine complained bitterly, Egypt seems to have been perfectly happy with the situation. This would offer a different perspective on both 'apiru activity and Egyptian failure to give heed to the plights of the rulers of the city-states, which should come under the rubric of "regulated hostility" [cf Briant = *hostilité réglementée*].

It has recently become clear that the New Kingdom did not suffer from a serious decline in the Amarna period, as has previously often been

⁵See Thompson's interpretation: "The tendentious function of many of the Amarna letters (namely to get money, supplies, troops, or moral support from the Egyptians) should cause us to hesitate before we read them as direct reflections of reality. Authorities in the best of times feel harassed by enemies and brigands. When they shout loudly as they have in the Amarna letters, we are not warranted on the strength of these shouts alone to conclude that the sky was falling, only that they wished to convince someone that such disaster was imminent" [Thompson; 1992b:207, fn.111].

assumed, precisely because of the relative inactivity of Egyptian pharaohs at the time [cf Leonard; 1989:17, 20; Lemche; 1990:87; Thompson; 1992b:207]. Four problems find frequent mention in the Amarna corpus. Three of these (the inter-city disputes, the 'apiru turmoil and bureaucratic corruption and neglect) are not at all unique to the period, but widely attested phenomena in the Ancient Near East. The fourth (interruptions in trade and commerce) is judged to only have caused minor and occasional disruptions [Weinstein; 1981:15]. The Amarna period is thus increasingly being viewed as representing "the normal state of affairs" [Weinstein; 1981:16]. Na'aman says the following:

Recent studies on the Amarna correspondence have made it clear that the archive reflects no breakdown in the Egyptian rule of Canaan. Rather the letters portray a situation of "business as usual", one in which the Egyptians were strong enough to maintain their rule over their Asiatic provinces. From an Egyptian point of view, the Habiru were regarded more as a disturbing element than as a real threat to their rule in Asia. For the rulers of the city-states, on the other hand, the Habiru may have been a direct threat, and the Amarna letters supply many indications of this. [Na'aman; 1986:276]

Thus from the Egyptian point of view there was simply no need to intervene. If the Palestinian state of affairs was indeed "normal", it goes without saying that such 'apiru activities were not only an expected occurrence but had been going on before. We can thus postulate that under the 18th dynasty we witness in Palestine a "long passé d'«hostilité réglementée»" [Digard; 1979]. It is appropriate at this point to comment on the rather disproportionate view that Egyptians and city-states had on this subject. The city-states being in the immediate firing line saw the 'apiru as mighty enemies and highly dangerous to themselves. The Egyptian court however was not only remote, but had a broader imperialistic

outlook, and to them the important thing was that highland 'apiru activity was simply not endangering the normal functioning of the empire [Ahlström; 1991:29]. The fact is that both outlooks are in their own way reflective of the true situation. There is thus no need to consider the documented 'apiru activity as gross exaggeration on the one side, or Egyptian inactivity as negligence on the other; the apparently paradoxical attitudes are merely the result of the differing political spectra in the minds of the two parties concerned.

Again a similar situation can be detected in the Greek records. Here, however it is the need to legitimate Alexander's actions that leads to a differentiation between the Greek and Achaemenid interpretation of the situation. Having depicted the highlanders as barbaric brigands, it is clear that the image of state-highland relations will itself be cast in negative terms. With an emphasis on pillage and plunder, the Greek sources are indeed inclined to show a situation of permanent hostility between the highland tribes and any state apparatus involved. In their eagerness to justify the conquests of Alexander and to promote the advantages of civilization, they readily bypass the fact that within the Achaemenid empire relations were dictated by a network of regulations that both sides approved of and that had functioned for a long time. Their records are thus not only biased towards the mountain people but blatantly overlook the political prowess of the Achaemenids who are pictured simply as having failed to incorporate and pacify their highland hinterlands. Briant clearly disapproves and proceeds to show, first of all, how untenable the statement is. He then also exposes the shortcomings of Alexander's politics of civilization. The exercise is thus not solely to rectify the errors of transmission but to show the notions of incorporation as well as pacification and civilization in an entirely new perspective.

The Greek historians have misunderstood the way the Achaemenids handled the people populating their mountainous enclaves. In some cases

they misinterpreted the situation to such a degree as to present an explanation of the events quite contrary to actual reality. In fact it is maintained on several occasions that the Achaemenids were themselves paying tribute to the hill tribes, where these found themselves in control of a *route de passage* [Briant; 1982:82]. Looking closer at what is here being said, one recognizes that the Greek historians thought not only that a state of permanent hostility existed between Achaemenids and hill people, but that the latter were indeed the stronger of the two protagonists. This Briant finds hard to believe; nor is he convinced that the Achaemenids should have failed, where Alexander would have later succeeded. He observes:

Si l'on veut bien admettre que les Achéménides n'étaient ni des lâches, ni des incapables, ni des imbéciles, on doit admettre aussi que le choix de la route des Cosséens ou des Ouxiens était délibéré et volontaire. [1982:84]

He reverses the situation insisting that, had the Achaemenids really wanted to, they could indeed have subjugated the hill people to a greater extent. That they did not do so and yet persisted in using this route only shows that they are in fact assuming a deliberate political stance. But he also insists that the choice of passing through hill people territory is an annual event only, shortening, and therefore facilitating the Great King's pilgrimage in the hot summer months. Other routes, longer and troublesome, but commonly used, are indeed available, and consequently, if the king chooses the alternative route once a year, he does so not arbitrarily, but most likely because it makes good sense. Indeed where the classical historians saw the hill-tribes subjecting the Great King to pay tribute, a sort of *péage* or *droit de passage*, Briant, on the contrary, perceives the king as leaving behind the stamp of his authority.

Briant in fact does not contest the fact that the hill tribes are

indeed being offered considerable riches in return for safe passage but around this event he construes an entirely different political framework. It is important to see these offerings not as a tribute paid by the weaker party, but as a donation from the stronger and richer, to the weaker. Briant thus introduces the politics surrounding the act of giving, politics which he summarizes under the heading of "don et contredon". The idea is in fact not entirely new; Hayden also has identified the power of the gift and how it can be manipulated [Hayden; 1993:169]⁶. In this instance, it is most important to notice that the initiative lies with the Great King, as this radically alters the situation. For what before looked like the collecting of protection money at the best or at the worst, outright robbery of the ambush type, hostile actions of brigandage directed against the king, appears as a quasi ceremonial affirmation of friendly relations that the Great King initiates by the deliberate offering of a gift.

Thus far it might still be argued that nothing has really changed. After all the king still does little else but buy peace in his realm. But the fact is that by initiating the process the king also initiates the flow of dependency. Thus by voluntarily seeking the route of the hills and offering gifts, he secures the favor and alliance of the hill tribes, who feel themselves in the need to return the gift as well as to adopt an attitude of friendship. A relationship is then established which on the one hand leaves the hill tribes with a considerable degree of autonomy, yet as surely establishes that the dependency is in fact that of the tribes towards the king. Assured of the friendship of the hill people, the king can indeed spare them a great amount of freedom. The hill people are equally aware that the relationship is relatively fragile. The king's territory is now to be considered "terres amies". Any acts of aggression,

⁶Hayden traces the phenomenon as far back as the hunter-gatherer stage, thus explaining its natural aspect: "The act of giving something that someone wants or likes has a strong emotional effect on the recipient. The recipient immediately becomes favorably disposed toward the giver, adopts an attitude of friendship and sympathy, and also experiences feelings of indebtedness. This, too, appears to be a fundamental part of our emotional makeup, part of human nature" [1993:169ff].

such as pillaging, will, at times, easily be interpreted as an act of war. As the inferior in the relationship, this is something they can hardly risk.

To an extent it is obviously possible to disagree with Briant and emphasize for example that the Achaemenid's perception was itself dominated by the desire to present themselves in the best possible light. Naturally the Achaemenid court would not have admitted that it needed to buy off hinterland tribes with presents. Nonetheless, it shows that they were perfectly happy with the situation whereas the Greek onlookers stressed the anarchic side of the story.

The New Kingdom situation was little different. A second closer look at the 'apiru activity involved is thus appropriate. Let us at least define the main agents. First of all we have Lab'ayu, who seems to be involved in much of the trouble, though he himself confesses his loyalty (EA 252-254). Working with him are Milkilu and Suwardatu, though later on they apparently are reinstated in Pharaoh's service (cf EA 267-271). All three are mainly accused by Abdi-khepa of Jerusalem (cf EA 285-291), yet he himself is later considered the main trouble-maker, ironically by the now reinstated Suwardatu (EA 280). Another stern accuser of Lab'ayu is Biridija of Meggiddo (EA 242-246), and in the Shephelah Gezer is at one stage accused of provisioning the 'apiru, at another itself suffering from danger arising in the mountains (EA 292). We are thus faced with the usual interplay of accusation, counter-accusation and reaffirmation, that are part of the normal build-up of the Amarna documents, and must be fully aware that little of it can be taken at face-value.

What is noticeable, however, is that the main trouble is centered in or around the highlands and the major protagonists to be watched are Lab'ayu and Abdi-khepa, who have been instated by Egypt. Much of the turmoil was apparently concerned with a struggle over the expanding powers of jurisdiction that must have lead to their confrontation.

Furthermore, most of the activity can have been little more than local skirmishes and raids, given not only Egyptian reluctance to intervene, but also because of what little was at stake. As Redford has pointed out the Amarna Letters do not only exaggerate the forces at work, but give a false impression of the importance of the "cities" that the 'apiru were apparently taking. Gonen claims indeed that the majority of the cities lacked serious fortifications [1984:62, 69; also Thompson; 1992b:209]. The Amarna Letters themselves hint at such minor importance, when rarely more than 50-100 troops are being asked for protection [Marfoe; 1979:15]. The active 'apiru cannot have been particularly numerous. All these factors combine to lead us to look for a different explanation of why cities, territories, and people were described as going over to the 'apiru.

It is advisable at this point to turn back to the politics of giving and view the advantages that spring from such a relationship for the central power. In the Achaemenid case, the king is obviously cleared of the duty to police the mountainous areas, a duty which he has now relegated to the responsible hinterland élites. To these, however, this represents the price, but also the guarantee of their autonomy. The king at the same time creates a frontier police as the position of such mountainous areas often transforms them into useful buffers. Still within the military sphere he is now able to profit from contingents of mountain origin. Finally the return gift, often produce of pastoral nature, makes a welcome substitute for tribute, although as we shall see below, its importance should not be exaggerated.

It appears that this is in line with what is often claimed to dominate relationships of trade and exchange between sedentary states and nomadic tribes. At this point it is thus appropriate to look at such relationships for a short while. Exchange is used mainly as a synonym for trade, that is the swapping of one object for another, or for some monetary value-item. This begs the question of how far pastoral nomads

are involved in such trade. Klengel maintains that in the ancient world, the nomadic involvement in trade was somewhat minimal [1977:167, 169]. Similarly Khazanov claims that market-oriented pastoralism is a rather recent development in nomadic societies. Although the pastoral economy generally strives towards capital accumulation, this seems to be a strategy of survival and security rather than to be directed at the production of surplus for the market [1984:71, 205]⁷.

To this one might add that in any case pastoral produce is a relative luxury for the sedentary agriculturally-based world. Agricultural produce, on the other hand, is a necessity to the nomad [Khazanov; 1984:82, also 202-206]. As such one starts to wonder what sort of exchange might take place between ancient state and tribal nomads. The solution seems to be that nomads are mostly engaged in the exchange of services, that is, in payment for much needed agricultural products, they offer their services in a variety of ways [cf Klengel; 1977:167]. Guidance and protection of caravans are often cited as among the occupations taken over by nomads. They are also able to rent out transport animals or become entirely responsible for the transport of sedentary merchandise. Also they are, as professional pastoralists, sometimes called on to look after or take into their care the flocks of sedentaries. Such services are of course related to trade, yet the nomad's involvement is tangential, in that it is mostly his labour that he sells, not his produce.

But the most important service that the nomad offers is on the military plane [cf Rowton; 1976c:242]. The nomads are most important to the authorities as an extra intake of armed men, as seen, either by direct integration into the army or by relying on them for policing. The two functions might of course overlap. It is also noteworthy that the need of the state for soldiers quite distinctively creates or at least

⁷One might also quote Knauf who claims: "Fernhandel in altorientalischer Zeit -...- war Staatshandel, Nomaden kamen in ihm nur als Störfaktoren vor" [1985:17].

largely increases the military component of the nomadic tribes under their influence. It is very doubtful that the same high number of individuals would engage in a military career if this was not the case. Under normal circumstances, the organisation of a tribal territory simply does not need nor has it the room for such an exaggerated amount of military specialists. In the end, in a case like this, it is the influence as well as need of the state which leads to the creation of or the increase in the paramilitary sector among tribalists.

The sedentary state conversely has good reason to turn towards the nomads for recruiting special forces. Turning to Eph'al's discussion of military engagement in the Ancient Near East, we note that one of the weaknesses of ancient state army systems is the fact that they rely too much on the strength of their chariot specialists for superiority [1984]. These, however, are few, and not able to effectively control vast areas. For war in the ancient world was done by seasons and battles were not only difficult but also slow to stage. An army, and especially its chariots, had to be moved over long distances to reach the point where the battle was held. This was easy enough in the situation of campaigning, when the whole army was on the move and heading towards areas of confrontation. Yet it proved extremely difficult to realize in the case of frontier defense and revolts. In a vast empire it is near impossible to move one's specialist forces to dispersed zones of danger over a short period. In other words, the chariot-squadrons are highly effective as far as raging war and battles and imposing local dominance are concerned, yet less effective when it comes to controlling and policing a large empire.

It thus becomes necessary for the state authorities to turn towards the local population, not only to enlarge its numbers, but to guarantee forces of order *in situ*. That they turn towards nomads rather than the sedentary peasant population, is not entirely due to the their adeptness for military tasks. It is first of all a matter of the exchange

mechanisms that we have exposed above. Thus a state society will preferably draw the nomadic component of the population into permanent service of the military kind, rather than reduce the basic food-producing unit by recruiting peasants from the fields. This is especially so, because an agriculturally based economy does not function properly, when large parts of the population are away from home [Borowski; 1987:9].

Eventually one must again mention that civilized states perceive the more constant threat to take root in nomadically and tribally controlled regions. Bearing in mind the extensive discussion on nomadic military superiority, we can see why it makes sense to employ troops accustomed to the territory. Frontiers are also fixed at points where often the geography and the environment dictate a nomadic lifestyle, such as mountain ranges or desert fringes. It follows that the best frontier police available will be of nomadic stock. It is with these circumstances in mind that we have to consider nomad auxiliaries as *élite*-troops. Finally it must again be said that nomads are often recruited so as to protect and defend against themselves. By calling on a tribe to survey a territory or a frontier area, the state not only acquires an effective police force, but also guarantees for itself peaceful relations with the tribe itself.

Being thus a military force, nomads are immediately entering the arena of politics and as their military efforts serve the sedentary world, it is the arena of sedentary politics that becomes the new playground. Trade, understood in this way, is the exchange of goods from the settled world for military and political concessions on the part of the nomads. We think that it is under such circumstances that we should understand Khazanov's statement:

However, the sedentary states bordering onto nomads of the Eurasian steppe usually regarded trade with nomads as an instrument of external politics, a way of applying economic

pressure ...'[1984:206]'... Nevertheless, whenever possible sedentary states in the Near East never missed an opportunity to use the interests of nomads in trade as a means of political pressure. [1984:208]

Khazanov reiterates the theme for many regions and many forms of nomadism, maintaining that governments in their dealings with nomads were never far from political considerations and that often the economic aspects were suppressed by political and military interests [1984:206-209]. The Egyptian case cannot have been different. This in itself is not surprising, but it is most interesting when we turn to an article presented by Liverani on the subject of trade in the Amarna period, in which he concludes:

But everything finds its own place on a global scale, in which to make gifts and to reciprocate them (as also to refuse them and to put them off) is in function of keeping alert certain political relations: ideally in the desired way, and, if not in any possible way. [1979:33]

It would seem that the Egyptians knew the political impact of gift and counter-gift, and used it in their dealings with Syro-Palestinian entities. Redford also has noticed the importance of the politics surrounding gifts in the Syro-Palestinian region [Redford; 1992:81-82; cf Na'aman; 1981:174; Strange; 1987:4]. He has also stressed that the Egyptian government of Syria-Palestine was, when for example compared with the Assyrian empire, of a very *ad hoc* nature. There seems to be a strong case that Egypt will have looked to engage in a relationship very similar to that between the Zagros mountain people and the Achaemenid central authorities when dealing with the population inhabiting the Palestinian highlands. The politics of presenting gifts indeed would have guaranteed the maintenance of law and order in the highlands, as well as the acquiescence of their inhabitants' military services without the need

to impose costly control, as is the case with tribute paying vassals. The latter was only considered viable when handling regions of prime economic importance and easily conquerable. For hinterland and mountainous areas the former was deemed sufficient⁹.

It can again be seen that two different opinions can thus arise, one by a strong imperialistic force who has just freed itself from dealing with annoying hinterland activities, one by relatively weak petty kinglets, who themselves dispose of only very limited military personnel to face the threat. As we have seen, even the towns on the plain were little more than relatively large villages, the kinglets in fact little more than mayors or headmen [Redford; 1992:268]. Given the reluctance and impossibility of imposing urbanization in the highlands, the extent of the here existing habitation units must have been even more reduced. In the circumstances, an armed group roaming on the outskirts of an unfortified village, eventually causing some havoc and even appropriating some of its food-produce, can have been interpreted as "taking over a city". Similarly a "city" where food was given voluntarily to such a group can be seen as "going over to the 'apiru". In reality, however, this is not comparable to making a full-scale rebellion. It might well form part of a symbiotic relationship between a tribal group and a village. Finally loosing territories and cities must be associated with little more than the free movement of mobile marauders as well as possibly quite peaceful nomadic tribalists within these territories. It is with these assumptions in mind that we reiterate a statement by Coote and Whitelam:

It is because of their military expertise that bedouin possess political power far outweighing their numbers. It is this military role of the pastoral tribe which is important for its relation with the state as well as an important

⁹Staubli devotes a large section to *shasu* serving as mercenaries [1991:41ff]. That the tactics of hiring local forces went on in Egyptian dominated Palestine can be seen in the extent with which the 26th dynasty relied on such forces [Na'aman; 1991:esp. 45-48].

factor in tribal autonomy. During periods of declining state power, often the result of continual warfare, the military expertise of some tribes allows them to gain control of extensive settled areas often incorporating urban areas.

[Coote and Whitelam; 1987:110]

To a distant and biased onlooker the same movements appear as a state of anarchy, the mobile element as barbaric brigands to be chased, if not eliminated. Abdi-khepa in this instance is either misinterpreting the situation, or to the contrary quite voluntarily summons up the pretense of reigning anarchy and barbaric conditions in order to see his rival in the north hopefully being sacked by Egyptian intervention.

Furthermore, if aggressive 'apiru activity found actual expression in limited raiding occurrences, there is no need to hold Lab'ayu as responsible in all instances. Lab'ayu was only able to muster what available armed force there was in Shechem. Described often as a sheikh, it is indeed quite possible that he had at his disposal a paramilitary sector, which equally possibly could have been made up of the parasocial element. There is, however, no need to assume that his troops were any more numerous than those of his rivals; in no way could he have been in control of swarming hordes of 'apiru that he ordered to battle from the outskirts of Jerusalem to Meggiddo. In many instances raiding must have gone on without his knowledge since he would not have been able to control effectively all the highland territory at all times. So-called robber-tribes and bandit-groups must have had territories of their own sway. Finally Lab'ayu probably had to rely on the aid of nomadic troops and bandit captains in many remote areas of the hinterland where he himself dared not trespass. For Lab'ayu, and most probably Egypt, the main aim was to hold aggressive behaviour at bay or at a normal and expected degree. Abdi-khepa on the other hand was swift to point to political machinations and important coalitions, which he viewed as leaving the Pharaoh's lands and cities in the hands of barbaric brigand

elements.

It seems apparent that Abdi-khepa exaggerated the importance of 'apiru activity. Yet some credit might be given to Abdi-khepa. Though intent on extending his own area of jurisdiction, it is possible that he honestly thought of himself as a better representative of power than his rivals were. His own status might help our understanding on this occasion. He insists many times that, unlike the other kinglets, he is an Egyptian officer (EA 288:9-10), and has been put into office by Pharaoh himself rather than having inherited his position. This points towards him having been somewhat Egyptianized. According to Redford [1992:270] this shows that the Egyptians had more interest in the region around Jerusalem than the surrounding areas. This argument is sound if one considers that Jerusalem controls the route from the Jordan valley to the coastal plain. In our opinion it also explains Abdi-khepa's bitter complaints about Lab'ayu's ways of handling the central hill country. To an Egyptianized officer it must have been frightening to see the surrounding countryside under the control, not of imperial detachments, but in the hands of local armed men of unsettled origin and barbaric in appearance. The fact that he might have been taught the logistics behind employing these mountaineers cannot completely do away with the situation that they looked fearsome and of doubtful loyalty. He probably also took far too much pride in the fact that he had been officially installed by Egypt, instead of simply having inherited his position [Redford; 1992:269-270], to lower himself into accepting the authority of hinterland auxiliaries.

On the other hand, some of his actions, especially the turmoil he was to create later, might be the result of his desire to exceed his powers of jurisdiction. Not content to control the west-east route from his stronghold, he clearly expected to have at least a say in how things were being handled not only in the adjacent northern hill country, but also in the Shephelah. It is hard to know if this was part of the

erstwhile Egyptian assignment, but he obviously felt responsible for a wider area than the immediate lands of Jerusalem. The position of the Shephelah towns of Gezer and Lachish might illustrate this point.

Abdi-khepa complains about these towns as provisioning the 'apiru forces under Lab'ayu (EA 287:14-16), whilst Gezer at one stage is even seen as sending troops to Milkilu and Suwardatu (EA 290:8). Yet to put all these actions into a context of illegality is to misread the situation along Abdi-khepa's lines. For it would be false to assume that the city-state kinglets were any less politically aware than the Egyptians. They soon must have realized that, in the absence of Egyptian intervention and given their own reduced military power, it was sound to agree on some kind of arrangement with the hinterland forces. Cities in the Shephelah, i.e. within easy raiding range, must have sided on some occasions with either Lab'ayu or Abdi-khepa, even playing one off against the other. It is doubtful indeed that Shephelah kinglets would have shared Abdi-khepa's idea of the extent of his responsibilities; they might in fact easily have played into Lab'ayu's hands, especially as an Egyptianized officer may not have been to their liking. It should be emphasized that even after Milkilu and Suwardatu had been reinstated, they never sided with Abdi-khepa and disputed Abdi-khepa's legitimate zone of influence. The fact remains that either Abdi-khepa's, maybe well intended, but paranoid perception of the occurrences in the neighbouring hillcountry, or his own expansionist views, made him file several complaints that received little response from the court which simply did not see things with the same eyes.

The same situation is probably applicable to the plight of other kinglets. Themselves military weak, burning with paranoia, they begged Egypt to put an end to the threat of apparent anarchy in the mountainous hinterland. Egypt's response was rare, in most cases absent; to her the situation appeared balanced enough not to endanger her imperialistic claims. This balance was to last for a considerable period of time, in

fact all through the 18th into the 19th dynasty. We hear of one campaign only being alluded to in the Amarna Letters, as several kinglets prepared to receive, provision, or meet the King's army. Again it was most probably intended to reach further northwards, and in any case it is very doubtful that it ever occurred. This striking lack of campaigning expeditions seems to have been the norm till the beginning of the 19th dynasty. Such inactivity within Palestine itself cannot be interpreted as anything other than the fact that the Egyptians were perfectly happy with the state of affairs which prevailed at least from the Amarna period.

Having argued so far that indeed the representation in the Amarna letters does not correspond to the political reality, it is now interesting to take a look at the economic exploitation of the highlands in this same period. Noteworthy among Briant's realizations for example is the degree and manner in which the Zagros mountain tribes exploited their territory. Already we have seen how he rejects the description of some tribal groupings as troglodytes⁹, preferring to point to the fact that these are not individual entities of tribes of hunter-gatherers, but part of a vaster ethnos subject to one of various temporary adaptations. He furthermore establishes quite early on the importance of pastoralism in mountain regions. However he deviates from the classical sources by postulating a considerable occupation with agricultural exploitation wherever this is deemed possible. As we have seen, the classical sources indeed tended to ignore the pastoral mode of existence and there is no reason to assume that they did not do the same for the agricultural lifestyle. After all, it would defeat the process of civilization if the mountain inhabitants were themselves already engaged in the exploitation of agricultural resources. Briant arrives at this conclusion not solely by reading in between the lines of the classical texts, but by the realization of the potential that mountain regions can offer, especially

⁹Briant is supported in this from a more general perspective. In fact in his exposure of the troglodyte myth, Hayden quite simply states: "If human populations had been restricted to living in caves, they would have had little chance of surviving" [1993:68 & 69]. It reinforces the notion that cave-dwelling is but a temporary strategy for survival.

when intermontane valleys are taken into consideration. Such valleys can in fact prove relatively fertile and, provide not only rich grazing lands, but are there to be transformed into fields; it is unlikely that this would have been missed by the mountain people.

The question then is whether the situation in Palestine shows the same potential possibilities. It can surely be argued that Lab'ayu's realm for example must have survived on other modes of production than raiding activities, especially given the limited extent of 'apiru activity as it has been described above. It has to be accepted in this case that similarly to the classical records, the Amarna documents not only exaggerated the role of brigandage activities, but reported these particular occurrences to the detriment of the usual state of affairs. In these circumstances and with respect to the relation between 'apiru, *sutu* and *shasu* as we have established it in the concluding parts of chapter 3, it makes perfect sense to look beyond the records in order to postulate the existence of more peaceful means of subsistence, such as pastoralism along with a limited degree of agriculture.

Our opinion is furthermore substantiated by the fact that the highlands were far from being a barren land. The Palestinian highlands under the New Kingdom, and this includes the Amarna period, similarly suffered not a lack of resources, but rather a lack of manpower. This is hardly surprising, given the deportations under the early pharaohs of the 18th dynasty, which particularly affected the hill country [see Thompson; 1992b:205]¹⁰. Nonetheless it can be stipulated that by the time of the Amarna period the population had already recovered and was able to support itself. There can hardly be any doubt that the highlanders took advantage of the pastoral potential offered by their countryside. Whether

¹⁰Manpower was apparently in short supply during the period overall; many struggles accordingly were not about the control of land or territorial disputes, but concerned with the control of the labour force. One might well wonder whether some of the "expansionist" policies of some highland chiefs, and the *hupsu* becoming 'apiru, should not be interpreted as an outcome of the desire to attract a strong enough workforce in order to implement a fuller exploitation of the highland realms [cf Marfoe; 1979:14-15].

or not they originated from the prior Middle Bronze IIC period as Finkelstein maintains [1988:343ff; but see Thompson; 1992b:222], it must be considered that groupings, tribal or not, of mountain nomads herding sheep and goats, very possibly formed quite an important part of the basic population of the Palestinian highlands in the Late Bronze Age.

The presence of a pastoralist element, nomadic in nature, is more often agreed on in scholarship. The conclusions that we have drawn in chapter 3 also reinforce such a view. Yet the case is different as far as the agricultural sector is concerned. From the archaeological point of view everything speaks against important agricultural activities in the highlands during the Late Bronze Age. There are but very few settlements, which could qualify as peasant villages. The textual evidence concentrates on military activities and therefore is not concerned with rural agriculture. Yet it is our contention that at least limited subsistence agriculture took place in parts of the central highland ranges¹¹.

The arguments are varied, but extremely important is one fact that modern anthropology never fails to stress: the fully or purely nomadic society is a very rare phenomenon, if existent at all [Cribb; 1991:16; Orme 1981:262]. Nomadic societies can simply not exist without some sort of contact with the sedentary world. Whether by including agents of the sedentary mode of production among their own numbers, or through arrangements with neighbouring village or city inhabitants, nomads must have access to the products of agricultural life [Bates; 1972:48; Yedid; 1984:28]. Similarly Khazanov maintains:

However, a specialized pastoral economy, in contrast to the economy of many comparable forms of agriculture, itself

¹¹Furthermore it is also true that accidents of discovery and the strategies of archaeological research have added to this situation. As seen in the introduction for too long archaeologists concentrated their research on urban sites, trying to uncover large sites mentioned in the Bible. Only recently have there been made efforts to dig up smaller villages in remote areas.

cannot produce even all the immediate requirements of nomads. Nomadism is practically inseparable not only from supplementary forms of economic activity, but also from such social and political activity which numbers amongst its aims the overcoming of economic one-sidedness... [1984:70]

Khazanov does introduce some reservations in that he still regards pastoral nomadic economies "conditionally as autonomous economic systems", but vividly stresses that nonetheless they are not autarkic [1984:81; but see Klengel; 1977:167]. Non-autarky is the outcome of specialization, in this case the sole occupation with animal husbandry. It is the irony of such specialization, however, that it is only possible if enough outside agricultural resources are present. Lees and Bates, for example, see the origins of specialized pastoral nomadism as rendered possible, or even as the result of pressures exerted through "the practice of canal irrigation as a technique of agricultural intensification" [1974:187]¹². Only then was it possible to develop symbiotic relationships which rendered both modes of production viable. Khazanov sees the development of Eurasian pastoral nomadism as related to the emergence of sedentary states in the same area. He insists that it was the very existence of these states that provided the necessary circumstances for nomadic pastoral specialization to come into being [1984:95]. Finally regarding the origins of pastoral nomadism in both the Eurasian steppes and the Near East, he concludes "...in both regions nomads were linked right from the beginning in a complex system of peaceful and hostile relations with sedentary states" [Khazanov; 1984:102]. Such theories of origins reinforce the point that nomadic pastoralist societies are highly dependent on the sedentary and agricultural sectors.

Although some agricultural necessities might in fact have been

¹²The presuppositions of this development are that "the process of domestication of plants and animals occurred in conjunction, and that the earliest food producers practiced mixed farming" [Lees and Bates; 1974:187]. Similarly see Garthwaite [1978:175].

obtained in exchange for the policing activities as well as provision of troops undertaken by the hill people or in exchange for their pastoral produce or thirdly in raids, one might however wonder if this was sufficient to maintain even the reduced highland population. Much of the first must have benefited the élite more than any other part of the populace. The third in a similar manner can only have been to the profit of groups reduced in numbers, possibly actual bandit groups, which sought to complement their usual modes of food acquisition by raiding. The second however, if we are correct in the assumptions drawn previously, was minimal in any case, especially when the peasants of the plain possessed their own flocks and guaranteed their own pastoral income [cf Coote; 1990:13]. In fact, as we have pointed out, the Palestinian hinterland remained only partly integrated, as such relatively isolated from the adjacent plains. Thus all points towards the fact that the highlanders were forced to occupy themselves with the agricultural mode of production in some form or another. Prag shows himself most insistent on such a point, when analyzing symbiotic relationships between nomads and sedentaries in the Levant:

The balance is a delicate one, depending completely not just on climate and seasonal rainfall, but also on contemporary politics. Given the right circumstances, many of these pastoralists settle on a temporary or a permanent basis to cultivate. Indeed Hole (1978, 152) believes that normal nomadism includes cultivation, hunting and gathering as well as pastoralism, and there is much ethnographic data to support this. [Prag; 1985:83] (emph. added)

An agricultural sector can also be discerned in the textual evidence. One only needs to read in between the lines of the Amarna Letters as Briant does for the classical sources. If in fact the description of 'apiru activity is to be associated with the similar records of brigandage concerning the mountain people of the Zagros, it

also holds that in reality there was a more complex combination of social and productive activities than the single preoccupation with war, raids, plunder, and pillage¹³. The argument gains substance from the fact that especially in the Samarian hills around Shechem, there are indeed broad valleys, with plains beginning to extent further north, a factor which influenced settlement of the highlands in ancient times [Rogerson; 1985:149; cf Thompson;1992b:223]. It is unreasonable to suppose that, quite unlike the Zagros mountain dwellers, the Palestinian highlanders would have ignored the potential benefits of these valleys. It seems to us that all points towards some agricultural exploitation of the valleys, albeit to a limited degree¹⁴.

The realization of agricultural exploitation however draws alongside it a number of ensuing consequences for lifestyle, habitation, and organization among the mountain people. Invariably more permanent forms of settlement are connected with agricultural development. Briant insists that the Mardians, the Kassites, and the Ouxians all are partially engaged in the agricultural mode of existence and live in villages in the valleys. In the Palestinian case, however the fact remains that so far settlement appears to be virtually absent. However, this simply means that although there may not have been an extensive and sophisticated sedentary and urbanized society in the Late Bronze highlands, this does not rule out the exploitation of agriculture in consort with pastoralism. This was clearly not a highly sedentary culture, but an agro-pastoral mode of existence, within which admittedly an important part of the population pursued a nomadic existence again

¹³It should at this point be noted however that Prag also emphasizes: "Semi-sedentary tribes are not necessarily peaceful." [1985:83]

¹⁴Knauf holds a similar view, although he is insistent on a view of the 'apiru as peasant refugees. Nonetheless it is interesting to follow up his argument: "Gewiss kam es zwischen 'apiru-Banden und Nomaden-Sippen zu einer Vielzahl friedlicher und unfriedlicher Kontakte als sie sich das gleiche Gebiet noch teilten; und die meisten 'apiru werden im Bergland das getan haben, was sie schon in den Ebenen betrieben hatten: Ackerbau und Viehzucht, nur dass sie nicht mehr in Häusern, sondern in Hütten wohnten. Dass uns die Texte die 'apiru in einer Vielzahl anderer Tätigkeiten zeigen, nur nicht in dieser, liegt an ihrer städtisch-staatlichen Perspektive, für die alles, was in den Bergen geschah, sich im gefürchteten (und ignoriertem) "Niemandland" abspielte" [1988:109].

with a major emphasis on sheep pastoralism. It is no surprise therefore that permanent settlements have not been identified archaeologically, though it is not altogether easy to speculate how the agricultural and pastoral sector divided themselves in the wider highland society. It must however have been the case that some form of seminomadism pertained, where the same unit either pursued different occupations at different times, or where a split unit prevailed. Briant, for example, raises the possibility that in fact we are often faced with one unit involving two sectors, one nomadic pastoralist, the other sedentary agriculturist. As such, one part of the population constantly moves around with its herds, the other remains in the villages tilling the fields. As part of one and the same unit, however, it is readily concluded that they live in symbiotic harmony, one of the components providing in a variety of ways for the other. We have thus a situation which seems to translate into what we might consider to be a tribal organization with a sedentary sector or, at the highest level, an "integrated tribe" [cf Rowton; 1974:2; Cribb; 1991:25-26; Prag; 1985:83].

Under these circumstances, it is possible that in the archaeological record evidence for settlement can easily have been missed. In a first instance settlement would be relatively dispersed and mainly present in intermontane valleys. Added to this, we again are faced with accidents of discovery and to some extent inappropriate strategies of research. Furthermore, Cribb maintains that "although the artifacts and campsites used by nomads need not lie beyond the capacity of modern archaeology, there may be no simple means by which these are distinguishable from productions of more settled communities" [1991:65]¹⁵. His study has shown settlement types that linger on a preciously fine distinction between permanent and precarious, especially where the worlds of semi-nomadism and semi-sedentism meet [cf also Orme; 1981:106-107]. It thus becomes perceptible that a wide range of nomadic dwellings exists from tent to hut or house. As such, it is for example not always easy to

¹⁵The claim here then is that sedentary forms can at times have been missed or mistaken as nomadic.

decide whether a hut represents the residence of a sedentary peasant rather than a nomadic pastoralist. He also shows that some kinds of precarious dwelling forms can in fact be used over a rather extended period as semi-permanent settlement. Only after further development do such dwelling forms start to betray characteristics of more advanced sedentism. The outcome of many of Cribb's descriptions is that archaeologically it is quite possible not only to confuse nomadic and sedentary settlements, but also to overlook some settlements of a more precarious kind altogether¹⁶. While archaeology thus clearly prevents us from identifying the Late Bronze highland society with a highly developed agro-sedentary culture, it does not speak altogether against the presence of smaller dispersed settlements for limited agricultural exploitation¹⁷.

However it is appropriate to point out that the north probably held some agricultural advantages over the more southern regions. This would especially be the case if settlement and agricultural exploitation did indeed take place mostly in the intermontane valleys. In the north these are much broader and thus more suitable to these ends. Further south, in the Bethel and also the Hebron hills, the economy would have been even more heavily dependent on pastoralism. Again the region of the *mâtat Ursalim* seems to present a somewhat special case. Although pastoralism is highly practicable in both the Judean hills and the Judean desert, regions such as the wilderness of Judah are most famous as a refuge for renegades and bandits of all sorts. Jerusalem itself thus gains its major importance from guarding the east-west and north-south routes in a region

¹⁶Daker mentions "la tente fixe" [1984:52] and "la hutte d'estivage" [1984:54]. He and Yedid also talk of nomads who are "sédentaires sous la tente" [Daker; 1984:53; Yedid; 1984:21]. Jarno claims "qu'il existe de nombreuses combinaisons fonctionnelles entre la tente et la maison, et qu'un seul mot (*beit*) recouvre de multiples relations entre la tente et les constructions en dur" [1984:198].

¹⁷Orme, who insists that agriculture is an important element among pastoralists [1981:262], also claims: "Whether or not there are permanent buildings, occupation sites are frequently permanent, albeit not permanently inhabited, ...clearly permanent settlement sites do not exclude a pastoral economy anymore than the absence of such sites indicates one" [Orme; 1981:261].

mainly inhabited by nomadic pastoralists and frequented by marauding bandit-groups. No wonder that the Egyptians were a bit more careful in choosing the man responsible for imperial presence in order to keep open the route to the Jordan valley [Redford; 1992:270]. With the neighbouring Shephelah at hand, there would also have existed less incentive to engage in agriculture. Maybe this also accounts for Abdi-khepa's stern reaction at Gezer and Lachish's support for 'apiru groups. It is thus possible to point out certain divergences existing between the northern central range and the southern hills dominated by Jerusalem already in Amarna times. The far greater agricultural potential of the north must have worked to its advantage. It was always more prone to increase its autonomy from the surrounding imperialistic presence's. A closer look at the socio-political arrangements in the north and the south will emphasize this point. It is also important for the ensuing discussion, especially for the problem of state formation in the highlands.

In fact the Amarna archive is the last, if not the sole, direct indicator, however imprecise, for the socio-political organization in the hill country during the Late Bronze Age. Like Abdi-Asirta of Amurru, Lab'ayu is held by many scholars to have been a sheik, rather than a standard Amarna petty kinglet. This complies with the identification of 'apiru as a nomadic element and the highlands as a pastoralist hinterland. Nonetheless, given the discussion of the paramilitary sector amongst nomads, it is still possible that his major strike and police force probably consisted of bandits. He furthermore had a seat of power in the city of Shechem. More so than Abdi-Asirta, Lab'ayu would thus qualify as the prototype of what Rowton qualifies as a "parasocial leader", reigning over a "dimorphic chiefdom". Yet as already mentioned, his hold on the northern hill country was far from complete. Although ultimately the surrounding kinglets held him and his sons responsible for all that occurred in the highlands, there must have been within his jurisdiction enough free-roaming bandit-groups and non-complying tribal and nomadic elements. Indeed the general qualifications of Sa.Gaz/'apiru

and *sutu/shasu* for the inhabitants of the highlands do not give justice to the diversity among the entities involved. Thus to view Lab'ayu as the only sheik controlling one tribal entity by means of a highly experienced paramilitary élite would be misleading.

Abdi-khepa's sway over the southern part of the hillcountry was even less complete. His dominion did not effectively extend into the Shephelah where his power was constantly opposed. In the end he must have presided over a small, mostly unattractive and sparsely populated region. The vaster part of the region, the Judean desert and hill country, must have appeared to him as barbaric as its northern neighbours, and the *shasu*-dominated Negev to the south and Transjordan to the east. Abdi-khepa more and more appears as a deliberate Egyptian creation: a local baron, set up in his stronghold bastion of the Jerusalem saddle to act as a buffer against the surrounding autonomous elements, as well as a line of protection to the more attractive Shephelah.

Another interesting question is of how much these forms of control and government survived into the following periods, and how much it could be affected by a changing political state of affairs. The little textual evidence that we have on the subject tends to imply that in principle there was a hereditary system. Even the figure of Abdi-Asirta left a solid heritage to his sons, Aziru in particular. Similarly the continued influence of Lab'ayu's sons in the northern hill country cannot be denied. Finally the very insistence with which Abdi-khepa proclaims that he, to the contrary of the other rulers, had been installed by Pharaoh himself and had not come to his position by the right of primogeniture, points into the same direction. The question, however, remains as to how far this extended into the latter period of the Late Bronze Age. The intervention of Egypt during the 19th and early 20th dynasties cannot have done anything else than displace some of the existing élite-figures. There is little reason to question the fact that the more permanent installation of Egyptian personnel must have done away with the previous

local dynasts, be this on the plain in Askalon, or deeper in the Shephelah, from Gezer to Lachish. Replacement of some of the dynasties could have followed in the aftermath of the Qadesh events. Moreover the arrival of the Sea Peoples can only have accelerated this process. The extent to which such events took place will be analyzed in the following chapters. For now, however, as imperial trouble remained further north on the frontier between the Egyptian and Hittite zone of influence, the situation within the highlands of Palestine must have remained that of a mainly nomadic pastoralist hinterland enclave.

Chapter 5

The highlands as a centre of dissidence and refuge

After all that has been said so far, one might wonder indeed how the Palestinian highlands could come to attract the attention that is generally paid to them. Our whole study so far has only shown that they represented a widely uninteresting hinterland, inhabited by people that appeared inferior to the powers of the time. Nonetheless, when the political situation is right it is especially such long ignored groups that can come to dominate the ebb and flow of political power and machinations. A good example of this, illustrating the considerable degree of irony sometimes involved in the processes, is presented by Minor's treatment of the Isaurian populations. Thus he says in his introduction:

And yet in the midst of the mighty Roman Empire a tiny group of tribes defiantly plagued the invincible Romans with their outlawry for six hundred years. Despite this distinction the history of the Isaurians is cryptic and esoteric, even though they ultimately placed a robber-chieftain on the imperial throne of East Rome. [Minor 1979:117 and passim]

To a certain extent the situation in Palestine must have resembled that of Isauria. Some scholars have indeed come to similar conclusions. Let us turn to Halpern for a first general understanding of the events:

In short there is evidence neither of disgruntled peasants running amok, nor of compulsive king-killing in the Canaanite ecumene. Rather the Amarna archive documents the rise of mountain kingdoms -with bandit traditions and a

drive toward primitive capital accumulation- much like the one Israel became just before her explosion into the Jezreel and the coastal plain. [Halpern; 1983:63]

Unfortunately Halpern, like Minor to some extent, appears to fall into some of the pitfalls that we have pointed out in the two preceding chapters. Most clearly he still shares some of the classical assumptions which identify not only mountains as automatically impoverished regions, but also that these conditions can be logically used to speculate for activities of banditry and brigandage, or what he calls "primitive capital accumulation" on part of the mountain inhabitants. Common to our standpoint, however, is the importance placed on the geographical situation presented by mountainous regions, as well as the identification of the main social actors in the 'apiru groups around the figures of Lab'ayu and his sons. Yet we differ in the socio-political status that is to be attributed to this group, for unlike Halpern who concentrates on their bandit-nature, on this occasion, we tend to side with Redford who perceptively associates their activities with those of "nomadic dissidents"¹. It follows that the political role played by the mountainous environment is not so much an intense opposition to, but an isolation from, the adjacent plains. This differentiation does of course not eliminate all aspects of aggressiveness, in fact it does not even deny Halpern's assumptions *per se*. Yet it allows us to view the socio-political disposition of the highland entities as more than that of mere parasitical existence as bandit agglomerations.

It seems that Halpern, in the anxiety to see clear parallel developments between Amurru and the Palestinian highlands [cf 1983:62, 78], overlooks that in the Shechem and the Jerusalem case, the Amarna Letters do not document the rise of a bandit-kingdom. This might be

¹Except for the use of the term, Redford never fully discusses the idea of dissidence, as we have done in chapter 4. This is very unfortunate as his views on the *shasu* tend to confirm our own interpretation.

the case for Amurru, but in the other two cases we are presented with a completed situation rather than with a development. While Lab'ayu and Abdi-khepa are to be seen as established within their territories that they control from the two respective central settlements, Abdi-Asirta is more actively engaged in an expansionist take-over.

Thus Redford warns against making general assumptions regarding the developments in the Amurrite zone, since he considers this to be a particular phenomenon, rather than a model which can be applied to the settlement of the Palestinian central highlands [1992:267]. Admittably neither the central range of mainly Ephraim and Manasseh, nor the Judean hills, and neither for that matter the hill country of Upper and Lower Galilee², can be said to exactly copy the topographical situation of Amurru at the time of the Amarna letters. Especially Amurru's very particular political position, as a highly disputed region around the river Orontes where not only two but three major powers vied for the dominance of the bufferzone of Syria, does not have an exact replica in or around Palestine [Redford; 1992:267, also 169]. In the end, it is precisely because the major political turmoil of the time took place around the area from the river Orontes towards Anatolia, that the region of Palestine cannot claim for itself the same conditions. At that time Palestine enjoyed a relative calm; its major turmoil was still two hundred-fifty years away.

In fact the relationship as we have established it to exist between the Palestinian highlanders and the responsible Egyptian authorities does not point towards a state of permanent hostility. Beyond this we find a state of affairs that is dictated by the degree of autonomy and freedom of action that is left to the hill tribes. It would, however, be false to claim a state of absolute harmony. Briant is quick to warn us that not all can be put down as being a sole

²It is a matter of debate whether or not Galilee, and especially upper Galilee, should be directly associated with Palestine, or whether it should be considered as the hinterland to the Phoenician coastline. See for example Thompson [1992:258]!

consequence of conquest and the use of language. He is ready to admit that brigandage existed in a variety of ways being performed by a number of groups³. This shows, however, that even where relations were regulated, hostilities sometimes flared up. We have already alluded to this fact. It is here that Briant speaks of "regulated hostility" (= *hostilité réglementée*) and, thus, introduces fresh categories to be recognized on the continuum of peaceful and warlike relations, especially as they exist between mountainous and/or nomadic populations and adjacent state societies. It is preferable for the latter not to take too much notice of minor incidents and skirmishes and leave the handling of law and order to the people themselves, thus respecting their autonomous status. Nonetheless they are in a position to exert enough power to execute drastic punitive actions if things go to far. From this point of view the hill people, or at least the élite who entered the relationship, will try their best to keep hostilities under control even if they cannot avoid them completely. When the state feels strong, it might well use actions of brigandage as a pretext for a punitive expedition, possibly as a display of might. However, in the long run, they will prefer to avoid such a response given the costs and inability to totally subdue the hill tribes. In fact as seen in the previous chapters, the military potential of the hill tribes can never really be broken and is quick to revive.

Things nonetheless were about to change [cf Na'aman; 1981:185]. Although textual evidence is scarce, it is generally agreed that Egypt came to lose much of its dependencies further north to the Hittites, one effect of this being that the frontier moved southward and thus ever closer to Palestine. With the frontier came trouble, trouble which has to be seen to explain the change within Egypt's policy towards Palestine. Some factors can be identified as indicators of the changing status of affairs. First of all Egyptians re-engaged in extensive campaigning expeditions, culminating in the stand-off at

³Again see, for example, the discussion on robber-tribes in the preceding chapters.

Qadesh under Ramesses II. It apparently continued under Merneptah, and it is in his victory stela that a new entity called Israel is first mentioned. This turmoil is added to by the arrival of the Sea Peoples on the shores of Palestine. Another important feature is the appearance of increased settlement in the highland regions. Indeed it is probable that this increase in settlement is closely related, if not a direct outcome of the change in Egyptian politics, the pronounced campaigning activities as well as the troubles created by the Sea Peoples. Briefly stated, political troubles had come to Palestine, and reactions had to be expected as surely on the plains as in the highlands themselves.

The reasons behind these changes are many fold, but we might identify two which seem most important to us. The first was the need to fortify Palestine more strongly militarily, while the second was that much of the burden of taxation shifted towards Palestine as well. Both are not only interlinked, but evidently also dependent on the loss of the northern dependencies.

So far Palestine had functioned much in the role of a go-between region [cf Thompson; 1992b:205-206]. Egypt concentrated for one on the timber supply from Phoenicia, and frontier duties were carried out by the dependencies close to the buffer zone, although Egypt in the end probably lost the gamble with Amurru. Palestine's major involvement in military affairs must have been to provide for the passing troops. Even in this it was probably called upon only rarely as we see in the Armana Letters. Palestine also stood fairly fast in its loyalties, in contrast to dependencies such as Ugarit and Amurru. This cannot solely be the result of its geographical position, but ultimately shows that here there was little reason to be dissatisfied. All this points to the fact that for a long time the whole of Palestine stood in a privileged position, seldomly bothered by harsh imperial claims on either the military or the fiscal plane. This changed dramatically

with the loss of the northern buffer zones. Not only did campaigning restart with unexpected vigour, but Palestine had to undergo increased military occupation, as the region itself gained in importance to hold off the Hittite challenge. Egypt knew only too well that if Palestine fell, she herself would be the next in the firing line [cf Rogerson; 1985:216].

Palestine, after a long period of relative calm, found herself suddenly confronted with the real hazards of imperial domination as Egypt tightened her grip on its southern dependencies. Palestine had to adapt, and it would be unreasonable to think that adaptation took no other form than willing subordination. Bercé's study [1990] would suggest quite the opposite to be true. In fact he claims that the passage of armies, the need to garrison and feed them, and added to this the troubles that many soldiers provoked, be it by sheer misbehaviour and undiscipline or by quite blantly living off the land, often were at the base of numerous riots in France⁴. Similarly it can be assumed that much of the Palestinian population did not take well to the presence of outside military groups, who showed little respect to the lands they were either passing through or to which they were assigned. The situation can only have worsened as military occupation was supplemented by the ever increasing burden of taxation especially as the end of the empire approached. It should be within this period of intensive Egyptian presence, that we should look for any causes of political troubles in Palestine.

Bercé insists that it is especially regions, which stood in some sort of privileged position, like Palestine under the New Kingdom, that developed the most hostile reactions against newly imposed authoritarian presence. Like Palestine, such regions and its towns had for a long time remained loyal to the crown. In times of war, when the

⁴See especially pages 179-196 in fact entitled "Riots against soldiers", which Bercé starts with the words: "Riots against soldiers are an ancient defensive reaction of any community --as ancient indeed as the passage of soldiers itself" [1990:179].

enemy threatened on the frontiers and kindled revolt and insurrection inside the realm, they did not change sides, but supported the state. For this the state awarded recompensation and granted privileges, which mostly translated itself as minimal administrative and fiscal state presence. These regions considered such privileges to be their right and reacted stubbornly against any new state encroachments⁵. They thus turned into what Bercé calls "hotbeds of insurrection" [1990: 288-305]. They resemble Briant's "poches de résistance", permanent regions of turmoil in one form or another. As such what states and empires do create by leaving certain enclaves to enjoy relative independence, and accordingly treating them favorably as far as taxation is concerned, is regions which quite justifiably come to think of themselves as privileged *de juro*, and therefore ever more fiercely resistant to further state encroachment⁶.

Turmoil is inherent and frequent as opposition not only to outright conquest or expanding state control but to new taxes or the imposition of duties. This is what should be called "dissidence" rather than revolt or rebellion *per se*. It does not aspire to

⁵There are of course differences to be noted. France deliberately granted privileges in the form of tax exemptions and limited autonomy to cities and regions within the zone of confrontation for support to her cause. She ran into trouble when she withdrew such privileges in periods of peace. Palestine on the other hand must be considered to be probably more lucky than actually privileged. Again the extent of Egyptian imperial claims is here at the heart of the problem. We must partially agree with Eph'al in that Egypt never really constituted a firm empire as such. If one compares furthermore, as Redford does, the Egyptian *ad hoc* regime with Assyrian stern stipulations by treaties etc, one must begin to view the Egyptian empire as mostly a wide zone of influence from which it could expect some tribute. On the northern fringes it found itself in constant competition, never really able to impose itself firmly over a long period of time. In the south it lacked the time and incentive to bother as its main concerns lay with the struggles in the north. But the situation remains comparable, as in both cases the regions in question saw dangers arising to a *status quo*, to which it had become accustomed in its liberality. If ever rebellion was conservative, it was in these cases which fought for the maintenance of the old ways.

⁶Bercé gives a number of examples before exposing the situation as such: "When a rising spread to the neighbourhood or the whole inhabited area, the usual reason was that the community had up till now enjoyed a tax exemption, *de juro* or *de facto* as the case might be, and the residents wished to uphold it...Their rebellion also had a larger, political meaning. People were signalling their refusal to accept the coming of state control and the new, terroristic methods of tax raising through which the government aimed to impose it" [Bercé; 1990:214].

overthrow systems as such, nor to drive out an exploitative overlord. The system or the overlord were never present to such an extent to make such a claim. Resistance is mainly put up so that a takeover by the overlord is avoided; dissidence is clinging on to one's privileges expressed somewhere on the line between autonomy and independence. Most interestingly, such regions often were adjoined by or part of a mountainous hinterland, such as the Pyrenees, where state encroachment had as in our case been resisted most successfully over long periods of time [Bercé; 1990:295]⁷. These pockets of resistance offered an all too ready refuge to any trouble makers in the wake of unwelcomed new state measures.

The major problem for the historian is that such acts of dissidence go relatively unnoticed. It operates within the norms of military engagement to be expected within the realm of empire structures, as part of what we have described before as "regulated hostility". It is often disguised in the literary record under forms of brigandage. It does not leave behind a level of destruction and has little, if any, impact on the archaeological record. It works to maintain the *status quo*, it brings no major shocks to state systems or empires. It is an important aspect of relative independence, and given the right conditions, it has the capacity to increase independence from state control. Although some of the definitions that we have looked up mention occurrences of revolt or rebellion, they are mostly insistent on secession and schism⁸. It is in this light that we view

⁷Already earlier on Bercé had singled out the Pyrenees: "The people of the Pyrenean valleys had similarly found a way to dodge the taxman. They had won themselves privileges and exemptions for the simple reason that their valleys were impossible to take by storm. In the words of the chronicler they held the law in contempt, placing their trust in the geographical location of their district and in the unfair privileges they had enjoyed for so long" [Bercé; 1990:213]. Amongst others are also singled out the county of Pardiac within the "hilly country of Armagnac" [1990:210], the "plateau of Millevaches" and the "moorlands of Coutras and Montguyon" [1990:211], as well as the "highlanders of Lavedan" [1990:182].

⁸Note the following definition: "(lat. *dissidentia*, m. s., du v. *dissidere*, être dissident; de *dis*, préf. sépar., et *sedere*, être assis). Scission, schisme; action ou état de ceux qui s'éloignent de la doctrine ou de l'opinion du plus grand nombre sur quelque matière. *Dissidence d'opinions*. Il y a des dissidences dans le parti. ✕✕ Dans les Etats

occasions of dissidence during the later years of the New Kingdom empire. The traditional pocket of resistance of the mountainous hinterland attracted dissidents and insurrectionists from the lowlands and plains. The outcome however was not open revolt, but attempts by the enclaves to secede from the overall imposition of power by the central state.

That Palestine thus reacted with a certain degree of reluctance to this fresh Egyptian take over can be assumed. The upheavals following the stand off at Qadesh can hardly be interpreted otherwise. They show a state of affairs in which even the cities of the plains were ready to take their chances, their hopes being kindled as Qadesh seriously set into doubt the invincibility of Egypt [Redford; 1992:185]. It is difficult to arrange the events into a definite chronological sequence. Several interpretations have been given of, what might easily be seen as, Egypt's re-conquest of Palestine. Although it might be seen as having been achieved under Merneptah [Singer; 1988], it is harder to speculate when it actually started. Seti I's campaigns, however, present a good starting point. We are interested particularly in the *shasu*-troubles that he not only encountered, but regarded as important enough to engage in punitive counterblows. This interestingly occurs shortly after a period during which Egypt had stubbornly refused to give heed to the exhortations of the Palestinian city-heads to send punitive expeditions. The question is whether *'apiru* and *shasu* activity had in fact reached unheard of levels demanding Seti's presence, or whether Seti's presence can serve as an explanation for the reappearance of these groups in the records of Egyptian campaigns.

It is not evident that as early as the reign of Seti I the degree of potential brigandage or the levels of dissidence associated

barbaresques, au Maroc, situation d'une tribu qui refuse de se soumettre à l'autorité du sultan (auj. du roi). *Entrer en dissidence.* ☒☒ Par ext., se dit de toute scission politique par rapport à un gouvernement établi. [Quillet; 1975:1864]

with either *'apiru* or *shasu* groups could have exceeded that of regulated hostility as tolerated for so long in the preceding periods. It is difficult to believe that so suddenly it would call for punitive measures to be undertaken by the court. It is possible to suggest two interpretations. On the one hand, Seti exaggerated the levels of hostile activity so as to legitimate the interference in Palestinian affairs, or on the other hand, it could again have been little more than a display of might as he passed through adjacent territories on the way further north. However the fact that only a little later Egyptian troops were to be garrisoned permanently within Palestine, a procedure next to unheard of earlier, suggests that displays of might had to be taken more seriously than the side-expeditions that had been going at the time of the original conquests. Now Egypt was here to stay.

Put differently, although there were bandit activities and nomadic raids at the time of Seti I, there is little indication that they were so intense as to be the cause of Seti's campaigns. Conversely, it seems more likely that his campaign represented the onset of things to come. It was a major cause of more serious outbreaks of dissidence, as he took tentative steps towards tightening his grip not only on lowland Palestine but on the territories so far only under nominal control, particularly the mountainous hinterland.

While it is hardly possible to determine with complete accuracy when occurrences of dissidence became more frequent, it is nevertheless reasonable to conclude that occurrences were more a result than a cause of the sharp increase of Egyptian military involvement around Palestine'. Again if we look at Minor's account of the events in Isauria, it is striking that the so-called robber-tribes

'It would indeed be interesting to see how much space *'apiru* and *shasu* activity would occupy in a textual body of this time. Unfortunately the absence of such documents too often seems to be forgotten, although some authors thankfully keep reminding us: "No Egyptian royal archive other than that discovered at Amarna has been found" in [Na'aman; 1981].

reappear in the records as soon as Rome repaid attention to the region. Which in other words means to say that Rome's fresh attempts at subduing the region not only accounts for the reappearance of the tribes in the records, but also their increased hostile reaction. Increased *shasu* and *'apiru* activity should, according to what has been said in the preceding chapters, be interpreted in the same fashion. It possibly reached something of a climax in the risings under Ramesses II, but that same Pharaoh must also have gotten things under relative control again [Redford; 1992:185-186]. Nonetheless continued reaction against this exceedingly firm occupation must now be regarded as a possible explanation for the campaign recorded in the Merneptah stela, "as it again became necessary to secure the international routes in Canaan by further annexations to the centrally governed territories" [Singer; 1988:3].

Merneptah's stela proves highly interesting to us, not because it contains the first ever mention of an entity called Israel¹⁰, but because it testifies to an unprecedented step by Egypt in her trying to gain greater control of the highlands themselves. Whereas Seti I undoubtedly undertook the first steps at reasserting Egypt's power in Palestine, Ramesses II perceptibly brought the southern Palestinian

¹⁰This entity has obviously been the subject of a long debate [cf Engel; 1979; most recently Yoyotte; 1990; Bimson; 1991; also Coote; 1990]. In an unpublished article Whitelam reviews much of this literature [1993]. The nature of this "Israel", however, remains elusive as much for its socio-political nature as for its precise geographical location [also Edelman; 1996:36]. Although Edelman, in her recent article, still holds on to the valuable piece of information that the Merneptah Stele represents, she insists that it provides little precise data [1996:35]. She concludes her review on the stele with the following commentary: "The Merneptah Stele probably indicates that some sort of entity called Israel was present in ancient Palestine already at the end of the Late Bronze period and had a well-established enough presence to be considered worth attacking by Merneptah. Even the latter statement is presumptuous; a review of Sheshonq's subsequent campaign list reveals that small villages are listed alongside larger walled towns and cities. If the scribe who composed the coda section had been working from such a detailed list, Israel need not have been a significant entity. The scribe might have chosen it among a number of options because he wanted a population group, a people, to balance his city-states, or because he wanted a highland encounter to balance the lowland ones. Other reasons are equally possible. It might have been a major confrontation or a minor skirmish; there are too many unknowns for us to second-guess why Israel is named" [Edelman; 1996:36]. In any case it remains doubtful as to whether this particular entity can be brought into a direct relation with biblical Israel.

coast under firm control. Under both Pharaohs the trend to establish permanent Egyptian garrison-cities became apparent, and by the time of Ramesses II many of the cities in coastal southern Palestine had become an extension of the "Ways of Horus" formed by Egyptian stations [Singer; 1988:3]. For all practical purposes up to this time the *limes* had become reinforced with Egyptian troops establishing garrisons and stations surrounding the highlands. But with Merneptah the situation changes as the Egyptian administrative effort seemingly moved towards including highland territory.

Our main attention to the Merneptah stela thus focuses not on Israel, but on Gezer and the Shephelah, as they appear to form a milestone in the development of control in the hillcountry. Two related concepts are important here. Thus first is the applicability of Mayerson's perception of the Roman double *limes*, while the second is Shils' ideas about center and periphery¹¹ in a society [Mayerson;1988, 1990; Shils;1975]. Both render in their own manner the notions of partial exclusion and integration that we consider characteristic of the Palestinian mountainous regions. According to Shils, the arm of the central authorities grows proportionally weaker as one leaves the physical center for the more remote hinterland [cf Gamst; 1974:7]. In the case of Palestine, it is reasonable to postulate the center of authority to lie within the coastal plains and the hinterland to be the central ranges of the hillcountry. Once again, the Shephelah occupies a position in between, not as centrally controlled as the plains, but not as autonomous as the actual mountains of the highlands. The Shephelah was more integrated into the system than the adjacent higher ranges in the Amarna period. In fact, we have mentioned the towns of Gezer and Lachish as part of the *limes* looking onto the mountains. It is therefore interesting to view such a *limes* not as a single line of fortifications, but rather as a frontier district, and also to consider dividing it into an inner and an outer

¹¹The notion of centre and periphery, especially as it is related to "barbarism", has been validated in a recent article [Randsborg; 1992].

frontier as Mayerson does.

Mayerson's concept bears resemblance to that of Shils as his division also is partly dependent on a view of decreasing affirmation of authority as one goes further away from the actual zone of influence of the central authority. It should be noted here that in the Roman case it is the inner *limes* which is furthest away from the centre, whereas the outer *limes* is closer by. In the case of Palestine it would appear to be appropriate to posit the highlands within the frontier district, with little administrative presence. The notion of the hill country as a frontier zone is now well known in biblical scholarship. However it has not generally been perceived as an inner and outer frontier. It is interesting to consider the foothills of the Shephelah as the outer *limes*, with the highland ranges as the inner *limes*; Transjordan represents lands completely out of the zone of Egyptian influence.

Both districts, however, were granted little Egyptian military input, either in terms of military expeditions and even less in terms of permanent occupation during the Amarna period. They were, for all practical purposes of administration, left in the hands of the local dynasts. Merneptah's conquest of Gezer, just on the fringes of the foothills, can only have been interpreted in one way by the headmen of both the lowlands and the highlands: this was a full military take-over as well as an actual "Egyptianization" of the Shephelah, as it had not been experienced before. Singer points out the double strategic significance of the conquest of Gezer. It stemmed not only from its position as the most important town of the northern Shephelah from which the Egyptians could now dominate the area and also protect areas further west. As Singer [1988:1 & passim] points out, the "domination of Gezer was also imperative for an attempt to penetrate into the central hillcountry".

There was thus a double function to the taking of Gezer and the installation of more permanent control over the immediately adjacent parts of the outer frontier, especially with regard to the more distant inner frontier. The Shephelah district could now serve as a more effective defense zone against possible raids from the highlands proper, the real "barbaric entity". But it also formed a firm base from which to launch attacks against the highlands in order to integrate them properly for exploitation. Both policies make sense, however, especially when recognizing Egypt's needs to consolidate and extend what they controlled in the south due to the losses in the north. From the point of view of the Palestinian hill-people it was beginning to be apparent however that the lowlanders were losing their autonomy and that the highlanders were next in line. Rameses III's continuation into the hill country with the subjugation of Lachish, which dominates the eastern Shephelah, confirmed their fears. However, the collapse of the empire brought the Egyptian momentum to a halt. Singer iterates a similar view of the events:

The Egyptian offensive in Canaan was primarily motivated by the growing menace from tribal elements who gradually settled the central hill country and the northern Negev. This is especially evident in the policies of Merneptah and Ramses III, who extended Egyptian jurisdiction as deep as the eastern Shephelah, at a considerable distance from the main coastal highway. Settling Philistines in Egyptian bases along the coast after Ramses III eighth's year was another facet of the same policy, intended to establish a strong bulwark against the new elements in the hillcountry who posed a growing threat to the stability of the imperial rule. [Singer; 1988:6]

Again at this point it is appropriate to stress that Singer sees Egypt as simply responding to a menace whereas we would stress that

Egypt was the aggressor. There is a case for suggesting that Egypt created the menace from the hill country with more pronounced campaigning and military occupation of Palestine under the previous pharaohs¹². Thus some of the population that Singer qualifies as "new elements from the hillcountry" should be sought among the malcontent and disrooted who sought refuge in the highlands from Egyptian pressure. Secondly, there is no reason to think that Merneptah's and Ramesses III's actions were solely defensive or preventive in nature. Rather they were intent to conquer the highlands. It would appear natural to us that the highland lords, who had for so long maintained a position of autonomy, opposed such a move and consolidated their own power to remain in control of the highland regions. These are the forces at work that Singer qualifies as "tribal elements".

Singer also alludes to a new element on the scene, the Sea Peoples¹³, and how they came to be involved in Palestinian affairs. There is little doubt that these groups were a "new" element much more so than the dissident forces in the highlands. It is, however, a different question as to what extent their power made itself felt. From the Egyptian evidence it would appear that the pharaohs, especially Merneptah and Ramesses III, dealt rather successfully with these new arrivals, beating their coalition with the Libyans in the West, holding them off in the East *per mare et terram*, and finally installing them as a mercenary garrison force in southern Palestine [Dothan; 1982:24]. It appears that Egypt always had the upper hand against these troublesome migrants and pirates. On the other hand

¹²Ahlström argues in a similar manner to Singer stating that "because of the growth of villages in the highlands at the end of the 13th century B.C., Egypt found that this territory had also become hostile" [1991a:29]. Again it is important to stress that this study rather sees the late Egyptian conquest as provoking withdrawal into and hostility from the highlands.

¹³He only mentions the Philistines. Here it must be said that much of what has been said about the Canaanites also counts for the Philistines. The way they are perceived owes more to the literary world of the Hebrew Bible than to reality. It seems preferable to continue to use the term Sea Peoples, although included amongst them are those migrants from the Aegean that came by carts over the landroute.

however, the Hittite empire, Egypt's strongest opponent for so long, had faltered quite rapidly when faced with similar forces from the north. It is surprising that while Egypt had never been able to achieve a decisive victory over its northern challenger, it should have been so successful in her dealings with the Sea Peoples, using shock infantry and chariotry, that had practically brought to an end Greater Hatti's hegemony in the north. Thus McEvedy is of the opinion that:

In the 1180s, a horde of what the Egyptians called 'sea-peoples' overran Palestine and was only beaten back with difficulty from Egypt itself (by Rameses III, first pharaoh of the twentieth dynasty). Thwarted but still far from impotent, the 'sea-peoples' settled in coastal Palestine and lorded it over their neighbours... [McEvedy; 1967:38; cf also Dothan and Dothan; 1992:27]

Again the Egyptian records concerning the Sea Peoples must be regarded as themselves perpetrated with ideological language. The fact that the Sea Peoples are often described as viking-like sea raiders [Redford; 1992:225], or pirates, is an interesting point since such elements as pirates or corsairs are the equivalent of brigands on the sea¹⁴. Moreover, it is apparent that many of the ancient empires, such as Rome, approached the problem of piracy with the same tactics as the brigand problem on land [Flam-Zuckermann; 1970:456; Clavel-Levêque; 1978]. It is thus fair to say that although we can hardly doubt that both Merneptah and Ramesses were relatively victorious in battle, they did not come fully to terms with these elements. It is possible to suggest that behind what Egypt describes as the stationing of Sea Peoples as mercenaries, there lay a certain degree of autonomy to the pirate enclaves that were springing up in southern coastal Palestine.

¹⁴McEvedy uses the term "barbarian" [1967:38], repeated by Dothan and Dothan who insist that this was the perspective of the Bible [1992:259]. Important is here that the Sea Peoples themselves thus resemble a "barbaric entity".

No wonder that Ramesses III tried to consolidate his power in the east, the Shephelah and the highlands. He must have been anxious to open new trade routes as he realized the danger to the *via maris*, which must already have suffered from the presence of the seafaring pirate elements. It must at this stage, however, not be forgotten, that not all the Sea Peoples came by ships. The force that caused the demise of the Hittites was rather a migrant force that advanced by land from Asia Minor and Anatolia along the coast of Syria and Palestine. In fact this group was probably very important for importing the Sea Peoples fearsome shock infantry and chariotry. It has also become evident that this was no unified invasion, but rather a protracted process, and that many of the Sea People over the time became extremely assimilated [cf Dothan and Dothan; 1992; Thompson; 1992b:269ff]. Nonetheless it is possible, once the groups (or at least some of them) united along the southern Palestinian coast, to characterize these new polities as initially foreign pirate enclaves that existed and evolved more or less with the agreement of Egypt. To what degree and size, and, importantly, what level of centralization they developed must however remain another question.

Yet these upheavals must have had an effect on the actual Palestinian population itself. Again it is interesting to see that the highlands throughout history often functioned as a refuge from approaching pirate elements. No doubt the Sea Peoples' takeover must have been met by some hostile reaction, just as the Egyptian occupation of the 19th dynasty had been before [cf Ahlström; 1986:5]. But again given the military advantage of the infantry and chariotry dominant Sea Peoples, displacement into the hillcountry for refuge and dissident resistance proved a more viable option than confrontation on the plain where even Egypt had found herself at odds. Egypt's relative cooperation with the Sea Peoples can only have emphasized the trend. Although the Egyptian-Sea Peoples confrontation had its own

destructive effects, the fact remains that once they came to terms with each other, the indigenous Palestinians seemed to have lost out most. The presence of the Sea Peoples as a mercenary force, "the newly hired guardians of the old order" [Dothan and Dothan; 1992:27], must have caused further turmoil among the Palestinians. As seen before, such outside police-forces are often the most feared because they can be so unscrupulous. It seems reasonable to assume that many sought to evade the Sea Peoples' jurisdiction by retreating to the hillcountry [Ahlström; 1991a:20-21]. Ironically enough, viewed in this way, the first instances of opposition between the highlands and the coastal forces of the Sea Peoples are due partly to the efforts of the Palestinians from the plain.

The question then, however, is how much the central highlands were affected by these occurrences, which took place mainly on the plain, later reaching the eastern Shephelah, the foothills of the hillcountry itself. Again neither Ramesses II or Sety I nor any of the following campaigners had been able to annihilate the military potential of the highlands or do away with the phenomenon of the rural military élite that we have described in the previous chapter. Quite to the contrary as far as expert military personnel goes, their numbers would have swollen. Although the Egyptian onslaughts might have disposed of some head members, this could only have profited other élite members in the wake to take over. As a matter of comparison, the displacement of entities on the plain did not prevent some cities from rising to unprecedented prosperity, showing that there are always those that manage to take advantage of the changing situation. Also within the highlands there were those ready to use the changing political situation to fulfill their own ambitions.

Apart from the possible survival of such ambitious elements, there is ample reason to believe that the Egyptian policies of the 19th-20th dynasties would have provoked reactions in the mountains,

that, far from leading to the end of existing polities, would have seen the rise of more consolidated power structures. In fact nomadic-pastoralist populations are inclined to increase not only tendencies to agglomerate, but also reliance and dependency on tribal élite groupings in times of severe dangers of state encroachment. The imminent danger presented by the inroads into the Shephelah by Merneptah and Ramesses III would have drawn the highland populations to organize themselves militarily and politically for purposes of defense and resistance. Thus the origin of dissidence was the result of Egyptian aggression; in this case, however, it also would appear as the cause for intensified organization, even noticeable patterns of stratification, among the hill people.

The strong empire of Egypt in the final phases of the New Kingdom period eventually also meant stronger and more unified resistance¹⁵. It organized itself most effectively in those regions that already previously had avoided too strong integration. Here units formed out of the older inhabitants and new arrivals from the lower plains and foothills. In the face of the might of Egypt, ties among the Palestinians became stronger. The longtime plain-highland dichotomies were forgotten and ethnic and/or tribal links emphasized. The aim was to escape the Egyptian grip. Again this was most effectively done in the highlands, where these new entities found an environment suitable for secession.

The formation of these highland polities, however, was not so

¹⁵Hayden has noted such a phenomenon [1993:459] and Dahl, an adherent of the recent science of sociobiology, argues strongly for its omnipresence in human nature: "Der innere Zusammenhalt einer Gruppe verfestigt sich, wie die Geschichte immer wieder zeigt, mit der Gegenwart von äusseren Gefahren, Bedrohungen und Nöten: >>In der Not sind alle Menschen Brüder!<< Und so erschallt denn der Ruf nach >>brüderlicher Liebe<< auch so selten laut wie in Kriegszeiten....Und welches Kapitel der Weltgeschichte wir auch immer aufschlagen mögen, der Ruf nach brüderlicher Liebe erschallte immer aus dem Munde eines von Feinden und Eroberern bedrängten Volkes-eines Volkes, das mit der gewonnenen Freiheit dann selbst bedrängte und eroberte..." [1991:49-50]. Again Bercé insists that especially the presence of outside soldiers unites the population: "Uprisings against marauding soldiers expressed the united will of the community to a greater extent than any form of collective violence" [1990:186].

much the outcome of an altogether newly creative process. It lay at first more in the reinforcement of ties already existing between previously disparate groups. This development can, however, not be limited to the highland regions only, although it is here that more concrete forms were taken on. Briant's example of the "Ouxiens de la plaine" and the "Ouxiens de la montagne" provides a rough guideline [Briant; 1982:78]. Most interesting is the fact that both populations are clearly regarded to be of the same ethnic stock. Nonetheless, the former came to be an integrated, civilized element. The latter, however, remained widely independent, therefore a people of barbaric highland brigands. It is not entirely clear with what sort of eyes the two elements regarded each other. Some Ouxians might indeed have shared the concepts of the conquerors and therefore emphasized the plain-mountain dichotomy. Others, on the other hand, might have preferred to stress the factor that they were after all all Ouxians. Finally at times, the general political situation prevailing might have changed existent dispositions of numbers of Ouxians considerably¹⁶.

The case of New Kingdom Palestine was little different. The inhabitants of the plain and especially the Shephelah cannot simply be viewed to be completely different people with no ties at all. It is more inviting to consider the possibility that the political arrangements of conquering outsiders divided Palestinians, like the Ouxians of our example, more so than any real differences in ethnicity and/or lifestyle. Conversely it is also true that at most times the two groups were little bothered by such divisions. Yet as alluded to above, at other times the old links could increase in importance [cf Kamp and Yoffee; 1980:89; Salzman; 1980a:13]. The final phase of the Egyptian occupation of Palestine was such a period. For many the need to distinguish oneself from the 'apiru in the highlands was by the

¹⁶Salzman and Coote argue that at times forms of organization, like tribal ones, simply lie dormant or are latent and inactive, but ready to be called upon, as "individuals do not lose their affiliations" [Salzman; 1980a:13; Coote; 1990:78; also Swidler; 1972:115].

time of Merneptah and Ramesses III, at the latest, replaced by the need to unite against the common aggressor. At these times the desire to find around oneself fellow Palestinians exceeded the fear previously inspired by the perceived presence of barbarians and brigands in the hills¹⁷.

Once again the actual use of the terms of *shasu* and *'apiru* somehow sharpens the problem. These general terms hide from the onlooker the ethnic and tribal agglomerations involved. We seldomly find the highlanders designated according to names of peoples or tribes [Thompson; 1992b:211]. More often than not they are either equated with other Asiatics, or precisely referred to as *'apiru* or *shasu*, designations of an appellative rather than an ethnic value. Briant also refers to a similar problem in his study. He points out that the classical historiographers indeed often identified only the major tribe in a given territory. By this, they also conveyed the impression that this was the only ethnic unit involved, thus also hiding the internal differences still existent in the region [cf Brown; 1986:107, fn.2]. This is also reminiscent of the situation in Palestine, where it is all the more highlighted by the use of general appellatives. Again it is worthwhile emphasizing that it is the conquerors lack of knowledge of the given region that comes to dominate the textual evidence. Yet it also arises from the fact that the central authorities mention those elements who are of most use. As such, the Persians and later the Greeks speak mainly of tribes or people in mountainous regions, such as the Mardians or the Kassites, that are given prime importance in their own dealings with the political situation. However the importance of one such grouping over others is often but the outcome of the central authorities preference or need to support a given tribe or people, and more especially its élite, in order to control its mountainous hinterland.

¹⁷It is thus this period, rather than that of the collapse of the Empire, that should be seen as providing "the conditions for the growing influence of bedouin, and possibly bandits, in conjunction with the withdrawal of peasant communities" [cf Coote and Whitelam; 1988:6].

In the Egyptian New Kingdom case, the situation is further complicated by the fact that the élite-members only are mentioned. The populaces themselves are not given an ethnic designation. It is thus very hard to see how varied a population in fact lies behind expressions of the kind of "Lab'ayu and his 'apiru, my 'apiru and my sutu"¹⁸. Briant again notices a similar phenomenon when he points to the fact that all the Zagros groupings are indeed in the position to make themselves heard by some official representatives. In whatever way one is to view this, it shows that some group is responsible, or at least thinks of itself as being responsible for decision making at a higher level. Conversely it implies the existence of some sort of unified entity as well as pointing to a hierarchical structure of that entity. Yet as official representatives, this élite group at the top of the hierarchical level mainly comes into the picture when the unit is confronted with some state authority; this is itself reminiscent of a situation involving tribal élites and central governments. It might thus be postulated that units such as the Mardians and the Kassites developed élites as contact with the state intensified, or even that contact with the state aided such formation substantially. On the other hand, it must then also be admitted that clustering mountain people under these names is part of a convention agreed on mostly by the élite group and the state itself.

A closer look at so-called tribal organization is here appropriate. Cribb and Khazanov insist on the differentiation in organization to be made between the "primary" or "A Type" and the "B Type" or "secondary communities". The former are residence units characterized by fluidity and instability in membership. The latter

¹⁸Interesting is then a statement by Kramer: "This point is relevant to an understanding of "ethnicity" in the early second millennium B.C., particularly when one considers that our perceptions of ancient "ethnic" or "tribal" groups are, as a function of our sources, biased, being filtered through the literate representatives of the ruling members of different socio-cultural groups, and that the bulk of the epigraphic evidence on which "ethnic" identifications are made is preserved in the form of (a relatively few) personal names" [Kramer; 1977:104].

are pasture-holding territorial groups giving major importance to the proper allocation of membership amongst them, agnatic descent being used as the primary criterion. It follows that membership is automatically more stable. Such groups might even take on a "sub-ethnic character", and at the level of "tribe" or "sub-tribe", they usually form an endogamous unit [Cribb; 1991:49]. Primary and secondary communities thus work on different levels, and form themselves according to different principles:

The dichotomy between primary and secondary communities marks that point below which some degree of flexibility in economic and residential association is essential, and above which the emphasis begins to shift to membership and territorially linked groups defined in terms of either agnatic descent or political allegiance. [Cribb; 1991:49]

Khazanov gives a similar account of the situation:

Units at the lower levels of segmentation which, first and foremost, are connected with social, economic, and more narrowly productive needs rely on kin and contractual relations. The higher subdivisions, the functions of which are primarily socio-political and in part include their functions as guarantors or holders of corporative proprietary rights to key resources, are based on the principle of descent. [1984:140]

Underlying such structuring we find that alongside the increase of importance and size of the units, there also is the widening of the sphere of interest. From necessary economic associations, we move onto the political, or socio-political, scene¹⁹. In the end, segmentary

¹⁹To which one might add that "Tribal definition tended to be sharpest at the top of the tribal pyramid, and increasingly attenuated further down" [Coote; 1991:40-41].

systems are of a much more ideological nature than has at first been assumed. Cribb, above, touches the problem, when maintaining that membership is based on "either agnatic descent or political allegiance"²⁰. Represented so often as the preserver of equality, they ultimately are often but the expression of reigning relationships of power within the tribe. They seldomly can, and normally do not avoid the fact that effective power and leadership becomes vested in one particular family and segment. Furthermore they can be seen as being used to reinforce, even legitimate this fact [Khazanov; 1984:141].

One can thus see that rivalry and affiliation at the top level of the hierarchy are in fact responsible for much of the picture that segmental lineages come to reflect. It is here that most of what is said to represent agnatic descent groups and lineages is invented from the necessities of cognatic relationships, where so-called blood relationships are made up from political associations [Marx; 1977: 355; Thiel; 1980:16; Khazanov; 1984:143]. Through the ideal image of ancestry and lineal descent shines the reality of power relations at the top of the social ladder. Tribal ideology takes its form here. As with royal ideology, it seems to be conceived of by those in power for those who have none. It is the tribal élite who decide on its forms, with little considerations other than their own personal interests. The average nomad has little say or control over the system. Even adherence to that system is decided for him; he is integrated into a

²⁰The degree of egalitarianism and the importance of kinship ties in nomadic societies have at times been exaggerated. Rowton states that "egalitarian society is little in evidence among the tribes of western Asia" [1976c:243; also Asad; 1979:421-422] Black's article is interesting, for here he states: "Equality, that is equality of opportunity, among Luri tribesmen is a fiction similar to that employed in western European democracies to justify, for instance, the blatant differences of quality in the educational facilities available to the children of the working class and those of the middle class respectively" [Black; 1972:617]. Cribb shows that voluntary associations and patron-client relationships are important [1991:35-36, 39] and claims that "the involvement in associations beyond the extended family and herding group appear to correlate with degrees of inequality in the distribution of wealth and status" [1991:40]. As often these ties are formed to act in a first instance against capital-labour imbalances amongst nomads, he goes on to expose a number of responses to such imbalances that range from the "egalitarian" over the "commercial" and "stratified" to "pastoral 'feudalism'" [1991:40-42].

system benefiting the preservation of the status quo and keeping him in his correct place.

In a nomadic society such ideology finds its expressions through ancestry, genealogies and descent groups. As already pointed out several times, these, however, have little to do with reality [Rowton; 1977:197; Thiel; 1980:11]. These are but the translation of power relations at the top of the society, where the influential families give themselves an ancestral right to superiority, and create a web of imaginative relations with those who are useful to them in pursuing their interests:

One other function of genealogies is that they legitimize social inequality in native models which are already heterogeneous...Frequently it is the aristocracy in a society which cultivates knowledge of genealogies and manipulates them so as to give an ideological basis to their ruling positions. [Khazanov; 1984:142, also Garthwaite: 1978:186]

This is best seen in the immense flexibility of such systems. For, to the contrary of true agnatic and blood relations, the relations at the top of a segmental lineage system are not of an immutable nature. They change as old rivalries are buried or old affiliations break up; briefly said, they vary with the political and economical necessities of the leading families. Minor segments or subtribes can rise in power, and if and when the time is ripe, be integrated into the power stratum. Genealogies are easily changeable, and normally reflect little more than the power situation of a given moment in time. Khazanov associates the phenomenon of "genealogical amnesia" with this process of assimilation of former outside groups [cf 1984:142, 143; cf Swidler; 1972:116-117].

Finally it has to be emphasized that the presence of a sedentary state strongly influences a nomadic community and unavoidably the contacts with the sedentary world will start to influence its own internal organization on the economic, as well as the political and social level. In such a case the adjacent state society will not only further the development of an élite, but also be highly influential in the choice of the potential leader and leading family or segment [cf Rowton; 1976c:147]. Khazanov explains this manifestation:

In my opinion, from the sociopolitical point of view, nomadism is not merely the economic adaptation of pastoral society to its habitat. At the same time, neither is it a distinct socioeconomic formation, or a distinct mode of production. The level of sociopolitical development in nomadic societies and corresponding changes in this level are very largely determined by the specificity of the societies' relations with the outside world, and with the individual particularities of the latter [Khazanov; 1984:197]

There seems to be no doubt that nomadic structures experience manifold changes when encountering sedentary communities, not the least of which arguably is a definite increase in the social differentiation amongst the nomads themselves [cf Marx; 1977: 344; Khazanov; 1984:186; see also Rowton; 1976c:228-229]. Contact with the sedentary world means to be drawn into the prevailing politics and economics, which will work out to the advantage of one or the other nomadic group at the expense of others. This seems to be the natural outcome of a symbiotic relationship between sedentary and nomad. Whether the nomadic component in such a symbiosis be the dominant, inferior, or equivalent partner, the impact of the sedentary lifestyle will eventually split the nomad camp itself and reinforce the differences between dominant and dominated.

To some extent the arrangements are meant for little more than facilitating a state's contact with and control of a given tribe. States need, or at least prefer to deal with tangible entities [Ghafter and Ahmed; 1973:90]. If in a nomadic and/or highland environment such entities are not present they will do their best to create not only them, but also a form of élite, who can and will be held responsible for the activities of this entity [Marx; 1977:359; Irons; 1979:371]. Briant himself is reluctant to express himself in tribal terms, preferring to speak generally of "peuples" or an ethnos²¹. In the end it has to be admitted that there are groups which at the top of the social level are viewed as a tribe, but mainly so by the state authorities and the somewhat state dependent tribal élite [cf Coote; 1991:41]. At the lower levels there is discernible quite a degree of autonomy. Yet under certain circumstances, particularly the danger of aggression from the outside, here also tribal expressions will gain in importance, when it is deemed necessary to face the danger as a unit.

In the New Kingdom case it would thus be appropriate to assume that in Lab'ayu, for example, we encounter a sheik who has risen to prominence through Egypt's preference of dealing with him and his following. In fact, put together with the expositions above taken from Briant, all this would point towards two interpretations. Fortunately they are not unreconcilable. The Ouxian case clearly points out that some of the ethnic relations have a wider spectrum than the textual evidence would have us believe. Ethnicities do not follow natural geographical boundaries. A people might thus live both in and outside the mountainous area. The other cases, however, show that within a given mountain-territory more numerous distinct ethnic groups can be existing than the textual evidence at first let appear [Briant;

²¹This is mainly so, because 'tribe' has come to represent many different things to many different people and the category is "by no means agreed upon in the anthropological literature" [Kamp and Yoffee; 1980:88; Meyers; 1983:47, 48].

1982:58-59, 80; cf Coote; 1991:42, 43]. Thus taken together this indicates that also a number of diverging tribal or ethnic groupings might have occupied the highlands of Palestine, these were not organized along the geographical line of the *limes* that we have identified beforehand.

It is thus all the more understandable how the late Egyptian conquests could possibly have met with unified resistance and how the highlands became the centre of that movement of dissidence. The highlands were in fact not a mere melting pot of loosely connected marauding elements. They are the location of long-standing tribal and ethnic affiliations, if, as we assume, the Egyptians did in fact use the terms of *'apiru* and *shasu/sutu* to cover up the little knowledge they had about such affiliations in the Palestinian hinterland. However it is these same affiliations which took more consolidated forms again, as the Egyptians tried to force their way into the highlands²². Not only that, but they also facilitated the movement of lowland elements into the highlands. In fact these affiliations went across the lines imposed by the zones of influence of Egypt. They were most at work beyond the *limes* of civilization, where Egyptian control was only nominal. They were also present on this side of the frontier, although they might have been lying dormant for long. Ironically enough it was Egypt's attempt to extend its frontier that hastened their reawakening [cf Price; 1978:179]. Elements from the plains and the foothills joined their fellow tribesmen in the highlands,

²²A similar case is argued for the Median consolidation by Burney and Lang: "The threat of Assyrian expansion into the highlands of Iran by way of Mannean territory had provided the spur which in due course brought about the political unity of the Medes, a people whose numbers and wide domains were sure to make them a major power in the Near East" [1971:123; Brown; 1986:109]. Kotula similarly views Roman expansion to be the cause of the formation of a great coalition of African tribes under Tacfarinas [1976:344] Finally Knauf gives a corresponding interpretation for the situation at Mari: "Beruhen die Konflikte zwischen Städtern und "Nomaden" in Mari wirklich auf der "kriegerischen Veranlagung" der letzteren, und nicht eher darauf, dass der Staat Mari Land kolonialisierte und einer intensiven Nutzung zuführte, das die Ziehbauern für ihre extensive Landwirtschaft ebenfalls benötigten? Handelt es sich bei den grossen Stämmesverbänden der "Mari-Nomaden" nicht eher um eine Reaktion auf den Druck der umliegenden städtisch-staatlichen Gemeinwesen als um ein "nomadisches Naturgesetz?" [1985:42-43; cf Kamp and Yoffee; 1980:88].

especially as Egypt went on to install herself in the Shephelah²³.

These were the processes of nomadisation and/or tribalisation that have been proposed by a number of authors [cf Coote and Whitelam; 1987]. Yet they took place at the height of Egypt's involvement in Palestine, rather than after the collapse of the empire. The collapse itself rather provoked a transit period of sedentarisation and reorganization. The people involved in this period involved those, or the descendants of those, who had previously fled in front of the Egyptian onslaught as above. Thus to a limited degree at least we are in agreement with a theory of withdrawal at the close of the Bronze Age. But it took place earlier, i.e. before the collapse, and also took more organized forms. In fact the people involved joined tribally structured groupings, to whom, partly, they had belonged before, or by whom, again partly, they were accepted and integrated anew. The problem then is how much the élites of the time had a say.

The élites themselves cannot have changed a lot since the Amarna times. Among them there might have been slight variations. Some might have been tribalists more heavily reliant on bandits as a military element. Some might simply have been bandits in charge of a protection racket. Some might have been more strictly dependent on a city than others. Both Rowton and Khazanov agree how difficult it is to determine and discover such power structures archaeologically. Consequently Rowton argues that such forms as a dimorphic state with tribal involvement took place more often than is generally assumed [Rowton; 1973a:203; 1973b:254; see also Cribb; 1991:26]. Khazanov's explanation is that the forms of nomadic chiefdoms, even states, often are disposable in nature. It can be deduced from this that élite forms

²³Coote's description of the events is similar: "Egyptian rule intensified during the 13th and early 12th century, a situation conducive to the strengthening of select tribal powers in relation to Egypt rule of which Israel was one. As a focal point for tribal opposition to city-state power, actual and/or structural, Egyptian or Philistine, Israel expanded as a highland hinterland power during the 12th and 11th century as political changes triggered the extension of village settlement under tribal rule" [Coote; 1991:43].

must have survived in similar fashion to Lab'ayu, Abdi-khepa, Abdi-Asirta and Aziru. There were thus enough rural élite-type elements with military back-up only too happy to claim responsibility over the newcomers. In this task they were aided by the existing affiliations described above. If the arriving groups did not walk into total chaos, they neither walked into freedom. They merely changed the overlordship of the city-state for that of a rural counterpart. The advantage however was that they at least escaped from the recently tightening grip of Egypt.

The situation can hardly be equated with a peasant revolt *per se*²⁴. On the one hand the movement was not socio-politically induced, not an opposition between impoverished peasants and rich city-state élites. If anything it was nationally induced, a contrast between Asiatic Palestinians and Egyptian occupiers²⁵. Secondly it was not a revolt as such. Rather it was a process of withdrawal; a long process which probably started under Sety I. Thirdly, the term peasant is under these circumstances at least too limited a term to be used. Among those taking refuge in the highlands would have been displaced élite members, artisans, and merchants, as much as peasants. Thus

²⁴We repeat again that generally seen revolts and revolutions aren't a peasant affair: "Ethnologues et historiens de la paysannerie s'accordent sur ce point: jusqu'à la naissance de la société industrielle, on observe rébellions, soulèvements, séditions, jacqueries, mais non de révolution" [Mendras: 1995:175] (emph. added).

²⁵The situation was thus similar to the one culminating in the Jewish revolt [cf Horsley and Hanson; 1985; Horsley; 1986; 1981]. Yet this also serves to stress the difference between a revolt and a withdrawal as exposed here. Occurrences leading to the Jewish revolt are described by Horsley in these terms: "That is, by creating a vast number of fugitives who could not return to their villages and towns, they effectively forced these peasants to form bands which had to plunder their own former territory or other areas simply for subsistence. Other than long-distance flight, moreover, these brigand bands now had no alternative but to fight back against the Romans --and keen motivation to do so" [Horsley; 1986:169, also:163,170; 1981:429-430]. The Romans provoked with many retaliations against bandits an avalanche of hostile peasant reaction [Horsley and Hanson; 1985:78; Horsley; 1981:429]. This was dependent, however, on the fact that in Roman times the hill country was densely settled. The Egyptians could quite simply not have provoked the same, as the hill country was largely unpopulated. There was simply no need for revolt as such; the flight into the hill country was as effective and, in the end, a less dangerous option [cf Coote and Whitelam; 1987:40-41, 58-59].

peasant as a social class can under the circumstances be considered a misnomer²⁶. Finally, if the term peasant is taken too narrowly, it becomes difficult to keep in mind the tribal affiliations at work [cf Lemche; 1991:12; Coote; 1991:41-42, 44]. For often the peasant and the tribal world are seen as distinct and sharply segregated. The following arguments should rectify this notion.

First of all it should be mentioned that both desert nomads and highland pastoralists seek at least part-time work in the plains and the cities [Peters; 1978:324; Swidler; 1980:22]. Within the ancient world it is especially in the military field that we know of tribal nomads and pastoralists to be at the service of the central and city authorities. Amongst these elements, members of quite elevated social rank and/or economically well off nomads might indeed also be included [cf Rowton; 1973b:255]. Rowton also says that richer nomads or members of the tribal élite who settle down often remain influential within the tribe [1974:17]. Marx insists on the fact that most nomads who seek part-time work in settled areas maintain contacts with the tribe so as to keep open the possibility of an eventual return [Marx; 1984a]. These urban-based nomads would help to facilitate, or even instigate, a return to the home-tribes in the highland regions [again cf Salzman; 1980a:13]²⁷.

²⁶On the general problems of peasants as a class see Shanin [1971:253], Marx [1971:231], Wolf [1971:264-265]. It is in fact highly unlikely that peasants identify themselves as a united social class. It is, as we have already seen, even difficult to see peasants as a real collective group; only recently Mendras has again made that point: "La diversité des patois et des dialectes de région à région, ainsi que leurs variations mineures de localité en localité, montre que cette homogénéité culturelle va de pair avec une relative autarcie sociale: ce qui est commun dans une collectivité n'est pas exactement ce qui est commun dans les voisines. Chaque village a sa personnalité et ses traits distinctifs.... :le villageois se sent d'autant plus de son village s'il se sent le même que ses covillageois et différent des villageois des autres villages." [Mendras; 1995:108, 113].

²⁷Yedid says: "Certes les bédouins, comme tout un chacun placé devant la facilité de la vie citadine, ont tendance à vouloir s'intégrer. Mais la désertion éventuelle se fera du désert vers la Ville et non pas vers la Terre. Cette désertion sera d'ailleurs suivie d'un courant contraire de retour vers le désert en cas d'insuccés. Les grands caravaniers, riches avant de se sédentariser, en sont un exemple. Ils n'ont pas <<tenté leur chance>> à la ville. Ils s'y sont installés, augmentant leurs richesses en s'intégrant au milieu capitaliste marchand dont avant, ils dépendaient, et en gardant leurs traits bédouins...Les villes n'ont pas attendu le XXe

Another issue at stake concerns the longstanding assumption that nomadic pastoralists are organized in tribes while peasants are not. This has been challenged [Cribb; 1991:26; Salzman; 1980a:13; Swidler; 1980:25]²⁸. Indeed peasants or sedentaries are often seen to have tribal affiliations even when village based [Cole; 1973:120]. In the Kassite case, for example, Briant stipulates that a village based organization is discernible. In fact, he points out a confederation of otherwise quite autonomous villages which came together in times of danger when they retreat to their refuges in the high mountains as well as gathering a common fighting force [1982:80-81]. It is arguable, after what we have said about tribal organization beforehand, that such a village confederation is but part of the wider ethnic unit itself organized along tribal lines. Knauf also insists:

Kein nomadisches Erbe ist das Stämnesystem. Stämme sind die politische Organisation nicht-urbaner Populationen, wenn die Bevölkerungsdichte oder die Häufigkeit und Intensität der (nicht immer friedlichen) Interaktionen zwischen den Bevölkerungsgruppen eine politische Organisation nötig machen. Dass die Stämmebildung auf den Prozess der Abwanderung der bauern in das Bergland, auf die Gründung ihrer Dörfer und damit auf die "Landnahme ohne Wüstenwanderung" zurückgeht, demonstrieren die ägyptischen Texte, wenn sie im Laufe des 13. Jahrhunderts dazu übergehen Ethnonyme zu gebrauchen, wo sie zuvor nur von unspezifizierten *shasu* geredet haben. [Knauf; 1988:107]

siècle pour acquérir leur charme, et l'attrait qu'elles ont sur les nomades ne date pas d'aujourd'hui" [1984:29]. A little earlier he had explained the outcome of this double flux of sedentarization and nomadization: "Mais ces mouvements ont un résultat certain: les us et les coutumes de la tribu se maintiennent, et l'autorité du Cheikh demeure puissante, ne serait-ce que pour se garder un abri en cas de besoin ou pour s'assurer le retour dans la tribu nomade si l'on décide de reprendre la vie sous la tente" [Yedid; 1984:29; also Kamp and Yoffee; 1980:93, 98].

²⁸See also Lemche's discussion on village societies [1985:170ff]. In fact Cribb at some stage maintains in the Near East there are "many tribal groupings which involve nomadism only marginally" [1991:54].

Again, tribes do not conform to the geographical frontiers, neither to the diverging lifestyles that are thus generally imposed by the terrain. In our case it means that the peasant villagers of the plain were at least in part affiliated to the pastoralist elements in the hill country²⁹. Again Briant's example of the Ouxians shows that those living in the plain were agriculturalists, those in the highlands though were shepherds. All the same they were all Ouxians. So at least as far as affiliations go, movement into the highlands, as well as coherence with the structures there would have been encouraged. It seems evident that, if we widen the scope from tribal to ethnic affiliations, such differences between sedentaries and nomads would be even less important [cf Kamp and Yoffee; 1980:88, 95].

To get back to the question posed above, it appears that the highland élites under these circumstances would have had a say over the people originating in the plain, if these indeed were tribally or ethnically affiliated to the hill people. This is probably the case if people were looking for military leadership. Yet equally important was the need for sedentary produce, now that the relations with Egypt had worsened, and the hill population was swelling. Conversely, the prosperity that the Egyptian takeover had brought to several Palestinian cities and the rise of rich temple estates provided increasing opportunities for raiding activities. Basically speaking, the best opportunities to appropriate sedentary produce seemed to favour military aggression. The time as such was ripe especially for military leaders to seize their chances.

The parasocial leader in particular would have profited from the situation. More than others he was able to combine the advantages

²⁹Furthermore those who were not so affiliated would not necessarily have found difficulties in being admitted into a tribal units, as tribal processes can also be seen "in terms of the accretion of heterogeneous units in response to largely political pressures" [Cribb; 1991:54; also Kamp and Yoffee; 1980:88].

lying in popular discontent and the desire to return to more tribal forms of structuring. Was he not like a sheik, yet also in command of a force recruited among the uprooted and discontent? In times like these he could furthermore considerably strengthen his paramilitary sector with refugees that would otherwise easily have turned to banditry. These refugees were on the one hand dependent on sedentary produce, on the other out of a job, as most of them previously were peasant producers themselves. It is at this point where the political goal and economic necessities of the situation ask for common solutions that dissidence and brigandage again meet. The political goal lies with dissidence, the desire to resist the Egyptian onslaught and ultimately secession. However it remains important to provide the necessary agricultural goods. This becomes however extremely difficult, as Egyptian occupied Palestine, i.e. enemy territory, represents the main breadbasket. It is thus important to find a way which works across the line of political separation yet economic dependence.

Again the parasocial leader represents the ideal personality to provide a possible solution. As the leader of a separate unit, tribal or ethnic, he can strive towards political secession³⁰. Yet as the leader of a paramilitary grouping, recruited among the discontent, he is well equipped to guarantee the provision of food. Finally, he offers a place in this new society, especially as he needs new employees in his ambition to fulfill this latter role. Evidently not all leaders were necessarily parasocial leaders of Rowton's type. Yet the example shows how people came to be accommodated in a developing consolidation of power that the times generated and necessitated. Cribb also mentions the phenomenon of "the creation of tribes or confederacies by decree around a nucleus of freshly recruited military units" [1991:53-54]. Rowton similarly devotes a long discussion to the

³⁰Illuminating might here also be Coote's view: "The point of tribal organization was to mobilize and rationalize groups in opposition to some threat, and the paramount threat was typically the state, or for a state ruled by a tribe, other states" [Coote; 1991:40].

processes by which parasocial leaders not only attract uprooted elements and adventurers, but also use tribal splinter groups to form new and powerful tribes of their own [esp. 1977:190ff]³¹.

For the ambitious leader it was to a great extent a question of timing, which itself depended on the precarious situation of the increasing highland population. A great deal of the occurrences at the end of Egyptian hegemony must have depended on the *ad hoc* adaptations that had to be undertaken. One should not forget that if agricultural produce was needed, then it would be needed promptly. Under such circumstances the aggressive, albeit unstable, manner of procuring foodstuffs was preferred. It can fairly be assumed that many considered the situation to be only temporary³² and that they did not object to but possibly participated in more aggressive activities. The dependency on military experts and leaders generated further consolidation.

Almost immediately, however, the cleverest of the leaders would have recognized the fact that a constant supply of sedentary-

³¹This gaining of power by a parasocial leader should be seen as operating parallel to the way that tribes can at times form around strong leaders. It also shows once more that even elements with no prior tribal attachments can be admitted due to the flexibility of the system: "A third element is usually involved in the form of authority structures centering on chiefs which penetrate the secondary level and are capable of holding together large lineage-based units which recognize no common descent. The process by which tribal units crystallize around a central lineage or powerful individual seems to have been historically common. Such units possess a central core organized in lineage's, together with a fluctuating element which may shift allegiance to rival leaders. Such accretions could also occur, . . . , not only through recruitment from other tribes, but also by attracting non-tribal peasantry. Barth (1961, pp.132-3) recognizes two patterns of tribal evolution: the first by way of population growth, segmentation and incorporation; the second occurring much more rapidly through the aggregation of tribally --and even ethnically-- diverse elements around a strong leader. The impression of stable lineage-based structures often conveyed as a result of synchronic modes of ethnographic inquiry may conceal a system in a constant state of flux. This perceived lineage structure is frequently a product of conscious rationalizations by tribal leaders or provincial administrators, an edifice of kinship erected on the basis of a common political or military purpose (see Barth 1961, p.55) . . ." [Cribb; 1991:53].

³²The process is amongst others also dependent on the human disposition to opt for short-term solutions. Hayden says: "The tendency to take advantage of the immediate situation and worry about the consequences when and if they occur is also all too human" [1993:462].

agriculturalist produce was going to be highly advantageous. The most powerful among them, i.e. those who already had an important military following, could start to invest in some settlement activities³³. That it was the most powerful must be deduced from the fact that they were most able to guarantee food supply under temporary conditions, thus able to support some of the agriculturalist activities that in the short term seemed unproductive. Similarly, it would have been easy to encourage such activities where they had been practiced before. Again the northern highlands would thus have been a preferred area.

The collapse of Egyptian power, just like the prior increase in Egyptian presence, had to be met with fresh adaptations in the highlands. The question however is whether it reinforced or weakened the trend of consolidation. If the situation that we all have witnessed only too recently in Bosnia is anything to go by, it would appear that the retreat of a strong outside force, leads to fragmentation among the resident population [cf Braudel; 1992:606]. It is arguable that the same happened to some degree in the Palestinian highlands as Egypt left a political vacuum. For one, people as easily recognize ethnical and tribal differences, as they recognize ethnical and tribal links³⁴. They thus reinforce or weaken the ties as is suited

³³Marx exposes a situation where organizers of smuggling in the South Sinai invested some of their fortune in establishing villages in inaccessible mountain areas. Admittably they served primarily as hideouts for smuggling activities, yet also for housing in the winter period. Even orchards were planted. The situation is obviously not altogether equivalent to the ancient Palestinian scenario, but nevertheless worth a mention [Marx; 1980:117-118; 1984b:182].

³⁴The irony which often dictates the way people come to recognize differences is exposed by Weissleder: "The Adal look down upon the Argobba, their fellow Muslims, because they are farmers; the Amhara distrust and dislike the Argobba, their fellow farmers, because they are Muslims" [1978:277]. The rather humorous account presented by Nigel Barley on his anthropological field-research among a people called the Dowayos shows that he ran into the same problems. They were themselves despised by other people, such as the Dupa, who considered them to be a "debased race of sons of dogs" [1983:34], and the opinion of the neighbouring Fulani was no other: "Dowayo were dogs, mere animals." [1983:151]. And yet the Dowayo have their own to despise; for them that role is fulfilled by the Koma, a pagan tribe, whom they consider as especially primitive and ugly [1983:161]. All that talk about dogs and ugliness is obviously remindful of our discussion of "barbarians", and that is why we like to add this comment by Barley: "The time had come, if indeed it was not overdue, to move into a village. Dowayos divide into two sorts, mountains and plains. Everyone I

to the time and situation. The prior conditions had led to reinforcement: there was a common aggressor, the loss of and desire to keep one's autonomy, with it the loss of an appropriate social structure, thus the need to adopt the order of the highland societies. Finally the will to secede, but the need to eat, directed many activities against the powerful and prosperous Egypt, and her collaborators of the lowlands. Under these circumstances, some links and ties were probably extended to unprecedented degrees; maybe even wider tribal confederations formed in order to satisfy the need for cohesion in the face of the might of Egypt.

It has been pointed out that such larger tribal agglomerations are however rare and most of the time not of long endurance. They are highly dependent on the particular political circumstances, and prone to dissolve when the situation changes. When Egypt left, many of the necessary premises for the maintenance of such agglomerations disappeared with her. Not only did the common enemy disappear, but so did an important food provider. With the collapse of Egypt went the temple estates and the cities, which had become prosperous under her late hegemony, suffered the consequences and many were abandoned. For the highland dissidents there was little left to pillage and plunder. The highland populations thus again had to undertake serious organizational changes, both economically and socio-politically. The new circumstances however worked considerably against the establishment of large units. They also had an adverse effect on those élite groupings that had profited most from the state of enmity between many Palestinians and Egyptian controlled institutions of authority, and had vested most of their power in the maintenance of a strong military component.

had spoken to had urged me to live among plains Dowayos. They were less barbarous, supplies would be easier, more of them spoke French; I would be able to go to church more easily. Mountain Dowayos were savage and difficult, they would tell me nothing, they worshipped the Devil" [1983:45] (emph. added). At least, it goes to show that preconceived opinions change very slowly.

Types such as the parasocial leader suffered severely from the fact that food provision through pillage and brigandage had to give way to methods, which more heavily than before involved food production by the new highlanders themselves³⁵. Conversely those who had been clever enough to invest in agricultural production earlier on held, on the one hand, an initial advantage. Yet, on the other, they possibly became easy targets for groups of the first kind, who were looking for new sources to profit from, either by raiding them or by wanting to set up protection rackets. These circumstances could only have added to the turmoil that already existed as units disintegrated.

To resume, the collapse of the New Kingdom empire had its effects on the highlands and its populations. Politically this probably involved a reduction in size of tribal and ethnic units, as well as a reduction in importance of powerful chiefs and their élite followers. Economically it meant turning towards production rather than appropriation. This in turn meant reinforced sedentarisation, which itself developed to be of a dispersed kind. In fact the increase in numbers of relatively small, but self-sufficient settlements, was a result not only of the collapse of the prosperous urban network of the late empire, but equally the disintegration of the tribal forces, which themselves had arisen mainly as reaction to this takeover³⁶. With no urban network and its dependent trade to live off, the highlanders, like the plain inhabitants were forced to seek survival in the village based economy. If we have thus posited a period of considerable nomadisation at the end of the empire, this next period must be viewed as characterized by processes of resedentarisation, especially as far

³⁵Again the situation for Marx's organizers of smuggling in South Sinai is comparable [1980:118].

³⁶The connection between sedentarisation, the demise of tribal agglomerations and a move towards self-sufficiency, are also illustrated by Cribb: "According to our model, phases of sedentarisation should be accompanied by a decline in specialization between pastoralism and cultivation, the merging of nomadic and sedentary sectors within tribal units, the weakening of tribal organization -though not necessarily its disappearance- and the pursuit of pastoralism largely within the framework of a mixed agro-pastoral system" [Cribb; 1991:62].

as the highlands themselves are concerned³⁷.

These processes of sedentarisation are not a revolutionary novel phenomenon. They do not represent sudden changes in ethnic composition of the population. They are quite simply part of a set of alternatives that predominantly pastoralist and nomadic populations can turn to in adverse situations³⁸. Nonetheless they can be rather rapid. It has been demonstrated that one generation is sufficient to endorse a rather imperceptible transformation from fully nomadic to fully sedentary by the way of the example of the development of a tent into a semi-permanent then a permanent housing [cf Daker:1984:passim; Jarno; 1984:esp. 198-200]. The development was imperceptible because within a few years nomads can quite slowly become sedentaries.

Cribb also shows various ways in which nomadic communities, as well as individuals can manipulate labour and capital to create a greater sector in need to settle down. Simply variations in delaying or advancing the dates and ages for marriage can lead to the presence of a wider sector of small, but non-sufficient families, which will find themselves forced to settle down as agriculturalists [1991:39]. Richer members can especially decide on the fate of poorer nomads in making or not making shepherding contracts available. Conversely those who invest in land capital can become inclined to offer jobs in the agro-sedentary field, and start to behave like powerful landlords. In many ways such processes of adaptation result from creating and

³⁷See Salzman: "Over a long span of time, the local history of many Middle Eastern areas reflects alternating phases of nomadic and settled life and the alternating sedentarisation and nomadisation of the local population (Adams 1975, Nissen, 1972)." [Salzman; 1980a:13] Finkelstein and Perevolotsky similarly claim about the nomads of the Sinai and Negev: "In two periods, sedentarisation resulted from a deterioration of rural and urban society in the settled land, during which the nomads had to supply their own agricultural needs." [1990:67, 70-71, 80]

³⁸Swidler has noted that although "nomads are said to be characteristically resistant to programs designed to encourage settlement", a difference should nonetheless be made "between forced sedentarisation as a political tactic and self-initiated sedentarization as a response to local economic and environmental factors" [Swidler; 1980:21; also Aronson; 1980:178].

disposing of a poorer sector by directing it towards sedentarism and agriculturalism. The situation in the Palestinian highlands, as political and economic collapse were being experienced, can only have emphasized such processes. Finally if we are correct in our assumptions that many highlanders were recent newcomers originating from the more agro-sedentary world of the plain and lowlands, it becomes easy to see how a sedentary sector engaged in agriculturalism can have developed rather rapidly under the circumstances. Another reason that would have furthered sedentarisation is that the arrival of the plain people would have swollen the numbers of nomad-pastoralists to a certain degree. Such a population growth is often seen as destructive to the nomadic option, provoking higher numbers of unviable households that need to settle down [Cribb; 1991:62].

Undoubtedly the period of the 19th and 20th dynasty changed the face of Palestine. For all practical purposes this, rather more than the efforts of Tuthmosis III or the Pharaohs before him, presented the real conquest-cum-occupation of the southern dependencies. The attempts to extend the arm of Egypt into the highlands has caught our attention. No doubt resistance against the fresh Egyptian measures must have caused displacements of refugees and encouraged the activities of bandit groups, culminating in a climax of dissidence from the highland regions. Egyptian presence in the Shephelah was, in our opinion, the cause for this state of affairs rather than the result of it.

The situation never fully stabilized. Coming to terms with the harsher Egyptian involvement was one thing, but as soon as this was done, the arrival of the Sea Peoples destroyed this new balance. Finally, Ramesses III's policies in subduing the eastern Shephelah cannot hide the fact that the empire was reaching its end. Some of his actions can in fact be interpreted as a last attempt by Egypt to get as much as possible economically out of her dependencies. Harsh

military occupation and measures of taxation are often the hallmark of crumbling states and empires. Resistance from the highlands can only have doubled in fierceness. By the time the empire finally collapsed, many highland groups had already decided to go their own way. Faced on the plains with the old oppressor and a new conqueror, settlement in the highlands presented an attractive option. In the end the vacuum left by Egypt allowed the extension of two diverging polities: the littoral Sea Peoples enclaves that had newly sprung up and the entities of the highlands where self-control and autonomy had never been lost.

Chapter 6

Bandits and nomads: their potential role within the processes of settlement, reorganization and stratification

This chapter is ultimately about state formation within the highlands. Yet we hope to have made it clear, if only by the choice of the title, that we are not here talking about something separate from what has been discussed before or, even worse, that now something dramatically new emerges on the scene. Some authors [cf Coote and Whitelam; 1986; 1987] have already moved in this direction. However even their works do not stress enough that it is not possible to view the history of the Palestinian highlands as being separated into a period of the "emergence of Israel" and then a period of "the formation of the Monarchy". We hope to remedy to this by including the development of settlement and organization, including stratification into one and the same chapter. We cannot separate them, because at the heart of the formation of polities (in whatever form and size) lies ever increasing settlement and/or exploitation of the territory which leads to a need for increased organization, but also the fact that increased organization can open ways for increasing settlement and/or exploitation of territory. Settlement and organization thus go hand in hand; they develop simultaneously rather than in sequence and react upon each other.

We are aided in our enterprise by the fact that our previous chapter did not treat settlement *per se*, but rather activities during times of withdrawal. Yet the reader should not be led by this into thinking that we are now proposing just another, albeit different, classification; i.e. a period of withdrawal and a period of settlement and organization. This would in fact be missing the whole point of the argument. It is important to stress again that both are part of the same

processes, constantly changing as different entities try to extend their grip over the highland areas and population. There is a very basic, we would like to say natural, continuity between these phenomena that has too often been obscured by our concepts of Late Bronze passing into Early Iron Age, or worse, Canaanite into Israelite periods.

Such assumptions must however not influence our renderings of events in any way at all; they must in fact be forgotten. It is the same people, or at least the descendants thereof, who withdrew and who had to face problems of settlement and organization. In any case we have, rejected the notion of Israelite as well as that of Canaanite. We have spoken of bandits and nomads, peasants and élites, as well as highlanders, lowlanders and plains people. We will come at some stage to speak of military and administrative personnel, merchants and kings. All the same, all these people are essentially ancient Palestinians, inhabitants of that geographical location we chose to call "Palestine". They do not now become something else. They remain Palestinians; we will try and describe how they moved and adapted in the face of changing conditions. Ultimately some of them will come to organize themselves in the form of a kingdom; that kingdom one may call "Israel, the land of Omri". Nonetheless it is a kingdom on Palestinian soil created by Palestinian folk, thus in the end thoroughly Palestinian itself.

It is at this point that we encounter many problems in our task. Studies of state formation within the Palestinian highlands only appear as studies of the Israelite monarchy. For a long time, biblically-based ideological views of a newly emergent and highly egalitarian highland society dictated the outcomes of any treatment of state development in the highlands¹. Thus, a concept drawn from the literary world of the Bible-dominated historical discussions. Furthermore this concept was seen as such a unique and innovative notion that it escaped proper historical investigation. As such, for a long period of time, it seems that no-one

¹The next chapter will treat this particular problem more deeply.

was even willing to admit, or at least consider, that these highland communities could out of their own will move towards centralization of power, thereby rejecting all their society once stood for [cf Martin; 1989:95]². Even the most adventurous, like Mendenhall, did not escape the well-established notion, that the monarchy was basically an "alien" institution. Depicting the fundamental differences between early Israel and the surrounding political system, and stressing both the novelty and uniqueness of the early Israelite experience, his reconstruction parallels that of others:

The development of the Israelite Monarchy followed the model of a typical Syro-Hittite state and introduced a pagination into the political and social history of Israel with fateful and lasting consequences. [Mendenhall; 1975:155]

Whitelam's comment illustrates the state of affairs:

There could be no better illustration of the lack of progress during the last twenty years achieved by text-based studies of the history of Israel, i.e. reconstructions depending primarily upon the literary sources" [Whitelam; 1986:48 and ff].

The fact however is that such studies have dominated scholarship for so long that it is now difficult to engage in a different method. As archaeology had for a long time been guided by such text-based interpretations, it has itself suffered from the ensuing implications. Not only can we not be altogether sure about the datings, not to speak of the assignment of ethnic divergences, that have been applied, but we simply miss a good deal of information due to the dominant strategies of

²Nowadays such ideological explanations for culture change are widely rejected from a general point of view [see Hayden; 1993:417].

archaeological research³. In fact, the concentration on finding the remnants of an Israelite kingdom have led most archaeologists to work in the highlands themselves, following strategies adopted more or less directly from the Bible. Thus the lowlands and the plains have been almost completely forgotten. Developments of (re-)settlement and of similar polity building in the lower parts of Palestine, as well as in Transjordan, are relatively unknown to us. We cannot therefore be altogether sure about their impact on the highlands themselves. To put it bluntly, archaeologically-speaking we are at a loss and have to start from scratch in discussing the interactions between plains, lowlands, and highlands in what is generally seen as the Early Iron Age period.

Nonetheless, a number of studies have been presented that at least initiated a movement against the trend of viewing the state as a foreign borrowing, best explained by pagination and reversion in the face of the Philistine threat. Although the Philistines still figure as a catalyst of the eventual institution of the state, as Frick puts it "a necessary but not a sufficient cause" [1985:26], prior to that, causes leading towards stratification and centralization that are internal to the highland communities have become a central focus of attention. Precedence is thus given to a complex and multivariant internal evolution taking place over a considerable time-span, as opposed to a uniform external cause leading to a sharp break with the previous social arrangements [cf Whitelam; 1986:61-62; Frick; 1986:13; also Lamberg-Karlowsky and Sabloff; 1979:207].

One of the intermediate stages in such a development is seen in the establishment of a chiefdom [cf esp. Flanagan; 1981]. At the head of these, we find local strongmen, men who have managed to gain influence and authority among their peers to a great extent through the machinations involved in the "intensifier-redistributor-warrior" complex

³What little has been achieved archaeologically will also be treated in the final chapter.

[cf Harris; 1979:92; 1978:71-73]. However, stratification and centralization do not evolve solely from the desire of such bigmen to impose their authority. Chiefs can only flourish under the right conditions, especially as bigger units at their early stages are subject to an endemic tendency to fission [Harris; 1979:101; Müller; 1996:100]. In the highlands of ancient Palestine these tendencies to fission need counteracting if the road towards statehood is to be maintained. They are effectively counteracted, when the territory of the highlands comes to lose its initial advantage, its potential for expansion. Otherwise people can simply leave those regions where some power or authority is about to be installed or, as Muller puts it: "People have all opportunities to, literally, vote with their feet if they feel dissatisfied" [1996:113; also Hagesteijn; 1996:196].

That this kind of circumscription has to occur at some stage is dictated by the very nature of the Palestinian highland terrain, surrounded by semi-arid steppes and desert fringes. Good arable land is limited, many of the areas being more suitable for horticulture and animal husbandry. Pressures of demography are easily felt in such areas. So, whereas the early settlers took over a marginal area where a low population density guaranteed available land for a self-sufficient existence, as well as possibilities to expand, population growth conversely seriously restricts these possibilities. Soon enough the limits of available arable land are reached, and it becomes impossible to solve the problem of a constantly growing population by expansion alone [cf Harris; 1979:102]. In order to maintain production and self-sufficiency, the highland-population has to revert to the policy of intensification, but intensification has its own devastating side-effects, such as depletion.

Eventually, intensification will provide no long time solution to further demographic pressures, and parts of the population have to engage in the cultivation of more inhospitable areas [Claessen; 1996:345]. They

are likely to face two problems, often both of them together: firstly, these new territories are not only ecologically, but also environmentally unsuitable; secondly, some of them are just not amenable for cereal growing, some not even for animal husbandry; they are the traditional zones of horticulture. Surmounting the first obstacle meant an input of work and effort in terracing, the hewing of cisterns, and deforestation, on a much higher scale than had previously been the case. The second ultimately meant specialization, which resulted in a considerable loss of self-sufficiency. The first needs major group efforts, the second the possibility of exchange; both call for a higher degree of organization⁴.

The way of understanding these developments owes a lot to Carneiro's theory of circumscription [Hauer; 1986; Whitelam; 1989:127]⁵. The environmental aspect of the theory has been explained above, but the effects are felt even deeper, when a second aspect is also present, that is social circumscription. This is also a characteristic attributed to the Palestinian highlands. In the lowlands, the highlanders are pressed by the newly consolidating and growing powers of the plain⁶. They are also subject to raids from outside nomadic groups. Finally, internal environmental circumscription causes confrontations on an ever larger

⁴Similar conditions are seen to determine the rise of civilizations. Lamberg-Karlowsky and Sabloff conclude: "In reviewing the evidence as understood from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Indus Valley, it seems clear that population increase ---within a geographically circumscribed area which was agriculturally productive when irrigated--- played a fundamental role in the development of civilization. An expanding population in turn was related to an increasing economic specialization and social stratification within the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley" [1979:209].

⁵Irons discusses Carneiro's theory also in a pastoral-nomadic setting [1979:366ff].

⁶To an extent internal developments in the highlands in fact created the threat from the plains. Chaney, after stating that the "Philistines" possessed the necessary military skills and weapons to fight in hilly terrain, goes on to say: "If they were thus granted a means for the conquest of the uplands denied to the kings of the Bronze Age, the Philistine overlords also enjoyed a newborn incentive. Using the technological innovations discussed above, Israel's free holding cultivators had for the first time produced in the hill country an economic population base worth controlling" [Chaney; 1986:66-67; Gottwald; 1986:88-89, 94]. But again, a closer look at Philistine achievements is needed, before drawing any conclusions at this point.

scale involving ever larger units. These call not only for higher military organization, but disrupt trade and exchange, one of the counteracting agents to environmental circumscription itself. In the end, pushed to the limit in both the social and the environmental arena, highland communities would have had the possibility to move towards greater centralization, going through the stages of steadily increasing chiefdoms to a centralized state controlling production, trade, and defence.

What we see here at work are the two traditional theories of state-formation, albeit in combination. Ewald, having followed the state-formation in the Taqali-massif next to the Nile River valley, describes the theories as such:

One body of theory stresses social contract as the basis of state formation, arguing that states arise from consensus when people try to solve particular problems, usually of population and ecology. Other theories stress coercion -- either of class exploitation or external conquest-- as the prime mover for state formation. [Ewald; 1990:181-182]

It is not our aim to question the results or indeed the methods of such evolutionary theories of state formation [but see Müller 1996:99]; in fact both bandit and nomad groups find an important place within these processes'. Thus, our first aim is to locate the functioning of these groups within such a scenario. However, a second question, also treated in the following chapter, will address the time-span needed for all these processes in order to reach statehood [cf Shifferd; 1996:31]. Finally we have to see what size and level of organization such a state could at the

⁷Asad makes an interesting point: "A weak state was vulnerable to elements other than nomads, and in fact the seizure of state power by dissidents and adventurers occurred far more often than seizure by nomads" [Asad; 1973:72].

very best have reached under the given circumstances¹.

Yet let us for a short moment return to the concept of the so-called early egalitarian Israelite society. At first it appears easy to see that this period of dispersed settlement, caused as it was by the collapse of the urban network and the disintegration of the greater agglomerations in the highlands, is often considered as a golden age for egalitarianism. It is indeed true that mountain and highland regions do tend towards more equality. However it is false to say that this is a voluntarily social disposition of the population. It is not the population that tends towards egalitarianism. Egalitarianism is rather induced by the environment. Even then some reservations as to the equality of the highland settlements and its inhabitants must be made. Orme for one claims that "every community has at least a minimum level of leadership, revealed in the course of the major group activities" [1981:138; Gamst; 1974:53-54]². Coote and Whitelam furthermore insist that within small scale societies, differentiation's might be small, but they are all the more important [1987:154]. Finally Briant's study of the Zagros mountain tribes shows that although they were organized rather independently, there nonetheless existed responsible officials [1982:79]. To stipulate that sedentarisation and dispersal, any more than nomadisation, would automatically lead to a completely non-ranked society would appear to be fallacious. Claessen and Oosten furthermore declare

¹Thus we heed some of the warnings iterated by Claessen and Oosten in their introduction to a recent monograph on state formation: "The formation of a state not only covers the origin, and the early beginning of a state, but also its further development to the more complex structures of a mature state....In all cases known, the emergence of states is the result of long evolutionary developments; and even in the few cases in which secondary or successor states ostensibly spring to the fore, traditions of state and state organization already existed" [1996:1&5].

²Cancian warns against viewing peasant communities only as "undifferentiated mass residing in homogeneous communities" [1976:235], pointing to a developing trend in anthropology to focus on the "internal differentiation among peasant communities" [1976:235-236]. Mendras can only confirm this opinion: "Mais, en fait, sont rares les sociétés paysannes égalitaires, sauf si la terre est propriété collective. Plus le groupe domestique est potentiellement fort, plus l'inégalité est probable..." [1995:87; also 107, 117-119] Mendras then further insists that the presence of an outside society obviously creates inequalities of its own kind through the need for intermediaries and the like [1995:122-157].

the following:

The assumption of an original state of equality in pre-state societies cannot be maintained....By projecting our own values of an egalitarian society into societies preceding the formation of states we obscure our understanding of hierarchy in pre-state societies and egalitarian principles in states.

[1996:12]

Similarly it would be false to believe that such heterogeneous highland populations lacked any form of cohesion. As argued above, greater tribal or proto-ethnic agglomerations would have risen under the late New Kingdom, although broken down again due to its collapse. There probably even arose a state of relative socio-political chaos as the subdivisions separated not altogether peacefully. There is a chance that at first a number of struggles, be they due to claims of tribal, ethnic or territorial nature, had to be resolved before a relative state of peace favourable to progress in sedentarisation imposed itself. In fact it is "conditions of political stability and security" that can "tip the balance against an unstable pastoral adaptation" [Cribb; 1991:61]. It is at this point that we posit what Coote and Whitelam often have seen to be a stay of conflict between nomadic chiefs and bandit captains realizing the need for stability in order to engage some of the population in self-sufficient food production [1986:120, 121; 1987:130-131].

A study by Renfrew [1982b] on social development in the aftermath of system collapse has caught our attention, as it seems comparatively similar to our case. In fact Renfrew traces seven points of development [1982b:114] that we happen to encountered also in the Palestinian highlands:

(a) Emergence of segmentary societies showing analogies with those seen centuries or millennia earlier in the 'formative'

level in the same area. (Only later do these reach a chiefdom or 'florescent' level of development.)

(b) Fission of realm to smaller territories, whose boundaries may relate to those of earlier polities.

(c) Possible peripheral survival of some highly organised communities still retaining several organisational features of the collapsed state.

(d) Survival of religious elements as 'folk' cults and beliefs.

(e) Craft production at local level, with 'peasant' imitations of former specialist products (e.g. in pottery).

(f) Local movements of small population groups resulting from the breakdown in order at the collapse of the central administration (either with or without some language change), leading to destruction of many settlements.

(g) Rapid subsequent regeneration of chiefdom or even state society, partly influenced by the remains of its predecessor.

[Renfrew; 1982b:114] (emph. added)

We can see points (a), (e) and (f), as they appear in the Palestinian scenario. A certain return to nomadism and pastoralism with tribal-like organizational features seem to correspond to a Middle-Bronze situation. We have seen already that pottery as well as housing culture diminished in sophistication and resulted in poorer or "peasant" adaptations of earlier forms. Finally the processes of refuge seeking and dissidence movements that we have described seem to correspond perfectly to point (f). Thus it becomes apparent that the situations in question are in fact largely comparable: population movements and reorganization after the collapse of a state-system, that had for long dominated the scene. Point (d) is also present in the Palestinian case, but will be part of a closer analysis in the following chapter.

The remaining points seem to us to be even further importance. We

are interested particularly in the fact, that, although the system by itself collapsed, there remained enough elements that survived rather unchanged from the pre-collapse period. Renfrew mentions that at first processes of fissioning were in operation, something we ourselves have posited for the Palestinian case, Larger tribal or proto-ethnic groupings which developed in response to the might of Egypt, the common enemy, redivide after the period of immediate danger. Rather more interesting is the fact that what form of agglomeration remained was highly reminiscent of the previous periods. We have emphasized the closeness to "earlier periods" and further that "several organizational features" are being re-used so-to-speak even in peripheral areas, which in our case would obviously be the highland environment.

The question then to answer is what sort of organizational system would survive, and it seems to us that conditions similar to the Armana period would be the ideal candidate to fill the vacuum. It would mean that after the coalescence of population groups of diverse origins at the times of the Egyptian onslaught, we are going back to a situation, where certain leaders of bandit, nomad, or other kind retain or regain control over certain areas to a degree without controlling either vast territories or large numbers of devoted followers on an ethnic or tribal basis. Yet certain cities and strongholds could again function as dimorphic chiefdoms or similar polities as they did in the times of Labayu and Abdhi-Khepa. It is all the more probable that the same cities again stood in the centre stage, albeit new names appeared (of which we obviously know nothing)¹⁰.

¹⁰ Although in general we do not follow the proposers of dramatically new chronologies like James and Rohl, a look at some of Rohl's assumptions deserves a quick note. He is able to link Amarna and Saulide-Davidic times, albeit in a quite idiosyncratic manner: "In der Neuen Chronologie entspricht die Amarnazeit der Epoche des Aufstiegs des israelitischen Königreiches" [1996:238; also 233]. Nonetheless the comparison that he makes between these two periods are from a sociological point of view not totally invalid, and it is only in combination with these sociological assumptions that he can deliver the following interpretation based on his New Chronology: "Hier ergibt sich also eine ganz ungewöhnliche Situation. Die Bibelwissenschaftler sind zu der Auffassung gelangt, dass die Hebräer unter David eine genaue (allerdings spätere) Widerspiegelung der historischen Amarna-Habiru sind. Das Problem ist, dass nach traditioneller

This is of some importance to us, as it shows that the vacuum Egypt left need not immediately have been filled by a strong centralized apparatus, but that other arrangements, copied on earlier forms, can have survived for some time. Again Renfrew claims at the end of his enumeration:

All of these features apply to some extent to the aftermath of the Aegean palace civilization of Crete and Mycenaean Greece, where following the Mycenaean collapse the city states of the classical Greek world emerged some three or four centuries later. [1982b:114]

This is the first time we will give notice to the notion of time. In fact it is the timespan, which elapsed between the first processes of settlement in the highlands and the establishment of a state in the highlands that separates us most from earlier interpretations. We simply think it took a time longer. This view by Renfrew would confirm our opinion. Even given a date of around 1200 B.C. (and this would mean, people would start reorganizing and settling immediately) as a starting point of resettlement in the highlands, would bring us into the 9th century, rather than the times around 1000 B.C. for the beginning of the establishment of more centralized forms of government. The arguments that will be presented in the next two chapters should however convince some that the date should even be lower.

Chronologie David und sein Hebräerhaufen ihre Raubzüge in Palästina im letzten Jahrzehnt des 11. Jahrhunderts v.Chr. taten. Mendenhall, Greenberg und McCarter hatten als Bezugsrahmen nur die traditionelle Chronologie. Wenn ihnen die Neue Chronologie zur Verfügung gestanden hätte, wären sie wohl zu einer anderen Schlussfolgerung gelangt: Die Amarna-Habiru sind Davids Hebräern nicht nur verblüffend ähnlich - sie sind Davids Hebräer!" [Rohl; 1996:241]. Of course proceeding in this manner, Rohl can also help out in so far as names go: "Labayu, der >>Löwe [Jahwes]<<, Herrscher über das Bergland in der Amarnazeit, ist die historische Gestalt, die dem Verfasser der Bücher Samuel zum Vorbild für seine Lebensgeschichte Sauls diente, des ersten König des Volkes Israel" [Rohl; 1996:260 ,also 245, 248].

And yet, it becomes apparent that, although larger organizations with widely powerful élites had disappeared, the remnant sub-divisions were enough to assure the survival not only of communities with an appropriate social place for every member, but also various forms of a rural military élite. The units might have become smaller, but it would be unreasonable to ignore the potential of such groups. Again the nature of the Palestinian highlands dictated such community types. Being geographically and environmentally highly disparate, it is not that the diverging regions often developed in relative isolation and independence. The importance of realizing the "diversity of Palestine", its "regional variations" and "complex arrangement of micro-environments" has only recently been stressed by Whitelam [1993:16] and it is thus interesting to review Ewald's conclusions on a similar environment:

In this context it becomes clear that the Taqali massif worked variations on the common themes of the Nuba hills: rich diversity in the physical and human environment, lively exchange amongst highland communities, and a wide range of specialized leaders. These dynamics worked against political centralization. ... On the contrary, indirect evidence suggests that no particular leader or elite exercised central power. Centralization rarely occurred for any length of time in the Nuba hills and, as argued above, the Taqali massif shared the physical and human environment of the hills. Highlander's own depictions of the Taqali massif depict various forms of shared power, whether between *ime* and *woster* or *mbering* and *Funj* elite. Moreover, no single *ime/woster* or *mbering/Funj* regime ruled the entire Taqali massif. Each of the separate hill communities on the massif had its own rulers. [Ewald; 1990:19 and 43]¹¹

¹¹Redford sees the whole region of Palestine as badly adapted for bigger and centralized units, and claims: "In contrast to Upper Egypt and even the Delta, in Palestine the genesis and growth of communities with a manifest destiny to control vast tracts of land were impossible. The mountains divide the land into circumscribed regions - valley, upland, steppe, coast -

Palestine looked much similar, and only in times dominated by the need to consolidate, such as under the late Egyptian onslaught, did the wider connections between these isolated entities make themselves felt in any important manner. The political situation of this particular period on the contrary furthered the tendency to fission. Thus minor regions and minor tribal units re-emerged all over the highlands.

Nonetheless this argument does not eliminate the potential of the different microcosms, such as for example an intermontane valley; to a) work as a unit and b) be dominated by some form of an élite grouping. Thompson has recently alluded to the fact that, if there was no natural tendency within Palestine to centralize, the centrifugal tendencies present did not eliminate the maintenance of power within sub-regions, where important city-centers "had their primary basis of power in the narrow economic associations of their local regions" [Thompson; 1992b:318]¹².

Within the highlands, regions, again especially some of the larger intermontane valleys, could easily have existed in relative independence, yet develop more or less definitive lines of stratification internal to

and prevent the development of anything beyond a canton. Automatically population growth was limited and complexity of government and society never achieved anything beyond a rudimentary level" [1992:15]. Such conclusions seem to be validated on a more general plane: "The historian Fernand Braudel has hypothesized that areas of geographical uniformity (for instance, alluvial plains) lead to centralization and population clustering, while areas of geographical diversity (such as mountain regions) tend to remain decentralized" [in Lamberg-Karlovsky and Sabloff; 1979:180].

¹²A little earlier he had already claimed: "In exploring the early development of states and protoethnic groups in a region such as Palestine, it is important to be aware that centralizing and integrating tendencies linked to a rise in prosperity, an expansion of population, a resurgence in regional and international trade, and the military organization of subregional powers, are not immediately open to simple linear evolutionary growth, even in a situation (as pertained from the late twelfth to the late tenth century) in which the collapse of the Hittite and especially the Egyptian empire left a power vacuum in the region. Quite the contrary! The economic structures indigenous to Palestine were essentially centrifugal, inimical to both political and proto-ethnic consolidation beyond the boundaries of very small geographically defined sub-units" [1992b:316].

themselves. The situation really becomes reminiscent of that of the Amarna period. Again it is advisable to look at the importance of tribal élites, bandit paramilitaries, and the power of any potential capital cities and/or strategic strongholds. It would appear surprising if some of these forms of leadership would not have survived or reappeared. The vacuum left by Egypt might have been destructive to the larger tribal or ethnic formations, but it must have laid open possibilities for strongmen, such as minor chiefs, parasocial leaders, and bandit captains to assert themselves on a local or regional basis. The increase in settlements presented in any case a fresh potential for the establishment of protection rackets.

Although the Egyptian withdrawal resulted in the breakdown of large scale power structures, smaller units with their appropriate forms of leadership thus survived. Coote and Whitelam had already noticed a similar phenomenon, when they claimed that already at the very beginning of the settlement in the highlands there were those who had ambitions towards stratification and even centralization [1986:132; 1987:149]. The proposals above would strengthen such a claim. Yet it still holds that at first they did not really intend to work in cooperation with each other, but rather fought out their differences. This was so-to-say a period where parochial power dominated the scene. The intermontane valleys and likewise isolated regions assumed something like a sub-ethnic or sub-tribal character with the accent on differences rather than on common features. The majority of them fiercely wanted to keep their own autonomy, from each other as well as from larger superimposing power structures. After a while such circumstances must have led to open confrontation.

It is extremely difficult to qualify these quasi-independent microcosmic entities. On the one hand, it is doubtful that the settled areas at first progressed beyond the stage of minor chiefdoms. Yet on the other, it is difficult to see how much of the role of previous nomadic

élites pertained. Similarly it is not proven that the processes of sedentarisation did in fact absorb all bandit groups. It might be that the aftermath of the collapse left numbers of roaming veterans and dislocated militaries, more expert in warfare than in agriculture. Some of them must have been less intent on settling down as farmers themselves, than on dominating other highland settlers from mountain strongholds, in an extended protection racket, maybe even a small bandit-kingdom.

The fact is that the outcome of the collapse furthered conditions in the highlands that, more than under the Egyptian domination, resembled Rowton's extensive descriptions. Settlement was not all encompassing; it took place in a first instance most extensively in Mannasseh and Ephraim. It was especially the cereal areas that were first exploited, and even here animal husbandry was combined with crop growing [Finkelstein; 1988:198]. This should not, however, be taken as a firm indicator that the settlers all came from a nomadic-pastoralist background. It is rather a sign of environmental adaptation in circumstances that needed fast solutions to adequate food supply¹³. Displaced peasants from the plain would have chosen exactly the same locations and terrains. It highlights the need to produce food quickly. It also indicates that it is still possible to consider the first attempts of settled life as a transitional effort. There was at first maybe no intention to prepare settlements for a permanent stay. The first settlements needed no terracing and were relatively independent of horticulture, two characteristics that would

¹³Whitelam criticizes Finkelstein on this point. He insists: "The evidence that Finkelstein puts forward, once the distraction of the label "Israelite" is removed, adds further weight to this view. As he states (1988:338): "Human material culture is influenced first and foremost by the socioeconomic situation and by environmental conditions." The appearance and use of pillared buildings, silos, cisterns, terracing, and pottery forms such as the collared-rim ware are explicable in terms of the topographical and environmental conditions facing the inhabitants of highland and marginal settlements in the context of the disruption of local and regional economies (see also Dever 1991:83-84). The technological solutions and expertise displayed in the use of cisterns, terracing, or the construction of pillared buildings militate against the view that the population of these sites were nomads in the process of sedentarisation (Coote and Whitelam 1987:123-4)" [Whitelam; 1993:20; but compare Fritz; 1987:96ff].

point to long-term maintenance and intended permanent settlement [Marfoe; 1979:21; Finkelstein; 1989:52, 58-59].

This at least suggests that the settlers might well have originated from the plains [cf Finkelstein ("other explanation"); 1988:199-200]. They had participated in the withdrawal in face of the late Egyptian onslaught of domination and exploitation. At first they also probably participated with a dissident attitude in the highlands efforts of secession and a more mobile lifestyle of brigandage, whilst still hoping to return to the plains after the situation calmed down. But instead of a retreat by Egypt, there came a general collapse. Far from being able to resume life on the plains, they rapidly had to adapt to sedentarisation again, but this time in highland territories. They chose not only lands with fast return, but also, while hoping to return to the plains, those which required less investment. Yet on the plain the collapse led to the consolidation of power of a new urban network under the increasingly assimilated Sea Peoples who seemed at first intent to keep the highlands in relative exclusion. There was little space for returning highlanders, who were left to develop their own agricultural produce .

This is not, however, to exclude all pastoralist and nomadic highlanders from the process of sedentarisation. Amongst them the poorest were most certainly also affected by the collapse, and, if Thompson is correct, a considerable period of drought [1992b:328, 334, 407]. They also would have chosen to settle down. They equally would have chosen lands of fast return, and equally would have thought of this as a short-term solution. Many nomads only settle down to gain capital to afford a new herd and resume a nomadic lifestyle [Cribb; 1991:61; Viger; 1993:24]. However, even then the presence of an originally sedentary group of settlers, especially if tribally or ethnically associated, would be extremely helpful¹⁴. These would be peasant specialists, and as such more

¹⁴Lemche maintains: "Furthermore, without a village culture of peasant origin, the nomads would hardly ever have been persuaded to settle, at least not by their own will and not in any significant number. This last

able to find the best territories and also capable of developing the necessary techniques to work the new environment. Furthermore, nomads prefer to settle down where there are already related kin. In the case of the Palestinian highlands, it also would explain why some of the housing and pottery techniques bear such striking resemblance to previous architectural and ceramic techniques from the plains, while at times taking on some characteristics that are often termed nomadic. Nomads and earlier inhabitants of the plain simply interacted as they settled down¹⁵.

Nonetheless the concentration of the initial settlement in certain areas leaves enough territory for the nomadic-pastoralist lifestyle to persist. Yet it would take on the characteristics of "enclosed nomadism", as it would exist around and in between the newly settled areas. Similarly it would be dependent on the agricultural produce of these settled regions. In this case, there always was an incentive for nomadic-pastoralist leaders to exploit the village population, even when and where indeed they were not still in charge anyway. Exploitation could, however, take many forms, from simple sporadic raiding to outright subjugation and integration into a state-like society dominated by an originally nomadic élite. One might argue that in this case it was the sedentaries more than the nomads that were "enclosed". This is especially the case if one presumes that the nomads were militarily superior. In the absence of other military specialists, particularly a trained army and its chariotry, this would have been the case.

It would be false, however, to assume that nomadic tribalists simply overran the newly established settlements. Neither can one really

argument may provide a point of contact between my thesis and I. Finkelstein's explanation, and it would be wrong to assume that my constructions exclude nomadic participation in the formation of Israel" [Lemche; 1991:13].

¹⁵Again see the reasoning by Lemche concerning the nomadic camp layout of the settlements: "It only indicates that the peasants living in the Palestinian villages of the Early Iron Age had spread their risk also to include some animal husbandry, a fact that should hardly be a surprise to anybody when the nature of the terrain is considered" [1991:13].

picture a scene in which nomads could organize the highlands in a larger confederation, least of all an amphictyony. The nomads themselves were not at ease with each other, and often tribally distinct. Again it must be noted that these differences did not work parallel to the lines of peasant-nomad diversification. Moreover, even amongst the new settlers, there would have been those who had ambitions of their own, and power and capital to fulfill them. Be they richer nomads that had settled down as landlords¹⁶, great and rich families that had come from the plains, or simply those who more than others had profited from the potential of the environment, the village populations themselves quickly developed their own bigmen. In certain instances élite formations among sedentary populations might have had some advantages. In fact the network of redistribution and clientship works much easier among sedentary agriculturists than amongst nomadic pastoralists. It is at this point that the effects of increasing population problems, dislocation into less cultivable areas, as well as developing trade and necessity of organization, started to work in favour of those ambitious men, who held a certain initial advantage.

It is also however at this point that the role of bandits grows in importance again. In fact bandit groups can figure prominently in a network of socio-political relationships that rely heavily on the notion of clientship. Hobsbawm has stressed this factor, when he explains how much the power of a given individual or family rests on whether he can count "enough swords, guns or votes in the calculus of local politics" [1969:79]. He goes on to say:

This is a situation which is ideally suited to banditry. It provides a natural demand and political role for bandits, a local reservoir of uncommitted armed men who, if they can be induced to accept the patronage of some gentleman or magnate,

¹⁶Interesting in this context is a claim by Block concerning phases of sedentarisation reiterated by Cribb: "The aim is to be rich in animals without pursuing nomadic skills" [1991:62].

will greatly add to his prestige and may well on a suitable occasion add to his fighting or vote-getting force. (What is more, the establishment of retainers kept by noblemen provide convenient employment for individual bandits, potential or actual.) [1969;79-80]

The fact is that little by little bandits regain their importance as a rural military élite. They might start off as little more than regulators or *vigilantes* in the employ of the richer landowning families. Yet as their patrons gained in prestige, they developed into more important and sizable forms. Instead of regulators, they rapidly became a standing paramilitary element in minor chiefdoms. Soon enough the demands on them must have exceeded those of policing, and they must have been called upon to act as an aggressive force in the expansionist visions of their patrons. The role played by bandit groups thus increased with the development of bigmen into chiefs, of local village units into bigger units such as chiefdoms. As especially social circumscription came to act against the fissioning of bigger units, the importance of this expert military element must have been consolidated¹⁷. With the passage of time, this apparently initial form of social warfare indeed slowly transformed itself into a part of the bureaucratic aspects of the chiefdom politics.

This movement from prestige or charismatic forms of leadership towards more traditional and eventually bureaucratic forms is another aspect of chiefdom formation. As charismatic leadership is, however, often heavily dependent on the leader's abilities as a military performer, it is important for him to guarantee for himself a competent military element. Yet it might be a hint also towards the fact that at times a strong bandit captain himself can strive and successfully become

¹⁷One might here note the importance of specialization and then promotion for state-formation: "By promotion, Flannery means that an institution's role may change from a lower-level, specialized one to a higher-level generalized one. An example of promotion is the rise of military leaders who initially formed as an arm of the state but eventually, in times of stress, were able to promote themselves to positions of overall power" [Lamberg-Karlovsky and Sabloff; 1979;331].

a local leader. Charisma and prestige are in our opinion seriously dependent on outward signs¹⁸. Chiefs in many societies rely heavily on outside signs, such as particular clothing and headgear, sometimes even tattooing and other body decorations [Hayden; 1993:300-301]. Some of these outside signs may be the result of an initial advantage such as capital. As such, people appear to their peers as charismatic because they have the riches to invest in order to parade themselves publicly [Orme; 1981:216]. Especially among nomadic societies charisma appears as part of a wider ideological concept, a vital commodity that not only had to be acquired, but also manipulated [Allsen; 1996:116-117]. Here the two attributes of charismatic warleader and redistributor come together. Müller's recent treatment of chiefdom polities in Cameroon draws similar conclusions:

Such quasi chiefdoms vary in size which expands or retracts according to the ascendancy of informal leaders who, like Dii chiefs, also attempt to attract as many kin and parents as they can by their generosity and personal charisma. Such leaders are in a very precarious position since the ideology is here at the same time egalitarian and competitive; they appeared usually in times of war and their position was transient: if they were not generous enough, the people they attracted would move away, or if a new leader who was thought better was at hand, people would abandon their former leader and follow the new one. [Müller; 1996:112]

¹⁸The notion of charisma is one that is subject to much ambiguity. We would like to stress that charisma is not self-existent, but heavily reliant on the feedback by a support group of followers. Similarly for example, Dekmejian and Wyszomirsky say in their article on charismatic leadership in Islam: "In discussing the relative importance and interaction of the psychological and social aspects of charismatic authority, he (= Weber) emphasized the former, e.g. the leader's possession of a 'gift of grace', independent from the social context. Despite this emphasis, however, he went on to recognize the need for the social acknowledgment of charisma, in the absence of which the leader's possession of this 'gift' becomes socially insignificant. (As in the works of Davies, Etzioni, Friedland, Willner and Willner, Rustow, and others), charisma is treated here as a relationship between leader and followers rather than a personal attribute of the leader himself" [1972:194].

Successful bandit captains (who, as we have seen, can be of an original nomadic-pastoralist stock) can themselves fulfill many of these attributes. They have advantages as far as military expertise goes. Yet they also possess far greater riches when compared to the normal peasant population [Hobsbawm; 1969:73]. Finally, but not least importantly, they show outward signs not only of freedom but also of superiority. Both would leave a poorer, labour-bound, and considerably abused village population highly impressed. Hobsbawm has pointed out that bandits love to parade their accouterments and arms, "insignia of power" [Orme; 1981:209] and often a privilege of an aspiring nobility. They thus carry around themselves a certain prestigious aura, which, coupled with possession of capital and leadership qualities, might well let them appear as charismatic personalities¹⁹. A bandit leader can as such figure as a chief, especially if Hobsbawm is correct in his assumption, that many bandit leaders are wanting to achieve status as a rich landlord²⁰.

These developments also have different consequences, especially at the early stages of polity formation. In fact, one of the major pools of continuing bandit activity results from a reverse process, when landlords or bigmen and their followers become bandits:

Furthermore, the structure of politics in rural societies provided another and perhaps an even more formidable reinforcement to banditry. For if the dominant families or faction protected them, the defeated or opposition groups had no recourse except to arms, which meant in extreme cases to become band-leaders...In this way the armed resistance of the 'outs' and the 'ins' of local aristocratic or family

¹⁹Fearsome looking bandits would indeed make good chiefs for "all chiefdoms have two things in common: chiefs who tried to be feared and awesome, and followers who wanted their chiefs to be feared and awesome" [Hayden; 1993:274].

²⁰Coote and Whitelam argue similarly when they describe some rulers as "established villagers, townsmen", others as "bandits" [1986:137].

politics, may, at least locally and temporarily, satisfy the resentments of the poor against their exploiters, a situation not unknown in other kinds of politics. In any case, where landowning families fight and feud, make and break family alliances, dispute heritage's with arms, the stronger accumulating wealth and influence over the broken bones of the weaker, the scope for bands of men led by the disgruntled losers is naturally very large. [Hobsbawm; 1969:81-82]

This illustrates that in the fight for paramount leadership the disinherited of one chiefdom, the loosing contenders, easily become the bandits of tomorrow. Furthermore, it is testimony to the political situation, as well as the important role of bandits within it, as discussed above. It shows that morcellement and localization do not exclude stratification, even exploitation. It also attests to a rather smooth transition between a limited socio-political scene of feuding operations between landowning families and the formation of greater polities. This shows the difficulties in assuming a definite chronology, particularly as far as the arrival onto the scene by bandit groupings is concerned. It is not entirely discernible which favours whom most, the advent of greater polities, the increase in banditry, or the presence of bandits the formation of the polities²¹. Nonetheless the two are intimately interconnected. The processes are not only simultaneous, but the developments, once engaged, become highly self-engendering. Hobsbawm goes on to say:

The structure of rural politics in the conditions that breed banditry therefore has two effects. On the one hand it fosters, protects and multiplies bandits, on the other it integrates them into the political system. Admittedly both

²¹Thompson has mentioned a similar problem in his review of Weippert, where he claims: "These two perspectives: geographical regionalism and chronological ambivalence and fragility, are clearly brought together in her discussions of relative chronology" [1992:165, also 191-193].

these effects are probably more powerful where the central state apparatus is absent or ineffective and the regional centres are balanced or unstable, as in conditions of 'feudal anarchy', in frontier zones, among a shifting mosaic of petty principalities, in the wild back country. [1969:82]

That the highlands of Palestine represented such a backward country has been seen on many occasions before. Indeed we have qualified it at times as hinterland, frontier zone, or even barbaric entity. It might be added here that the situation was reinforced with the collapse of Egypt as the central authority. Furthermore, this collapse left behind itself precisely a mosaic of isolated local, at the most regional polities. As these tried to extend their territories of jurisdiction, the situation grew steadily unstable.

However, the nomadic-pastoralist factor has to be added to this mosaic. These groupings are dependent on the agricultural produce by the sedentary element [Aurenche; 1984:13; Kürsat-Ahlers; 1996:136-137, 142]. They will thus try to procure it for themselves, if necessary by force, ultimately by domination. Although some might have simply created their own sedentary sector within their own niches, others will have tried to subjugate existing sedentary regions. Although some might have been among the initial groups to settle as landlords in the agricultural valleys of Ephraim and Manasseh, some tried to remain nomadic while trying to extract the products from such valleys. Finally, some might from the very beginning have arranged symbiotic harmony between themselves and the sedentary areas. Others, on the other hand, had to conquer or subdue such territories. As long as there was a nomadic element present, there were thus tensions to be expected. In the end these have to be viewed as the nomads' participation in the hunt for protection and domination, and the fight for paramount chiefdom. This bears witness not so much to a peasant-nomad opposition *per se*, but rather to the claim by certain powerful nomadic groups to engage in the business of appropriation cum

exploitation, and eventually of chiefdom come state formation. It is a competition between opposing élite groups, not so much between peasant and nomad.

It is then interesting to note again the importance of bandits as the paramilitary sector within a nomadic society. This is all the more so, as the importance of bandits also increases among nomads, as more obvious occurrences of élite formation become apparent. Despite the legitimating efforts produced by ideology and various forms of propaganda, it is our belief that any potential élite, which is about to make any would-be claims to authority and aims to uphold such a privileged position, necessitates a certain degree of coercive power [Ratnagar; 1996:181]. In any case, the influence of a military component on its society, whatever its form, is hardly deniable:

But consequences follow for any society from the presence or absence of full-time military specialists, from the forms of their organization, from the regional distribution of control of organized violence, from the advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of force, and from the norms associated with such use. [Baretta and Markoff; 1978:587]²².

Schäfer-Lichtenberger has shown that it is important for a city-state society to either make sure its bulk of peasant population remains

²²Generally speaking specialists of any sort change the circumstances of life for society. This is mainly so because as a non-food producer, they have to be nourished, as such the food has to be extracted from the food producers, which, ultimately, lies at the very base of the separation into dominant and dominated. The military specialist seems to have an extra role, as he profits not only from such a situation, but represents the force responsible for keeping the system in place, and able to do so through the use of violence. Otherwise, most specialists are indeed in some way connected with the maintenance of the status quo, playing one part or another in the complex machinery of ideology and propaganda: the scribe who creates court literature, the priest who gives divine sanction, the artisan who creates monumental art, etc. The sedentary world clearly distinguishes the peasant as its main food producer. It appears doubtful at first that, within a nomadic and pastoralist setting, one single protagonist can be as easily isolated as the food producing entity. Or, to reverse the angle of the problem, it is difficult to discover any specialists marking themselves off in a society where everybody owns and manages animal herds.

largely unarmed, or that the élite-group possess superior means of war and coercion. Thus sedentary élites monopolise some of the necessary war machinery, in this case the chariotry, to keep the wider populace at bay. Interestingly enough, a study by Rosenfeld [1951; also 1965] seems to prove this to be the case also among nomads. Among the tribal groupings of the Rwala, he follows the slow assuming of military superiority by the camel-breeding sub-groups over their sheep raising or handicraft performing nomad brothers. The camel has however previously already been compared to a specialized weapon. Thus the situation seems to be more similar to that of the sedentary state than to one where equally equipped nomads face each other. It is thus questionable whether the consequences apply for a society where only sheep-nomads are involved.

Two restrictions must be given to such objection. First of all Rosenfeld has pointed out that not all camel-breeding sub-groups reached the status of superiority on the military plane. Only one of the groups in fact had not only the intelligence, but also the time and skill to invest more intensely into this previously common advantage.

Secondly, and here the camel shows similarities with the chariot, camel warfare is no easy matter. The handling and maneuvering of both the camel and the chariot are in fact hard to acquire and need long and specialized training. Thus it is prolonged training, i.e. much time, which can transform a normal bedouin into a fully skilled meharist. The art of camel-warfare is indeed a full-time occupation. This, however, is a luxury equivalent to time-consuming chariot-training. In the end someone has to pay for those who are thus unavailable for herding duties²³.

²³It is, thus, not only the availability of, but also the ability to handle the given military means that is important in order to create an outstanding paramilitary element. In the case of Bercé's artillery for example availability rather than expertise seems to be the main factor. Chariots, although much training is needed, are equally if not more important because of the monopoly on fabrication and ability to cover their cost on behalf of the élite-strata. Camels pose a different problem. They are more generally available among bedouin than artillery or chariots among peasants. Yet in Rosenfeld's case one group managed to monopolize for itself the breeding of this military asset. This it did by specialising in the military use of the camel in the first place. Which comes to prove that

The formation of a military grouping is time-consuming and therefore costly. Among sheep-nomads it cannot be different. With the absence of any equivalent to a specialized weapon, training would, however, be even more important. It goes without saying therefore that it is those nomad chiefs or sheikhs with sufficient capital that are most likely to engage in such a venture²⁴. As such, these groups do form, or are formed, in a first instance especially as body-guards. Slaves are immensely important in this role. In fact they present several advantages over other free followers in the same role. They do not need to be substracted from the shepherding labour force, thus at least from one point of view they are less costly. Furthermore slaves, like mercenaries, are more loyal than free followers. Not only fed, but also maintained in such a high position as the armed occupation represents, they are less likely to be bought off. In fact they can hardly expect any better status, neither are there any ideological attachments of any importance that would draw them to another master. Most importantly, as non-kin, they are unlikely to pose as much of a danger to their masters as close relatives who may wish to usurp the position of power.

However, the question of the outstanding maintenance costs remains. Paradoxically, also amongst nomads, once the trend to form an armed group is engaged, it becomes self-engendering. For the best way to maintain such a group is to do it at the cost of others, i.e. by raiding and pillaging, or even by expanding. The process then becomes essentially

a trained camel-bedouin surpasses his fellow camel-bedouin in the military sphere. On this he can a *posteriori* base his claims not only to superior military but also social status.

²⁴But the case is not all that clear-cut. Khazanov [1984] maintains that a nomad-pastoralist economy does not provide for such capital investment. Although it is agreed that it is possible for some chiefs to arm and maintain a number of their followers, the fact that capital is mostly herd-capital and that systems of reciprocative self-help exist, renders the redistribution system rather less effective than is the case in a sedentary agriculturally-based society. The same is true if the troops in question are to be made up of slaves rather than free followers. As Khazanov points out, slaves have to be armed, fed, and maintained as much as freemen.

cyclical, for the very manner in which the armed force is maintained, becomes on the other hand the very reason to maintain or even to increase such a force²⁵. Other chiefs and groups will obviously respond leading to the need of an increased military cadre²⁶. This competitive need also again calls for improved expertise. Ultimately the prolonged occupation with warfare skills will make such bodyguard-groups, as specialized shock-troops, more effective than a levied militia.

This development of a high level of competition, however, means that it is highly advantageous to develop such a cadre in as short a time as possible. There is, therefore, a case for employing ready trained elements rather than meeting the cost and time of development. If our previous assumptions are correct, these should ideally share some of the characteristics of slave bodyguards, namely that loyalty which is not kin-related. Where else to look, however, than to those marauders roaming within or adjacent to the territories under one's tribal influence. These parasocial elements, bandits, outlaws, and refugees, have made the wielding of arms their full-time occupation, and share with the nomads knowledge of territory and mobility. They represent a ready and available source for recruitment into paid service. And if some of them do indeed enter the service of state representatives, there is no reason to assume that the same should not be the case in the presence of powerful nomadic

²⁵Kürsat-Ahlers furthermore claims that a chief might lose his position because he stops military activity: "The appearance of centrifugal forces always coincided with the cessation of the conquest, territorial expansion, and therefore with a decrease in the redistributive capacity of the ruler which implied also a loss of charisma, and therefore a decreasing consent of his subjects" [1996:142].

²⁶Again this is even the more so, as chiefs can lose their position, if they fail militarily. Hagesteijn, writing on state formation in Southeast Asia, says: "In some periods, the legitimacy of rulers depended for a considerable part on their achievements in warfare. A ruler who was successful in war and in expanding his territory was considered to be a good ruler and had many adherents. A less fortunate warrior would tend to lose his men, who would look for a new 'winner'" [1996:196]. Similar claims are made by Oosten concerning kingdoms in Europe: "A successful war-leader would attract warriors from all sides, and so he might succeed in conquering new land and settle down as an independent ruler...The new kingdoms depended for their existence on the king and his army. If the political and military nucleus of the kingdom was destroyed the kingdom as a whole might vanish" [1996:223].

chiefs and sheikhs²⁷.

The arrangement will be advantageous to both parties. We have claimed earlier on that bandits prefer to secure for themselves a foodbase rather than living on *ad hoc* raids. It is similarly the case that service for a nomadic chief is a more stable occupation than permanent marauding and pillaging. And as with state service, a certain degree of legitimation and power is thus handed down to the bandit-group. Nomadic chiefs on the other hand will win time and reduce their costs, while at the same time being assured of a strong military force. Not being kin-related not only calls for another kind of loyalty, but brings with it a certain degree of ruthlessness vis-à-vis the dominated population.

This is however also one of the reasons for the ease with which such outside-groups can be adopted into the tribal system. It would indeed be unreasonable not to take into account the possibilities of integration for such groupings through the manipulation of genealogies and the principle of descent²⁸. After all, the presence of such a foreign element is not easily tolerated. In this instance the flexibility of tribal and lineage systems, however, helps to legitimate the place of the newly incorporated outsiders, and may even elevate them to quite high status, due to their military strength. In this way chiefs and sheikhs in need of such a power group, meet the problem of justifying the presence of the strong outsiders not only to the whole populace, but especially to contenders, often relatives, at the top of the social scale. Ewald detected just such a group surrounding the early kings of the Taqali massif. A nucleus of armed men, was called "the 70 sons (*awlad al-makk*)" [1990;51, 67]. She claims further:

²⁷Rowton's description of the *mawali* is reminiscent of such a situation [1976b:16].

²⁸Cribb alludes to this phenomenon, when he claims: "Mercenaries drawn from diverse sources, together with their households and retainers, may be offered 'tribal' status as a reward for loyal service" [1991:54].

When Isma'il died, his son Abakr took command of his fellow warriors and became *makk* around 1800. Abakr wad Isma'il faced little opposition. If, as argued above, they were in reality clients and slaves, the 70 sons depended directly on their leader. They had few family ties or other sources of support in the highlands. When Isma'il died, it was in their interest to unite behind one of their number and prevent the kingship's disappearing altogether or passing to another group. Thus Abakr wad Isma'il succeeded to his father's office without incident. [Ewald; 1990:52]

Ironically, this very same group, once it is integrated, can itself progress to become a source of contention to power. The leader of the paramilitary sector, perhaps an erstwhile bandit-captain, will enjoy considerable backing from such a strong group, if he decides to usurp paramount chiefdom²⁹.

Thus, a very complex situation arises where "probably the split

²⁹There does as such exist a paradox in the loyalty of such out-of-kin militaries. Rosenfeld mentions the following: "A chief apparently may or may not be able to depend on his slaves. 'The slaves are the main support of the chief: they protect him against sudden attack and execute any order he may give. Yet nobody deposes or kills a chief so readily or more frequently than his own slaves' (Musil 1928, p.277) The loyalty of the slaves undoubtedly goes in the direction of the power: 'after the power of the Shammar emir, Eben Rasid, had collapsed in 1906, many of his negroes went on to an-Nûhri [head chief of the Rwala] (*ibid.*, p.517)" [Rosenfeld; 1965:191, fn.12]. As when states hire bandit groups, there seems to be a danger that the whole thing backfires. Ewald shows that in Taqali some arrangement reigned, yet violent take-overs nonetheless became frequent: "The awlad al-makk agreed on patrilineality, but beyond that rough distinction they had not yet worked out complicated or precise rules for political life. They refused to define further who should become makk. Trying to keep the kingship within their own group, they willingly supported patrilineal succession. But they all wanted to become king. Therefore, they failed to rank themselves or give any individual or group among the awlad al-makk special rights to office. Succession remained vague, with room for much competition and rivalry. All awlad al-makk, whether sons of previous kings or the current ruler, exercised equal claims over the office. Local theory, as stated in the 1970s, maintained that highland leaders and members of the ruling elite chose a new king by consensus when a makk died. But this never actually happened during most of the nineteenth century. After the death of the kingmaker 'Ajlan wad Isma'il sometime before 1840, every makk came to office by violence" [Ewald; 1990:61].

between higher and lower status agrarians was duplicated by a split between higher and lower status pastoralists" [Gottwald; 1986:100]. Nomadic pastoralists are to be seen within these processes as competent statebuilders as settled populations. Noteworthy is further the common reliance on parasocial elements, often bandits, as military support group. It also shows that on the way towards the formation of any sort of polity, more than the differences between rich and poor, powerful landlords and dominated peasants are at work. As Coote and Whitelam claim, "superimposed upon the class-oriented grouping just outlined were the subregional clan, tribal, and party alliances endemic to Palestine" [1986:139; cf also Coote; 1990:83].

The complexity of the situation is even strengthened through the fact that nomadic élites engaged in state-building often tend to adapt sedentary characteristics rather rapidly. Rosenfeld's later study of the ascent of Ibn Rashid at Haïl in the northern Najd of Arabia is enlightening [1965]. It tries to follow the development of a state society, within which we find involved the same variety of social actors, nomads, bandits, and sedentaries. It also involves similar variations of productive exploitation, with fertile oases being opposed to arid desert hinterland. Rosenfeld's analysis does not only describe a nomadic takeover with imposition of power over the sedentary oasis settlements. The main subject of the study is in fact the military composition involved. One of Rosenfeld's initial assumptions is important for the present study:

Meanwhile the process of state formation is dependent on the development of an exclusive instrument of force, a military, which must first of all secure productive means and extract surpluses, usually through conquest or the threat of the use of force; and, secondly, which must ensure the continued use of the productive means within its area of control for the benefit of a separate exploiting class: that is to organize

the population for purposes of control and to secure its own continuity against threat of rebellion from within and attack from without. No state appears without the appearance of a state military alongside it; the type-state can be fairly well defined by the type of its military. [1965:75]³⁰

Noteworthy then is the steady decrease in importance of the kin group of the ambitious leader, which comes to be replaced by out-of-kin groups as the emerging state takes more definite forms [see also Hayden; 1993:389]. Furthermore reliance on the nomadic element becomes less as not only the state, but the erstwhile nomadic élite adopts more and more of a sedentary nature [Bates; 1971:120; Irons; 1979:372]³¹. As such the out-of-kin group becomes an élite group, a sort of praetorian guard, whereas otherwise one relies heavily on the settled population of the oasis-town to make up the fighting body. The nomads who had completed the conquests at first however, find little space in this make-up, and in fact the erstwhile nomadic élite stay in power "en marginalisant à leur tour, et jusqu'à un certain degré, leurs anciens contribuables, sur lesquels ils s'étaient pourtant appuyés" [Digard; 1976:270; cf Asad; 1973:66, 71; Rowton; 1976a:28]. In fact these fellow tribesmen are now again part of a nomadic hinterland to be dominated by those whom they subjugated at first. Ironically this is done to the benefit of those who

³⁰Rosenfeld's emphasis gains support from Hayden: "Chiefs whose societies were large and rich enough soon devised ways of establishing a constant military force, ever on the alert to ward off raids and ready to form the nucleus of a full army in time of war. Military specialists undoubtedly proved their worth to the elites and soon became indispensable. Moreover --and more important for the evolution of culture to higher levels of complexity-- the elites found that these armed agents could enforce sanctions against individuals or small groups that might not want to go along with their decisions. According to Sanders and Price (1968), it was at this moment that the state was born" [1993:387].

³¹Interesting is here also Aurenche's view, when he claims: "C'est particulièrement vrai de la Mésopotamie et de la Palestine au sens large. Leur histoire peut se résumer, sur des siècles et des millénaires, en un cycle aux rythmes variés, au cours desquels des populations nomades, qui gravitent autour des zones fertiles cultivées, sont progressivement absorbées par les sédentaires auxquelles elles se substituent, à la suite de luttes parfois violentes. Devenus sédentaires, ces groupes sont à leur tour menacés par de nouveaux nomades qui, peu à peu, <<s'urbaniseront>>, donnant ainsi naissance à un nouveau cycle" [1984:13].

used their nomadic kin to become the masters of the oasis-town. Developing trade under the aegis of this stronger apparatus also might guarantee the formation of a merchant class, who is ready enough to take up arms to keep this trade in their hands own rather than that of the surrounding nomads'. It is they that come to represent an essential part of the army of the state not only against the nomads, but also in new conquests.

Admittably Rosenfeld's study is one set in a desert environment involving desert-bedouin. However a situation in a mountain environment involving mountain nomads cannot have been highly different. A strong settlement, a strategic stronghold, or a developing town must have presented similar attractions to a strong mountain tribe leader. Thus a polity of the same form could have taken its roots here. The question then, however, is how much of a developed form such a polity took. On the one hand, we find here an increasingly professional military and also already a merchant class. To a certain degree this points towards a highly organized polity with an instrument of coercion and a potential trade apparatus. Yet on the other hand, Rosenfeld insists that this state-form never was completely in control of its hinterland, and constantly had to be aware of the growing power of neighbouring towns. Rosenfeld thus says that this state had a "recreative" nature, in that it had to reconquer its territories yearly. Its authority was less recognized than it was reimposed every year. Ewald expresses herself differently, but makes a similar point when assessing the nature of the Taqali massif kingdom:

The Taqali kings gained only limited control over the internal affairs of highland communities. Writing of the more distant hills, one traveller reported, 'Every mountain has its own particular chief who governs his own country.' The kings failed to establish their own men as lords or vassals in the hills. The relations between the local 'particular

chiefs' and the Taqali kings thus defined the limits of royal authority in the Taqali kingdom. [1990:74]³²

One wonders if under these circumstances it is possible to talk about a state *per se*? On many other levels, Rosenfeld's state, as seen above, is characterized by elements, that would suit Rowton's notions of a "dimorphic chiefdom" with a "parasocial leader" more than those of a full-blown state. Rowton himself ranges it in the class of "small dimorphic state which differs from the dimorphic chiefdom only to the extent that it is sovereign" [Rowton; 1973a:204]. It was in fact little more than keeping an unsteady control over a territory from the basis of a town [cf Rowton; 1973a:202]. Neither the hinterland, nor the adjacent towns were in fact fully integrated into a strong state-apparatus. It seems very doubtful in any case to qualify this entity as a monarchy of any major importance. Nonetheless we already encounter a heavy reliance on trade, developing urbanization and, especially in the military field, a steady move towards institutionalization. Thus we can talk of a state insofar as a state can be seen to consist of:

... a dominant group (even if it cannot be rightly called a 'class') that comes to control the modes of production, trade or sources of commodities, using either ideology (ritual and religion)³³ or some instrument of coercion (a military/police force) or both in order to enhance or buttress its authority and safeguard it as well as protect its sources of wealth.

The borders within which such power, authority or influence

³²Another case is that of southeast Asia: "Due to difficulties in transport and communication the ruler in the capital had only strict control over the peasants and their leaders in the neighbourhood of his own settlement, which sometimes gave rise to usurpation from leaders of settlements in the periphery, who were able to patronize a large number of peasants...The kings had insufficient control over the activities of the elite and their landownership outside the core of the realm. Combined with problems of transportation and relative freedom of the local population this favoured the autonomy and strength of the landowners, who occasionally threatened the king in the capital." [Hagesteijn; 1996:193-194].

³³This particular point will be more directly taken into consideration in the following and final chapter.

is exercised may or may not be clearly delimited. The political organisation that would arise therein would range from the simple to the highly centralised or complex [Salim; 1984:3] (emph. added)

In our case, it remains to be seen whether Palestinian highland society remained within the range of the smaller and simpler, or whether indeed it reached that of the more complex rather rapidly. So far, we would tend towards the first proposal, especially when taking into account Rosenfeld's and Ewald's studies. Salim's definition above leaves a wide range as to the simplicity or complexity that such a polity can reach. In fact it has recently been argued that the importance of this development in Palestine has been highly exaggerated particularly for the early stages of the Iron Age. A warning had already been given by Frick: "To reach the early state level is one thing; to develop into a fullblown or mature state is quite another..." [1986:21]. In view of what Rosenfeld and Ewald say, considerably more attention must be paid to resistance to would-be state-builders from the communities they wish to integrate into that state. For, although we have seen the role that bandits and nomads play, especially as rural military élite, i.e. as means of coercion, we have not been fully able to determine what level of state-society can be reached under these particular environmental and social circumstances. In the Taqali massif, for example, the kings experienced some serious restrictions as to the use of that means of coercion:

The warrior-kings exercised only incomplete command over armed men in the countryside. In Tumale, for example, every man was a soldier. Willing to fight under the warrior-king to defend their homes from invaders, these men would also resist their own *mukuk*. The kings did not grasp sufficient coercive power to seize rights over land. Their initial limited access to land locked the warrior-kings in a cycle in which they could not use their soldiers to gain control over land or

land to gain control over soldiers. They did not possess enough land to support an army consisting solely of dependents; their own men --slaves and sons-- formed only the élite nucleus of the fighting force. Relying on free highlanders and plainsmen for the remainder of their soldiers, the warrior-kings could not take land by force from their own levies who lived in defensible highlands or distant plains. [Ewald; 1990:146, cf 186]

Ewald is insistent that throughout the highlands, the power of these kings remained highly limited. They could not really extract agricultural surplus from the rest of the highlanders. Moreover these highlanders remained as seen above loyal to regional power-holders of various kinds. It is thus conceivable that in the Palestinian highlands, similar problems faced the ambitious state-builders. As seen, the Taqali massif shows many similarities to the highlands of Palestine, such as regional fragmentation, heterogeneous population and geological diversity, all characteristics that give rise to centrifugal tendencies. As shown, above, we also claim that many regional leaders established themselves within diverse microcosms. Just as with their counterparts in Taqali, many of them probably resisted the establishment of an overall, centralized state. To an extent, even the establishment of a kingdom of some kind does not totally do away with such resistance. Although ready to acknowledge the power of such a king in some areas, many leaders still put up resistance in others. What can be said about Taqali can thus also be said about the Palestinian hinterland, namely that "the histories of frontier communities reveal the expansion of political and economic systems as incomplete and contested" [Ewald; 1990:188].

Again we can trace a certain pattern that is resembling the theory of centre and periphery. Dependent on certain environmental circumstances, some highlanders more than others could escape the jurisdiction of the kings. Again, as seen above, a hinterland seems to

reform as soon as a certain city or residence wants to claim royal and absolute authority over the neighbouring country. Haïl encountered these difficulties, and in the Taqali massif things were no different:

Those (territorial units) enjoying the best natural defenses, mainly because of location and topography, also felt royal power most lightly. Rulers of these hills claimed the same title, *makk*, as the Taqali king; Taqali people remember these leaders as *mukuk al-'ada* ('customary kings'). More vulnerable hills became more closely bound to the Taqali king, often associated with a royal *khashm al-bayt*. No independent *mukuk* ruled over these *khashm al-bayt* territories, but *elot* ('big men') or *shuyukh al-tin* (shuyukh of the land) continued to supervise community life with little interference from the king. Taqali's kings exercised full control over land and labor only in their domestic sphere, the system of royal compounds, or *hayshan*. Most of the *hayshan* lay near the center of the kingdom or in the outlying massif of Abu Dom.
[Ewald; 1990:74-75]

At this point it seems appropriate to have a short look at Niemann's extensive study on state-building within the Palestinian highlands. Like us he sees the Palestinian highlands, especially the northern part, as characterized by "geographisch-geomorphologisch Differenziertheit" and "eine zentrifugale Tendenz". He consequently asks himself "wieweit die dann von den Omriden eingerichtete Residenz Samaria als Herrschaftszentrum überhaupt bis zu den peripheren Gruppen des Nordreiches wirklich als solches Anerkennung, gefunden hat?" Similarly to us he concludes that "je weiter man an die Peripherie geht, desto eher sind Zweifel angebracht" [1993; 271, fn. 112].

Thus he seems to offer conclusions that are in accordance with what we know about Haïl and Taqali for instance. It follows that, although

this chapter has presented a picture of nomads and bandits as protagonists of definite importance in the scenario of state-building, one major question remains to be resolved, namely whether the so-called monarchy of Israel developed as rapidly and became as important, as the Biblical Literature would have us believe. Again the picture that Ewald and Rosenfeld present, would lead us to believe the opposite. Following their arguments, the Palestinian morphology simply shows too many centrifugal tendencies to permit the rapid development of a powerful and highly centralized state. Again we can quote Niemann:

Aus dieser Situation ist einerseits die bleibende Existenz nichtköniglich organisierter Regionalgliederungen und Kleinregionen (...) verständlich, die für das Nordreichsgebiet geradezu charakteristisch zu sein scheint; andererseits zeigt sich die Herrschaft der Könige des Nordreichs vor allem als eine militärische Führungsmacht, die neben der ideologischen Stabilisierung und Legitimation des Herrschaftsanspruches und der Abgrenzung wie der Integration dienende königliche Grenzheiligtümer (Betel und Dan) vor allem Grenzfunktionalorte ausbaute; was wiederum ein Kennzeichen für relativ binnenstrukturschwache chieftdom-Herrschaften (und 'primitive Staaten') darstellt. [1993:271]

Niemann thus also argues that there is not a particularly efficient concentration of power in the hands of a monarchical apparatus. A monarchy there might have been, insofar as somebody called himself king over a given territory. It is another question how many people indeed considered this given man as such, how much he could impose his will on them, how far his powers went. Similarly it would be interesting to see, how many and what sort of people would oppose his claims to overlordship; what claims of their own they would hold and how strong their own hold on distant regions might have been. To these final questions, we hope to find a satisfactory answer the final last chapter that deals more

directly with the situation in Palestine.

Chapter 7

Polity-Formation: the case of the Palestinian highlands

Was King Kong big? Yes, compared to a compact car; no, compared to the World Trade Center in New York? In order to be understood, phenomena must be captured in scale and perspective. [in Lamberg-Karlovsky and Sabloff; 1979:v]

The Bible shows David as a mighty conqueror, Solomon as a magnificent emperor in control of most of Syria-Palestine. The Solomonic empire is presented as a Golden Age for Israel, amassing riches from her neighbours, building an enormous temple and generally taking center-stage in Near Eastern events. But can we take these assumptions at face value? Can we really assume that developments in the highlands, once in the hand of bandits and nomads, so-called barbarians, can have led to the build-up of such an all-encompassing empire?

Whatever Israel was and however she developed, we can surely not speak here of the rising of a new civilization such as the advent of Summer or Egypt. Things have to be put back into perspective. The highlands might have developed a certain degree of centralization and kings from the highlands might have intervened in Near Eastern affairs, yet they were restricted in their possibilities. We have been talking about developing processes all along; the advent of such a revolutionary and astonishingly magnificent new force on the stage simply does not correspond to the trends that our research has detected. It is important, therefore, to subject the traditional, biblically - based picture to further scrutiny.

This chapter will analyze the most recent contributions to the problem of state formation in the hill country with a particular interest

in the questions of the chronology and size that are assumed for the emerging polities. For one, it is to be doubted that the extent of the highland entities in the Early Iron Age had reached that of a powerful state, let alone a Solomonic empire. Furthermore it has become hard to accept the idea of a United Monarchy, centered on Jerusalem, as the overall long-term history of Palestine clearly speaks against such a development. Already our discussion of the preceding chapters has shown that the north and the south were rather disparately organized and, during the Amarna period, opposing political forces held sway in the two highland districts. For some reason, however, some people continue to cling onto the reality of the United Monarchy [cf Frick; 1985:42]. Let us here present an example:

It is a striking factor of J's history as Davidic propaganda that it gives so much attention to the legitimation of David's Judahite monarchy in relation to the northern hillcountry. Whereas we tend to think of biblical Israel as uniformly overlying the general region of Palestine, historically the northern and southern hillcountries (Joseph and Judah) have typically existed as separate regions that have almost always fallen under different rulers or belonged to separate administrative districts. The divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah represent the norm for Palestine, while David's "unification" of these areas represents a historical anomaly that was fragile and insecure. [Coote and Ord; 1989:181]¹

Again it appears that the main reason to hang on to the notion of a united monarchy is the biblical text itself, an unwarranted assumption that the books of Samuel and Kings are more historically valid than the narrative of the Pentateuch [cf Long; 1994:271-272]. We have sofar

¹More recently see Thompson on the anomalies that the extension of power of both Jerusalem and Samaria represented [1992:318].

avoided engaging in a discussion about the biblical narratives. Yet, at this stage, we find it rather difficult to go on ignoring this material. This is not to say that we too view the material in the books of Samuel as historically more valid than for example the pentateuchal material. On the contrary, the narrative will be mainly viewed as story. Due to our insistence on the role of bandits, it is something of this nature which we will single out in a first instance, namely the story of David's life as an outlaw. We will then try to place it in a more general context of the interplay between history and literature. David Gunn has exposed the usefulness of such an approach to the Biblical narrative in his monograph The Fate of King Saul. We turn to him in defining and justifying the limits of our story:

That is to say, I am defining the literary unit without claiming that it necessarily once had a distinct life of its own in precisely that form. But I would argue that these boundaries are not entirely arbitrary; on the contrary, the resultant text could be shown (a) to conform to various conventions of story-telling (with, for example, situation, complication, resolution and aftermath), (b) to display internal coherence, and (c) to be amenable to an empirical test of what might constitute the "story of Saul" (namely, try it on your friends!) [Gunn; 1980:13]

As Gunn does with the story of Saul, we likewise are able to isolate the "story of David, the outlaw", stretching, as we see it, from I Samuel 19:1 to 26:25. This unit seems to us to meet Gunn's requirements. It starts quite logically with David's alienation and flight. Saul's jealousy has already been mentioned in the preceding chapter 18, but only in chapter 19 does the decision to kill David force to escape and then to flee, i.e. to become an outlaw. The ending of the story is put at Chapter 26, because it rounds up the episode of David's life as an outlaw. In the next chapter he starts a new career as a

mercenary in the service of the Philistines, while the text as a whole moves onto a much more pronounced international scene. The fact that a reconciliation is taking place between David and Saul at the end of chapter 26 confirms our belief that this is an appropriate ending for our story. In Gunn's words, a resolution is presented for the story, here in the form of a blessing, the aftermath being resumed in the latter half of the final verse:

Saul said to David, "God bless you, my son! You will succeed in everything you do!" So David went on his way, and Saul returned home. (I Samuel 26:25)

From alienation to reconciliation, from Saul's desire to kill David to his blessing David; we believe that hardly any better limits can be found for a story like ours. Indeed many a song about a noble robber, even that of the most famous, Robin Hood, finish in such reconciliation [Hobsbawm; 1969:44]. The end to our story is thus most appropriate. Unlike Gunn, however, we find ourselves not so much interested in interpretation alone, but also in comparison. David's days as an outlaw catch our attention mainly because, on the one hand, they reflect the myth of the noble robber as seen in ballad and song [Hobsbawm; 1969:34]. Yet, as part of the wider narrative of the Samuel cycle, it also presents features of epic poetry, as David and Saul fit the descriptions in Jackson's monograph around the epic theme of the conflict between intruder-hero and king:

The pattern of the conflict between settled king and intruder-hero is thus essentially a study of transfer of power or, in other terms, of the problem of kingship. In none of the major classical and medieval epics are we presented with a "normal" king, that is, with a king at the peak of his physical prowess, fully in control of his kingdom, with no problems, actual or potential, in his relations with his

subjects or within himself. The sovereign may be powerful with a slight flaw, or be guilty of a temporary weakness or aberration, or he may be weak and totally unworthy of his office. The intruder may be (but rarely is) a crude braggart, distinguished only by his physical strength and verbal pugnacity, but more often he is a powerful warrior of such caliber as to be worthy of kingship. [1982:15]

Finally it is part of a well-established pattern of Near Eastern court apologetic [cf McCarter; 1980; Whitelam; 1984]. We are attracted foremostly by the parallels between these forms of legendary projections, in medieval folklore and epic, and ancient court literature, as well as the consequences this realization has for the historical reality behind the text. If "the quest for the historical David is primarily exegetical" [McCarter; 1986:117], or if "bandits belong to remembered history, as distinct from the official history of books" [Hobsbawm; 1969:115], what can these parallels tell us about story and history?

The portrayal of the ideal noble robber includes nine major points [Hobsbawm; 1969:35-36; also Blumenthal; 1998:6]; we shall enumerate them here, and see if they find their counterparts in the story of David, the outlaw:

First, the noble robber begins his career of outlawry not by crime, but as a victim of injustice, or through being persecuted by the authorities for some act which they, but not the custom of his people, consider as criminal.

[Hobsbawm; 1969:35]

Fewer can be more innocent than David; there is actually no concrete act of his part, that could have possibly attracted the wrath of the given authorities, i.e. Saul. His persecution takes place for no other reason than Saul's unprovoked and quickly growing jealousy.

Manifold references in the text make sure that David's innocence cannot be overlooked:

Why, then, do you now want to do wrong to an innocent man and kill David for no reason at all (I Samuel 19:5; cf also 20:1, 32; 24:11; 26:18).

If there is anything that could explain Saul's attitude, it is David's military prowess, a prowess, which he however put at the service of that same king Saul, "whose jealousy and groundless suspicion were responsible for the alienation of David" [McCarter; 1980:499].

Second, he 'rights wrongs'. [idem:35]

Third, he 'takes from the rich to give to the poor'.

[idem:35]

These two points are taken together. They find no real concrete parallels in our story, maybe because of its limitations, centering mainly on the actions of the main protagonists. Yet we can deduce from the fact that the oppressed flee to David (I Samuel 22:2), that he in fact stands as the hero and avenger of their sufferings. We might, however, point to the saving of Keilah (I Samuel 23:1-5), and David's reaction to the killing of the priests. In the latter case there is no doubt that David is ready to safeguard those who have suffered at the hands of Saul:

Stay with me and don't be afraid. Saul wants to kill both you and me, but you will be safe with me. (I Samuel 22:23)

Fourth, he 'never kills but in self-defence or just revenge'.

[idem:35]

David, the outlaw, simply doesn't kill (quite to the contrary of

David, the youth, or David, the Philistine mercenary, or David, the king, for that matter). David, in his outlaw days, has amazingly clean hands. Not that he is not given the opportunity to kill; twice he can slay Saul, twice he restrains himself. The episode with Nabal is a prime example. Here David is on the verge of ending the days of Nabal, but the plot develops cunningly to see him convinced not to commit such an act. It is all the more striking, when David's expression of thankfulness emphasizes his deep-down abhorrence of killing, even if it were for revenge:

Thank god for your good sense and for what you have done today in keeping me from the crime of murder and from taking my own revenge. (I Samuel 25:33)

Fifth, if he survives, he returns to his people as an honourable citizen and member of the community. Indeed, he never actually leaves the community. [idem:35]

This is hard to assess in our story, as the story of David, the outlaw, does not end the story of David. Of course David eventually becomes king, and you cannot become much more of an honourable citizen. Within the scope of our story, we have to settle for less though. The fact that Saul and David become reconciled, the repentance of Saul who invites David to come back, their parting peacefully, and finally Saul's blessing and promises of success to David, whom he calls his son, must, however, convince us that David is accepted back into the community with considerable honour:

Saul said to David, "God bless you, my son! You will succeed in everything you do! (I Samuel 26:25)

Sixth, he is admired, helped and supported by his people. [idem:35]

David's relation with the people is all but clear-cut, but, then again, maybe not all of the people mentioned should be considered *his* people. Again we have to read admiration into the fact that the destitute flee towards him. Town-citizens, or urbanites, do not seem to hold him in great esteem; the men of Ziph denounce him twice (I Samuel 23:19; 26:1), and even the people of Keilah, whom he had saved, are ready to hand him over (I Samuel 23:12). But as we have said, they are not really David's people, who would be the Israelites and Judahites, with whom he has no trouble. Maybe this urban adversity is also deliberate, as it emphasizes the difference between townsmen and the humble outlaw of the wilderness. (It, thus, is in accordance with peasant ideology, as well as the idea of humble origins in much royal literature.) However, we can again point to the Nabal incident. Here we find David confronted with both a rich landowner, Nabal himself (I Samuel 25:2-3), and the poor, his shepherds and servants. It is striking then, that Nabal despises David, a run-away slave (I Samuel 25:10), while the servants speak of him in admiration:

Yet they were very good to us; they never bothered us, and all the time we were with them in the fields, nothing that belonged to us was stolen. They protected us day and night the whole time we were with them looking after our flocks. (I Samuel 25:15-16)

Seventh, he dies invariably and only through treason, since no decent member of the community would help the authorities against him. [idem:36]

David, the outlaw does not die, but we still encounter treason. We have already mentioned the behaviour of the people of Keilah and Ziph, but there is another case, which presents more striking resemblance to the traditional figure of a man who betrays a bandit. Doeg, the chief herdsman, again an Edomite, not one of David's people, seems to be the nasty traitor of our story. He it is who tells Saul of David's

whereabouts (I Samuel 22:9); his immorality is furthermore heightened when he murders the Lord's priests, an order that Saul's guards had formerly refused to obey, probably out of fear of sacrilege (I Samuel 22:17). But nothing seems to be holy to Doeg; a foreign priest-murderer definitely does not strike us as a decent member of the community:

So Saul said to Doeg, "You kill them!"- and Doeg killed them all. On that day he killed eighty-five priests who were qualified to carry the ephod. (I Samuel 22:18)

Eighth, he is -at least in theory- invisible and invulnerable. [idem:36]

David's invulnerability must be deduced from the simple fact, that he does not get injured, killed, and generally always escapes Saul's plans. There is no isolated, concrete incident, that demonstrates his invulnerability otherwise. The case of his invisibility is much more interesting. On both occasions, when David spares Saul's life, his invisibility is apparent. The first time it is only mentioned that Saul does not notice him, even though he cut off a piece of his robe (I Samuel 24:4). The second time it is much more apparent. David is able to creep into an enemy's camp full of soldiers, do his deeds, and creep out again totally unnoticed. Eventually he even mocks Abner, who, like all others, never was aware of his presence (I Samuel 26:7-15). It is not surprising that the Lord intervenes on David's behalf in this instance, for such "magic, which reflects the beneficent interest of the divinities in his affairs" is a common characteristic of the deity-robber relationship [Hobsbawm; 1969:43]. It is also possible to point to the ephod as a divinely magical charm, used by divination to determine further action; such amulets and other magical assets are common to many bandit-groups [Hobsbawm; 1969:43-44]. With the help of God, David can thus go around unnoticed as he wishes; for all practicality, he is invisible:

So David took the spear and the water jar from just beside Saul's head, and he and Abishai left. No one saw it or knew what had happened or even woke up -they were all sound asleep, because the Lord had sent a heavy sleep on them all'.
(I Samuel 26:12)

Ninth, he is not the enemy of the king or emperor, who is the fount of justice, but only the local gentry, clergy or other oppressors. [idem:36]

On the surface it seems that our story would deviate rather drastically from this notion. After all the main opponents are Saul, the king, and David, the bandit. But, as one looks more closely, this deviation becomes one of the most interesting aspects in our study. It is true that David's struggle is with the king, but David is not the enemy of the fount of justice. Though Saul pronounces himself the enemy of David, and David flees, David's insistence on his innocence not only states that he has committed no crime, but quite specifically emphasizes the fact that he has committed no crime against Saul. He furthermore insists that he does not engage in rebellion against Saul. In fact there is little in the text that points to any sort of concrete action of David against Saul, as opposed to multiple references of away from Saul.

The point is made obvious in the incidents where David spares Saul's life. That the author attached major importance to this passage is shown by the fact that approximately the same incident is reported twice³. Author, or editor, clearly wants to make sure that his point is noticed. It is thus all the more interesting to see that only in these passages, is Saul called David's enemy, twice by a third party, and twice

³ The action of sending the bandit's enemies to sleep is actually mentioned by Hobsbawm [1969:43]

³Interestingly, Jason sees such "duplication of narrative elements" as characteristic of oral traditions [Jason; 1979:60-61].

David refutes the notion almost immediately:

They said to him, "This is your chance! The Lord has told you that he would put your enemy in your power and you could do to him whatever you wanted to."... But then David's conscience began to trouble him, and he said to his men, "May the Lord keep me from doing any harm to my master, whom the Lord chose as king! I must not harm him in the least, because he is the king chosen by the Lord." (I Samuel 24:4-5, cf also I Samuel 26:8-11)

In recognizing in Saul the anointed one, David firmly acknowledges him as the fount of justice, and he therefore knows that he cannot possibly harm him, lest he provoke chaos, for the king as the fount of justice, is what upholds the earthly order. David sees further than just the man who pursues him. Within all his troubles, he recognizes that the life of the king, despite all appearances, still is what maintains justice in the land, and only by keeping the king alive does justice stand a chance of being done. One wonders if there can be a stronger upholder of justice than this David, who defies his own chances of survival, when he protects his pursuer in order to protect the earthly fount of justice. David thus never denies Saul as the fount of justice; his links with that fount are furthermore emphasized in the story. His marriage to Michal, Saul's daughter, and the undeniable bond between Jonathan, still the heir and, as such, future fount of justice, and David, show that David has little quarrel with the royal line.

It might then be stated that, within our story, at least David never declares Saul to be his enemy, nor is Saul ever denied to be the fount of justice. It is, rather, ensured that Saul is to be seen as untouchable, and David appears as the sternest proponent of this line of thought⁴. The deviation from the image of the noble robber is thus

⁴ Note here the similarity to the epic of Beowulf: "Beowulf the poem examines the problem of kingship and succession through the life

comparatively minor. In the end, it comes down to the great skills of the author who, in the one person of Saul, ingeniously combines Robin Hood's good King Richard, and evil Sheriff of Nottingham⁵. Finally it must always be kept in mind, that in fact David's struggle is not with the real king of Israel, who after all is YHWH Himself. In the scope of the wider David story, this surely must be taken into account and also could represent a solution to our problem.

Another way of viewing this schizophrenic attitude of king Saul is to see the evil Sheriff represented in the Lord's evil spirit (I Samuel 19:9). David's real struggle would then be not with Saul, but with the evil spirit that drives Saul to his actions; in which case the deviation becomes nearly non-existent, and broadly parallels the Robin Hood cycle:

of Beowulf the man. It shows that every kingdom needs a ruler who is aware of the first duty of a king, the protection of his kingdom against intruders. Hrothgar had once had this knowledge and power but he had lost it because of an obsession with what we may call the material and esthetic aspects of kingship (= Saul and the evil spirit). He is fortunate indeed that the intruder-hero Beowulf not only carries out the duty of killing Grendel and his mother (= David and Goliath), themselves intruders, which he should have fulfilled himself, but also that Beowulf is too noble to profit from this superiority at Hrothgar's expense (= David spares Saul's life)" [Jackson; 1982:35]. Again the Cycle of Guillaume d'Orange carries similar ideas: "Louis is a weak king who nevertheless occupies the throne and therefore has at his disposal all the attributes of kingship, its powers of disposition of land and its demand for loyalty. It is kingship, not the king, which possesses these powers and it is to kingship, not the king, that Guillaume devotes his loyalty. Louis' behaviour, as a person, is despicable. ... Yet Guillaume never fails to recognize the duty he owes. Because Louis is king, Guillaume must support him" [Jackson; 1982:73].

⁵ Again here Jackson's comment on the Aeneid is interesting: "The actions of Turnus are, in fact, inescapable in the epic tradition. Whenever the intruder-hero does not oppose a strong king and attempt to oust him, he will fall foul of a principal warrior or adviser of a weak king, with devastating results for the kingdom" [1982:21]. Bad advisors also play a role in the Cycle of Guillaume d'Orange [Jackson; 1982:73].

The king, on the advice of evil counsellors such as the Sheriff of Nottingham, pursues the noble outlaw. They fight, but the king cannot vanquish him. They meet and the ruler, who naturally recognizes the outlaw's virtue, allows him to continue his good work, or even takes him into his own service. [Hobsbawm; 1969:44]

Again, Saul's final blessing and promises of success provide a close parallel with the Robin Hood cycle. It does indeed represent the classical ending to the legend of a noble robber.

Our story can thus rightfully be seen as portraying David as the noble robber, as we know such a figure from folkloristic and legendary myths. How much does this however tell us about the historical David, or of the events described? Is the identification of such a story of any use, if we are to determine the historicity behind the events related? In concrete terms, does the character of David, the noble robber shed light on the developments that lead to the rise of the Israelite monarchy?

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions are difficult to decide, to say the least. The perception of David as such an idealized figure wrapped in the world of legend and myth can in the end only add to the obscurity surrounding the actual events and protagonists. Parallels like these may be of major interest to the student of ancient literature, but to the historian they can be nothing else than the frightful realization that he is to be lost in the world of the storyteller [cf Whitelam; 1989:126]. The task of the historian thus becomes extremely difficult; Levenson describes it as such:

The fact remains, however, that the historian must look beyond the literary piece in front of him in his effort to recover the historical facts. He must, so to speak, pierce

the artistry in order to find the social and political truth it clothes. Thus, the biblical scholar feels a constraint upon his readings which the critic of more univocally aesthetic literature does not. [Levenson; 1978:12]

In our case far more is at stake than the simple discovery of empirical facts behind the veil of idealized accounts. The political weaponry, of which such stories can be a part, takes us much further than this. Beyond the ideal figure of the noble robber David, it might of course still be possible to find David the bandit, although he might represent a more awkward personality, less socially aware, and more like the bandits that we have described in the preceding chapters. Lemche and Thompson mention such a possibility, although they themselves remain rather sceptical:

However, the issue of David's historicity is not merely a question of how we read our Bibles. We need to refer here not only to recent literary and critical biblical studies since the late 1970s, but also to a number of revisionist histories of Palestine. None of these studies leaves much room for a historical David. Although Jameson-Drake thinks of him as a bandit chief in the Judean mountains of the tenth century, such a figure is hardly the biblical David. [1994:17]

The attraction towards such conclusions as Jamieson-Drake puts forward cannot be overrated in our case, but therefore do we have to be especially careful about our use of this material. We believe that we have to look even deeper than the mere peasant idealization of an unlikely candidate, and view the literature from the point of view of those who have written it, and whom it served most, i.e. the élite.

It has to be stated that bandit-stories are not for peasants alone, but, especially in their written form, they are mainly the product of

those in power. There is little doubt that intellectuals of many sorts are mostly responsible for the survival of bandit-traditions [Hobsbawm; 1969:114]; in some cases, they may be responsible for the development of such ideal notions [Koliopoulos; 1989:196]. Shaw points to the frequency with which bandit tales appear in the popular literature of the upper classes [Shaw; 1984:44]. "The sad truth is probably that the heroes of remote times survive because they are not only the heroes of the peasants" [Hobsbawm; 1969:111]. The fact is that bandit tales are written down, often because they serve the political propaganda of the upper-classes⁶. That this can be a rather rapid process is illustrated by the following findings by Blumenthal:

Schon am Schauplatz seines Todes haben die Strassenhändler ein reges Geschäft mit Berichten und Geschichten über seine räuberischen Heldentaten betrieben. Berühmte Literaten wie Daniel Defoe (Autor des >>Robinson Crusoe<<) haben ihn bereits ausführlich interviewt, und die Zeitungen haben täglich seine Bekenntnisse veröffentlicht. Mehr noch: Auf Geheiss des Königs Georg I. hat der Maler Sir James Thornhill den jungen Kriminellen in seiner Todeszelle liebevoll porträtiert...Ein Räuber wird zum Helden. Doch

⁶Something similar is mentioned in Rolleston's conclusion to his study on Celtic myth and legend, where he says: "Folklore may sometimes represent degraded mythology, and sometimes mythology in the making. In either case, it is its special characteristic that it belongs to and issues from a class whose daily life lies close to the earth, toilers in the field and in the forest, who render with simple directness, in tales or charms, their impressions of natural or supernatural forces with which their own lives are environed. Mythology, in the proper sense of the word, appears only where the intellect and the imagination have reached a point of development above that which is ordinarily possible to the peasant mind -- when men have begun to co-ordinate their scattered impressions and have felt the impulse to shape them into poetic creations embodying universal ideas. It is not, of course, pretended that a hard-and-fast line can always be drawn between mythology and folklore; still, the distinction seems to me a valid one, and I have tried to observe it in these pages" [1985 (1911):418].

There can be little doubt that the literature of I Samuel 19-26 is the product of an intellectual élite. One can deduce this in the first instance from the simple fact that they are in written form, within a society where only a very small proportion of the population were literate. The literature was thus available only to those few who could read, or, alternatively, to those who could afford to have them either read or performed in front of them [Whitelam; 1984:62, 68; 1986b:168]. Peasants would obviously fall into neither category. The story is furthermore set within the scope of court apology, which is primarily addressed to the élite, where it either legitimizes the seizure of a throne and further dynastic claims, or, on the other hand, warns against usurpation and the overthrow of the existing dynasty [McCarter; 1980:495; Whitelam; 1984:62]. Shaw also points to the fact that bandit tales often appear in the context or aftermath of throne-seizure [1984:48]. The function of bandit stories, as Shaw sees it, then becomes extremely interesting when viewed in relation with court apologetic:

...there is a moral ambiguity about the tales themselves; they serve the purposes of both popular and upper-class concerns. The dominant theme in them, ..., is less that of rebellion and opposition than of *reform and remodelling of society to fit an ideal pattern already imparted by its dominant class structure*. [Shaw; 1984:49] (emph. added)

Jackson's study on the major epics gives a similar explanation of the social role of this literature:

The deciding factor in the Greek situation is the nature of kingship itself. It is, as Nestor says, to be respected and cherished - because support of it and respect for it are the only factors which hold off chaos. But in return the king has

duties and he must discharge them well or pay the penalty.

[1982:115]

Thus it seems that the main aim of a bandit-story is not that of describing opposition and rebellion, but reaffirming an established institution like kingship itself. After all a bandit is often seen as the protector of orphans and widow, whose protection also imparts on kings in state-societies. It is thus easy to see how, he who looks like the representative of the little folk, can come to defend the values of the superiors. Nonetheless it would be interesting to see whether the story of the outlaw David can be seen as having existed in isolation from the rest of the court apologetic. Although we do not know if the Ancient Near East featured bandit-tales *per se*⁷, or if they appeared solely in the

⁷Interesting in this context is Blumenthal's claim that: "Manche Forscher glauben übrigens, dass Robin Hood die späte Abwandlung eines uralten Mythos war: der des Tricksters, einer Sagengestalt, die nur Schabernack im Sinne hat. Seine Aufgabe in dieser Welt war es nämlich, die Vornehmen zu veräppeln. Nicht von ungefähr findet man den Trickster in den Legenden vieler Kulturkreise. Till Eulenspiegel ist ein Beispiel, ebenso wie Loki in den germanischen Mythen und Hermes bei den Griechen" [1998:9]. This connection with the divine and mythological world has caught our attention (especially keeping in mind the DWD-David question, that will be treated later in this chapter), as Bottéro seems to identify such a trickster figure in the Mesopotamian god Ea/Enki, as he appears in the story of Atrahasis: "Mais Ea, jaloux de la survie de son oeuvre et pourtant incapable de s'opposer de front à la volonté du détenteur du pouvoir, agit à sa manière: par ruse" [Bottéro: 1987:437]. We also can detect the theme of hero and king theme, as it is against the wishes of Enlil the high god and king, but struck with "fureur aveugle" [1987:438]. As the eldest known version of this story has been dated around the time of 1650 B.C. [Bottéro; 1987:435], it can obviously provide a model to a trickster-bandit story. Furthermore, we cannot escape the notion that the trickster somehow figures in our particular court literature, when an article by Hagan identifies the motif of deception in eighteen instances only in the "Succession Narrative" [Hagan; 1979]. Interesting is also his comment: "Though deception becomes a theme in its own right, it is also a function of the larger theme of fidelity and infidelity which in the ancient Near Eastern world defines especially the relationship between the king and his men" [Hagan;

context of court apologetic, the question begs whether one can be seen as preceding or influencing the other. Finally, if so, how and why do they appear together?

In view of our preceding analysis, we firmly believe there is a possibility that a story of David the noble robber might well have existed as a separate story. Apart from the fact that we have been able to isolate it with relative ease in the preceding pages, we are struck by one detail, namely David's amazingly clean hands in his time as an outlaw. For this same man has, only in the preceding chapter, been praised as the slayer of tens of thousands (I Samuel 18:7-8). His most outstanding claim for fame is the killing of Goliath (I Samuel 17:50). It becomes even more striking, when we see that, as soon as the noble robber cycle is ended, he returns to killing (I Samuel 27:11). Only a little later are we reminded of the praises in honour of his deeds on the killing fields (I Samuel 29:5). This is all the more amazing, as, within epic literature, such behaviour does not stand in the way of being considered a good king:

This same sense, that only a strong king can prevent chaos, is even more marked in the Odyssey. Nowhere is any attempt made to show that Odysseus is morally superior. He lies, cheats, steals, and even kills without provocation. He is bent on acquiring and keeping material goods, and in later works with a stronger sense of what was morally 'proper', his reputation is bad. [Jackson; 1982:116]

It thus seems amazing that in the chapters 19-26 every effort is made not to associate David with slaughter. No doubt, it was also the aim of court apologetic to describe David as just and benevolent, and not as an indiscriminate butcher. Nor can we overlook the deliberate irony in the sparing of Saul, the anointed one, when the reader already knows that

1979:305].

David has been appointed king, and its strong underlying message to any would-be usurpers⁸. However it raises doubt that all the non-killing being confined to what we have defined as the bandit-tale is merely coincidental. We would rather say that a popular bandit-tale, possibly oral in origin, was used to address the concerns of the upper-classes; as seen above, Shaw claims that bandit tales are often used in this manner. The genius involved in such an effort can hardly be overrated; it intelligently introduced popular folklore into what was mainly court literature of the apologetic kind.

The outcome is that the degree of complexity, which surrounds the creation of the literature of the books of Samuel, is again heavily emphasized. Other stories have been isolated within the court apologetic. Jason provides a good example. He has isolated and then identified the episode with Goliath as a "romantic epic", also at first embodied in folklore [Jason; 1979; see also Jackson; 1982:29, 35,72]. Such use of traditional folkloric material interacting with upper-class concerns, however, adds a further dimension to the problem. For the more we become aware of dealing with folk-heroes, re-used so-to-speak by the élite, the more we must admit to the difficulty in finding historicity behind the literature⁹.

Eventually the whole question as to the date of the books of Samuel comes to the centre of the debate yet again. In comparison to other

⁸ Jackson's comment on the relationship between Achilles and Agamemnon in the Iliad shows an interesting counterpart: "It is Achilles' conduct, not Agamemnon's, which sets a standard of kingly behaviour and shows what should happen in a stable society" [1982:13].

⁹ During our analysis of the text we have spoken about different Davids in different stories. Davies' argument is similar, when he says: "Even within the text, the David of 1 Samuel is not the David of 2 Samuel, literary speaking. These are two characters, created by (probably) different authors. How can it be possible for an historian to conflate them or choose between them with any degree of assurance or justification?" [1992:12]

biblical material, the books of Samuel have enjoyed an image of being relatively reliable historical sources. They are not to be taken at face value, but there seems to be a firm belief that they include some historical truth [Miller and Hayes; 1986:129], and that at least some of the material is mostly contemporary with the events, i.e. Davidic or Solomonic. This line of thinking easily manages to incorporate court apologetic. Such an interpretation can see the facts reported as empirical facts, some even publicly known, but arranged so as to justify the usurpation by David, legitimize the ascent of Solomon, etc. Hence the process of exegesis permitting the discovery of the real history behind the scribal effort.

However text analysis and conclusions presented above, call into question such a process, and with it the date given to the apologetic material. If our findings are correct, David, the outlaw (as well as the David of David and Goliath according to Jason's findings), can be seen as a hero of song and ballad, who somehow found his way into the propaganda literature of the upper-classes. Finally the David of the full Samuel cycle can be identified with the epic figure of the intruder-hero [cf Jackson; 1982]¹⁰. The consequences that ensue from this realization, especially as far as dating is concerned, are made clear by this statement by Hobsbawm:

The bandit myth is also comprehensible in highly urbanized

¹⁰A further case can be made when we compare this story of the outlaw David, son-in-law of Saul, who after having lived in the wilderness and/or in enemy territory, creates a rival monarchy to that of the Saulides in the south based on Jerusalem, to these claims made by Kochakova concerning Yoruba folklore: "As a rule, the legendary hero of the local people is either a son of a ruler abandoning his home land with a group of supporters who, after long wanderings in the bush, founds a new city-state, according to the pattern of his home town, somewhere in the back-woods, or a brave and courageous hunter who fearlessly paves the path in the wild forest and becomes the founder of a village which will become the nucleus of a future town" [1996:51].

countries which still possess a few empty spaces of 'outback' or 'west' to remind them of a *sometimes imaginary heroic past*, and to provide a concrete locus for nostalgia, a symbol of ancient and lost virtue, a spiritual Indian territory for which, like Huckleberry Finn, man can imagine himself 'lightning out' when the constraints of civilization become too much for him. [Hobsbawm; 1969:112] (empd. added)

If the heroic past is indeed but imaginary, this leaves us with little support to the view that the material in the books of Samuel necessarily has to be contemporary with the events described. They might as well have been conceived by much later societies. Levenson says that the social and political truth the artistry clothes might be far removed; they could be much further removed than he would have us believe.

The fact that we are dealing with court apologetic should not hinder our conclusions. Hoffner stresses that there exists a "tradition of royal apologies in the Hittite kingdom or even a loose literary form" [1975:50]. The point is that anyone could have copied the form; if the alleged scribe of David or Solomon could have, so could a later scribe. A comparison can be drawn, if we consider the new debate surrounding the historicity of the biblical writings about Solomon's building programme. Doubts have arisen whether such a building programme ever took place under Solomon, and there are several scholars who now believe that this was not the case. The programme took place under later kings, yet the Bible attributes it to Solomon [Garbini; 1988:30-31]. Interestingly the royal building programme is the physical equivalent to the sort of royal propaganda, that literature such as court apologetic propound [Meyers; 1983a:175; Whitelam; 1986; 1989a].

For the moment we are mostly interested in Miller's treatment of the use of royal hyperbole in the texts [1991a]. He establishes that it is in fact an exaggeration traditional to Ancient Near Eastern language.

As such, however, its use in the biblical text does not point to the veracity of the accounts, but rather to the fact that the later scribes have ingeniously introduced it to their description of Solomon's alleged building programme, by copying this tendency to written exaggeration. We hold exactly the same argument concerning court apologetic. Scribes of a rather late date can easily have been inspired by this common form of court literature.

It is difficult to see what the purposes of the later powerholders and their scribes were in attributing such stories to David, if they were not true; but then again, why should they have attributed the building programme to Solomon, if he was not responsible for it? Maybe there is just some deep desire for dynasties to lay their origins with just and humble heroes, maybe they used them to justify some claims of their own. Maybe the answer lies with the moment in time in which, according to Jackson, occurs the genesis of the epic theme of hero and king: times of social turmoil:

More important, perhaps, is the fact that epics spring from violent social disturbance, when patterns of civilization of long-standing are being challenged or overturned -- the troubled period after the collapse of the Cretan Thalassocracy, the Germanic invasions of Western Europe, the clash between Muslim and Christian. [1982:2-3] ... The conflict between ruler and hero is often as much a conflict of values as of personalities and seems to be an essential theme of epic poetry. The reason is not far to seek. Epic themes spring from turmoil, and one of the characteristics of turmoil is the intrusion of the outsider into a settled, established culture, an outsider who often proves more powerful than the ruler to whose court he comes and who must be placated or, if necessary, suppressed, if he is not to dominate the court into which he intrudes. [1982:4]

Of course traditionally the Early Iron Age is seen as a time of multiple changes and turmoil, and among the "significant changes in the socio-political realm" one could easily count "the introduction of kingship and the move to statehood" as it would be "bound to have profound reverberations throughout the whole of society producing major structural transformations" [Whitelam; 1989:120]. Yet it must also be admitted that Palestine witnessed numbers of occasions that can equally be seen as times of social turmoil and cultural change. The Damascene threat, the Assyrian onslaught and the fall of Samaria, the Babylonian danger and the sacking of Jerusalem, finally the exile and the repopulation of the highlands later under the Persians, are all valid candidates for the composition of epic literature. Are they not times where established systems crumble, or where something new has to be imposed and also justified? Jackson makes an interesting observation:

There can be little doubt that one of the most common characters in the "period of turmoil" is the exile from one's own culture... Both population pressure at home and the break-up of a tribe under foreign pressure produced the most characteristic of epic heroes, the exile...The exile inevitably finds himself in conflict with the ruling establishment. He is from a different culture, younger than the ruler, and ambitious to establish himself in his new environment. It is this conflict, which originates in historical circumstances, that provides the motivation of all Western epics, even though the hero may not be in an exact sense an exile. [1982:5-7]

Given this, one might in fact wonder whether the exile or the relocation of various people, be they returning exiles or not, would not be the most appropriate time of composition for the Samuel literature. For this incoming population needed legitimation, especially if they were

to superimpose themselves, their culture and society, on those who were already in the land. Is it not possible that intruder-hero and ruler could symbolically stand for the incoming and the already present population? The responsible scribes furthermore would have done so by drawing on the figures of folk heroes and using literary traditions well known to them. This suggests that the exegetical effort as proposed by McCarter, Levenson and Whitelam needs revising and deepening. There is little historicity to be read into the story of David the outlaw; in fact there is little reason to hold onto a historical outlaw named David, any more than there is any reason to hold onto David, the slayer of Goliath. After all, "no real original Robin Hood has ever been identified beyond dispute" [Hobsbawm; 1969:109; Blumenthal; 1997:8].

Which leaves us with David, the king, a king, who like his heir Solomon appears in no other epigraphic evidence than the Bible. A king whose kingdom, like the empire of his son, does not get a single mention by his contemporaries. A king who left it to his son to build the all-important temple, a temple which until now has eluded discovery. The fact is that what we know about David stems from the stories in the Bible, and as we have viewed them, they are the creation of popular folklore welded into political propaganda. Lemche and Thompson state their position as such:

To compare the Bible's stories about David with early Iron Age Palestine is like comparing the story of Gilgamesh with Bronze Age Uruk, Homer with ancient Mycenae, or, indeed, Arthur with medieval England, or even Wagner's Siegfried with a Germany of the Middle Ages. It is not only that one lacks evidence for understanding these stories as accurate accounts of the nation's past, but that stories and history have always dealt with quite different kinds of worlds. That is as true of ancient stories as of modern ones. Whether we are dealing with Homer, the Bible or mediaeval epic, the quest

for a historical heroic age must fall short. Not only is such a period always cast in a time before history begins, but the very characteristics of verisimilitude, authenticity and plausibility mark the tradition more as fictional than historical. [1994:18-19]¹¹

So far the possibility is still there, that a scribe of an early monarchy has conceived the literature of the books of Samuel, by skilfully identifying a king David with heroes of popular folk stories, which he has woven into the wider scope of court apologetic. Yet one must admit that, in view of our analysis and new evidence surrounding Solomon, not only the date of the material, but also the persons of David and Solomon become highly conspicuous.

However, the recent discovery (21 July 1993) at Tel Dan of a stele

¹¹ "As the phrase goes, any resemblance to real or actual persons may be purely coincidental. There is no way in which history automatically reveals itself in a biblical text; there are no literary criteria for believing David to be more historical than Joshua, Joshua more historical than Abraham, and Abraham more historical than Adam" [Davies, 1992:12, also 31]. In his earlier monograph, Lemche already says: "I shall not continue this discussion at any greater length, and will instead merely state my own view, namely that when we encounter an oral tradition (which in connection with the OT always means that we find it in written form, which is, in other words, against its nature) we cannot count on the accuracy of other elements in the tradition than the main plot. For example, in connection with the Ehud narrative in Jdg 3,12-30 we should ignore the details, including such names as Ehud and Eglon, or even, for that matter, Israel and Moab" [Lemche; 1985:383]. Note also what Jackson has to say about epic poetry in general: "In view of much that has been written about oral-formulaic poetry, it is not belaboring the obvious to stress that we have no record of the oral form of any of the great epics. The epics which we possess in manuscript form may be many times removed from their oral antecedents and may well have undergone substantial revision in their written form, no matter how many traces of oral-formulaic poetry may still be noted in them" [1982:4-5]. It is interesting that Lemche and Thompson refer to some of the epic works also included in Jackson's book.

mentioning a "House of David". The discovery of and the stele itself were rather rapidly described in an article in the Israel Exploration Journal by the excavators themselves [Biran and Naveh; 1993]. The two scholars here offer their own interpretation of the stele as far as dating and translation are concerned. They confidently date the stele to the mid-ninth century B.C., although they indicate that "this date should not be taken as definite and it might fall within a range of some decades earlier or later" [Biran and Naveh; 1993:95]. All in all, they do not consider a date later than the end of the ninth century B.C., thus roughly 150-200 years at the most from the supposed reign of David.

It is interesting to note that they warn that it is not possible to "draw definite conclusions", given "the nature of the biblical sources on the one hand and the fragmentary state of the Dan inscription on the other" [Biran and Naveh; 1993:98]. Some, however, were quick to do so, and soon it was claimed that what had, in the end, been discovered at Tel Dan was an irrefutable proof of the historical existence of David, his lineage, as well as a monarchical state under their control [cf Shanks; 1994; Rainey; 1994; Lemaire; 1994]. Shanks is illustrative of the tendency to have "'David' found at Dan":

There Avraham Biran and his team of archaeologists found a remarkable inscription from the ninth century B.C.E. that refers both to the "House of David" and to the "King of Israel". This is the first time that the name David has been found in any ancient inscription outside the Bible. That the inscription refers not only to a "David" but to the House of David, the dynasty of the great Israelite king, is even more remarkable. [Shanks; 1994:26]

His following claims are echoed by those of Lemaire, who says:

The inscription easily establishes the importance of Israel

and Judah on the international scene at this time - no doubt to the chagrin of those modern scholars who maintain that nothing in the Bible before the Babylonian exile can lay claim to any historical accuracy. [Lemaire; 1994:31-32]

These modern scholars, called "Biblical minimizers" by Shanks [1994:26] or the "deconstructionist school" by Rainey [1994:47], are dismissed as a "circle of dilettantes" [Rainey; 1994:47]. In fact, however, one might wonder if these scholars can really be as quickly and safely ignored as Rainey would have it [1994:47].

Lemche and Thompson, in a joint article, have seen in some of the above mentioned literature on the Tel Dan stele a "return to the worst abuses of the biblical archaeological movement of the 1930s-1960s" [Lemche and Thompson; 1994:3]. They take a much more critical stance, seeking for alternative interpretations of the stele.

Two points are at stake in their approach. First the question of dating is addressed. Indeed, they find the date given by Biran and Naveh as inaccurate, even given an error of a couple of decades that these two scholars were willing to acknowledge. Lemche and Thompson would date the stele about 100-150 years later than was originally done. A somewhat later article by Thompson alone still holds the same view, and it is claimed that archaeologically, there is little indication that the stele should precede the late eighth century B.C. [Thompson; 1995:60; Lemche and Thompson; 1994:7; see also Cryer; 1994:5].

Furthermore, Lemche and Thompson also rely on the analysis of the epigraphical and linguistic evidence presented by Cryer [1994; also 1995]. Here again it seems that a later date than it was at first thought, can be assigned to the stele [Cryer; 1994:4]. In his analysis, Cryer is first concerned with the actual writing, the examination of which leads him to claim the following:

In all, the script of the inscription contains features known from the early 10th down to the 7th centuries in the ambits of Phoenicia and Syria-Palestine. It must be emphasized that the few 7th-century features could easily be the results of innovation or even be simply idioms peculiar to a single scribe. However, the horizon of many of the letters extends unproblematically to the 8th c., and there is no reason whatsoever, as far as the epigraphy is concerned, to rule out that century. [Cryer; 1994:8-9]

Cryer then turns his attention to the orthography and the language of the stele. He here comes to the conclusion that the language used represents a kind of "Mischsprache or a genuine local pidgin consisting of Phoenician, Aramaic, and 'Canaanite' elements" [Cryer; 1994:11]. He further claims that certain phenomena of the language, such as the frequent use of the dot-spot for separating words, make it very difficult to hold on to an early date [Cryer; 1994:13]. Again he reaches the conclusion that an 8th-7th century date would be more appropriate [1994:12-13; also Thompson; 1995:61]. In a more recent article Cryer maintains his position, advocating a date of around 750 B.C. [1996:6].

Yet the dating of the stele is not the only matter of debate. Far more importance is the question of whether the wording *bytdwd* should in fact be read "House of David", as referring to that famous biblical king and his kingly lineage. Lemche and Thompson concluded:

In the light of the archaeological evidence from the Tel Dan inscription, our understanding of the biblical David, and the relationship between the biblical and the history and society of the ancient world of its context, has been immensely enriched. Not only do we have no historical-archaeological context for a king David in history as the ruler of either a

state of Judah or of a United Monarchy centred in Jerusalem in the period that biblical archaeologists like to refer to as the 'time of David', and not only do we have overwhelming literary reasons to understand the David stories as reflecting romantic fictions of the 'Golden Age' of Israel, but we now have concrete extra-biblical evidence supporting the eponymic and metaphorical character of both David and the House of David, as reflections of an ideology that understood Yahweh's relationship to Judaism as eternal, centered in the Byt Dwd or temple of Jerusalem. [Lemche and Thompson; 1994:21]

In fact, quite rapidly after Biran's and Naveh's publication, people came to doubt that the stele really alludes to a historical David. Consequently, it has been argued, the *dwd* had to stand for something else. A first attempt, by Knauf, de Pury and Römer, saw *dwd* being rendered as a deity Dod "worshipped by the Aramaic inhabitants of Dan in the ninth century BCE" [in Barstad; 1995:493]. Barstad, however, claims that "there is little evidence to support the existence of a deity Dod" [Barstad; 1995:497]. A not altogether dissimilar interpretation of the word *dwd* yet seems to carry more weight, or at least, find more support among biblical scholars. This argument maintains, that while *dwd* might not refer to a deity as such, it nonetheless has been used as a divine epithet with the meaning of "Beloved" [Davies; 1994a:55; 1994b:23; Ben Zvi; 1994:30; Cryer; 1994:17; 1995:52; Lemche and Thompson; 1994:11, 14-15; Thompson; 1995:61; cf Barstad; 1995:493-497].

These conclusions were arrived at, as the reading of *bytdwd* as "House of David" presented some difficulties. For in the stele *bytdwd* is not separated by the common dot-stop as a round divider. This, however, is always done, when the "House of David" is referred to in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, within the stele itself, this would be a single occurrence of *scripta continua* in the text [Cryer; 1994:13; Davies;

1994a:54; Lemche and Thompson; 1994:8]. Thompson thus argues:

Although it is linguistically possible to translate the inscription's bytdwd as a reference to a "house of David", that we have only a single word (and not byt.dwd, as in the bible) goes against such a translation and suggests that we have here a place name, such as the comparable biblical Bethel, perhaps somewhere in northern Palestine, that can and perhaps should be translated: "temple of (the deity) DWD" [Thompson; 1995:61]

The theory that we have to do with a place name, possibly a temple or holy place, has received the support of several scholars such as Lemche and Thompson [1994:12-15], Davies [1994a:54, 1994b:23], as Ben Zvi [1994:28]. They actually find support for this interpretation in Lemaire's article on the Mesha stele [1994], where "the context of the preceding lines contains a number of Bits; that is 'temples' of various gods." Thus the conclusion "that bytdwd here is also the name of a temple" [Lemche and Thompson; 1994:12; see also Ben Zvi; 1994:30].

Such arguments, if sustainable, undermine the assumption that the Tel Dan stela offers proof for the existence of a historical David, king of Judah. Rather has it "thrown light both on an ancient Palestinian divine name, the cult of the deity of question, and, of course, the invention of the ancient king" [Davies; 1994b:24]. Lemche and Thompson, for their part, are quite sure that "we now have concrete extra-biblical evidence supporting the eponymic and metaphorical character of both David and the House of David" [1994:21]. David thus becomes a so-called *heros eponymos* or eponymous ancestor [1994:21-22]. To this we might add Cryer's comment:

In this connexion it should go without saying that a lineage name is not based on history, meaning that it is, for the purposes of organising the internal solidarity of a given

lineage, irrelevant whether "David" or any other eponymous ancestor ever existed. What is important is the usefulness of the ancestor-convention for organising the personnel essential to the lineage by providing members of the lineage with a handy system of identification. [1994:18]

We here seem to encounter a similar usefulness of genealogical flexibility to that seen with nomadic tribal arrangements. Linking oneself to David provides identity for oneself and one's society, yet the historicity of this ancestor is of little importance¹². As we understand it, an ancient divine epithet has been over the years transformed into a personal name, and that name has been attached to a founder-king who led the society in the Golden Age. How is such process possible, and is it possible at all? Would not human nature, the honest search of truth, forbid the creation, invention, of such an ancestor¹³?

To answer this we would like to turn again to the monograph by Ewald, who has analysed the process of state formation in the Greater Nile Valley between 1700 and 1885 A.D.. As we have seen she concentrates her work on the highlanders of Taqali, a part of the Nuba Hill Massif. Interestingly there remain some written traditions concerning the formation of a Muslim monarchy within these highlands. Ewald states:

¹²Kochakova speaks of similar habits among Yoruba polities, where there was ample use of artificial lines of kinship [1996:58-59]. Many other societies show similar ventures. The Scythians used such a genetic legend, where "through the incorporation of the highest deities in their line of ancestors, the Scythian central power obviously achieved the state of divine kings" [Kürsat-Ahlers: 1996:138; also Claessen; 1996:342; Claessen and Oosten; 1996b:385-387].

¹³ Davies poses the same question: "Do we wonder whether we are dealing with a literary construct as we confront Saul, David and Solomon, Jeroboam, Jehu, Hezekiah and Josiah? We have certainly been given good reason to think so in the first two cases?" [1992:29]

Centralizing political institutions began to form only in the late eighteenth-century. This statement apparently contradicts the image of a centuries-old Taqali kingdom presented in certain primary written and oral sources. Both the *Funj Chronicle* and the *Tabaqat*, a history of Sinnar's kings and a biographical dictionary of Muslim holymen, respectively, note that seventeenth-century warriors or holymen encountered sultans or mukuk in Taqali. In the 1930s, Taqali people themselves asserted that their royal dynasty extended back through the uninterrupted, though not undisputed, reigns of 17 kings to the immigrant-founder, Muhammad al-Rubatabi. Today they repeat that kinglist, adding that their kingdom originated about the same time as the Sinnar sultanate. [1990:15]

Another of Ewald's statements is even more interesting:

No nineteenth-century evidence about Taqali's history mentions the immigrant-founder who begins the kinglist or the five kings who supposedly succeeded him. . . ., I argue that Taqali people probably composed the kinglist in the early twentieth century, viewing their own past from the perspective of their current historical knowledge and political interest. [1990:16]

One cannot deny the similarity between this statement and those made by biblical scholars who speak of "retrojection of contemporary problems into the past" and claim that "the biblical authors tell the readers stories that are situated in the past but relate to their problems in the sixth century BCE" [Smelik; 1992:21-22]¹⁴. We may,

¹⁴Van Bakel follows a similar line when he discusses myths in relation with stateformation on Hawaii. In fact he says: "First myths present the ideas of a people, rather than give an objective historical account. Myths may change in the course of time, as and

therefore be dealing with similar developments in the invention of the eponymous ancestor-hero David and the creation of the Wise Stranger Muhamad al-Rubatabi; both seem to be born out of the processes of history reconstruction undertaken by the populations, or rather an élite.

Furthermore these are not the only examples of such processes. According to van Bakel the same has happened on Hawaii. He also is able to trace the beginnngs of kingship back to mythical founders whose historical existence, after analysis, "cannot be ascertained beyond a great deal of doubt" [1996:332]. Rather, like us, van Bakel insists on the legitimizing effects that the creation of such myths usually have. Thus he affirms that these myths were written down only at the time when a certain Kamehameha, historically an usurper, emerged as king. He then goes on to say:

So the thought cannot be dismissed that the myths such as related in this article were created, or adapted, during Kamehameha's own lifetime, to legitimize his extraordinary achievements. Anthropological literature abounds with examples of new myths created and within a short period of time accepted as knowledge from time immemorial in order to incorporate in societal tradition new and hitherto unexperienced and even contradictory events (Vansina 1973:78-79). So our Paa, Pili and Umi¹⁵ myths may be relatively

when the narrators change their views of the past, but also when other people start telling the myths, citing from memory and answering the questions relevant to the audience at that time. Second, at a specific moment in time these myths were recorded -- but who were the people who first heard the stories? To what extent can they be expected to have recorded the myths exactly as they were told? It seems not too far fetched to think than at least --consciously or unconsciously-- some of their own ideological convictions were included in the native myths" [1996:322].

¹⁵Umi is a particularly interesting personality in relation to David. Let us note the following "Umi was at least partly of a dubious ancestry, but when he arrived at the royal court, he was accepted by

recent creations and may have no connection with any historical time or event at all (cf. De Josselin de Jong 1977, 1980). The thought cannot be dismissed that their sole reason for existence was to provide legitimation for Kamehameha's kingship and nothing else. [1996:331]

It is therefore, interesting to note the historical situation that Taqali highlanders were experiencing, when the story of the Wise Stranger began to be created. Ewald states that there existed a situation where "large numbers of highlanders had been taken from the hills and then come back again. An entire generation had been born in Omdurman, the Gezira, and the eastern Sudan" [1990:129]. Thus there prevails a situation that can only be described as one of returning home after exile. It is also interesting to note that the actual story around Rubatabi needed only little time to become the accepted version of the founding story of the Taqali kingdom. Ewald's description is of interest:

The *makk* and his family presented themselves to the Condominium as heirs not only of a historical tradition of kingship but also of Islamic kingship. In the 1930s, they related their founding story to an assistant district

the king as his son...Hakau remained envious and treated Umi harshly. Therefore Umi decided to go into exile...Kakau proved to be a bad king and Umi was invited to revolt. After a successful revolt Umi was generally acknowledged as the new king and rewarded those who had helped him in gaining kingship by giving them high governmental functions" [1996:327]. Van Bakel talks about an ideology of usurpation [1996:325], which we find close enough to the Hero and King-theme. According to him of the three figures it is precisely Umi that remains the least historically findable. Let us also cite van Bakel on this: "When these myths were created or adapted during the reign of Kamehameha, the Umi myth on its own already might have done the trick. There was no need for other myths to legitimize the conduct of Kamehameha. So, the Pao and Pili myths may represent older traditions, while the Umi myth is a relatively recent one. Still, one cannot dismiss the possibility that perhaps all three myths are of relatively recent origin" [1996:332].

commissioner who showed particular in the history of the kingdom. According to this story a wandering Muslim *faqih*, sometimes said to be from the Rubatab Reach in the northern Sudanese Nile Valley, had founded their kingdom. More than 40 years later, Makk Adam's family and entourage repeated that story with some elaborations and very few variations. By this time, everyone presented the hero as Rubatabi. [1990:136]

Thus in a very little time the Taqali élite rewrote their history so as to fit their new political situation, in which it was considered advantageous to link up with Arab ancestorship. Ewald states:

Taqali people composed this founding story in the years after the Mahdiyya....no evidence indicates that highlanders either told the Muhammad al-Rubatabi story or claimed a northern river valley origin for their *mukuk* until after the Mahdiyya...New claims of origins began to appear in the changing post-Mahdiyya political situation....As the Taqali kingdom became more integrated into the administrative and commercial systems of the northern and central Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, claims of Arab origins began to emerge more clearly....The Muhammad al-Rubatabi story brought Taqali's history into line with other Islamic kingdoms in the greater Sudanese Nile valley. The Taqali kingdom now stood in rank with the great precolonial sultanates, Sinnar and Dar Fur. The Muslim kings of Taqali now even rivalled the sultans of Sinnar in antiquity, having supposedly come to power in the sixteenth century. [1990:136-138]

Although we do not want to claim that we have now found the key to the secret of the composition of the Samuel-books, we might suggest a scenario, build on our analysis in comparison with the Taqali material. In the post-exilic period, élite-members composed a story that accorded a

long tradition of kingship to a territory that now was the Persian province of Yehud; as such they justified the political unification of the diverse people inhabiting the region [cf Davies; 1992:116, 130]¹⁶. They used for their story David, a personal name won from an ancient divine epithet, as eponymous ancestor to whom they attached several popular traditions, such as a prototypal noble robber story, which they wove into strong political language as part of a court apologetic, a literary form to which they were accustomed [cf Davies; 1992:122]¹⁷.

¹⁶This would be a dating in accordance with Davies, who says: "The literature itself was at least largely compiled into its present form, and at most almost entirely written, at a time later than this 'biblical period', during the rule of the Persians and then the Hellenistic monarchies" [1992:24]. See also especially Davies' chapter entitled "The Social Context of the Biblical Israel" [1992:75-93] which he sums up with the following words: "But the society which these writings claim to describe is in no sense an Israel, historically speaking. It is a Persian province with the name of Yehud or Yeduhah (Judah). It is reconstituted on the territory of the erstwhile kingdom of Judah, and it enshrines the cult of the God Yahweh. The connection between this society and Israel is this: the scribal class of this new society creates an identity and heritage for itself in Palestine, an identity expressed in a vigorous and remarkably coherent (all things considered) literary corpus. That identity is given the name 'Israel' (which now exists alongside Judah). The society itself, or more accurately, parts of that society, will transform itself in the direction of becoming the 'Israel' of its own creation as it accepts that Israel's presumed history as its own, accepts its constitution, beliefs and habits as its own, and begins to incarnate that identity" [1992:92-93]

¹⁷Again, a look at Rolleston's treatment of Celtic myth, and especially the Arthurian saga, is interesting: "...The Welsh exiles who colonised part of Brittany about the sixth century must have brought with them many stories of the historical Arthur. They must also have brought legends of the Celtic deity Artaius, a god to whom altars have been found in France. These personages ultimately blended into one, even as in Ireland the Christian St. Brigit blended with the pagan goddess Brigindo. We thus get a mythical figure combining something of the exaltation of a god with a definite habitation on earth and a place in history. An Arthur saga thus arose, which in its Breton (though not in its Welsh) form was greatly enriched by material drawn in from legends of Charlemagne and his peers, while both in

Chronologically, the case of Taqali shows that even if we go back to the mythical period of the founding of the kingdom by Muhammad al-Rubatabi, we lie within a timespan of at most 300 years that separates the invented founder-figure with the acceptance of his story into history. Saul and David's struggle over the kingship are separated by approximately 500 years from the period after the exile. The Tel Dan stela may be separated by as much as 200 years from the supposed time of David. It took the Taqali people considerably less time to accept the legendary founder-figure as historical. Thus it is at least possible that the Palestinian highlanders came to accept a similarly invented founder-figure just as the Taqali highlanders have done¹⁸.

Of course this can be no more than a tentative effort to explain the complex processes which lie behind the composition of biblical material. It is by no means clear when the transformation of David into a personal name took place exactly, or where exactly the different folk

Brittany and in Wales it became a centre round which clustered a mass of floating legendary matter relating to various Celtic personages, human and divine" [1985 (1911):342].

¹⁸Ewald describes events as such: "During the diaspora of the Mahdiyya, Taqali people had gained new knowledge of other parts of the greater Sudanese Nile valley. People in many parts of the Sudan told stories depicting how a Muslim immigrant, or Wise Stranger, had come to an area, civilized the people, and founded a new political regime. Although he was neither the founder of a kingdom nor even clearly a Muslim, a Wise Stranger appeared in a narrative told by the Tumale youth Djalo in the 1830s. Living in the river valley during the Mahdiyya or meeting northern river valley immigrants to Taqali after the Mahdiyya, Taqali probably heard other Wise Stranger stories. Already familiar with the motif of the Wise Stranger, these stories rang true to them. They elaborated their own Wise Stranger story, telling how a Muslim stranger had converted highlanders to Islam and founded a dynasty of kings" [Ewald; 1990:138]. There is no reason why scribes of a late period should not have used material such as standard court apologetic to make up their David in the Palestinian case in a similar manner.

traditions came from. Other times of turmoil could very possibly have led to the composition of much of the material. Davies yet sounds rather sure in his conclusions:

The truth about the society of Yehud is this, then: it is an erstwhile Babylonian province shorn of its ruling class and governed by Babylonians, now becoming a Persian province and receiving a new population transplanted by the Persians with funds to build a Temple and the city of Jerusalem. This society is constituted by fundamental contradiction: its élite is aware of its alien origin and culture, but its *raison d'être* implies indigenization: the Persians want the immigrants to accept the new lands as their own...But in their writings these immigrants set about establishing claims in no small measure. [1992:117]¹⁹

At the very least our exposure shows that it is possible to date the composition of the Books of Samuel to a later period, and that within

¹⁹We would like to make a short note at this point. Raising the date to the Persian period also creates a totally new outlook on the advent of monotheism. We would like to point out here that this will constitute our next project. In mind we have a thorough analysis of the influence of Persian religious thought on the development of monotheistic Yahwism, especially if the historical processes we propose are considered as accurate. We are confirmed in the value of such a study amongst others by the following statement: "Toutefois les Juifs n'étaient pas les seuls à adorer un Dieu universel et éthique. Beaucoup plus à l'est, sur les hauts plateaux d'Iran, deux peuples apparentés, les Mèdes et les Perses, étaient peu à peu passés du paganisme à une croyance en une seule divinité suprême incarnant le principe du bien en lutte perpétuelle contre les forces du mal. L'apparition de cette religion est associée au prophète Zoroastre, ...il semblerait que le zoroastrianisme connut son apogée aux VIe et Ve siècles avant J.-C. Pendant longtemps, les Mèdes et les Perses avaient chacun de leur côté, poursuivi leur quête d'un Dieu. Les bouleversements du VIe siècle les rapprochèrent. Les répercussions s'en feraient sentir dans le monde entier des siècles durant" [Lewis; 1997:37].

it was created the figure of the eponymous ancestor, David, who need not have an exact historical counterpart²⁰. As such it seems that neither the biblical material nor the evidence from Tel Dan takes us any further as far as the historical events around the Palestinian highlands in the Early Iron Age are concerned. We now have to turn to further evidence from the available epigraphic and archaeological material.

As already alluded to, some major changes have manifested themselves in the study of the emergence, and also the extent of the state, and some have indeed come seriously to doubt the existence of anything resembling a Solomonic empire [Davies; 1992:67, 69]. Solomon himself has been qualified as little more than a "local king" rather than an "international potentate" [Miller; 1991a:28 and passim, in reply to Millard; 1991; Jamieson-Drake; 1991:143; Davies; 1992:69]. Jamieson-Drake emphasizes his suspicions as to the achievements of David and Solomon:

The evidence provided in this study, and the technical definition of 'chiefdom' as it appears in the sociological literature, seem to indicate that this term may be the one most applicable to the level of administrative control present in 10th-century Judah. [Jamieson-Drake; 1991:144]

This all points to "the tenuous hold on existence the period of the United Monarchy has" [Thompson; 1991:91]. The argument presented in the previous chapter relating to the parcelling out of the hill country, as well as Rosenfeld's findings and Ewald's conclusions, would help to substantiate such a view. Finally all argumentation in favour of an early

²⁰Claims similar to those made here as well as those of Ewald in particular are presented by Shifferd, who analyses the ideological background of state-societies in pre-colonial West-Africa. Especially interesting is her treatment of the Yoruba polities where it is claimed that kingship goes back to a mythical founder Oduduwa, himself a son of the High God Olodumare. Here we thus also find a link between kingship and divinity [see Shifferd 1996:esp.31-32; also Kochakova; 1996:53-54; Hicks; 1996:267].

strong and united monarchy suffers heavily, precisely on the textual and epigraphic side, from the absence first of all of David and Solomon, and further their respective kingdom and empire, from any of our contemporary evidence (except, of course, for the above seen Tel Dan stela) [Garbini; 1988:17; Miller; 1991a:30; Davies; 1992:67; Lemche; 1994:65].

On the archaeological side, it is especially the total absence of the Solomonic temple that still bewilders scholars, all the more so because we know of the importance that the temple and other public constructions hold in ancient state structures [cf Ahlström; 1982; Meyers; 1983a; Whitelam; 1989a:133-134]²¹. Again, Hail itself possessed something resembling an *acropolis* (and even then her power was limited) [Rosenfeld; 1965:185]. In fact whereas the preceding chapter has given much importance to the military factor in state formation, this chapter will focus briefly on the ideological sphere as it is linked to early efforts of centralization of power²². Whitelam states the following:

²¹This was not only the case for the Ancient Near East, but for many societies. The Aztecs offer an interesting parallel: "In ancient Mexico, what defined a settlement as a city (*altepetl*) was the fact that it was the political, economic, and ceremonial centre of the polity. Its heart was the 'ceremonial precinct', where the principal state institutions were headquartered. This was designed to be a place of impressive grandeur, with its temples atop tall pyramids, stone palaces raised on platforms, all adorned with awe-inspiring but mysterious art work" [Hicks; 1996:263].

²²Thus following the argumentation presented by Claessen and Oosten: "Usually the evolution of the state was mainly connected with economic, military, or political developments. Recent research has emphasized the importance of ideology in the process of state formation....The necessity to relate the theoretical debate on the development of the early state and that on ideology became obvious as more and more scholars argued that ideology was of crucial importance not only in relation to the emergence, but also in relation to the fall of early states" [1996:1-2]. An article by Kochakova in the same monograph makes these claims sounding rather familiar to our line of thought: "As for the king, the ruler of a town, he was the incarnation of the concept of 'kingship', a concept broader than that of the 'king', which was associated with the regulation of peace and order.

States could only survive if they attained legitimacy, often through the manipulation of religious symbols, since reliance upon coercion and force would destroy the very relationships upon which the ruling elite depended for their wealth and power. [1989:121]

His position is paralleled by anthropologists who specialize in the field of state formation, when they claim:

There must exist an ideology, which explains and justifies a hierarchical administrative organization and socio-political inequality. If such an ideology does not exist, or emerges the formation of a state becomes difficult, or even outright impossible. [Claessen and Oosten; 1996:5]

Part of these religious or ideological symbols are, amongst others, a certain amount of ideological literature portraying the "Israelite kings ... as possessing qualities and characteristics that set them apart from ordinary mortals" [Whitelam; 1989:135], as well as the Temple and its cult, which is "repeated in the various shrines of the major urban centres of the kingdom, legitimated the king's role in the political and

The king was in the centre of regulated peace, he was supposed to guarantee the harmonic interaction between the social and cosmic forces. The outward manifestation of this idea was the palace, the sacred centre of the town surrounded by walls, the place where the most important decisions concerning town life were taken and where esoteric rituals were performed in a narrow circle of initiated people" [1996:51]. The fact that we might be dealing with a society that had nomadic or at least semi-nomadic antecedents does not change anything at the situation. In fact Kürsat-Ahlers states: "The integrating role of a legitimizing ideology in the emergence and development of the early nomadic states was crucial due to two peculiar characteristics. ...The centrifugal forces remained too strong...the relatively high homogeneity of the products based on live-stock" [1996:136].

economic ordering of the state" [Whitelam; 1989:134]. Thus what was really needed was a religious legitimation of centralized power in the form of the king, and along with it of the whole concept of the state or the nation [cf van der Toorn; 1996:266]. Niemann has devoted a full chapter to this phenomenon, but his results are mostly negative, as he talks of a "landesweit geringe bzw. fehlende königliche kultorganisatorische Engagement in Juda" [1993:202]. According to him, the cult was not being used as one of the means of domination (*Herrschaftsmittel*) [1993:207]. He also speaks against the concept of a centrally, or royally, administered national cult or religion, which would have found acceptance among the larger populace [1993:234]. He summarizes his position as follows:

Insofern erscheint mir das Reden von einer "offiziellen" Religion auf jeden Fall bis Josia, wahrscheinlich aber bis zum Ende der monarchischen Zeit, schlicht unangemessen. Eine offizielle Religion (oder auch Staatsreligion, Nationalreligion) hat es in der Realität in der gesamten Königszeit m.E. nicht nachweisbar gegeben, dem Anspruch nicht bis Josia. [Niemann; 1993:238]

It follows that in the absence of such a national cult, people must have held onto other manifestations of the divine power. These manifestations could have taken on various forms, such as the veneration of localized deities, but also ancestor worship, and even magic rites. It is difficult today to determine exactly in what forms and to what extent such kind of worship and belief operated in ancient Palestine. Van der Toorn believes that 'family religion' shared some of the same characteristics in Babylonia, Syria and Israel (sic.). Predominant amongst them were precisely "the cult of the ancestors and the devotion to a local god" [1996:4, 181]. Rogerson holds that magical practices were engaged in widely [1989:17, 25]. Jeffers, too, agrees with Rogerson and van der Toorn. Firstly she insists that magic and divination formed an

integral part of the religious history of the society that came to be known as Israel [1996:1, 25]. Secondly she is also of the opinion that this society shared a religious heritage with the surrounding world, i.e. Babylonian, Assyria, and Syria foremostly [1996:8]. In fact, she speaks of a (northwest)-semitic mentality holding common beliefs in the religio-magical sphere [1996:14, 16, 144; van der Toorn; 1996:206, 234-235].

Reviewing the work of Robert Smith, Jeffers goes on to say:

Indeed the old superstitions of Israel were of the general Semitic type and therefore closely akin to Canaanite usages. According to this scholar, although there were a number of practices borrowed from the Canaanites the syncretism would not have gone on so freely if there had not been a stratum of common religious ideas underlying both faiths, and derived from an original semitic tradition.... Moreover, practices forbidden by the deuteronomist writer were viewed as quite legitimate in older times. [1996:9]²³

It is thus very reasonable to assume that the Palestinian highlanders of the Early Iron Age were engaged in local deities and ancestor worship, as well as the processes of divination and magic and

²³ Of similar interest is the statement by Jeffers, who says in the preface to her monograph Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria: "This study stems from my firm belief that there is more to magic and divination in the Old Testament than meets the eye. Indeed the few verses in Dt 18:9ff. that purport to dismiss the whole subject as theologically preposterous make use of a vast, "home-grown" vocabulary -- a vocabulary of specialists which is by no means limited to foreign practices and practitioners. It betrays the curious reader a rich knowledge of who's who in magic and divination" [1996:preface]. It is also important to note that as far as the passing of time is concerned, similar deductions can be made: "The forms of family religion in second millennium Syria and Palestine persist virtually unchanged in the first millennium...The designation of the family god as the 'god' or 'lord' of the 'house' remained in use down to the Hellenistic and Roman periods" [van der Toorn; 1996:176-177].

the like. This is very interesting as such habits can stand in the way of state formation. Not only do they work against the establishment of a centrally orientated religion that serves to legitimize central institutions, but in the words of van der Toorn, they also "manifest the wish to preserve one's cultural identity" , "reinforce local identity" and have "a strongly localist orientation" [1996:374-375, see also 87-88, 147, 177]²⁴. Thus not only does the absence of a national religion suggest the absence of state institutions, but, it appears, local manifestations of the divine attached people to their own local environments and opposed the formation of bigger entities with common cultural identities. Niemann has seen the role of local religion in a very similar way. Even for the time of Josiah, he is able to claim the following:

Die beharrende Rolle der persönlichen Frömmigkeit und der bisher nicht beachteten Ortsfrömmigkeit bildete für die Ebene der Gesamtvolksfrömmigkeit nicht nur eine Möglichkeit der Abfederung der Härte der josianischen Zentralisation- (sforderung); ihre traditionelle beharrende Existenz lässt auch Zweifel an der Realität der landesweiten Durchführung der Zentralisation bzw. der (schnellen) Durchführbarkeit berechtigt erscheinen. [1993:245]

Clearly those local manifestations indeed worked against any centralising efforts. If Niemann is correct and if these processes were

²⁴Van der Toorn says further: "The cohabitation of state religion and family religion in one nation was a source of conflicts. Many of these were intimately connected with the opposition against the monarchy. The transformation of a segmentary society into a state had not abolished the sentiments of local independence, of which the cult of the clan god was the ritual expression. With its emphasis on genealogical and local identity, materializing in the ancestral inheritance (*nahala*), family-religion fostered anti-royalist feelings among the Israelite population" [1996:316-317]. Similarly Muller can speak of ideological factors able to prevent rather than lead to the apparition of the early state in the case of Dii chiefdoms in Cameroon [1996:99].

still going on in the time of Josiah, one has to wonder how much effect local religion would have had in an earlier period. More precisely, how much opposition to the formation of the state can we expect from local religious institutions? Shifferd, for example, emphasizes the role of what she calls counter-ideologies in the history of the Yoruba kingship [1996:39, also 30]. Again, the situation in Taqali provides a very interesting parallel. Ewald thinks that in the Taqali highlands, the wielders of local religious power used their control of the divine or the supernatural to compromise the establishment of a strong monarchy:

But this does not mean that the kings enjoyed equal success in using local beliefs to establish hegemony over highlanders. Local sources of ideological power, like local land and labor, remained contested. Speaking with the voices of spirits and performing rituals for rainfall, highland leaders attested their autonomy from the kings. Highlanders may even have tried to use local religion to control the kings. Struggles over ideological power took place in the context of power struggle in general. [Ewald; 1990:8]²⁵

²⁵This sounds very similar to van der Toorn's comment on the hillcountry of Palestine: "Until the emergence of the state, Israelite society had been segmentary, and Israelite religion had been locally diversified. Family religion protected and reinforced the identity of the lineages and their title to their inheritance. It was primarily the interests of the landed gentry to maintain this tradition over the national religion which claimed all the land to be 'Yahweh's heritage' (...), which amounted to saying that it was national property. The landed gentry consisted of the old Israelite families who owned much of the land and formed a kind of nobility" [1996:301]. Another case is that presented by Kürsat-Ahlers. Due to its monotheistic tendency, it is all the more interesting for this study: "Eliade asserts that Turkic Religion was composed of two diverging branches, 'the popular' one was centered on shamanism, totemism, and a vigorous polytheism, 'the imperial' one was antishamanic, antitotemist and had monotheistic tendencies in its advocacy of the supremacy of Tengri...It seems that the kagans systematically undermined and gradually abolished local totemist beliefs and the power in favour of the religious centre, gradually depriving the local tribal élite of

As such, it is more than probable that local holders of religious offices in the Palestinian highlands would have acted against centralizing efforts, using their power to frighten, threaten, and control others among them [cf van der Toorn; 1996:318-320]. Jealous of that power, they reinforced rather than dismantled local systems of belief and control, thus stressing the autonomous identity of the different micro-environment entities within the highlands. All this, would have hampered the efforts made by some to move towards centralized institutions for religion as well as for administration.

Ewald mentions that in Taqali those holding political power had to share their power with different religious leaders [1990:61]. In fact, she maintains that "spirit mediums probably gained power because people faced forces from beyond their communities - including their own king" [1990:181]²⁶. She then insists on the influence of Islam in the later

religious power. In short, the processual centralization of administrative and political power has to go hand in hand with the ideological centralization of the religious power in an early state" [1996:146; similar Kurtz; 1996:286 and van Bakel; 1996:324-325] The question put by Claessen and Oosten simply is: "Why should the mass of the population in an early state accept an ideological system which contradicts their own interests?" [1996:15].

²⁶Interestingly similar points have already been made about the situation in Early Iron Age Palestine: "One form of opposition to kingship stemmed from groups and individuals who had the most to lose from the structural transformations. The formation of the state meant in reality the transfer of sovereignty over arable land to the king. It gave rise to a complex situation in which there were competing chiefdoms, local notables and various rural groups and village communities attempting to protect their arable land and its produce from the claims of the ruling urban elite. The strength of resistance to the social and political transformations which kingship entails may appear to decrease over time but often continues in peripheral areas or underground movements to erupt in periodic popular protests against the exploitation and oppression of monarchic rule" [Whitelam; 1989:121].

period of the Mahdiyya. It brought about a profound change among the Taqali highlanders, who now started to view local religious manifestations, especially highland beliefs and rituals, as less worthwhile or quasi incompatible with true religion, i.e. Islam, the religion of their kings [1990:130, also 181]. But again it is interesting to note that this only happened after the highlanders had experienced a kind of exile, during which they had come under heavy outside influence:

Many highland leaders died or disappeared, and others, like Jayli, replaced them. By force, the Mahdiyya had broken the strong residential bonds tying Taqali people to particular places in the massif....Uprooted from the shrines that were central to highland religion, they had come into close and violent contact with a militant Muslim theocracy. [1990:129]

Thus there is ample reason to believe that in the Palestinian highlands too, people such as spirit-mediums or similar magicians, tried everything to hold on to their own power. This again had negative effects upon any would-be state-building, where, as seen above, the ideological idiom needed to create a common cultural identity was lacking. As we see it, such important literary material, as "court apologetic", was absent at early times. Furthermore there was no temple, and on top of that, the remaining of the earliest monumental works found in localities such as Gezer, Megiddo, or Hazor do not firmly attest that one single and central government was in fact responsible for their being build [Ahlström; 1991b:139; Davies; 1992:68]. However, this also would be one of the first things to attend to by any state administration. Whitelam equates the need for such buildings with that for a temple and some sort of ideological literature:

The great monumental buildings, palace-temple complexes, fortifications and public buildings, which characterized early states, were an important means of reinforcing and

manifesting the social differentiations upon which royal power depended. These structures, which required a massive investment of state resources, displayed the authority, security, and permanence of royal rule. [1989:133]

Others have attributed the same importance to architectural efforts in other societies. Allsen insists that even among the nomadic Turkic and Mongolian states much was invested in such ventures in order to build a "proper capital" with an "appropriate ancestral shrine", as well as "numerous religious establishments" [1996:128-129] and Kürsat-Ahlers claims the same to be true for the Scythian empire [1996:139]. However, the interpretation of many of the architectural findings of the so-called early monarchic period in highland Palestine has seen many alterations. Na'aman has noted:

A lack of firm anchor points for the dating of Iron I archaeological assemblages in the Land of Israel. The number of strata accurately dated to historical events of the 11th-10th centuries B.C.E. is minimal. Thus, the assigning of strata to the reigns of either Saul, David or Solomon is usually based on circumstantial evidence²⁷. [Na'aman; 1992:83; but compare Ahlström; 1991b:135ff]

Of late, there has developed a growing tendency to look very critically at such circumstantial evidence, and thus an inclination towards ascribing a lower chronology, when looking for indications for intensive state formation [Knauf; 1991:39; compare Wightman; 1990:8-10; Dever; 1991:105]. Again as seen above, none of the most famous architectural remains in Gezer, Meggiddo, and Hazor necessarily point to one particular or sole builder [Ahlström; 1991b:139]. They might be the

²⁷Whitelam had already given a warning: "The comparative study of Israelite monumental architecture and the economic significance of the royal cult is only in its infancy and hopefully will provide further insights into the dynamics of monarchic society" [1989:134].

outcome of the building activities of separate state bodies, consequently minor in nature. Niemann argues that it is by no means sure that "die Schutz- und Befestigungsbauten jedenfalls königlich-salomonisch, nicht aber lokal veranlasst sind, falls und soweit sie denn in die Salomozeit gehören" [1993:98]²⁶. Under these conditions, Jamieson-Drake could only stress that the evidence available seriously speaks against the concept of a state important enough for the redaction of the biblical literature in the Early Iron Age [1991; also Knauf; 1985:36]. Niemann's extensive study offers the following conclusion:

Die Fortentwicklung Judas und (Nord-)Israels von vorstaatlichen zu staatlich organisierten Gesellschaft geschah demzufolge später als die nicht historisch-soziokulturelle, sondern primär theologische Intentionen übermittelnde biblische Darstellung auf den ersten Blick erkennen lässt...Mir scheint von den Ergebnissen der vorliegenden Arbeit her, dass, entsprechend gegenwärtiger soziologischer, kulturanthropologischer und ethnographischer Untersuchungen, für das Südreich Juda erst ab Ussia, für das Nordreich Israel ab Omri, von einem Staat gesprochen werden kann. [1993:281-182]

Thus not only have we here indications for a later advent of centralization, but also with Niemann the tendency to view the North and

²⁶In a footnote he further comments on the gates of these cities: "Nicht gesichert ist demnach nicht nur die Zuweisung aller solcher Tore zur Zeit Salomos; es ist auch nicht ausgeschlossen, dass es sich um ein Phänomen, ein Element der Architektur-Entwicklung speziell der E IIA-Zeit (ca. 1000-900 v.Chr.), also ein Element eines Epochenstils handelt, so dass die Torkomplexe nicht notwendig alle auf einen staatlich-königlichen Auftraggeber zurückgehen müssen, sondern vielleicht auf einen Impuls der Architekturentwicklung der palästinischen Küstenebene (...), also von philistäischen Baumeistern auch in lokalen Auftrag ausgeführt worden sein können" [Niemann; 1993: 97-98; fn.435].

the South as "two substantially different types of regions" [Thompson; 1992b:313], which have come to be seen to an extended degree as separate entities [cf Davies; 1992:66ff]. In fact, in the very early stages of the development of the highland polities, there was, according to some scholars, a difference in the manner of settlement and the origin of the settlers between Benjamin and Judah on the one side, and Ephraim and Manasseh on the other [Thompson; 1992a:13; 1992b:288, also 334-335 and 407ff; Davies; 1992:69]. Consequently, the talk is now also of separate kingdoms or states, whose coming into existence has to be seen as, although not unrelated, relatively autonomous. Thus Knauf maintains that "archaeologically speaking there are no indications of statehood being achieved before the 9th century BCE in Israel and the 8th century BCE in Judah --so much for King Solomon in all his splendor" [1991:39].

Causes probably lie, as Coote and Whitelam have it, with the desire of the most powerful and richest, to reduce the cost of warfare and defense and to assure uninterrupted trade [cf Thompson; 1992b:408-409]. It is doubtful, however, that the degree of trade that undoubtedly developed, was at first important enough to create a strong and highly centralized apparatus. Again, in the case of Hail, trade was involved at a reasonable level [Rosenfeld; 1965:184ff], yet the state still appears as a rather weak institution. With the institution of a centralized state and an adequate bureaucracy, it would have been possible indeed to shuffle the costs and duties of maintaining a war-machine onto the general populace, and to facilitate interregional trade. When exactly however the time was ripe for such measures is next to impossible to define. Yet there are, as demonstrated above, indications that it was later rather than sooner.

Trade, and accumulation of wealth, is in fact a third important factor for the establishment of state polities [see Kürsat-Ahlers; 1996:142]. It helps to establish necessary contacts and also dependencies between certain subregions that have specialized in certain products. It

furthermore puts some in an advantageous position, as their control of trade routes permits them to impose their will in a number of ways. Finally it provides the necessary funds to uphold a strong military sector, as well as those that finance ideological architecture and the maintenance of specialists such as scribes and priests. All this again is very helpful in the buildup towards a state society. Haselgrove has analyzed the situation in Belgic Gaul within the expanding Roman empire. She has not forgotten the importance of the "manipulation of ideological constructs", but also insisted on the presence of military and commercial factors:

The increase in warfare and external trade made possible an unprecedented cycle of wealth accumulation for successful groups in conjunction with their demographic and territorial expansion. In many cases, some of these may originally have been among the lower ranking groups of the elite, which suddenly found themselves in a geographical situation that left them far better placed to gain access to the new sources of wealth offered by external trade and thus to elevate their status within the tribal hierarchy in contrast to previously higher-ranked groups which suddenly found themselves possessed of advantages that no longer counted. With time, however, of necessity a limited number of successful groups emerged as powerful and wealthy, able to control territories of a far greater scale than would have been possible under the earlier conditions of competition. [Haselgrove; 1987:110]

Some of the argumentation presented by Thompson also gains support from such claims. He is insistent on viewing the Iron I period as an extended period of transition, with a return to prosperity only in the Iron II period [Thompson; 1992b:236]. This longer time-span would indeed allow for a more intense development of extra-regional trade, fostering economic and political coherence among the central highland populations

[Thompson; 1992b:232, 408]. For it is to be doubted that the early periods of the Iron Age would have offered a scenario involving the necessary interregional trade. We can notice in the argumentation above that it is especially external trade that led to the necessary competition, but also wealth accumulation and the ensuing advantages for some that gave rise to state formations. Where, however, would that sort of trade come from in the Early Iron Age I, when people were only just adapting to the situation after the Egyptian collapse?

The most likely candidate would obviously be the Philistines. Yet there are certain difficulties in simply making such an assumption. For what is known about the Philistines also stems for the most directly from the Bible. As we have said in the previous chapter, little archaeological research has concentrated on the plains, but was aimed at the highlands themselves. It thus becomes extremely difficult to know what sort of polity came to dominate the coastal plains during the Early Iron Age, if that polity was of enough grandeur to influence the highlands in a major way. Finally it is again nearly impossible to date the advent of strong polities among the inhabitants of the plains. Simply to take over the biblical image of a strong Philistine Pentapolis around 1000 B.C. would not aid the aim of this study.

The fact that the Philistines were but a part of a wider agglomeration of people that have become known as Sea-Peoples already stands against an all too ready cohesion amongst themselves. It is doubtful that they formed a united front as rapidly as the Bible puts it. They themselves, like the highlanders, probably had their differences to fight out. Secondly their numbers were probably rather limited so that they did not replace the existing population, but mainly had to impose themselves as rulers. Finally they themselves assimilated rather rapidly to their environment and the local populace, so that at any rate it becomes very difficult to recognize something like a biblical

Philistine²⁹.

Thus the picture we have of the "Philistine" has changed over recent years, and it is therefore also plausible that their unity and political force has been exaggerated in earlier interpretations. Although it is not deniable that some of the cities reached considerable prosperity in the years between 1200 and 1000 B.C., after reflection, it remains to be shown that this was sufficient to become the catalyst that led to the formation of an important state in the highlands. Finally, although the relative strength of some of those cities outside the highlands might have drawn some of the hillpeople, especially those situated along the borders towards the lowlands, to form alliances against them, or, for that matter, with them, temporally and geographically speaking the situation seems rather badly adapted to provoke early centralization within the highlands:

Ekron, caught between Philistia and Israel/Judah entered a 270 year decline. Presumably so did Gath, which was eventually to disappear from the textual record. On the other hand, the cities of the coast flourished and became important conduits for international trade. The flourishing of sites along the Besor Brook, far removed from Israel and Judah, during the tenth century may also be indicative of the

²⁹Ehrlich summarises the situation as follows: "It would hence appear that the Philistines of foreign (or "Philistine " origin) were the minority in Philistia. Just as the origins of Israel in Iron Age I are shrouded in mystery and we are unable to pinpoint the changeover from a "Canaanite" consciousness to an "Israelite" one on the basis of isolated cultural phenomena, so too in the case of the contemporaneous inhabitants of the coastal regions of Canaan, Many cultural influences were at work in a variegated population to which the name "Philistine" was given --similarly to Israel-- pars pro toto, possibly by the late eleventh century B.C.E., ironically a time in which the distinctive material culture traditionally associated with the Philistines was waning" [1996:12-13].

political situation. The leading Philistine cities until the time of the Assyrian conquest were to be the coastal sites, which served as vital outlets for both landbased and maritime international trade. However, they were never to reestablish any grandiose plans of expansion, let alone empire. [Ehrlich; 1996:56]

It is in fact questionable whether the presence of a few strong cities would have provoked centralization on a grand scale within the highlands. As those cities closest to the highlands were lost or destroyed around the end of the eleventh-beginning of the tenth centuries, a destruction that can be attributed to Egyptian campaigning by pharaoh Siamun as much as to opposition from highland forces [Ehrlich; 1996:51-56], their influence cannot have been that important over a very long period of time. Those that remained, however, were the furthest removed from the highlands, and again their influence can be considered as minimal. As it has become impossible to delineate clearly a strong Philistine Pentapolis, it also becomes impossible to assume for certain that the threat or the trade from the plains was sufficient enough to engage the highlands in state formation. Interesting is also the historical research into one of these major coastal cities Ashdod, especially as it becomes apparent that that city was still developing even at later stages:

Ashdod enjoyed an unprecedented prosperity for nearly two centuries after Solomon. The Philistine "renaissance" at Ashdod during this time was entirely absent from biblical accounts of this period, but it was commensurate with contemporaneous international development. ...

And, indeed, toward the end of the eighth century B.C., the people of Ashdod fortified their city again. The city had apparently recovered from Uzziah's attack. It was then that Ashdod reached its greatest stage of expansion. The city

itself was enormous. [Dothan and Dothan; 1992:184-186]

Similar developments are believed to have happened in the coastal cities of Ashkelon and Gaza [Ehrlich; 1996:68]. Again this also shows at least that the highland polities were in no way strong or united enough to be able to confront those very coastal cities. At the best the highlanders held at bay the development of nearby cities such as Ekron and Gath (if these cities were then stopped in their development by the highlanders, and not simply themselves by lack of trade possibilities). Ekron would, however, revive at some stage. Yet this was exactly at the time of the *pax assyriaca* [Ehrlich;1996:68]. Thus already the influence of Assyria makes itself felt not only within the highlands, but also within the cities of the plains and the coasts.

All this pushes us to lower the dating of the advent of a state polity in the highlands. The influence of outside powers would then have to be taken into account to a greater degree than has been the case with a traditional chronology. By the time of Omri, it is possible to consider a higher consolidation of power among the polities of the plain around these erstwhile, but probably now highly assimilated Sea Peoples. The struggle with Phoenicia and Damascus was also becoming more intensified [Thompson; 1992b:408]. Finally there was the increasing threat by the ascending imperialistic power from Assyria.

The importance that Thompson attaches to Assyrian influence can be detected in his claim that "even the term "proto-ethnic" is first appropriate for the political units that from the ninth century on respond to the expansion of the Assyrian empire west and southwestward" [Thompson; 1992b:306]. In fact the Assyrian threat provided the whole of Palestine, plains and highlands, with something they were missing for a long while, a strong outside enemy, who fostered ethnic coherence. Hagestejn has emphasized the importance of "the vision of 'the enemy'

...as the identity of a 'state identity' often depends on a 'we/they' distinction" [1996:198]. The same insistence on "we-identifications" is expressed by Kürsat-Ahlers, discussing centralization among nomadic societies of the Eurasian steppes [1996:137]. Thus slowly there would have appeared a sort of proto-ethnicity among northerners, who had come from a highly heterogenous background [Thompson; 1992b:327, 335]. Thus he maintains that at Samaria "the establishment of a political base of power is logically prior to the actual building of a city" [1992b:408].

It is then again possible to view the highlanders as reacting to forces within the wider political arena¹⁰. In the late New Kingdom period similar processes had provoked the consolidation of power among dissident highlanders and their ethnically or tribally affiliated plains-people. Now as a more densely settled territory, the hill country saw the rise of a state of the type of an agrarian monarchy, the national state of the highlanders. Thus, while Thompson in no way denies the importance of the more intensive development of especially horticulture, its implications for the development of trade and ensuing steps towards centralization, he, nonetheless, stresses the impact of Assyrian policies on Palestinian affairs [1992b:316].

Similar developments had in fact led to the formation of the state in the Taqali highlands. Ewald often stresses the importance of outside influences. Shifferd says something similar about the Yoruba polities, claiming that "the idea of 'Yoruba-ness', a sense of common culture or peoplehood, is a rather late development in their history, stemming from the anti-colonial movement of the early twentieth century" [1996:32; see also Kochakova; 1996:48-49]. In Palestine such influence intensified even

¹⁰One of the criticisms on Coote and Whitelam by Weippert and Weippert was in fact "dass sie mit ihrer im wesentlichen mit innerpalästinischen Faktoren rechnenden Erklärung der Staatenbildung von ihrer sonst vertretenen Prämisse abweichen, derzufolge sich Palästinas Geschieke nicht im Land selbst entscheiden sondern von aussen bestimmt werden..." [Weippert and Weippert; 1991:379]

further as Samaria became a vassal of Assyria under Tiglath-Pileser II, and her territory was integrated into the Assyrian provincial system even before the fall of Samaria herself [Davies; 1992:67].

Such assumptions are validated when the sparse epigraphic evidence that is available is taken into account. Admittedly the earliest evidence we have is that of the records pertaining to Pharaoh Sheshonq's campaign to Palestine, yet it provides mostly negative evidence:

Neither *Judah* nor *Israel*, and neither *Jerusalem* nor any viable capital of the central hills invite Shoshenq's attention in his efforts to enforce *Palestine's* political and economic subordination to Egypt. *Jerusalem* is a small highland town at the time, and the existence of an *Israel* or a *Judah* at such an early date is unsupported by what is known of *Palestine* of the time. The evidence drawn from the archaeological and textual data we have certainly argues against the assertion of any transregional political structures in the highlands, and precludes any coherent sense of a unity of the population during the Iron I or early Iron II periods, prior to the building of *Samaria*. [Thompson; 1992b:307]

The fact that Sheshonq largely bypassed the southern highland territory, while he plundered cities in and bordering the northern territories, although not mentioning *Israel* as such, has now reached a certain consensus [see Na'aman; 1992; Davies; 1992:68]. All in all it is thus arguable that the territory of *Judah* in particular remained economically and politically fairly uninteresting to outside powers. At the same time, it again points towards the fact that the northern parts were somewhat ahead of the southern hill country. This perception is confirmed when we turn to the remaining evidence.

Except for one reference given by Mesha king of Moab (c.840 B.C.), which mentions not only Israel, but also her king Omri, the evidence all comes from precisely an Assyrian background. While Ashurbanipal (883-859 B.C.) still does not refer to any kingdom of Israel, scholars have detected such an entity on the "Kurkh stele" of Shalmaneser III, on the "Black Obelisk", the records of Adad-nirari III's expedition to Palestine (803 B.C.) as well as his "Rimah Stele", and finally it is seen to be mentioned by Tiglath-Pileser III (743-732 B.C.) and Sargon II [Davies; 1992:66-67]. Yet even then this evidence is not at all clear, for, as Davies notices, "indeed, apart from the one reference to Jehu"³¹ by Shalmaneser III, the regular Assyrian name for Israel is 'House of Omri' or 'land of Omri'. The only capital city mentioned is Samaria" [Davies; 1992:67]. Consequently this strengthens the argument that state-formation culminated to a great extent in the building of Samaria, most probably under some form of Omride dynasty [cf Thompson; 1991:89; 1992b:313]. This again allows for more time for state-formation to take place. Jamieson-Drake has pointed out "it is somewhat surprising that Israel should pass through the 'chiefdom' phase so rapidly" [Jamieson-Drake; 1991:143]. This scenario would provide an answer to this problem.

There remains the question of Judah and Jerusalem. We have already seen that the concept of a united monarchy is unlikely. How much, however, did this northern state come to influence the southern hillranges? It has already been argued that at times the south came under some kind of weak hegemony from her northern neighbour. Thompson argues that "chronologically, we can expect that the political development of

³¹This realization led Davies to the following remark: "I might pose the question whether, in the absence of the biblical literature, historians would refer to this Palestinian kingdom as 'Israel' at all, rather than 'Omri-land' (and we would wonder who Omri was!); even in the biblical literature, the names 'Ephraim' and 'Samaria' are frequent alternatives. 'Israel' is a name which predominates only as a result of a later preference, and may not have been the name by which the state was most commonly known during its existence" [Davies; 1992:67, fn.9; cf Miller; 1991b:94].

Jerusalem as a regional state, controlling the Judean highlands, lagged substantially behind the consolidation of the central highlands further north" [1992b:291], and that the basis of power was "never great before well into the seventh-century" [1992b:291]. It is doubtful that a state of dependency existed as such between the north and the south, with Judah coming under the hegemony of Samaria. Yet it is generally agreed that, until her fall, Samaria was the more developed and thus the stronger element [Davies; 1992:69; also Miller and Hayes; 1986:222]".

Finkelstein noticed that settlement in the southern hillcountry was later and less extensive. He claimed that it spread from the centers of Manasseh and Ephraim into the south and Judah. Admittedly the southern part of the hill country is far less suitable for settlement than the neighbouring northern territories. It was far more nomadic-pastoralist in character, as well as functioning as a refuge for brigand elements. It is also possible that the intensified settlement that took place in the north gradually pushed out its nomadic population. This process intensified itself as stronger polities formed. We have seen that even when formerly nomadic, a state élite will diminish the role of further nomadic elements by either settling them forcibly or recreating a hinterland. Thompson denies such an idea of the south simply becoming the receiver of the overflow of population growth in the north. Nonetheless we believe that the influence of the north must have manipulated the ways in which population organization and polity formation took place in Judah. The establishment of a monarchy in the northern hill country would have called for some form of reaction in the south. Thompson after all also argues for a chronological confluence between the developments in the north and a reaction in the south:

The great expansion of settlement in Judaea during the course of Iron II also corresponds chronologically well with the

"As such, in the Hebrew Bible, "we get an 'up-side down' history of the kingdom of Israel" [Ahlström; 1991b:131].

floruit of new settlement in the central hills to the north, and the controlled centralization of political power in *Samaria*. The confluence of these elements suggests that it was only later, in the course of this Iron II period, that the demographic basis for the Iron Age regional hegemony of *Jerusalem* first developed as the expanding cash crop economies of herding and horticulture drew the Judean highlands into an increasing dependence on the major trade centers for their markets. Efforts to control these trade goods, in turn encouraged *Jerusalem* to compete with the southern towns of the Judean region: most immediately with *Hebron* and the large towns of the *Shephelah*, such as *Lachish*, as the central market for the southern highlands. [Thompson; 1992b:290-291]

Unlike *Samaria*, the national capital, Thompson views *Jerusalem* as coming to power as the center of a city-state. *Jerusalem* did not become the capital of the nation of Judah, but managed to extend its control over the territory of Judah [Thompson, 1992b:291-292, see also 407-412, esp. 411]. This account is paralleled by that of Jamieson-Drake, who also sees *Jerusalem* as developing into a primary center [1991:137-138]. Given the nomad-brigand history of the territory, it is again tempting to view a scenario similar to the one presented for Ha'il by Rosenfeld [1965]. *Jerusalem*, with the strong arm of a parasocial leader and/or sheikh and his aid of expert fighters, maybe exiled nomads and brigands from the north, could have extended its control over the surrounding territories and tried to monopolize trade. Then the erstwhile nomadic, but now city élite, could have reinforced settlement to higher degrees, even if it meant forcibly settling their prior nomad kin.

That the territory of Judah was environmentally limited and socially circumscribed by more or less hostile groups can only have intensified and accelerated the processes once they began. That

settlement had already reached seriously high levels in the north can only have added to these factors. The possibilities of withdrawal were thereby reduced in the case of Judah; in fact the development of a centralized state in the north had added to the impact of the south. Nonetheless, Jerusalem could extend as a center, also because the region was becoming more dependent on such a center for organizing the developing trade [Thompson; 1992b:291]. However, at first its overall influence remained limited. Other potential centers maintained not only an independent, but also a competitive role over an extended period. Furthermore "Jerusalem's dominance over the Judean highlands (to say nothing of control over the Northern Negev or the Shephelah, both of which boasted towns easily comparable and perhaps superior to Jerusalem) seems best dated at the earliest from the destruction of Lachish at the turn of the century" [Thompson; 1992b:292]. According to Thompson there is little warrant to suppose that successful consolidation of the southern highlands was achieved by Jerusalem [1992b:292]. When it did, it was furthermore aided by Assyria, which eliminated its strongest contender, Lachish [also Jamieson-Drake; 1991:146].

Little can be said as to the exact extent of the southern polity, yet it is probable that Jamieson-Drake is to be followed with his claim "that Jerusalem began to function as the primary center of a 'state' (in the technical sense) only in the 8th century, and then on a relatively small scale, for a state" [1991:142]. In fact Jamieson-Drake argues that even 8th-7th century Jerusalem lacked some of the characteristic traits of a state, showing only limited evidence for interregional trade and skilled artisanship [1991:138-139]. From what has been said above, it also can be deduced that, although Samaria might have enjoyed a peak of power in the Omride period, at the time Judah reached any higher degrees of organization, she (Samaria) already had Assyria breathing down her neck. Consequently it is plausible that Judah never reached the level of a highly developed agrarian state monarchy of independent status, before Samaria had already fallen. At which time Judah became little more than a

buffer state between Assyria and a resurgent Egypt [Thompson; 1992b:333]. Thompson reaffirms the role of Assyria in the process, when he claims that the states of Israel and Judah, regional in nature, "eventually emerged during Iron II as part of the new order of the Assyrian empire" [1992b:324]. In the end, both Samaria and Judah, but especially Judah, enjoyed too short a period of independence to develop into powerful states, let alone forces of imperial might [Thompson; 1992b:412]. The Palestinian highlands became, once again, relatively unimportant pawns in the political game of the greater powers. Again the conclusions drawn by Ewald for the Taqali highlands seem to suit the Palestinian highland scenario rather perfectly:

The state formed when warriors and their retinues organized themselves into a ruling elite which gained various kinds of material support from its subjects. The warrior-kings won preferential access to long-distance exchange. Their access to land and labor, however, remained limited. Thus state formation remained a disputed and unfinished building process; disputed because highlanders only unequivocally supported their rulers; unfinished because rulers and their subjects continued to contend over the structure of their political edifice until outside forces brought their work to an abrupt end. [Ewald; 1990:8]

Thus any potential polity at an early date can only be conceived of in minor terms, which would point to the fact that even when settlement had increased dramatically and the first signs of stratification appeared in the Palestinian highlands, much of the hill country still was controlled by separate chiefdoms and/or relatively minor state-like polities. In fact too many factors are indeed standing in the way of early and complex state formation in the case of the Palestinian highlands. The diversity of the environment in favours centrifugality; the population strong ethnic bonds between the populations. Both

political chiefs, and religious leaders would have opposed centralization, especially as we have seen that there is little evidence of a national ideology. There were no outside powers that could have slightly influenced trade or stood as the enemy in order to foster ethnic coherence among the highlanders. Archaeologically speaking, nothing indicates for certain that a state with a major building plan was at work in early times. Finally, epigraphically, the kingdoms and their kings find mention only later than would have been thought. In the end, there appears to be too many factors opposing centralization, and little evidence of the presence of a highly centralized and strong state to believe in the existence of such a polity. Claessen and Oosten's warning concerning the advent of state formation reflects this position rather closely:

As the emergence of complex socio-political systems requires a positive feedback between a number of factors, it will come as no surprise that only in a few cases such a development came to be realized; many societies never reached the level of the chiefdom, and even fewer became early states....Whatever the impediments, early states did emerge. They developed from an incipient form into the typical early state, and then, gradually, early states made place for mature states. Though this process of growing complexity can be documented for several cases, the majority of early states, however, never reached this level of development. In most cases, development stagnated, and the state in question declined and collapsed, or was incorporated in stronger, or more developed political organizations. [Claessen and Oosten; 1996:6]

Again, this is not to say that there existed no state at all. Most certainly regions and sub-regions came under the hegemony of strong men, who most probably started to call themselves kings. We do not want to say

that the highlands remained a highly decentralized country, where every single village was independent and tribes roamed in absolute freedom. What we contend is that there rapidly developed an overall highly centralized, organized and bureaucratized full blown state, an empire under David and Solomon. We think that state formation on such a scale simply encountered too many difficulties to make it possible. This is not even to say that no-one at the time thought of such a thing. There might even well have been someone proclaiming himself king of a vast territory and why not the whole highlands. It is another thing to say that this was effectively so, that local contenders did not contest his claims, that the very mass of the peasants accepted this as so, that it was possible for this man to make his claims true, and even that people actually knew of his claims. Again the situation in Taqali is a good example to look at. We tend to view the situation as it existed around the so-called Davidic-Solomonic Age as closely reminding us of the Armana period, petty kings in petty strives.

It is arguable indeed that most of such minor polities were controlled from a major settlement, where a market and a merchant class developed. As Coote and Whitelam have said those situated along newly emerging trade routes would have an initial advantage [1987:155-156]. As a state they would however remain dependent on reconquering their territory year in, year out. Like Haïl many of the earliest polities in the Palestinian hillcountry must have been "recreative". As a state they were endangered not only by rival polities, but also their dependent, but growing sub-settlements, and the ever-remaining hinterland³. To keep all these elements at bay, it was necessary to impose authority by regular raids, just as empires do upon larger territories with their campaigns.

Again, the previous chapter has shown that the role of bandits and

³Hayden also noticed the vulnerability of early states to "the dangers of attack by the armies of other cities or by marauding nomads" [1993:416].

nomads never seriously diminished in these circumstances. They were ever-present threats from the hinterland, and a potential reservoir of recruits for any would-be usurpers. Even where, as is the case for Haïl, they themselves had conquered and imposed an albeit limited state apparatus, there soon redeveloped a hinterland with its nomadic forces and its bands of pillaging marauders. To a great extent the erstwhile nomadic élite provoked this situation. It soon took on sedentary characteristics and alienated itself from its previous nomadic kin. It not only disfavoured the nomads, but forced them back into the hinterland, and probably even tried to undo their lifestyle by forcing them to settle. In due time, these same forces could re-emerge as a definite menace.

It is hard to qualify such polities. One might call them nomadic states, when, like Haïl, they were conquered and set up by nomads. Yet it is equally true that they remained essentially sedentary in nature, as even the nomadic leaders adopted the settled lifestyle. Due to the role played by bandit groups as a military force, even when led by a sheikh, one might characterize them as bandit-kingdoms. But also then the transformation from bandit into professional soldier soon leaves us in the same position. Where the nomadic élite settles down and their parasocial warriors become an institution of bodyguards, we are faced with the end-result of an essentially sedentary polity. It is tempting to compare this end-result to a city-state, and this is to some extent the way to view the situation in the Palestinian highlands till the advent of Samaria, a mosaic of competing city-based states of a limited character [cf Thompson; 1992b:307]³⁴.

³⁴One might also note that Rowton himself claimed that there are common characteristics to be seen between a dimorphic chiefdom and a city-state, and that they have "a similar potential for growth" [1974:17]. The overall situation could be compared to that exposed by Salzman for Baluchistan: "The *hakom* (dynastic rulers) were associated with centers of irrigation cultivation and thus with *shahri* (sedentary cultivators), although their rule depended to some extent upon collusion with *baluch* (nomadic tribesmen). Some *baluch* groups were

intimately associated with *hakom*, and thus involved in a feudallike organization; other *baluch* tribes were quite independent...The political units within which these categories of people reside and interact are tribal territories, or oasis centers, or limited regional areas tied together by recognition of a certain *hakom*. Between such units, and sometimes within them, there was frequent armed struggle of various types: raiding for goods, boundary maintenance, imperialistic expansion" [Salzman; 1980b:97; cf also Pastner; 1978:250-253]. In the end it might all again come down to a matter of definition between chiefdom and states: "The latter are, so to speak, evolved chiefdoms that have the capacity of averting fissions and reduplication among their members, the chiefdom having no such ability but possessing nevertheless a centralized political authority based on a hereditary aristocracy backed by priests, the ruler being one of them and often the chiefpriest" [Muller; 1996:100]. It is clear that to make a difference is not easy at all, when such chiefdoms can have populations running into the thousands [Muller; 1996:100]. Of further interest might be a warning given by Muller in the same article: "But to focus on such singular cases --and their accumulation thereof-- may leave the impression that the evolution into early state is a natural trend in chiefdoms. However this is merely an impressionistic view which is even more reinforced when looking at the literature on chiefdoms. One cannot fail to notice that there are a number of cases where an important factor is never taken into consideration: a chiefdom is more often than not found in what I may call a congeries of similar chiefdoms which are simply juxtaposed or, at best, loosely federated either politically or ritually" [1996:99].

Conclusion

This book is about order and disorder in society, their constant presence, overlap, and blend. When times seem peaceful, a substantial amount of active unrest perdures --- more than is thought. The opposite is also true; order is rarely as pervasive as it seems. Order and disorder are created by humans to serve their needs and ambitions. Order serves one group and disorder another. As peace does not often equal progress for everyone, some employ disorder to advance. Order can encroach on liberty, so it is resisted. People also use order or disorder, or both, to protect their interests. Some who induce disorder may eventually join the order they sought to disrupt, which is where they wanted to be all along. Others, such as successful revolutionaries, may establish a new system of their own, but it will always have its challengers. In this persistently unsettled environment, individuals can shift from compliance to dissent and return to order with unsuspected ease.

[Vanderwood; 1981:xi]

This study has made one point extremely clear. That as historians and anthropologists, we tend to work with terminologies that often convey far too restricted notions. Ancient scribes and modern scholars are often limited by the uses and abuses of language. Frequently involuntarily, we find ourselves restricted by our own choices of subject, models, and desires to render our findings in written form. To do so we have to use a vocabulary that often conveys upon others notions that we did not ourselves have in mind, and equally often what was important to us is missed by others. Especially on the socio-political scene, it is the case that sooner or later we are be forced to decide for one term or another for the groups and occurrences that we are wanting to describe. Thus at some stage we will posit a centre and a periphery onto a given society, choose to qualify some groups as bandits, nomads, peasants, etc., and finally characterise the political mood as peaceful, rebellious,

revolutionary, and likewise. This is to convey upon the reader a somewhat general idea about what we thought was going on. Yet often the subtleties start to get lost, and eventually heavily distorted pictures emerge.

At the very start of the study, as well as throughout, we have alluded to the difficulties in trying to qualify groupings. These difficulties are no less when we come to describe the socio-political circumstances during the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition. In the first instance, this transition is a modern concept, that was not qualified or even perceived as such by its contemporaries. The people of the time did not know about the fact that they were leaving one defined period to enter a new one. To them the terms of Late Bronze and Early Iron meant nothing. Moreover the importance of both Bronze and Iron have been heavily challenged not only in their importance for the transition, but also generally as distinguishing qualifiers between the two periods.

As such, it indeed becomes difficult even to speak of something like the "emergence of Israel". There was nothing new emerging, only old populations and dispositions, social groups and modes of life taking modified forms. To describe the processes more correctly, it would be appropriate to talk of the transformation of the Palestinian highlands. Yet the realisation of this does not eliminate all the problems in describing the processes and developments. Despite the progress which has been made on this point, it is still common, as Gnuse's review shows, to reach out for qualifications that in the end restrict the full forces at work. The difficulties lie not as much with finding the right model for the occurrences in the transition period. It rather has become important to list a number of caveats in order to keep the reader aware of not losing sight of the subtleties involved.

This is not to deny the validity of models and analogies. It is not the veracity of models that are in question, but it is the

terminology and vocabulary that often become too restrictive in transmitting the ideas. Terminology leaves less space for variations than real life. It is arguable that since the classical period of biblical history writing, with the conquest and infiltration models, even since Mendenhall's attempt to apply a sociological model, biblical scholars have rendered reconstruction's of far more complex forms. Nonetheless, often the complexity is overlooked in favour of concentrating on one or a few main points, that come to characterise the model. Thus to use such terminology as withdrawal, indigenous settlement, or peaceful, internal transformation does not in fact eliminate this problem. By using these particular notions, other important factors tend to be ignored.

The solution however is not to do away with such qualifications, since this would undermine the process of understanding, but to point out clearly the aims of the study and the difficulties of interpretation. This study has been an attempt to draw attention to the variations in political power, be this in adherence or opposition to the central instance of authority. This has taken the form of relating how changes on a wider socio-political arena can change the directions in development taken by small scale social groups within a limited environment.

The attempt to analyse a selection of social agents, rather than ethnic entities per se, represents an advantage. Indeed they do not tend to appear suddenly on the scene like the Sea Peoples (or as it had been long postulated, the Israelites), or suddenly disappear from the scene like the Egyptian or Hittite empires. The social agents are always there, in some form or another, albeit not always the same persons. They are thus far more suited to discuss as part of a period of transition and transformation. Indeed when approached from this perspective the whole outlook changes. Instead of discussing how earlier Canaanites became Israelites, it is now possible to discuss how one and the same Palestinians adapted themselves to ever-changing political circumstances. The occurrences

surrounding the settlement of the highland territories are thus no longer a unique event, but a link in a long chain of socio-political strategies at the disposal of the Palestinian population(s). They are but one part in the wider context and can only be viewed with reference to what happened before and what was to happen later.

Nonetheless, it remains impossible to avoid referring to the transition period as an isolated point of interest. In this case it proves equally impossible not to qualify the period with reference to a political mood and disposition of some kind or the other. At this point it should be stressed again that there is now a tendency to move away from models such as the conquest and revolt model that insist on the more violent side of the events. As such, it is to some extent variations of the more peaceful infiltration model that have come to dominate the scene of biblical scholarship. Gnuse has accordingly used the term "peaceful transition period".

As with other such qualifications there exists the danger that such a notion of "peaceful transition" is carried too far by the reader or generalised to a point where it comes to dominate the whole outlook. The relativity involved when it is claimed that a certain period is peaceful must be emphasised. This problem has been encountered in Briant's concept of *hostilité réglementée* and the differences discussed above between occurrences of brigandage and dissidence or revolt and secession. The Amarna period cannot be viewed as effectively a period of permanent hostility nor the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition as a period of peasant revolt.

Following Briant, it has been necessary to warn against taking all records as merely the outcome of the language of conquest or the ideologically inclined perceptions of sedentary state societies. It has been seen that the sedentary societies in question exaggerate the violence of hinterland populations and that they overstate the backwardness of nomads and mountaineers in order to justify and legitimate their own desires of conquest and domination. On the other

hand, it would be wrong to assume that mountains and highlands represent a paradise on earth, populated with law-abiding and peace-loving shepherds and villagers. This romantic image is no closer to reality than the previous picture of barbarism. The reality is probably to be found somewhere in between. It is important, therefore, to have a clear understanding of what it means to call the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition 'peaceful'.

Peaceful at this point, briefly stated, means that violence did not exceed expected norms, that occurrences were nothing particularly out of the ordinary. It has not been denied that there were active bandits, that nomads lead intertribal disputes, that marauding armed bands made the highlands somewhat less secure, nor that at times raiding into the lowlands and plains occurred. Yet the Egyptian New Kingdom empire was little concerned by such events. They were simply drawbacks that the bureaucracy at the Pharaonic court considered to be the natural outcome of being in control of a vast territory. Where the hinterland was not prosperous, it was simply better to concede a certain freedom of action and autonomy so that large-scale violent encounters were avoided. That the outcome of this was that minor skirmishes had to be largely ignored, so that the hinterland people felt confident in the guarantee of their autonomy, was probably as obvious to the Pharaonic court as it was later to be to the Assyrians, the Achaemenids, and the Romans. As long as the empire was not disturbed to any great extent in its functioning, there was little reason to be alarmed by minor upheavals.

To say that the transition was peaceful, thus is to say that it was not violent enough so as to cause major upheavals. It was in no instance intense enough to threaten the stability of the empire. As we have seen, the most dramatic increase in violence that Palestine experienced was a reaction to (as opposed to a cause of) the late Egyptian takeover, coupled with the invasion of the Sea Peoples. Even then it was to a great extent aimed at maintaining autonomy, and consequently came to be concentrated in the highlands. Here

resistance was easiest and a situation of quasi-independence had always reigned. Over this period of Egyptian reinforcement and expansion by the Sea Peoples, the highland dissidents were most likely joined by refugees from the plains and lowlands. Though resistance on the plains might at times have reached more or less violent levels, it is again not to be viewed as a major revolutionary event. It must be rated with what has to be expected when an outside force decides to establish itself more firmly; local, at most regional upheavals and minor riots, that resulted in little ostensible change, but were likely to increase the number of people taking to the mountains.

This situation is not to be equated with a vast and unified revolt on the part of the plains people, least of all a peasant revolt against the city-state regents. At the most some of the city-state élite-members themselves organised a desperate attempt to ward off Egyptian hegemony and/or the Sea Peoples' invasion. They were, at any rate, doomed to failure. Egypt took over, reinforced military and administrative personnel, and, after initial confrontation, allowed the Sea Peoples to install themselves largely along the coast. Yet the main attraction of interest to us must remain the highlands themselves. Admittedly here instances of violence increased to some extent, as the highland people fiercely resisted Egyptian claims. After a long period of relative calm, they decided to hang on to an independence which had existed de facto, and which they considered to be de jure.

But this kind of violence also has to be put into perspective. It remained to a large degree a form of dissidence, in fact, defensive rather than aggressive. The aim was to resist Egyptian conquest, rather than to overthrow Egypt per se. Again this is a situation to be expected when empires try to impose themselves in previously autonomous hinterland which they had left in the charge of local representatives and chieftains. It does not, however, translate itself into massive attacks launched by hordes of barbaric warriors.

To a great extent, it restricts itself to fighting off the conqueror, although intensified occurrences of short-lived hit and run attacks, as well as raids of the pillaging kind must be expected. As we have pointed out, it consists mainly in holding on to one's perceived rights, in conserving the traditional order of things. As such, these occurrences by themselves cannot have led to a major break in the configuration of the Late Bronze political scene.

Nonetheless a certain political aim can be detected. Resistance should in the end also be equated with a desire for secession, as if the attack on their autonomy had incited the hillcountry populations to push for independence. As we have seen, ethnic and tribal agglomerations would have been becoming more important in this period. It is possible that like Amurru, the Palestinian hill country was on its way to constitute an independent state-like entity, or several, as the degree of unification remains in doubt. The fact is that to secede, i.e. to separate itself from the overarching arm of Egypt, all that the hill people had to do was to hang onto, at the most re-emphasise the long-standing relations of power, as they had existed during most of the New Kingdom period. So far, little new emerged on the Palestinian scene. To a great extent, and coupled with a realignment also by the people from the plains and the lowlands away from the political might of the Egyptian suzerain to that of the highland chieftains, all that happened was an emphasis of the highland area to rights of self-rule.

That the collapse of the empire aided the highlanders on their way to independence must be taken for granted. It is not as evident that it helped to transform the hill country into a state-like entity, least of all a full-blown state. It might well be the case that Amurru took the step towards statehood with a dynasty so quickly, because it remained surrounded by Egyptian and Hittite provinces, a sort of no-man's land between opposing empires. But as we have suggested, the collapse of the empire left the Palestinian hinterland in a totally different situation. The withdrawal of Egypt

meant that the one factor that had provided unity, however little it might have been, to the dissidents in the highlands had disappeared. The collapse also provoked the ruin of cities and temple estates and disrupted trade thus seriously reducing the possibilities of plunder and raids. These conditions were not altogether favourable to the formation of more important polities, such as early states, in the hinterland.

It is preferable to see the collapse of the empire as destructive to the trends of consolidation that had manifested themselves during the reigns of the later Pharaohs. On the one hand, surely, the vacuum left by Egypt worked in favour of those who made political claims of their own, such as tribal sheikhs and parasocial groups. Yet, on the other, this was not yet a time for ambitious statebuilders. Unlike Abdi-Asirta's expansionist tendencies, centrifugal forces would have worked against the fast development of state-polities of greater importance. Notwithstanding, chiefdoms, even smaller bandit-kingdoms, remained in existence. The trend would have been to disperse not only people, but also political power. Only as population growth increased and land became less available, did tendencies towards stratification and centralisation evolve and initiate a move towards a more organised polity. Even then there is a case for arguing that the polities never developed to be an important state, least of all a united kingdom or major Solomonic empire.

Again it is emphasised that we do not witness unified and large-scale movements that led to the replacement of an old picture by a totally new one. Rather, it is the development of different social, seemingly unimportant, groups reacting to a changing political environment. The evolution of these groupings was favoured by the fact that for long they had to a large extent been ignored, thus left alone to go their own ways. In the context of changes on the wider socio-political arena, they also transformed and realigned themselves. Even though it might be said that this changed the political configuration of Palestine, the movements by themselves are

not to be held responsible for the overthrow of either the petty city-state system or the Egyptian empire. It cannot be stressed enough that they are the outcome, not the cause of events on the higher political sphere.

It is therefore not necessary to invoke such interpretations as a large scale conquest or a major peasant revolt to account for the changed face of ancient Palestine in the Early Iron Age. Such one-time and unified happenings are here replaced by a slow evolution that saw movements being dispersed temporarily as well as geographically. Even during the late takeover, we do not posit a unified anti-Egyptian protest. Even then actions were to a certain extent isolated, of diverging nature, some more and some less violent. There was definitely no unified violent uprising, leaving behind itself widespread death and destruction. Archaeology thus leaves an equally elusive picture. Though destruction's can be considered to have happened, it is possible to credit different entities with the responsibility. On the one hand the Egyptian takeover itself might have engineered such destruction's, secondly the invasion of the Sea Peoples must be considered a likely candidate, while, finally, Palestinian reaction cannot be wholly ruled out. But again it is the isolation, and to some extent, the relative unimportance of such events that have to be emphasised. There is no unique factor that could be said to be responsible, as there is no unique cause.

Thus it is possible at this point to determine the place of this study within recent scholarship. In the first instance, it shows that it is possible to approach the question of the history of Palestine-Israel from a different angle. It shows that it is possible to give an account of a history, albeit tentative, of Palestinian populations which is not dependent upon the arrival of the Israelites and their writings. Admittedly, it is in this case less possible to pin down a historical event as such. Rather the task lies in following potential lines of development especially on the socio-

political sphere. But this is in accordance with the new trends that insist on slow evolutionary schemes. In fact, the study shows that it is more plausible to follow the continuum of an evolution when studying social agents rather than nations.

In the end the fruits of a study such as this are basically twofold. On the one hand they provide a framework within which to work. They thus can serve as a tool for future research into the history of Palestine. This is especially so because on the other hand they prove extremely adaptable to new findings. Hopefully, the future will yield new archaeological discoveries and new epigraphic evidence. A study like this will be important in order to set the new findings within a proper socio-political context, giving credit to whole population groups rather than concentrating on a few figures, such as kings and princes. Of course this picture can only be improved if more studies of this kind appear, concentrating on other agents. It is our belief that the availability of enough studies of this kind would enable us to narrow down the history of Palestine far more effectively than by starting with texts that present a number of different histories, or interpretations of history. Furthermore, if enough of these studies are available, they will ultimately help elucidate each other. At some stage it will then hopefully be possible for historians to pin down with an increased degree of exactitude the developments that occurred around the end of the Late Bronze and the beginning of the Early Iron age in Palestine.

At the beginning of the study we challenged the dominance of the Bible in historical research. We have hopefully shown that it is possible to engage in history writing without reliance on this extraordinary body of texts. The relation between Bible and history has accordingly changed rather considerably in our outlook. The Bible will, in the future, have to be seen in relation to a socio-historical account rather than determining it. It will be the sociology and history of Palestine that will have to be looked at first, while only then will it be possible to address questions such

as why, when, and how the biblical texts took shape. These processes will be slow and difficult of course, but nonetheless a necessary path to follow in future biblical scholarship. Ultimately one might be led to follow the propositions of a recent monograph, that make it very hard to conceive of anything like a traditional "Israelite" history or the existence of the vast majority of the Hebrew Bible before the Persian period [cf Davies; 1992].

INDEX

Index	1
Abstract	2
Introduction	3-19
Chapter 1	20-44
Palestinian banditry: potential and likely candidates	
Chapter 2	45-75
Bandits: image and reality	
Chapter 3	76-103
Bandits, nomads, and barbarians	
Chapter 4	104-135
The Palestinian highlands in the Late Bronze Age	
Chapter 5	136-176
The highlands as a centre of dissidence and refuge	
Chapter 6	177-215
Bandits and nomads: their potential role within the processes of settlement, reorganization, and stratification	
Chapter 7	
Polity-formation: the case of the Palestinian highlands	216-281
Conclusion	282-292
Bibliography	293-317

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