(Re)Creations

Telling about Iron Age Dan and the Hula Valley

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Abstract

This dissertation suggests alternative ways of thinking about the scales of interpretation in Syro-Palestinian archaeology. It does this by outlining a number of ideas prevalent in what has been called post-processual or interpretive archaeology and looking at ways they could be employed in the Iron Age Hula Valley region. Chief among these are considerations of landscape, ethnography, phenomenology, post-colonialism and narrative. The central site examined is that of Tel Dan and, importantly, an overview of the valley itself and its outstanding features – the lake and swamp – are also considered. The purpose of this thesis is to show that it is possible to write small-scale, even personal narratives, about the way people may have lived at a particular place and time without recourse to the biblical texts. I suggest that the use of such narratives can be used to produce alternative accounts of the past and thus subvert the grand-narratives of the region. The method outlined is as opposed to the large-scale *Annalistic* approaches which currently predominate. To this end a number of sample story-narratives are included which hope to show that this form of writing can be utilised to revivify the personal archaeologies of everyday life.

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It is to her that I dedicate this thesis.

Cover Photo: sign outside Iron Age fortifications at Tel Dan (source: author).

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Illustrations

Glossary

Ashlar – dressed stone work
Bamah – raised platform
Debir – holy of holies
Mazzevah – standing stone (plural = *mazzevot*)
Pithos – a large vessel used for storing food or wine (plural = *pithoi*)
Dunam – unit of measurement = to 1000m²

Trip to Birzeit University

The knackered old van climbed its way north out of Jerusalem. The brightly coloured curtains flapped in the warm gusts as the driver, content now he had a full load of passengers, put his foot down and pressed on toward Ramallah. Before long the van was slowing until it ground to a halt, the vehicle gently throbbing with the engine, as it sat in the sun waiting for the queue at the checkpoint to move.

I fingered the front pocket of my little bag reassuring myself that my passport was still there. The van rolled on slowly then pulled over into a spot indicated by one of three Israeli soldiers. He spoke to the driver in Hebrew as the other two mooched around, one standing and chatting, the other looking up from where he sat scrunching his eyes against the sun, the automatic rifle lying across his knees. The side door of the van slid open with a rasp and the sunlight dispelled the relative interior gloom. A cursory glance by the young soldier around the van was enough to satisfy whatever he was or wasn't looking for. The soldier's second glance left me feeling, for the first time, conscious of my incongruity. It was probably only a look of mild surprise at an out of place blonde man in the middle of a van full of Palestinians but in my mind it was a disapproving look resonating with challenges of 'us or them' (thought I, allying myself with the Palestinians and feeling outraged on their behalf!). The soldier waved us on and as the van pulled away towards the town I attempted to dismiss my thoughts as simplistic but they continued to linger.

There is a certain uniformity to Palestinian commercial streets. A constant burble of activity that moves around the patched up buildings with their hand-painted signs, or run down signs, or palpably new signs. The distinction between pedestrian and traffic not clear cut as they meander in and around one another. The bus station in Ramallah gives the impression that there just happened to be a convenient bit of space off the side of the road and one day somebody said, 'This'll do!'

Out in the September sun I wove my way down the street heading towards where I had been told a taxi would take me to the university. The very centre of Ramallah is a jumble of a roundabout into which life poured and only seemed to trickle out. Upon first encountering it the effect was quite disorienting, like the logical conclusion of the chaotic street I had just come down. The splashed movement rotated around the centrepiece pillar, flanked by lions rampant, and occasionally centrifugally slow-motioned off along the arteries that radiated out from it. The back

end of a line of taxis drew me along one of these streets. I was shepherded into the front taxi and we pulled away, the driver talking to a succession of people along the street in brief bouts of words as we trundled away from the centre gradually picking up speed as the crowds thinned.

The university is not far north of the town. Set on a low hill on the way to the village of Birzeit the university is a collection of new looking stone buildings. Clean and confident looking in the sun, it is immediately recognisable as a campus. The taxi dropped me outside the main entrance and I wandered in amongst students making there way here and there or sitting and talking. Campus atmosphere hummed around me and I, not having a clue where I was heading, chose a building largely at random and entered, walking up to a reception desk inside that looked to me like the sort of place that would gush forth handy information to the visiting stranger. I was right; they also dispatched an earnest female student to guide me to the School of History and Archaeology building.

On the third or fourth floor I waited on a seat at the end of a corridor next to the lifts and a vending machine. My sweat was cooling in the relative chill of the interior. I have never done that well in the heat and my damp-patched T-shirt was in marked contrast to many of the locals, some of whom were wrapped in garb that would have brought me to my knees with heat exhaustion in a matter of minutes. I slotted some coins into the machine, grabbed my coke and drank it down. Before long I was called by the secretary.

In the room at the end of the corridor, behind a desk, sat a squat balding man who put me more in mind of a Hollywood producer than an academic; though perhaps this was the just due to the effect of the reflective shades wrapped around his eyes. He grasped my hand in a firm perfunctory shake. Emails had swapped possible dates and times over the previous months and now, here I sat. I scrabbled inside my rucksack and pulled out my new digital Dictaphone which I had purchased especially for the trip. "Do you mind if I...?" I asked out of politeness, eyebrows raised, holding up the Dictaphone. There was a pause as he eyed the little machine suspiciously (at least, I had the impression he eyed it suspiciously behind his sunglasses).

"I'd rather not."

"Oh...no problem." I lied, a piece of me dying inside. I tried not to huff as I delved back into my bag in search of antiquated pen and paper.

The interview had not gone well. Heading out of the building I couldn't help feeling disappointed and a little confused. Why had I come all this way? Wasn't I here trying, in my own way, to promote Palestinian archaeology? Did I not get that across? How had they not recognised me as a kindred spirit?

Conveniently there were taxis waiting outside the main gate of the university and I jumped in one, feeling despondent. Back to Ramallah, back up the street, back to the bus station. I enquired after the van for Al-Qud's (one of my dozen or so Arabic words), found it and clambered in and sat waiting for it to fill up. I sat looking over my notes; reading through them only annoyed me once again at not being able to use my shiny new Dictaphone – did I have anything of use?

The van set off, bumped along and after only a few minutes slowed to a crawl – the checkpoint. This time when the van opened everyone began to get out so I disembarked also. What I had somehow managed not to notice on the way into Ramallah was a fairly large, official looking building on the other side of the road. My fellow passengers trooped towards the building and around the side of it, emerging into an area penned in on three sides. Opposite where we had entered was a row of five turnstiles. Only one was in operation. The others were gated to prevent any unauthorised access. Behind the turnstiles patrolled a single Israeli soldier, though more were visible beyond. Between myself and turnstiles, pressed and heaving, was a mass of people – too many for the space. No queue, no organisation, just a constricted shuffle toward the solitary point of exit. I looked around for any other way but there was none. I took out my passport and clutched it. People behind me were tacking themselves on to the growing crowd; I saw little other option and shuffled meekly into the scrum.

Once you had committed to that mass of bodies there was no turning back. No turning at all in fact. The throng squeezed increasingly tight as it inched toward the gate. Already sweating I was uncomfortably aware of the intermittent uprush of heat every time a sliver of space opened up between myself and those surrounding me. Being six-foot plus does have its advantages. All those whacks on the head as I was growing up seemed worth it now for I was at least able to see and breathe clearly above the mass; as I looked around me there were women with small children, some with babies, and I worried silently on their behalf. The crush was becoming significant as the gate drew closer. Now perhaps only ten metres but a million miles away. The soldier behind the turnstile was letting through three or four at a time who

then went to a window beyond before having their possessions searched and scanned.

Those nearest the turnstile were waving little books. Some form of ID I assumed. A woman who had put in her time and effort to reach the turnstile was clearly being turned away. She began to cry out in anger and frustration; the soldier dismissing her casually with a wave of his arm. I must have been looking on quizzically for a man behind me explained, 'She has the wrong type of pass, they are not letting them through today.'

'Why not? Have they just decided not to let them through?'

'No, she knew they weren't allowed today.'

'So why did she come?'

'Because tomorrow is a holy day so she will try to go to Jerusalem anyway.'

Ahead of me things were starting to fray a little. In spite of the cramped conditions there prevailed an eerie calm, not quite an acceptance, more a stoical endurance. There was little surprise, however, when voices became raised and a large man in front of me and over to the right began to shout angrily and gesticulate with his arms, forcing those in the immediate vicinity of his elbows to bob and weave in evasive action. All faces turned that way. The large man surged forward without warning, shoving his way through a few feet of the crowd like an icebreaker in the arctic. The soldier behind the gate started to shout also but even as the big man was swinging a sturdy limb toward whoever it was he had a problem with he seemed to lose intent and interest in the face of such universal disapproval.

As a reaction perhaps, or as policy, the soldier closed up the turnstile which was on the right hand side of the row and moved to the opposite end where he opened up another one. This action brought a chorus of muttering as those who had inched towards the previous turnstile were left, once more, with a long wait ahead of them. The only people who didn't complain were those who found themselves suddenly at the front of the scrum. Some more were let through, some more were turned away. The interminable press continued.

I was near enough now to the gate to pull out my passport. I began to wave it trying to attract the attention of the soldier which seemed to be the thing to do. As if picking someone out of a police line-up the soldier looked at me in a somewhat curious manner, then pointed and said, 'You.' A flock of faces turned to look. I motioned uncertainly toward myself with my passport, 'Yes, you,' he nodded and waved me towards him. I started to muddle my way through, my relief tempered by a touch of guilt as I imagined the

rest looking on with envy. The soldier thumbed my passport slowly, looked at me, looked back at the passport. Then with a curt movement of his head handed it back and sent me through. I pulled my bag clear and stood, relieved to be looking on once more from the other side.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Thought Process

Originally the intended topic for this thesis was to be a rather straightforward consideration of three Iron Age sites in Israel and how their differing landscape settings affected the material conditions of each site. I was then planning to consider how these (hopefully) different findings might lead us to reconsider the emergence of early Israel in the land of Palestine / Canaan. This was to be an apolitical thesis, purely archaeological, but very quickly I began to encounter problems. I was not happy using the term 'Palestine' to describe the region during that period. This was initially due to my general reluctance to use anachronistic terms whenever avoidable. What was I to call this place at that time?[1] I was not happy, nor convinced that the people I was writing about could confidently be called Israelite, or Canaanite, or Palestinian for that matter. From these doubts I was forced to rethink the entire basis of the thesis, swiftly realising that the notion of an apolitical piece of work was a naïve and forlorn hope. Conversations with various colleagues and further reading convinced me that to write about archaeology and the history of archaeology in this area is not only a political issue but a political act. All academic writing is infused politically – it is just a question of explicitness and intentionality.

In 1996 Keith Whitelam published his book *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History.* Whitelam, heavily influenced by the work of Edward Saïd, argues that the obsession of Western academics with the search for ancient Israel has buried Palestinian history under a mountain of discourse. This popular but artificial discourse has created a history of the region which has had, and continues to have, a significant political impact, the effect being overwhelmingly to the detriment of the Palestinian people. Although nominally a biblical scholar, Whitelam pays considerate attention to the archaeology of the region and the way it has been interpreted. After setting out his initial hypothesis Whitelam spends most of the book providing examples to support

[1] In that single paragraph alone I have referred to the region as 'Israel' and 'Palestine' in successive sentences. Such confusion abounds.

his position. In the concluding paragraph of the introduction to his book he himself admits that:

> This work represents only the beginnings of an attempt to articulate an idea: its realization as a history of ancient Palestine must await others...the conceptualization has been more important than the realization. ... This is not a history of Palestine but a commentary on how such a project has been obstructed by the discourse of biblical studies. ... Palestinian history and with it the history of ancient Israel has to be approached in a radically different way from that of our standard histories.
>
> Keith Whitelam (1996: 10)

This thesis is a response to that challenge thrown down by Whitelam. In short, the way to understand its essence is to accept it as an attempt to create an alternative past for a particular region through the use of different techniques from those commonly employed. It is not easy to produce a piece of Western academic writing while avoiding the pitfalls that Whitelam highlights. I hope I have been at least partially successful in doing so, deeply ingrained as I am in the patina of my own Western, more particularly British, society.

Initial Thoughts

The last thirty years have seen a fundamental change in the approaches of biblical criticism and archaeology. Of course these changes have not occurred across the entire spectrum of scholars, nor even perhaps across the majority, but there has been a move away from the reliance on the biblical text and a difference in the way archaeology is used. The uncritical use of texts and archaeology is, hopefully, in permanent decline. The avid search for 'Israelite' culture led to archaeological material being identified as such due to the influence of biblical texts. The Bible defined what archaeologists were looking for and when they found something they were all too eager to label it 'Israelite'. There is an obvious circular trap here whereby the texts help identify the archaeology which is then, in turn, used to corroborate the texts.

Early pioneers and explorers such as Edward Robinson travelled to Palestine in the mid 19th century CE[2] in an express attempt to immerse themselves in the land of the Bible, "The Holy Land". They were interested in discovering biblical sites – that is, cities and places mentioned in the texts of the Old and New Testaments. These were religious people, with a religious interest. Biblical archaeology was born out of this milieu. 'Biblical archaeology' is the only area of archaeology that derives its name from a specific text. All others are named after a period of time, place or people, e.g. Neolithic Europe, Egyptology, Roman Britain.

This carries immediate implications for the nature of discourse in which the subject takes place. If archaeology is essentially about people, where does this leave an area of archaeology that is inspired by a text? The reasons for excavation within the discipline range from providing a background to a religious text to purposefully seeking to 'prove' the word of the Bible - the 'Bible and spade' approach (see Ussishkin 2007: 132-33). This motivation has been called into question. Dever (1982:103) went as far as to call for the term 'biblical archaeology' to be made redundant due to it having '...no independent rationale, methodology, objectives, status or support'. He prefers the term 'Syro-Palestinian archaeology' which more accurately reflects an independent regional discipline, separate from the connotations of religion.

The championing of a more rigorous, scientific approach following the precepts of the New Archaeology has been largely successful. The reliance on the biblical texts and archaeology conducted in an effort to 'prove' biblical accounts has diminished greatly. Yet the texts continue to exert influence, albeit perhaps in a less direct manner. While the immediate focus of digs may have changed with less focus on great biblical characters, cities or battles and more on site location, economics and social structure, the link with the texts remains in the background. One of the main questions concerning many archaeologists in the region is that of the period of Israelite settlement. Despite a change in methodology to more long-term views of the region the aim of such research

[2] All dates throughout the thesis should be taken to be BCE unless otherwise stated.

remains centred on the question of Israelite origins. Whether or not the conclusions of such research agree or disagree with the accounts provided in the texts it is still the Bible that is dictating areas of investigation.

All archaeology is subject to pre-conditioned thoughts and approaches. These affect which sites are dug and why, which artefacts are considered important and which are cast aside (literally and metaphorically) and how the results of a dig are interpreted. This is a truism across the archaeological spectrum, and is equally applicable to those who maintain that they operate within a strictly atheoretical framework as well as to the most fervent theorist. Such influences are unavoidable and as such should be acknowledged so that the reader may be aware of them. These internal biases however are very different to the use of an external text to drive interpretation. To verify material culture by means of a religious tract, the historicity of which is by no means reliable, cannot provide a solid foundation for our understanding of past events. Perhaps the closest comparable form is Marxist archaeology, in the sense that it is based on particular ideological texts which purport to understand the history of mankind based on that ideology. The difference is that Marxist archaeology is a general theory that can be applied to all areas of history and is not restricted to a time or place or the quest to justify particular passages of 'history' through material culture. Perhaps if the archaeology were limited purely to 19th century British industrial areas in an attempt to justify Marx's thoughts then that may be a better analogy of how biblical archaeology operates.

This study will follow Dever's suggested moniker of 'Syro-Palestinian archaeology'. The utilisation of this name is an effort to remove explicit associations with the Bible. This is not to say, however, that this work intends to disassociate itself entirely from the Bible. This would be an overreaction and would also deprive this work of a valuable resource. The biblical texts will be regarded as an artefact – that is they are considered a product of a particular place and time and therefore, like all other artefacts, require interpretation. The nature of the Bible and its implicit influence in the Western world occasionally results in extreme reactions towards it. Biblical archaeology has too often relied on the biblical texts, restricting possible interpretation. The material culture is

placed conveniently into 'Bible-shaped holes' and rarely ventures beyond those boundaries. The opposite route is to abandon the texts altogether relying solely upon the material evidence. Both of those approaches cut themselves off from the possible insights that are to be gained from the other. To discount the Bible is to ignore accounts and descriptions that normally, i.e. if they were found in any other source, would be deemed highly valuable. Alternatively, simply ascribing the material culture a biblical explanation is to limit severely the ambition and possibilities of other interpretations. This work will rely primarily upon archaeological and ethnographic research and any biblical references, be they explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, will hopefully be kept to a minimum so as to maximise the possibility of writing alternative histories of the region.

The Archaeological Setting

The archaeological setting for this thesis revolves around the site of Dan in modern north-east Israel. The site sits within the Hula Valley which, before a drainage programme in the 1950s, was dominated by the Hula Lake and surrounding seasonal swamplands. This site and region were chosen because they may be considered somewhat of a hinterland in respect to, what is often considered the heartland of Iron Age Israelite territory, the central hill country. Dan is a large excavated site which has uncovered significant material finds but it lies in an area which has a disputed history (see Finkelstein 1999). This uncertainty, combined with aspects of invasion and counter-invasion, immigration, major trade routes, the city and the swamp, and a large cultic sanctuary provide fertile ground for the imagination.

Methods and Aims

I consciously used the word 'imagination' because the major focus of this thesis is to illustrate a method for producing alternative accounts of the past. In some ways the archaeology itself plays a vital yet subsidiary role in this thesis. The regular course of any methodology is to provide an account and explanation of the interpretation of the archaeology but, for the purposes of this thesis, the

archaeology is used to illustrate the methodology. It is the proposal and demonstration of this methodology which makes up the larger part of this thesis.

Any suggestion of providing alternative understandings of the past needs to know what it is setting itself against. To this end the first part of this thesis is given over to deconstructing the way in which traditional archaeology has written about the region. By 'traditional' I refer to the dominant discourse which has been produced by Western academia with its over-reliance upon the biblical texts as a guide and interpretative tool – a reliance that has political implications, which I also explore. The next step is to present a number of ideas prevalent within what has been termed Post-processual or Interpretative archaeology. Elements of agency, analogy, post-colonialism, landscape, phenomenology and narrative have all influenced my thinking and I spend time exploring these concepts and the way in which they have shaped my methodology.

The narratives form what is effectively the case study of this thesis. They are examples of the ways in which alternative pasts could be written and presented. Their aim is to contextualise research by providing an account of some of my own experience in researching this project and to present a number of intentionally personal, small-scale tales (as opposed to the very large-scale *Annales* style suggested by Whitelam (1996)). Taken together these will hopefully allow the reader to form impressions of what it may have been like for the people who lived in and moved through that time and place and how the modern context of research helps to shape these accounts. In no way are these tableaux meant to be definitive or laying claim to an absolute accurate depiction of the past (however one may wish to judge such a thing). They are suggestions, possibilities of the way the past may have been. The accent is upon human experience and interaction; the archaeology is the reflexive backdrop through which, and in which, they live out their lives and express themselves.

Chapter Summary

This section briefly outlines the conventional (i.e. not narrative) chapters of the thesis. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 is an overview tracing the early development of archaeology in the region, the influence of Biblical Archaeology and the processual reaction to that and offering a brief critique as to the failings of these approaches.

Chapter 3 introduces Tel Dan and the environment of the Hula Valley in the Iron Age. The city of Dan is the archaeological focal point of this study and its setting within the broader landscape is one that I consider to be crucial to helping to understand ways of living in that area during the Iron Age. The physical geography of the valley is examined as well as the flora and fauna of the lake and surrounding swamplands. With regard to Tel Dan, its location and references within the biblical texts are outlined. There then follows a general outline of the major archaeological artefacts of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age periods with particular attention being paid to Areas A and T – what have been designated the Sanctuary and the Israelite Fortifications. The chapter concludes with a look at issues raised by a 1999 Finkelstein paper, which portrays the region as contested between the kingdoms of Israel and Aram-Damascus, and the implications this has upon understanding how people may have lived.

Chapter 4 focuses on the political issues which have impacted, and in turn been impacted upon by, archaeology. It takes the view that archaeology has an intrinsic political aspect to it which can be implicit or explicit, intentional or otherwise. The chapter traces the intertwinement of politics and archaeology from the 19th century, through the British Mandate and into the modern state of Israel highlighting the ways in which archaeology has been used in both the pursuit of Western biblical interests and the promotion and justification of the state of Israel - both of which have resulted in a suppression of alternative accounts of the past. Suggestions are made as to how such dominant discourses can be countered and alternative histories written.

Having already touched upon the fragility of some traditional interpretations of Dan and the Hula Valley in Chapter 3, Chapter 5 examines in greater depth the problems inherent within Biblical Archaeology and its reliance on the biblical text. The chapter also looks at ways in which processual archaeology has been employed in the region. Both these positions are critiqued from a general post-processual standpoint. The impact of the so-called 'minimalist' position is considered and in the latter half I begin to outline my own ideas, drawn from interpretive archaeology, but also reflect upon reactions to a more post-structural stance which anticipates the next chapter.

Chapter 6 outlines in depth the aspects of interpretive archaeology which have influenced my thinking. These are analogy, agency, landscape, phenomenology, post-colonialism and narrative. I discuss each in turn and draw out the particular qualities which I feel enable the construction of more personal accounts of the past. Some examples are provided of the ways in which narrative has been used to offer alternative visions of the past and finally I begin to outline my own approach toward narrative.

Chapter 7 is both the discussion and conclusion. This is a very personal reflection (its tone is intentionally conversational) upon the process of writing the thesis and the issues that were raised and covered in the construction of the narratives. The focus is upon the use of the narratives as an interpretative tool and the experiences and act of writing about the past. The conclusion focuses upon the idea of history as fiction and how a willing recognition and acceptance of this can lead to more open, personal and intimate accounts of the past.

Interspersed between the chapters are a collection of narratives. These cover some of my experiences in researching this thesis and also there are accounts of the past which are anthropocentric in nature, i.e. the stress is upon human experience and interaction within the archaeological background. These are effectively the case study of this thesis and are centred upon Dan and the Hula valley region. They are an example of the story-narrative method outlined and justified in this thesis.

To summarise then: after having shown the traditional representation of Dan and the Hula and provided background to the Iron Age archaeology of the region the links between politics and archaeology of the region are then outlined. The cracks in the traditional discourse and meta-narrative of the region are then highlighted. With the underpinning of a secure past removed (and acknowledging the implications this has upon the political present) it opens the way for different approaches to write new accounts of the past. Alternative accounts which take a story-narrative form.

Three Sites

Purely by luck I had managed to coincide a day of research trips with a national holiday. So my student heart was as gladdened as ever at the thought of a fifty percent discount. The kibbutz I was staying at was handily placed amidst my three intended sites - which worked out for me, having, as I did, only my feet to carry me.

The approach to Dan is along a kilometre or so of quiet road which runs beside farmland on the left with high trees overhanging a fence to the right. The three or four other times I had been to the site the still of the road had only been punctuated by the occasional vehicle. That particular late September day saw the traffic, to my surprise, backed up half way along the route. Tramping on down the way I passed each car (filled with that small smugness a pedestrian has when overtaking backed up traffic), invariably packed with at least of couple of children and I wondered what the occasion could be.

After failing to convince the staff at the gate to let me in for free on 'academic grounds' I handed over my half-price fare and entered. Inside the place was even more jammed than the road. The car park in front of the visitor centre (essentially a shop and some toilets) seemed full to bursting with cars, new arrivals circling in slow laps in search of a space. Ice creams were being furiously licked by children which seemed to be the only time they paused from excitable shouting. Good natured raucousness pervaded as families rested up or ventured into the nature reserve in which the site of Dan is now set. A number of off-duty soldiers sat around on the grass, some in the shade of a tree, others lying back propped up on elbows squinting as they enjoyed the autumn sun on their face.

Leaving the visitor centre you cross a small bridge spanning the fast flowing Dan River. The path buzzed with children and mothers who haphazardly pushed buggies resulting in my having to take evasive action on at least one occasion. The track wound its way alongside the clamour of water charging along its course. Perversely the noise of the river did not detract from the tranquil atmosphere. Even the cries of children and parents seemed cushioned by the foliage pushing in from all sides, contained and dampened by the verdant surround. I passed more children, mothers, fathers, some of whom looked oddly at me as I posted little remarks into my Dictaphone. Obviously they had never seen an archaeologist attempting a little phenomenology before!

The lush and leafy crown cover above my head had knitted together creating a cool, moist atmosphere, only the occasional glimpse of sun and sky penetrated through in a concentrated shaft to the ground. Gaps between trees and bushes enticed me but always led to impasses or in circles. For all its apparent primal growth the hand of man was evident. Stepping off a path did not get you very far.

The noise and bustle dropped off as I moved away from the car park but ahead of me a new cacophony was rising. In a clearing a shallow pool had been dug, edged with irregular stones. The clear water streamed in and fanned out over the cobbled bottom before exiting on the opposite side. Multitudes of bare, young feet splashed excitedly while others, older, lounged by the side pulling pre-prepared food from plastic containers and pushing it into their mouths nodding all the time at something someone had said or in indulgent approval at a child's antic.

Once past the pool the tumult of activity and families faded away quickly. Alone for the first time I followed the path as it began to rise, skirting around the edge of the tel. As yet there was still no evidence of archaeology; the Iron Age wall and gateway that are visible from the road on the way to the car park are nearly the farthest from the entrance. It seemed that anyone with a child had not ventured beyond the pool. For that matter neither had anybody else.

Another minute or two more brought me to the reconstructed wall and Iron Age gate. From a yellow, rust flecked sign, Joshua (19: 47) proclaimed in Hebrew and English that *'…therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.'* Huge yellowish boulders piled one upon the other formed the monumental wall which ran perhaps fifty metres to a paved courtyard which stretched around the wall and up to a gateway on the left. On my right was the boundary fence with the road on the other side still packed tight with cars. The occupants looked through wound down windows at the ancient walls and gate but I doubted that many of them would explore beyond the pool to view them closer.

I pressed on into the city, through the gates, along paths that ran along side unmarked open, excavated pits until I reached the sanctuary. In the silence I could hear the not-so-distant undertone of water punctuated by the odd farther yelp of a child but the archaeological heart, that Israel had striven so hard to revive, was all but abandoned.

Twenty minutes brisk walk from Dan is Banias. At the foot of the Golan as the road begins to wind upwards is another car park. The entrance lies across the road from a field in which columns and capitals are strewn. Half-price entrance again and I was dodging my way between coaches as they reversed out of spaces and pulled up to the entrance barriers. I appeared to be the lone pedestrian. The sweat was forming a patch on my back under my rucksack despite the greying early afternoon sky. A coach party was descending toward the main path so I quickened my pace to arrive ahead of them.

Banias, even more than Dan, is a place defined by water. The waters emerge tumbling from near the base of the cliff and spilling out from under footpaths. Initially channelled into a wide, stepped gully to the left of the walkway, it picks up pace as the channel narrows and it falls away, rushing off to meet the Dan River and the other headwaters of the Jordan. The tour guide behind began his lecture on the site, it was in English but I didn't stay to listen. I wanted to keep ahead of the group. It was busy here but not compared to the scrum at the Dan pool. Four coaches were in the park and scanning around you could see the definite stages of each group - the most recent just behind me had arrived at the edge of the river, another were halfway up the path the guide pointing at a Corinthian capital atop an abbreviated column that appeared to have been rather arbitrarily situated by the side of the wooden walkway. The third were milling around the maw of the cave itself. The cliff gave the impression that it was just waiting for one of the hapless tourists to wander in before snapping its jaw shut. I could imagine the tour guide running through his spiel about Pan and reeling off that old New Testament chestnut, *'Upon this rock...'*, which was the line that all the coach parties had come here for. The fourth group had done the tour, now they were buying the t-shirts in the shop before boarding their coach and heading to the next destination on the itinerary.

Now in the late afternoon the climb to Nimrud looked less appealing in the face of my flagging enthusiasm. Fortunately I managed to hitch a lift with a local Druze man running deliveries between the kibbutz where I was staying and some of the Golan towns. He even took a slight detour to drop me at the gate. He departed with my thanks and I with an apple he had given me. Nimrud sprawls spectacularly on its own prominence, the castle boundaries defined sleekly along the edges of the hill. Beyond it the Golan rises still further and the nival heights of Hermon dominate all. To the fore one is treated to lofty, commanding and

encompassing views of the Hula Valley. A more spectacular setting for a castle one could not wish for.

I paid my half-price and entered. A new road runs along in the shadow of the castle walls to an even more newly built car park at the front end of the prominence. There were perhaps half a dozen cars. No coaches. The drizzle that had started a few minutes before picked up its intensity prompting me to head for the interior. In a rare and tremendous moment of foresight I had remembered to pack a brimmed hat - vital for the spectacle wearer in precipitous weather.

Monumental collapse forms a dilapidated apron around the towered gateway through which a wide path ascends to the castle. A sign depicted the layout with coloured lines suggesting various length trails. I felt myself to be dedicated so picked the longest one. Despite its ruinous form there remains a number of rooms that, if I wasn't so academically informed, I would be tempted to describe as pregnant with arabesque romance. Nimrud's pointed, groined vaults and Arabic inscriptions evocative of a world incongruous with the holidaying Israeli families only ten minutes away by car.

The grounds were sparsely populated compared to the two other sites (though perhaps this was due to the relatively late hour). A couple ambled about, sheltering in the few roofed sections when the rain fell harder; a father with two young sons peered and pointed into a collapsed pit where a pair of hyrax sat warily on fallen ashlar; another family explored the water reserve, the mother calling out to her son to be careful on the steep, wet, metal ladder leading down to it. I sympathised, having nearly come to grief on it myself only a short while before. The mother called out in Arabic, the concern apparent in her voice; the couple, the father and his boys, all in Arabic. As the rain came down on the Islamic castle of Nimrud I realised that I was the only non...Arab? Palestinian? Druze? Israeli-Arab? Having been at Dan and Banias earlier in the day I thought that perhaps this is how it should be, that different histories require different sites, exclusive sites even. It appeared that people had already made their choice, unconsciously or otherwise. Israeli families flooded into Dan (although very few made it to the actual tel), the Islamic castle of Nimrud was sparsely dotted with its founders' co-religionists and Banias sat between the two as a kind of no-mans, or more accurately, every-mans land. With its associations to the Greek and Christian gods it brought tourists and a form of neutrality, a place outside the political sphere.

On the way back to the kibbutz drivers were not being so generous. In the wet, enough vehicles passed by, the spray flying up off their rear wheels but none stopped so I had little option left but to walk. A river, which had been dry when I passed it once in the summer, now surged and threw itself from a fall. Barbed wire and red triangles told me not to leave the road for danger of mines. I looked at the cows in those perilous fields and wondered if anyone had told them. The rain kept coming; I turned up my collar and headed back to the shelter of the kibbutz as the clouds kept rolling in.

Chapter 2: From Pilgrimage to Processualism

> I once bet $100 that the Old Testament would never meet the New Archaeology. Now...I have lost my bet... [now we are given] full-coverage surveys, followed by tables of site sizes which allow the development of settlement hierarchies. Using rank-size graphs, they determine the degree of political integration of a region. They attribute major social changes to a combination of 'external pressures and internal processes'...They present multiple hypotheses and test them with empirical data...The reason this scientific, empirical, statistical, materialist, explanation-seeking archaeology works is that virtually all of the volume's [*The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*] authors are genuine field archaeologists. None have fallen prey to archaeology's latest messianic cult, that anti-science, anti-materialist, anti-comparative movement calling itself 'post-processualism'. For hard core post-processualists (few of whom spend much time on archaeological sites), the past is merely a 'text' with no objective reality, to be interpreted intuitively.
>
> Kent Flannery (1997: xvii)

Pre-World War I

Two incidents irrevocably placed Palestine in Western minds. The first was the birth and ministry of Jesus (or at least the representation of it in various books) and the second was the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire in 313 by the Emperor Constantine the Great. Pilgrimage to the physical world of Jesus resulted in a fairly constant if somewhat erratic flow of people from Europe to Palestine and back. They took with them certain expectations of what they would find and brought back tales of what they had encountered as well as what could perhaps be considered the earliest artefacts - religious relics (Silberman 1997: 11). So, the process of searching for a biblical reality within Palestine began with the spread of Christianity and continues to this day.

In the Medieval period European involvement in the region took a more dramatic and interventionist turn. The Crusades of the 11th – 13th centuries

encouraged portrayals of the Muslim rulers of the region in a barbaric light and opposed to Christian interests. This helped to create a picture of the Arab / Muslim as 'other', a legacy which has been perpetuated into the modern period. Pilgrimage from western Europe continued and flourished during parts of the Crusades but began to drop off slowly as the centuries went by, perhaps an influence of Protestantism having some effect (Davis 2004: 1). Although there was a little antiquarian interest, the region fell under the spotlight of the West again as an area of political and strategic importance. Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798 prompted a British reaction. Despite Napoleon's primarily tactical reasons for invading the region many scholars accompanied his expedition and began to work throughout Egypt on aspects of its history, particularly on its monuments and buildings. This combination of the military and scholarly would be repeated in the latter half of the next century by the British. Charles Wilson and Charles Warren (both of whom worked in Jerusalem for the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF)) were officers in the Royal Engineers (Davis 2004: 13). This link with the Engineers continued into the next century when, prior to the outbreak of World War I, Captain Stewart Francis Newcombe mapped the region (a process already started in the 1860s by Kitchener among others). This mapping took place under the auspices of the PEF and archaeologists (including Leonard Woolley and T.E. Lawrence) were drafted in to aid in the identification of ancient sites (Benvenisti 2000: 15-16). The history of Western involvement in the area can be viewed as the development of largely negative stereotypical notions. Each pilgrim, every crusade, and the exploration of later scholars and adventurers have added layers which continue to influence the modern political situation in the region.

There were others before him (e.g. Burkhardt, Clarke (Silberman 1997: 13)) but the root of what we may recognise as biblical geography and archaeological (albeit surface remains only) investigation in the region is usually traced to the expedition and work of Edward Robinson (Robinson 1841, 1852). There had of course been a tradition of antiquarianism and treasure hunting by Westerners but Robinson is generally regarded as being the first to systematically attempt to explore the region (in the 1830s and 1850s) with an academic eye and scholarly purpose. Robinson was a philologist, theologian and a committed Christian. He

theorised that ancient biblical names were often preserved in their modern Arabic equivalents. If he thought he recognised an ancient name in the modern he would investigate for ruins (sometimes this method was reversed) and finally check historical references. If all accounts tallied he felt confident enough to identify it. This methodology enabled Robinson to successfully identify thirty-five sites despite his failure to recognise the true nature of tels (had he done so he would probably have had even more success) (Davis 2004: 6-7). Robinson's motivation for the identification of biblical sites was born out of his religious interests and his work (intentionally or otherwise) shows scant regard for the contemporary Arab inhabitants of the land or for any of the post-biblical history. This would be an early indication of the largely roughshod and insensitive methods of Western scholarship which followed (Silberman 1997: 13-14).

Archaeological activity in Palestine began in earnest during the second half of the 19th century. Although a long way from what we would recognise as archaeology today these initial forays paved the way for the increasingly organised, scientific (nominally at least) and scholarly digs that were to follow. Following Robinson's lead a number of societies in Britain and America were established to explore Palestine, e.g. the PEF (British) and the short lived Palestine Exploration Society (PES – American). From the outset the PES was more directed by the concerns of biblical illustration than its British cousin. They were convinced that physical investigation in Palestine could only result in support of scripture. Twentieth-century American archaeologists such as W.F. Albright and, later, his pupil G.E. Wright maintained this view of archaeology in support of scripture. Today this traditional form of biblical archaeology is mostly limited to conservative academic establishments in America.

The period up to the First World War saw much activity but little methodological coherence. The last decade of the 19th century and the first couple of decades of the 20th century saw the establishment of archaeology proper in Palestine. Archaeologists, mainly from Britain, America and Germany excavated at a number of sites with various methodologies (e.g. deep trenching, sondage) resulting in varying degrees of success. Foremost amongst these was Flinders Petrie. It was Petrie who first recognised the possibilities of using

pottery for dating purposes and developed a belief in systematic recording (although he was later criticised for not doing so) (Davis 2004: 29-31). R.A.S. Macalister at Gezer was less successful. He cut 40ft wide trenches into the tel and worked down to the bedrock. He would then start a new trench and backfill the old trench with the spoil. Using this method he excavated two-thirds of the site but (unsurprisingly) at the end was unable to match up the strata from the various trenches (Davis: 2004: 33). Still others such as the German archaeologists Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger continued to conduct what were essentially treasure hunts (Davis 2003: 54-55). Macalister's (methodologically disastrous) dig at Gezer is notable because of the way he explicitly linked it to the Bible. Davis (2004: 34-36) suggests that Macalister was cynically tapping into what he believed was a great source of potential funding. The complicated stratigraphy of tels had caused many problems for archaeologists but George Reisner's work at Samaria focused not upon major structures but upon the non-architectural material which he recognised could be intrusive (Davis 2004: 43). This led to a particular emphasis on stratigraphy; accurate, detailed recording and the realisation that tels are a product of human activity (Davis 2004: 44). Unfortunately Reisner's methods were not adopted by subsequent archaeologists.

The influx of foreign scholars into the region, with little or no native academic experience or help, on the back of the changing political situation meant that while there was a professed attempt at 'objectivity' by many this meant little in actuality. A Zionist archaeological group was formed in 1912 (Society for the Exploration of Eretz-Israel and its Antiquities) (Silberman 1997: 18) though in their own way they were another branch of foreigners with an agenda, i.e. establishing physically ancient Jewish connections to the land. Arriving in the Holy Land, scholars with agendas driven by the Judaeo-Christian tradition sought out artefacts and sites as evidence of their beliefs. Those who lived in the region had developed their own relationships with the remains of the past and they formed part of the cultural landscape. These local connections were effectively dismissed (with small exceptions) in the pursuit of 'objectivity' and the search for the true meaning of 'the fossilized customs of antiquity' (Silberman 1997: 15).

Biblical Archaeology

The hallmarks of classic biblical archaeology were established in the 1920s and 1930s through the work of the American scholar W.F. Albright (e.g. see 1949). With Palestine now under the control of the British Mandate there was an explosion of archaeological activity. The shift of controlling power that resulted after the First World War meant that Western archaeologists now had unrestricted access to sites in the area. This proliferation of digs was characterised by the diverse methodologies which continued to be employed despite the establishment of the Palestine Department of Antiquities which tried to regulate activity ensuring minimum standards (Silberman 1997: 15). This inter-war period is often referred to as the 'golden age' of archaeology in the area. Methodology continued to develop as the archaeologists gained a greater understanding of tel complexity. Albright, director of the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR) in Jerusalem for much of the twenties, placed great stress on ceramic typology and its use in establishing chronology. The work of Albright still resonates strongly through the archaeology in the area. It was he who is often credited with creating the concept of 'Biblical Archaeology' (Davis 2003: 57). So influential was this work that it still forms the basis of many American excavations (Davis 2004: 74). Economics also played a part in the spreading influence. The faith-inspired digging of Albright and others brought many volunteers out to work on sites. Instead of having to pay large gangs of workers, like the expeditions of organisations such as the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (est. 1920), the virtually self-sustaining workforce meant they were less captive to the vagaries of changing economic conditions (Silberman 1997: 17).

Albright worked with the assumption that the biblical accounts and framework were generally reliable. The task of archaeology was to provide an extra-biblical material witness in support of the texts to help confirm their historical veracity. The Albright methodology set the pattern of archaeological discourse in the region for the next half a century. This traditional approach continued into the Sixties and Seventies, some even maintaining the historicity of the Patriarchal

Age (Halpern 1999: 423). G.E. Wright (1962) and John Bright (1972) told histories of Israel utilising the basic biblical framework, introducing archaeological material and considering its impact (positive or negative) on the biblical narratives. Although archaeological material plays a part in this approach there remains a loyalty to the overall form of the texts. Similar styles of study have continued more recently with J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes (1986) and J. Alberto Soggin (1993) maintaining the basic structure of the biblical texts. Avraham Biran (1994) wrote the archaeological account of Dan as if it were a piece of history ready to be slotted into the biblical jigsaw.

After the Second World War and with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 Kathleen Kenyon, working at Jericho, introduced elements of methodology from when she had worked with Sir Mortimer Wheeler at Verulamium in the late twenties. Excavating a series of large squares, separated by standing 'baulks', to show the stratigraphy, she moved away from a reliance simply on floor plans (Davis 2003: 57). G.E. Wright, a student, of Albright's, combined his mentor's ceramic typology with Kenyon's stratigraphic methods to produce a working methodology that is still largely in use today (Davis 2003:57-58). Israeli archaeologists were tending toward larger scale, architecturally based excavations. What was notable was the lack of any theoretical discussion or self conscious awareness of the role of archaeology and its effect upon the region (Silberman 1997: 19).

Robert B. Coote and Mary P. Coote's, *Power, Politics and the Making of the Bible* (1990) provides an example of the rather arbitrary way that archaeology is used in combination with the biblical texts. Covering the period 1250 BCE – 530 CE the book is designed to be a basic introduction and overview of the biblical events, placing them in context so they may be understood better. Although the book does make brief reference to a variety of authors and political motives behind the biblical texts it chooses a curious approach to the events related within. The period prior to the first millenium is covered using extra-biblical references (e.g. Merneptah Stele), while relating the Israel occupation of the land as developing through initial highland settlements and a subsequent power struggle with the Philistines following the power vacuum created by the

withdrawal of Egyptian and Hittite forces (Coote & Coote 1990: 19-24). This adoption of theoretical speculation and archaeology to explain this period is odd given what follows. The next chapter, entitled 'David Begins the Bible' picks up chronologically, by placing Saul and then David within this struggle, using only biblical sources but continuing to write as if this were undisputed history. The biblical account it would appear, according to Coote & Coote, appears to be divided remarkably starkly into two sections. All events predating Saul are seemingly dismissed but conversely everything from then on is accepted with no debate of their historical veracity.

Avraham Biran, the site director at Dan throughout most of the now nearly four decades of its excavation (1966 – present), dedicated nearly half of his book *Biblical Dan* (1994) to the Iron Age period. The manner in which he described the archaeology is very much in keeping with his choice of title for the book. This immediate association of the site with the Bible makes clear the approach that he took throughout the rest of the work. He limited himself to a physical description of the site, made occasional reference to similar finds at other sites and where possible explicitly connected a find with a biblical reference. Biran's classically biblical, matter-of-fact delivery of the findings provides us with very little, if anything, of what it meant to visit such a place and participate in the events associated with it. It does not constitute a meaningful experience of the site. Admittedly I do not believe that this was Biran's intention. His approach conforms to the Albrightian approach (Biran was a student of his). He does little more than provide a list of artefacts and the positions in which they were found and then tries to link them to the Bible.

Reaction

> As long as history is primarily based on texts and as long as the historian tries to relate archaeological results to his texts, only a very small segment of the archaeological data can be processed. Instead of being regarded as a source in its own right, archaeology is relegated to the status of an appendix of illustrations to a history that has been established along the lines of ancient narrative.
>
> Ernst Axel Knauff (1991: 40)

The last thirty years have seen a shift away from the 'biblical' emphasis (although this still remains an influential factor) and more towards anthropological and social questions. The changes in archaeology occurred concurrently with changes in biblical studies. The emphasis began to change in the 1970s. Attempts at reconstructing the history of Israel increasingly gave way to historiographies of biblical books, traditions and figures as well as the use of narrative (Zvi Brettler 1999: 44; Rast 2003: 49). In archaeology the Biblical Archaeology paradigm came under increasing attack and there were calls for a new approach. This new way required a distinctive name to distinguish it; in this study I shall follow Dever (e.g. 1999: 13) and use 'Syro-Palestinian Archaeology' for it redresses the Israeli bias somewhat and is more in line with my own political sympathies. There are a plethora of other names (including Levantine Archaeology, Israeli Archaeology and Near Eastern Archaeology) which is indicative of the fractured identity of the discipline. The exact nature of what people are digging, where they are digging and why they are digging it is still in a state of flux. There is no consensus – but this can be viewed as a relatively good thing.

The re-branding signified a more specialised and professional approach to archaeology in the region which gradually began to adopt processualist theory and methodology during the mid to late-Seventies and Eighties. In reviewing a 1986 article by Albert E. Glock, Dever (1999: 16) claimed that 'biblical archaeology...is now dead and almost forgotten'. Glock believed that 'biblical archaeology' was a viable branch of academia but could only exist as a sub discipline of biblical studies. Dever disputes this, saying that now the subject is only taken seriously by a few conservative seminaries and theological colleges.

Dever attributes the death of biblical archaeology to a number of factors but believes that, ultimately, it was the failure to achieve its major objective that condemned the discipline. This objective, as outlined by Albright, was to use archaeology to defend the historicity of the biblical narratives (Dever 1993: 706). Another area which has compounded this is that the Israelite / Canaanite divide is far from distinct. Notions that the Israelites were descended from

Canaanites and that the religion of Israel was not unique, indeed that it was highly syncretistic (Dever 1993: 706-7), are now generally accepted. More recently the debate about the 'low chronology', the re-dating of many Iron Age sites in the region (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001; Jamieson-Drake 1991), has opened up further questions about the disparities between the period as represented in the biblical texts and the picture emerging from the archaeological material. The 'low chronology' can be seen as part of the so-called 'minimalist' approach in biblical scholarship. This movement discounts the biblical texts as anything more than one source amongst many and one which is to be treated as thoroughly unreliable and ahistorical unless supported by other independent material (Zvi Brettler 1999: 48). Philip Davies (1999: 188-90), writing in reaction to a conservative attack upon this position, makes a number of key points which can also be applied to the archaeology of the region. These are, the rather arbitrary decisions scholars make about what is history and what is fiction in the Bible, the motives behind these decisions and the challenging of master-narratives. All of these have left biblical archaeology without any solid foundation to build upon.

The Bible

The extent to which the Tanakh (i.e. the Hebrew Bible of Rabbinical Judaism) can be used to aid in archaeological research is a contentious one. Archaeologists such as Albright and Wright have used the texts in a two-way process. The archaeology provides background to the texts while the texts help interpret the archaeology. Obviously there is a danger of an interpretative loop here. If the texts are used to initially interpret archaeology and then later that material is used to authenticate the texts then all they do is reinforce each other. If this is the case then the material aspect is demeaned. It is reduced to merely being a means by which the texts justify themselves.

The circular trap outlined above is applicable in all cases where archaeology is used to help 'prove' historical texts. The biblical texts carry with them their own particular peculiarities however. Whether one is inclined to date the source

material (Genesis – 2 Kings) early (c.10th century) or late (c. 6th-5th century or even after) affects how much historical veracity is attributed to them. The inclusion of the account of the 6th century Babylonian exile means that we are at least provided with a *terminus post quem* of the final composition / redaction (Maxwell Miller 2003: 61). It must be acknowledged that many of the events related in the Tanakh are set in the period now identified as the Iron Age (1200-600). There will always remain that link no matter how much doubt one wishes to cast upon their historical reliability. Another major factor is that the texts remain part of a living tradition. Indeed they are regarded as sacred by two major world religions, Judaism and Christianity and held in high regard by Islam. This association carries with it still more considerations. Conservative groups often object to interpretations that conflict with the texts. The texts themselves also have a subconscious effect upon those, be they religious or secular, growing up within its traditions. Interpretation of archaeological material can be affected according to one's beliefs about the texts, particularly if the writer or excavator has an agenda to prove. For these reasons, the texts themselves are often relied upon too much or, reacting against this, discredited as a reliable source altogether (Maxwell Miller 2003: 62).

Part of the 'minimalist' revision of biblical textual dating has been to regard the portrayal of the early Israelites as an invention of later Old Testament writers. The narrative is driven by casting the Israelites in the role of the 'good guys' with the 'bad guys' part being filled by the Canaanites (also regarded as an invention) (Lemche 1994: 168). *If* we accept that what we know about ancient Israel is the creation of writers centuries later then we are forced to accept that there is little we can be sure of. Niels Peter Lemche (1994: 168-69) makes a number of points which illustrate our ignorance of the period. Although there are a number of extra-biblical references (e.g. Merneptah Stele, Mesha's inscription, Shalmaneser III's inscription, *Beit David* inscription), they only confirm that there was some sort of entity called 'Israel' or the 'House of David' and that at one point (mid 9th century according to the Shalmaneser III inscription) there was a King called Ahab ruling. How these different 'Israels' are related to each other is not apparent. Are they the same entity? The assumption that they are and that the description of them supplied in the Old

Testament is accurate is far too simplistic. The use of a shared name does not mean the term was indicative of any historical, political or ethnic continuity between the groups although it is clear that the Old Testament writers believed there to be a clear ethnic connection. Lemche (1994: 169) uses the example of the modern state of Israel to highlight the limitations in using a single epithet to link the ideas of continuity outlined above, ideas which in any case are modern conceptions.

Ernst Axel Knauff (1991: 46) claims it would be possible but undesirable to create a history of ancient Israel without recourse to the Bible. Although possible it would be extremely difficult to exorcise all trace cultural influence stemming from the Bible. It would also be an injudicious move given that the Bible is of course a valuable artefact in itself. It is the Hebrew Bible which sets the tone and agenda for the vast majority of the historical reconstruction of ancient Israel. As J. Maxwell Miller (1991: 94) points out, our view of the region during the Iron Age would be vastly different; indeed even the name 'Israel' itself comes from the text. The interpretation of extra-biblical inscriptions and archaeology has been defined through a framework of ideas established from the Hebrew Bible. However, it is the failure to recognise this which leads to innate assumptions about the past which subconsciously define the area. These pervasive ideas, which run throughout Western scholarly work, have been a powerful contributing factor to our perceptions of Israel and Palestine.

This study is archaeological in nature and as such precedence will be given to the material. This does not mean to say, however, that no attention will be paid to the textual sources nor of the work of biblical scholars for there is much of value there. Archaeology in this area has a curious nature. It arouses attitudes and passions due to its connections with living religions which means that, often for non-academic reasons, sources are either too vehemently defended or too readily discounted according to one's beliefs. Taking this into account it is the stated intent of this study to give primacy to the archaeological material with suggestions taken from the written texts. This will be done on the recognition that the appropriate texts are themselves a product of the social conditions of the

late Iron Age or the few centuries immediately thereafter and therefore will form part of the supplementary sources.

New Archaeology

The take-up of processualist theory in the area came at a time when doubts were already being raised about the validity of many of its basic assumptions (cf. Hodder 1982). Despite these doubts processualist theory opened up many new realms of investigation. The past twenty years and more have seen a change in the focus of archaeology in the region from large-scale, monumental sites to a more social-science-based approach concerned with recreating everyday life in Israel (see King and Stager 2001; McNutt 1999; Levy 1997). The methodology adopted has been in line with the precepts of the New Archaeology. There is an emphasis on the *longue durée / Annales* approach (King and Stager 2001: 7). There is a persistent belief amongst some Syro-Palestinian archaeologists that the discipline provides an independent and objective witness to the past. Writers such as Dever (2005) and Alpert Nakhai (2001) continue to insist that the archaeology reflects an historical reality.

Despite contentious debate over issues such as the dating and historical veracity of the biblical texts it is clear that they still exert a massive influence on the choice and interpretation of archaeological work – particularly the Iron Age period. Oded Borowski's *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (second edition 2002), which was originally written in 1979 as a PhD dissertation and published in 1987, uses archaeological, extra-biblical material and analogy as well as the biblical texts to try to provide a broad overview of the subject outlined in its title. Borowski's methodology shows his (qualified) faith in the texts. The book continues to link the period heavily with the Old Testament even in the 2002 edition. By continually referring to agricultural workers from that period as 'the biblical farmer' (e.g. Borowski 2002: 164), Borowski conflates the biblical texts with a past reality. He also displays his processualist tendencies when, despite having declared that the intention that the work 'would produce a better understanding of Israelite daily life' (Borowski 2002: 163), he makes

generalising statements such as the following, 'With the introduction of iron tools...more grain could be produced and harvested. Iron tools, crop rotation, and fertilizing led to the creation of large surpluses for export and for the support of large cities' (Borowski 2002: 164).

Frank S. Frick's 1989 article *Ecology, agriculture and patterns of settlement* promoted a systemic approach to best explain the early social history of Israel. He assigns values to various ecological factors creating a hierarchy of interpretation and effectively promotes an environmentally determinist approach. Frick (1989: 70) asserts that this is a valid and relevant approach to explain early Israelite settlement patterns. Factors considered include annual rainfall fluctuation, soil fertility and technology. These factors were used to determine the 'risk' in each area, i.e. the chances of producing sustained agriculture. Frick (1989: 88) concluded that the new settlements were settled in both high and medium risk areas with the majority to be found in the latter category.

There has been a reluctance to produce multivocal and momentary accounts of the past with writers preferring, instead, to follow the thoughts of the *Annales* School and Fernand Braudel in trying to discern and explain long term change. The Braudelian three tier temporal framework of short-term (*événements*), medium-term (*conjonctures*) and long-term (*la longue durée*) processes has been regarded (see Whitelam 1996) as being ideal to relate the broad sweep of the past in the region, one which has often been related through a mix of text and material. According to Thomas E. Levy and Augustin F.C. Hall (1995: 2) 'one of the advantages of an *Annales* framework is its notion that different historical processes operate at different temporal levels'. They criticise the habit of Syro-Palestinian archaeologists who focus on remarkable and unusual finds and try to identify snapshots of the past recorded in the material (Levy and Holl 1995: 2). I would certainly agree with this criticism but the adoption of the Braudelian framework which, though it nominally identifies three temporal processes, tends in practice the focus to fall on the *conjonctures* and *la longue durée*. The *événements* , 'surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their backs' as Braudel (1972: 21) himself described them, have

received relatively little attention. Human action and decisions are viewed at best as relatively unimportant and at worst as determined by more powerful historical processes. Knauff (1991: 43-44) declares he is interested in human choice and decision making but not on an individual basis; rather he is interested in the accumulative effect of these decisions which create structures. Advocating a processual approach as a means of accessing such choices he states that 'far from determining human history past and present, processual (or structural) history elucidates the conditions and limitations, the possibilities and impossibilities under and among which the people of the past had to live and had to make their decisions' (Knauff 1991: 44). It is only with regard to historical events that individual decisions and consequences can be considered (Knauff 1991: 47); he clearly feels that the archaeology is not sufficient to allow us that level of interpretation. The same approach is employed a decade later by Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager (2001). Their work, entitled *Life in Biblical Israel*, is a broad overview which too often treats Israel as a homogenous entity across the entirety of the Iron Age. Its blend of archaeology, biblical and extra-biblical texts and ethnography makes assumptions about the existence of early Iron figures such as David and Saul (King and Stager 2001: 5).

The tenets of New Archaeology have by no means been universally embraced. Perhaps archaeology in the region, connected (be it willingly or not) as it is with living religions, has also fostered some of the conservatism associated with those traditions. There has been an unwillingness to abandon the text. Even allowing for the text to be considered as an artefact (which I believe it should) it still seems to exert disproportionate influence (depending on your point of view of course!).

In a 1993 article Kenneth Kitchen rejects what he calls the 'the commonly advocated position' (1993: 40). Although he recognises that there is a lack of consensus amongst archaeologists in the area, he reacts to the history of Israel as portrayed, in the broadest possible terms, by archaeology. Kitchen notes an apparently marked difference between the 'archaeological history' and that related in the biblical narrative. In support of the 'biblical history' he looks at

the 'historical profiles' of three of Israel's neighbouring regions; Egypt, Mesopotamia and Anatolia. According to Kitchen (1993: 40) all three follow roughly the same historical pattern of 'a considerable formative period, a point of crystallization, and then a relatively long and undulating stream of cultural tradition'. These patterns are, Kitchen (1993: 35-40) writes, 'fundamental structure[s]...based on firsthand, observable, verifiable fact: on the scrutiny of archaeological remains, and the critical reading of original documents'. He then notes that the biblical account of the history of Israel conforms much more closely to these 'fundamental structure[s]' than the archaeological account.

In Kitchen's opinion the historical texts and the archaeology of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Anatolia correlate. That is enough for him to decree the basic historical layout of the Bible as fact. Here we must consider the process of interpretation. Kitchen claims that 'no modern and alien reconstruction has ever needed to be imposed upon it [i.e. the textual history of Israel]' (Kitchen 1993: 38) but fails to recognise that any history is a reconstruction – personal, nuanced and continually re-written. Interpretation is a subjective process, 'the scrutiny of archaeological remains and the critical reading of original documents' is undertaken by modern individuals, each with their own biases, backgrounds and agendas (subconscious or otherwise). At every point Kitchen is himself making choices. The archaeology in Israel (unlike the other three above) fails to conform to the texts, so Kitchen chooses to reject it. Why does he not reject the text? Because he chose to give the text primacy – essentially, if the archaeological interpretation conforms to the text then it is correct, if not, it is wrong. He also chose to compare (very broadly) the history of Israel with three neighbours even though those neighbours differed considerably in size and date. If we can compare Iron Age Israel with Egypt and Sumer then why not compare it also with Greece or Rome? China? The Aztecs? Why? No doubt locale will be pointed to but Kitchen (an Egyptologist and epigrapher) has made an interpretative decision that these are more applicable than others. He fails to recognise that despite his protestations he is making a 'modern and alien reconstruction'; he cannot do anything else.

Thomas E. Levy's 1997 edited volume *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* is notable because it is one of the few volumes to attempt a complete review of all archaeological periods in the region. These span the Lower Palaeolithic through to 1914. It is also a champion of New Archaeology. The polemical quote at the beginning of this chapter is from the introduction by Kent Flannery and while it may not be wholly representative of the other contributors it certainly sets the agenda. The volume is a collection of the 'new wave' of archaeological research in the region, one that is scientific, statistical and hypothesis driven, in other words embracing all that the New Archaeology stands for. In a 1993 paper, Levy calls for increased interdisciplinary cooperation in Syro-Palestinian archaeology. This cooperation incorporates such disciplines as geology, geomorphology, botany and microarchaeology (Levy 1993: 478). The emphasis is very positivist and processual. Unusually Levy (1993: 467) acknowledges the debate between processualist and post-processualist archaeologists and believes it to be healthy but prefers to concentrate his focus on the New Archaeology.

Charles E. Carter and Carol L. Meyers' 1996 collection of essays, *Community, Identity and Ideology: Social Science Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* is illustrative of how little progress there has been in interpretative thought in Syro-Palestinian archaeology. One of the articles by Frick attempts to place the religion of Israel within a standard processual framework. He portrays religion as one factor amongst many in a system. 'Culture' is composed of many interacting parts all of which are interdependent. For Frick (1996: 450), religion (specifically Israelite religion in this case) is the expression of a culture rather than being the core of it. He rejects the amphictyonic model for this reason. Equating society to an organic system, he prefers to see society in holistic terms with religion as one component and concludes that religion only has meaning as part of the system. Whilst I agree that an element such as religion should be viewed in the context of the broader society, I take issue with the notion of departmentalising. For example, Frick (1996: 450) states that in early Israel 'religious ideology and practice seem to have operated as the functional equivalents to political power'. It is exactly this sort of macro-declaration that this study is attempting to distance itself from.

Frick admits to being influenced by the work of Roy Rappaport, an American anthropologist, who has written about the homeostatic power of religion. He quotes:

> Rituals, arranged in protracted cycles...articulate the local and regional systems, and, furthermore, regulate relations within each of the subsystems, and in the larger systems as a whole.
>
> Roy Rappaport (1971: 60, cited in Frick 1996: 451.)

Frick further explains how Rappaport believes that religion can function as a vital cohesive agent for uniting groups into a larger social unit (Frick 1996: 452). There follows a discussion as to the exact nature of 'tribes' and whether or not the alleged tribal league of early Israel, i.e. pre-monarchic, was indeed composed of 'tribes' or smaller clan groups. Frick (1996: 455) then bemoans the lack of a testable hypothesis to determine interaction between early Israelite groups, as if this would establish finally the existence of a tribal league. Frick continues to stress, as he sees it, the correlation between religion and power before describing how a chiefdom (citing Tel Masos as an example) can be identified through the archaeological record. The generalising principles and statements which Frick employs do not acknowledge the idiosyncrasies of Israelite religion or the people who created and participated in it. Despite the interdependent theory of the systems model the overwhelming aspects tended toward power and the maintenance of that power. It is clear that Frick's model cannot explain a factor such as the change in form of 'Israelite' religion either through the duration of the Iron Age or the variation apparent within the geographic area often identified as Iron Age Israel.

To some extent we are doing Frick a disservice here; his article was originally written in 1979. There are philosophical issues at hand over the use of terms such as *archaeological record* and *chiefdom.* All these criticisms have gained momentum over the past two decades and therefore while we may critique Frick's work it is not the intention of this study to lambaste an author for reflecting the academic mood of the time in his writing. Frick may even be congratulated for attempting to introduce theory (even relatively, at that time,

up-to-date theory) into the discipline. Carter and Meyers (1997) decision to include the piece in their book, however, reflects how little the field had moved on over the intervening eighteen years. Indeed this same basic approach is apparent in Beth Alpert Nakhai's 2001 book, *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel.* After a very general overview of many different types of religious sites she concludes that cult sites played a vital role in state formation, the economy and the development of elites (Alpert Nakhai 2001: 193).

Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman's popular 2001 work *The Bible Unearthed* attempts to place the Bible (as artefact) within the broader archaeological context of Ancient Israel. The Bible is regarded by them as a product of the seventh century because 'archaeologists and anthropologists working all over the world have carefully studied the context in which sophisticated genres of writing emerge, and in almost every case they are a sign of state formation, in which power is centralized in national institutions like an official cult or monarchy' (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 22). This fits nicely into the authors' main theme of re-dating the establishment of Judah as a significant power in the region and refuting the claim that David and Solomon were commanders of an empire. Other noted key developments of state formation alongside the genre of sophisticated writing are monumental buildings, economic specialization and a network of interlocked communities (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 22). Archaeology is, we are told, 'the only source of information on the biblical period that was not extensively emended, edited, or censored by many generations of biblical scribes' (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 23). No mention is made of the discursive and interpretative process which archaeological material undergoes or the nature of the material itself. The book is aimed at the lay reader – this is apparent in the language used in the above quotes – and is a general round up of one of the main arguments besetting the field, that of the 'low chronology'. That being said, even though the work is primarily based upon archaeology it still revolves around the Bible, still is concerned with the settlement and origins of Israel, is largely processual in character and links the two heavily, albeit in an unconventional manner.

In *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (2001) Ziony Zevit devotes an eighty-page chapter to a discussion of the theoretical construction of the past. The subtitle of his work succinctly describes his methodology. A *parallax* is a distortion, something that may appear different depending on one's perspective but, in fact, has an actual reality. This reflects Zevit's opinion that there is an historical reality that can be reconstructed through a judicious use of various sources, of which archaeology is one. The postmodern approach (what he calls the 'Third Paradigm', Zevit 2001: 57) is viewed as 'a refined, intellectual celebration of mindful anarchy conducted paradoxically by scholars in hierarchically organized elitist institutions of higher learning' (Zevit 2001: 64) and rejected because according to Zevit (2001: 75) it is not 'an autonomous vehicle for historical research'. Despite recognising that events in the past may have many coexisting and competing perspectives, Zevit (2001: 79, 80) maintains that there is a single reality lying behind these, one which may be at least, indistinctly reconstructed.

Despite works such as Finkelstein and Silberman (2001) and the Levy (1997) anthology mentioned above, purely archaeological approaches are rare. J.S Holladay (2003) bemoans a lack of serious attempts at historical reconstructions of the region through archaeological data. He criticises the continued tendency to focus on rare and unusual artefacts rather than concentrating on the material most often encountered. It is this material which he believes can be used to construct a meaningful history. Holladay (2003: 43) remarks that the way to remedy this problem is to use 'hypothesized recurring patterns of human activity' across all scales, this 'inevitably entails quantification and the use of statistical forms of analysis, comparison, and, where appropriate, inference validation'. He firmly believes that the way forward for Syro-Palestinian archaeology is to adopt the maxims of New Archaeology. He calls for the use of testable models as a method for advancing the archaeological writing of history in the region (Holladay 2003: 44).

There has undoubtedly been recognition of the need for a change of emphasis in Syro-Palestinian archaeology and this is reflected in Holladay's appeal. His article testifies that despite certain works and writers adopting elements of

processualism (and to a lesser degree even some post-processual thought) the area is still dominated (particularly in the public perception) by more traditional approaches and attitudes.

Critique

> ...in order to comprehend Israelite folk religion *on its own terms,* I shall take an approach that may be called "descriptive" rather than "prescriptive". I am well aware that postmodernists and other sceptics who prevail in many disciplines today think this is naïve. For them, there *are* no "facts", only social constructs; ancient texts do not refer to any reality but have to do only with other texts and ideologies, theirs and ours. But I shall ignore what I regard as postmodern piffle and get on with the task as I see it, which is historical and descriptive of realities that did exist after all.
>
> William Dever (2005: 8-9)

Whether in its Biblical Archaeology incarnation or since the Syro-Palestinian adoption of processualist maxims, archaeology in the region has made little effort in attempting to access the people behind the material. The critical factor is how we interpret the material that is uncovered. Archaeology in Israel has limited itself to either assigning artefacts a biblical explanation (i.e. identifying material with reference to the texts of the Bible) or explaining finds in a systemic / functionalist manner.

The problems with the first interpretation are manifold. Any interpretative process is subject to questions as to the intentions and background of the interpreter. If we acknowledge that there is no such thing as an objective truth in regard to the past (if, indeed, at all) then the way is open for multiple and varied accounts of the past. The archaeologist has to work with the available material. Although theory and methodology cannot be separated, if a piece is ascribed a biblical explanation then the interpretative process is effectively bypassed by the archaeologist. The interpretation is instead provided by a text, which is far from homogenous in either its authorship or thought, is constantly being re-evaluated by scholars, deals with many non-historical subjects and yet, somehow, is meant to portray an accurate picture of a past society. This

procedure adds another layer of uncertainty to the process of interpretation, further removing it from the material. A level of doubt exists in any interpretation. For an interpretation to be convincing then that level must be kept to a minimum. Interpretations based on interpretations can only increase the level of doubt.

Where studies in the area are theoretically explicit they are largely processual in nature. This approach was set up as a reaction to cultural archaeology. It views society as a collection of inter-dependent mechanisms that function as parts of a 'socio-cultural' whole. Often an organic analogy is employed, comparing society to the human body with each organ representing areas such as economy, religion and government. Processual archaeology rejects the idea that society is homogenous in its motivations and attitude. Instead it claims that although society is a whole it contains within it a number of heterogeneous systems that compete with, influence and depend upon one another. Changes in one area of society have inevitable repercussions throughout the rest of it. It sought to produce models of society which were based on cross-cultural observations. It was believed that an accurate model should be applicable to all similarly organised societies on certain developmental levels.

The processualist tendency to search for generalisations means that many unique factors are ignored because they fail to fit with the overarching, cross-cultural principles which are familiar to us and therefore understandable (Barrett 1994: 161). In the quest for these defining societal maxims processualism forgets about people. It also fails to explain change in a suitable fashion. If each area of society is inter-dependent then homeostasis would occur – we then have a situation, similar to culture history, where change can only occur through the influence of external forces.

The apparently linear development of archaeological thought (antiquarian – culture-historical – processual – post-processual) gives the impression of a cohesive movement of thought advancing towards an ever more accurate representation of history. Archaeology however is, theoretically speaking, a fractured discipline. Theoretical stances vary from country to country,

interdisciplinary and even intradisciplinary. This is amply demonstrated in archaeology relating to Israel. There remain classic Biblical Archaeology works; there are increasing numbers of processual and sociological approaches; biblical studies too continue along their own splintered trajectory; there is of course a large (the majority perhaps) section that employs both archaeology and text in the belief that this will produce a more balanced, objective picture of a past reality. The post-structural notion of abandoning an objective past throws the search for 'the past as it was' or other such encapsulating ideas into chaos. We have seen that the take-up of the ideas of New Archaeology has been patchy and the subsequent reaction that has occurred in other areas, notably prehistory, is largely absent. Syro-Palestinian archaeology has not moved beyond the processual stage, nor has it even been universally embraced. This is perhaps not surprising; with processualism still not fully established as the dominant paradigm a reaction is perhaps less likely to occur. That said, champions of processualism have tended to react vociferously against the more interpretative, post-modern ideas that have been collectively labelled post-processualism.

What is curious about Dever's quote at the start of this section is that in setting out his methodology for *Did God Have a Wife?* (2005) he appears to have picked up upon many of the criticisms which post-processualism aimed at New Archaeology and incorporated them into his approach. At various points he talks about working from 'the bottom up' (Dever 2005: ix); provides a brief biography of himself so readers may understand any bias in his writing (Dever 2005: xi-xii); distances his use of the name 'Palestine' from the modern political connotation (Dever 2005: xii); acknowledges that methodology helps determine results (Dever 2005: 8); emphasizes individual creativity (Dever 2005: 9) and attempts to avoid 'reductionism' and 'determinism' in his writing (Dever 2005: 10). All of these are points which I would embrace but there is also a marked reluctance to abandon altogether the familiar ground on which much of his writing has been based. Dever maintains an insistence that there is an historical reality which can be accessed through the material (Dever 2005: 8-9), that the phenomenological approach he adopts is functional (Dever 2005: 9-10) and that somehow although his new approach may not be 'strictly "scientific"...it does not abandon *real* method' (Dever 2005: 11, italics original). And recently Dever

has softened his position and suggested that archaeology and biblical scholarship need to work hand-in-hand to gain a greater understanding of Israelite history. Indeed Dever appears to have completely reversed his early firebrand position when he recently stated that archaeology without the Bible can tell us very little about the way people lived (*BAR* 2005 vol.31 no.1: 17).

What the site at Dan affords us is an opportunity to be more ambitious in our interpretations. The archaeology there implicitly asks us a number of questions which, as yet, remain unanswered. A consideration of the landscape and the various ethnic groups in the area would immediately help to contextualize the region, broadening the scope and understanding of the area. Is there a discernible difference between the people who dwelt within the city, those who lived in its shadow and those further afield who perhaps only travelled up to the city on the rare occasion? How could such a different landscape setting affect people and their perceptions? What would have been the experience of those people not part of the ruling authorities or dominant group? How did they participate in the community, and what did they get from it? How did conflict affect the way people lived their lives? How did these experiences change through time?

There seems to be a mute acknowledgement in Syro-Palestinian archaeology that if one wants to use archaeology alone then only certain broad statements can be made. As such there is an adherence to New Archaeology or (where texts are often concerned) the principles of the *Annales* school (e.g. King and Stager 2001). If one wants to write about people, the way they lived and acted, their beliefs, their motivations and actions then one must turn to the texts. It is as if many are still clinging desperately to Christopher Hawkes' (1954) ladder afraid to let go and take the interpretative plunge.

Having established a broad overview and critique of archaeology in the region (Chapter 5 will examine the current state of Syro-Palestinian archaeology in more detail) the following chapter looks more specifically at the site of Dan and its setting within the Hula Valley examining some of the ways in which the interpretation of it has been approached.

The Edge of the Swamp

In the fading light the woman's tough fingers shuffled across the loom winding another reed into what would become a mat. Her body worked with the automatic instinct of movement repeated beyond measure. She bent to select another reed from the bundle at her feet and worked it alternately between the vertical warps. When she had fed it all the way across she brought down the beam to press it into place. Her back and shoulders ached and the curved reed roof of the shelter which housed the loom frame and kept the sun and rain off her back as she worked was restricting the dying light to the extent that she decided to finish for the day.

The shelter stood between the hut and the water's edge. The shallow water ran out to the silhouettes of reeds tufting into the purpling sky. She turned her back, pulled the mats she had already made under the shelter, and crossed to the dwelling kneading her fingers into her left shoulder as she went. The house was a simple construction, a wooden framework wrapped in sheets of bound reed not dissimilar to the mats she had been weaving for most of the day. She unhooked and rolled back the flap of a door. Her eyes needed time to adjust to the interior gloom.

Her daughter was asleep. Curled on a reed mat under a sheepskin she lay still and quiet against the far wall. The woman crossed to her and reached out a hand to her daughter's forehead almost fearful to touch it lest she find it too hot or cold, but it was normal. She smiled to herself; that could only be a good sign. She began to gather together the evening meal. A catfish, caught and smoked only the day before, was stripped off the bone and mixed with some fava beans in a plain basalt bowl. Despite the retreating sun the remnants of the hot day lingered into the evening and a cool meal was easier after a long day and more appealing than cooking. The bowl soon filled up and she sank her fingers into the mix, lifting them, letting the pieces of fish and vegetable fall through them. Once more she plunged in, and another time, unnecessarily, just because she liked the feeling of it. All done she placed a little reed covering over the top and started to suck the remnants of fish from her fingers in a little pleasure she had enjoyed ever since she had been a girl herself. She looked over again at her own daughter, nodding imperceptibly to herself at the reassurance of finding the little girl's forehead neither too hot nor too cold.

It had only been two summers since they had arrived by the lake. Well, not the lake itself but the swamp and reed beds to the

north. Her husband was not much of a fisherman but they both could work the reeds. The supply was limitless and their versatility meant there was an opportunity to sustain a family on them. A number of other families also lived along the edges of the swamp and lake, some in larger groups, some in villages, others, like themselves, more alone. A few had been there generations, but most had newly arrived, or at least had been there no more than a generation – and from all over it seemed. The lure of the lake and its abundance was strong but it came at a price.

Towards the end of the previous summer her son had fallen ill. He had complained of feeling dizzy and, though she had initially paid little attention, after he vomited she sent him to lie down. Her husband seemed more concerned than her but when he called her in from her weaving she knew immediately that something was not right. The air was bad inside, thick and heavy, although wrapped up tight her son was racked with shakes, his forehead like winter ice. She remembered the look that passed between her husband and herself as they both knew it was the swamp fever of which they had been told. Neither of them had said a word, afraid to articulate it, to give it substance. They had all stayed up that night, she holding her son through his unconscious shivers and, when the sweats came, wiping his brow clean with a cloth cool with the waters of the lake. Her husband and daughter had slept a little. Her daughter had been too young to understand but had been affected by the sombre mood and not fooled by their efforts at reassurance. By sunrise the shivers had stopped and the sweats had ceased and her son had died. She held him a while longer till her husband woke. They washed his body and burnt a little grain in offering before her husband punted out to the deeper water in which he placed her only son. The world was still.

Her husband had not yet returned. It was not that unusual. He had been gone since yesterday morning and although he only usually spent the one night away it was not uncommon for him to remain at the city until he had traded all their goods. He would set off walking by the side of the grey donkey. The animal nearly doubled in size thanks to all the reed mats and bowls and rope attached to it. Her husband always took a spare batch of reed strips with him and would make little creatures which helped pass the time and delighted the mothers and children. They acted as little sweeteners as he made his calls and exchanged their wares for the oil, wheat, fruit, sometimes a little beef or mutton. She decided that he would not be returning that evening so secured the flap of

the hut and lay down behind her daughter and stared into the dying fire until she fell asleep.

The next morning she was up and into her routine. She tipped some water from the pithos into the basalt bowl and washed herself briskly. Her daughter slept on. She took the goat out and tethered it, and it immediately settled into its rhythm of stripping nearby foliage, nodding in satisfaction as it chewed. Returning to the house she pulled out an earthenware bowl and then, back at the goat, she squatted and began to milk the engorged udders, the rich liquid gathering in the bowl below. Inside she set aside the bowl and placed a reed covering over the top. She rekindled the fire and fed it up with dried reed off-cuts. The writhing licks of flame cracked and spat as they devoured the reeds, adding their light to the growing dawn. From a pile in the corner she selected some dried goat dung and positioned them carefully onto the fire. The flames responded, curling their ways around the edges and burning with a deeper intensity. Finally she brought over four squarish stones and placed them about the fire before sitting on them a broken section of pithos that curved just right over the fire. She made a quick and simple dough of water and flour, a little olive oil and a dash of salt. Taking a chunk she flattened it out in her hands and flopped it onto the pithos where it instantly began to bake and fill the hut with its warm fragrance. She dipped a beaker into the still warm goat's milk, laid a hot bread on to a reed plate and placed them at the head of her sleeping daughter.

Gently she stroked her face; it was hot but not feverish. Her daughter opened her eyes slowly, the dried rheum breaking like a seal after her long slumber. The flesh around the eyes had puffed out in an almost comical fashion but did not seem tender as her daughter blinked and rubbed away the grime of sleep.

The mother enquired softly after her daughter. The girl looked about as if trying to place the sound. 'How are you feeling?' asked the mother, trying once more. Her daughter seemed to focus this time and, holding a small hand over her left eye, replied simply, 'My head hurts.'

'Yes,' agreed the mother, 'yes. Here, eat something.'

Her daughter pushed a little of her tangled, dark hair away from her face and looked toward the bread and milk. Satisfied that her daughter was over the worst she turned back to the fire and dropped another dough flap onto it, drank a little milk and mentally ran through the day ahead.

The grind, grind, grind of the stone on the quern was wearing down her patience as much as it was the wheat. The day was

particularly hot. Her daughter had not felt well and had been sleeping again since mid morning. Making flour was one of her least favourite jobs and her husband had *still* not returned from the city. Now it was becoming unusual. He had been this long before but often with bad reason. Once he had been robbed and quite badly beaten, another time the donkey had gone lame. She worried what it could be this time.

She stood, freeing her loose dark robe that had wrapped uncomfortably about her, then flexed out her shoulders. In the distance, to the north, rising up over the reeds, white and grey smoke hung low in the still, blue sky. She watched it for a while, curious. It idly occurred to her that the smoke was coming from the direction of the city but she dismissed the notion as fanciful. Something remained though, pulling at her thoughts. She checked her daughter, still sleeping, no temperature. She moved outside again and looked at the smoke. Had it grown? She began to wander out away from the hut attempting to get a clearer view but wherever she went it looked the same. Cocking an ear to strain for sounds brought nothing more than the regular soft susurration of breeze through the reeds punctuated by occasional bird cry. The smoke had definitely grown now; the puffs and rolls were hazing out and obscuring even the great mountain which lay beyond the city. The gnawing curiosity of before was suddenly shot through with a sudden fear in her stomach.

Having decided upon action rather than waiting she headed back to the hut and checked once more upon her daughter. Then she set off, skirting the edge of the waters, walking with purpose, occasionally and briefly running a few steps, eager to reach her destination. The family who lived on the other side of the lagoon had been in the area a lot longer than they had and had offered help and advice when they had first arrived. They would know more than her, what it was, what to do. Their hut was located beyond a little rise in the land and as she crested the rise she immediately knew her fears had been correct. Running down the slope to the hut she could see abandoned mats, bowls and bundles of reeds. The place was deserted, the animals gone, and though she checked inside the hut she knew that she would find it just as empty. In the distance the smoke continued to expand across the horizon.

With burning legs and lungs she arrived back at her own hut forlornly hoping her husband had arrived in her absence. Breathing heavily after her run she was relieved that nothing had changed. Her daughter slept on – that in itself was another worry and left her with little choice. The city was a morning's walk away and she

chastised herself for being a fool and not acting sooner. How long had she watched that ominous mass rise? The reed bundles were her first target; she dragged two at a time to the water's edge. She pulled them out on to the water, her robe soaking up the swamp as the mud gathered around her bare feet, oozing between her toes. She lashed a number to the raft her husband used to collect reeds and fish and so forth. When she was happy with the size she tested and it seemed steady enough.

Her daughter wouldn't wake. She carried her outside and laid her in the loom shelter. She gathered together the food and milk and water, the sheep skins. The goat was a dilemma. She couldn't take it; there was no room. She thought about butchering it but there was no way she could cook the meat. In the end she left it tethered close to the water and foliage in the hope that all would be well. She lifted her daughter and placed her unconscious body on the raft. It tilted a little and she tried to balance it out with the bowls of food and water. Finally, and warily, she climbed on to the raft herself. It seemed stable enough and the water was not deep but she did not want to lose the food or her daughter into the murky water. She positioned herself astride the prone figure of her daughter and, grasping the wooden pole her husband used, punted off into the relative safety of the cover of the reeds in the depths of the swamp to wait for come what may.

Chapter 3: Dan and the Hula Valley

Physical Geography

The traditional boundaries of Iron Age Palestine are framed by four very different geographical features. To the west is the sea. The north has a system of mountains and valleys which form a natural border. To the south is the desert and to the east a low-lying fault line which forms the large Rift Valley that stretches the length of the country and continues south all the way through Arabia and into Africa. Today these mostly form the borders of the modern state of Israel and are roughly equivalent to the territorial claims put forward in the biblical texts for the boundaries of ancient Israel (Joshua 13-20)[3].

The Mediterranean Sea defines the entire western border of Israel. The largest inland sea in the world (c.1,550,000 square km) is about 3,860 km in length, from Israel in the east to the Atlantic ocean in the west to which it is connected by the Straits of Gibraltar. It contains a plentiful supply of fish and links Israel with the southern coast of Europe and north coast of Africa. North of Mount Carmel is a bay which harbours the modern city of Haifa but to the south the coast is very straight and shallow making it unsuitable for large ports until the construction of the artificial harbour of Caesarea in the first century BCE (Beitzel 2003: 7). The Lebanon Mountains in the north are also the result of the same tectonic action which created the Rift Valley. Mount Hermon, to the east, and Mount Lebanon stand as two pillars; between them lies an accessible valley known as the Beq'a ("a place of stagnant water", Beitzel 2003: 6) while to the west of Mount Lebanon the coastal plain is also accessible. Mounts Hermon and Lebanon both have a large layer of impermeable non-porous rocks which results in an abundance of springs at high levels (1200 – 1550m) which then go on to contribute to many rivers in the area, including the Jordan.

[3] There were some territories east of the Jordan. 1 Kings 8:65 has the northern border of Solomon's kingdom as far north as Lebo-Hamath which was at the northern end of the valley between Mounts Lebanon and Hermon

Fig. 1: general map of region (from Stager and King 2001: 393).

Lake Hula

The path of the Jordan is steep and so, initially at least, the river is fast flowing and as a result a channel was eroded through the underlying basalt. A result of this was the formation of the Hula Lake. The heavy seasonal flow of the river meant that flooding was frequent and therefore not conducive to regular irrigation (Beitzel 2003: 7). Lake Hula and the surrounding swamps were the southernmost wetlands in the Levant and the freshest of the three Jordan River Valley lakes. It was one of only a few truly freshwater lakes in the Middle East (Dimentman *et al.* 1992: 6). The lake was drained in the 1950s as part of a programme to remove malarial mosquito breeding grounds and to turn the area into more productive agricultural land. A small nature reserve was retained. The lake had long been known in history and was mentioned in the 14th century Amarna letters under the name *Samchuna.* That name continued to resonate centuries later; Josephus, writing in the 1st century CE calls it Lake Semechonitis. Later still, in Talmudic literature it is referred to as *Yam Sumchi.* The lake is also associated with the name *Merom* after a site where Joshua fought the Canaanite king of Hazor. The name *Hula* derives from the Aramaic *Hulata* or *Ulata,* which survives in Arabic as *Buheirat el Hule* and through various transliterations has become the modern *Hula* (Dimentman *et al.* 1992: 5).

Measurements of the lake's water level taken between 1935 and 1951 (the last year in which the lake remained unaffected by the drainage programme) show that the size of the lake and the surrounding swamps fluctuated greatly. The average size in the summer was 21km^2 (August – September) rising up to an average of 60km^2 in the winter (January – March) floods. The water level ranged from 1m to 1.5m whilst the lake itself varied between 12 to14km^2, the variation in the swamp being much greater. The depth of the lake was between 1.5 and 2.5m on average with the deepest parts up to 3-4m. The swamp areas were largely covered (85-90%) by papyrus with the remaining area being pockets of open water (Dimentman *et al.* 1992: 18). The Hula Valley contains as many as 70 springs. Mainly they are on the eastern side along the fault line and along the foot of the Golan Heights. Some fed directly into the lake, more into the swamp. At the northern end of the valley the streams converged to

become tributaries to the three main arteries – the rivers, Senir, Dan and Hermon. These three joined before fracturing once more into the Jordan, Az-Zawiya and Tur'a. The Az-Zawiya disappeared into the swamp but the other two (the Jordan being the stronger) flowed through into the lake (Dimentman *et al.* 1992: 22-24). The temperature of the water in the lake varied on average between 12.0° C to 27.3° C (December 1938 – August 1945) and there is a total absence of brackish water unlike further south in the Jordan and Kinnereth (Dimentman *et al.* 1992: 27-28). The land north of the lake was fertile arable land and good grazing land for cattle. The lake itself was a good supply of food and the papyrus found in the swamps was used as building material and fuel as well as for rope and mats (Dimentman *et al.* 1992: 110).

The City of Dan

Location

The site of Tel Dan is located in the verdant, extreme north of Israel. The area, just southwest of Mt. Hermon, is a lush and fertile one. One of the sources of the River Jordan, the *Nahr Leddan*, rises near by and provided the city with a constant supply of fresh water. The spring supplies more than 250 million cubic metres of water a year (that is more than an eighth of the water modern Israel consumes in a year). The city lies at the northern end of the fertile Hula valley which has long been an area of rich agricultural land. There is little doubt that Dan occupied a position of strategic importance. It lay on the intersection of two main routes. The north-south road ran from Israel, past Hazor and along the valley routes to the north between Mt. Hermon and Mt. Lebanon. The east-west route probably saw even more activity as it was the main artery between Tyre and Damascus. The tel occupies a site of just over 20 ha and rises 18m above the surrounding plain (Biran 1994: 23).

Significant changes have occurred to the plain around Dan since antiquity. It was only in the 1950s that Lake Hula was drained. Although the lake had been receding naturally (at a rate of 2m a year) it still covered an area of 14km^2 with

a further surround of 177km^2 of marsh and swamp (Dimentman *et al.* 1992: 10-11, 18, 25). It is estimated that the lake's edge was only approximately 3.5km south of Dan during the mid first millennium BCE (Zevit 2001: 183). The lake would have supplied the city with papyrus and reeds as well as the more obvious water, fish, fowl and game birds (Zevit 2001: 183). Apart from the lake itself the local ecosystem also provided habitats for lions, bears, leopards (including the 'black panther' variety), wolves, foxes, jackals, hyenas, otters, boars and gazelles (Dimentman *et al.* 1992: 110). Zevit (2001: 183) suggests that during the Iron Age reed boats were used on it, similar to the poled rafts utilised by mid 19th century Bedouin who settled next to the lake. The land between Dan and the northern edge of Lake Hula would have been dry enough during the summer to enable the planting of wheat and barley. To the east of Dan was marsh land. There are five other Iron Age tels between Dan and the ancient limit of Lake Hula – that is five settlements in only 3.5km (Zevit 2001: 185).

Biblical References

A quick search for the word Dan using an online concordance (internet ref. 1) reveals fifty-four references in the NRSV text. Twenty-two of these refer to the place of Dan rather than the tribe. Nine of the entries are the classic representative phrase for the land of Israel 'From Dan to Beer-Sheba' which – akin to the phrase 'From Land's End to John O' Groats' – came to represent the length of the territory. Four more also use Dan as a geographical marker, that of the northernmost point of Israel. Four are in connection with the perceived idolatry associated with the *bamah* at the city. Two are concerned with the Israelite capture and renaming of the city and two more are near identical sentences listing the cities captured in a campaign by Ben-Hadad of Damascus. The one remaining reference is when the city was visited by those undertaking a census in the time of David.

The biblical texts do not tell us much about Dan. Geographically it was considered the northernmost point of the kingdom and had a sanctuary which was thought to be idolatrous. It had become an Israelite city when the tribe of

Dan, displaced by the Philistines from their original portion of land, moved north to resettle. They captured the city by force, killed the inhabitants and burnt down the city. They then occupied it and renamed it after their ancestor.[4] It is also noted that at some point the city was captured by Ben-Hadad, king of Aram-Damascus.

The timing of the Israelite capture of the city appears to have occurred sometime during the time of the Judges, before the establishment of the monarchy (anywhere in the 12th and 11th centuries if we are to accept traditional biblical scholarship dating). The city was conquered by Ben-Hadad (during the reign of the Israelite king Baasha) as part of a deal struck between the Aram monarch and King Asa of Judah. There was an ongoing war between the two Israelite kingdoms and Asa paid Ben-Hadad to betray his former allies Israel and attack (1 Kings 16-20; 2 Chron 16:1-6). According to traditional biblical scholarship dating this puts the assault on Dan in the early 9th century (NRSV 338OT).

Archaeology

This section provides an overview of the Late Bronze and Iron Age period archaeology. It will show how this material has been interpreted by Avraham Biran and others and offer a critique of some of these interpretations. Other accounts, notably Finkelstein 1999 and Finkelstein and Na'aman 2005, of the region are also covered and these open the way for alternative histories of the region.

The two most high profile archaeological finds in the northern Hula region have both been uncovered at Dan. These are the 'Royal Sanctuary' and the 'Tel Dan Inscription'. The first is known because it is mentioned a number of times in the biblical texts as being a site of religious heterodoxy; the latter has been seized upon by conservative scholars in their response to 'minimalist' attitudes over the historicity of the biblical texts.

[4] Joshua 19:47 cites the previous name as Leshem; Judges 18:29 records it as Laish.

Excavations began in 1966 under the direction of Avraham Biran. Originally a rescue dig, the project turned into the longest ongoing excavation in Israel. After the end of the Six-Day War in 1967 the scope of the excavations were extended and it was then that Area T was opened up and 'The Sacred Precinct' was discovered. The city dates back to the Early Bronze Age and was continually occupied through to the Iron Age II. Although there is evidence of settlement from the Neolithic (beginning of 5th millennium) this is intermittent and there appears to have been a period of about a thousand years where the site was unoccupied (Biran 1994: 30). The original Canaanite city (Laish / Leshem) is mentioned on a few occasions in the Bible as well as in the Execration Texts, Mari tablets and the records of Thutmose III (DeVries 1997: 164).

STRATA AND CHRONOLOGY OF TEL DAN

Stratum	Archaeological Period	Date B.C.E.
XVI	Pottery Neolithic	5th millennium
XV	Early Bronze II	30th–
XIV	Early Bronze III	–23rd centuries
XIII	Middle Bronze I	23rd–20th centuries
XII	Middle Bronze IIA	20th–19th centuries
XI	Middle Bronze IIA–B	18th century
X	Middle Bronze IIB	18th–17th centuries
IX	Middle Bronze IIC	17th–16th centuries
VIII	Late Bronze I	16th–15th centuries
VII	Late Bronze II	14th–13th centuries
VI	Iron I	12th century
V	Iron I	12th–first half of 11th centuries
IVB	Iron I and II	second half of 11th– first half of 10th centuries
IVA	Iron II	second half of 10th–beginning 9th centuries
III	Iron II	9th–beginning 8th centuries
II	Iron II	second and third quarters of the 8th century
I	Iron II	end of 8th–early 6th centuries
	Persian	6th–4th centuries
	Hellenistic	4th–1st centuries
	Roman	1st century B.C.E.–4th C.E.

Fig. 2: strata and chronology of Tel Dan (from Biran 1994: 11)

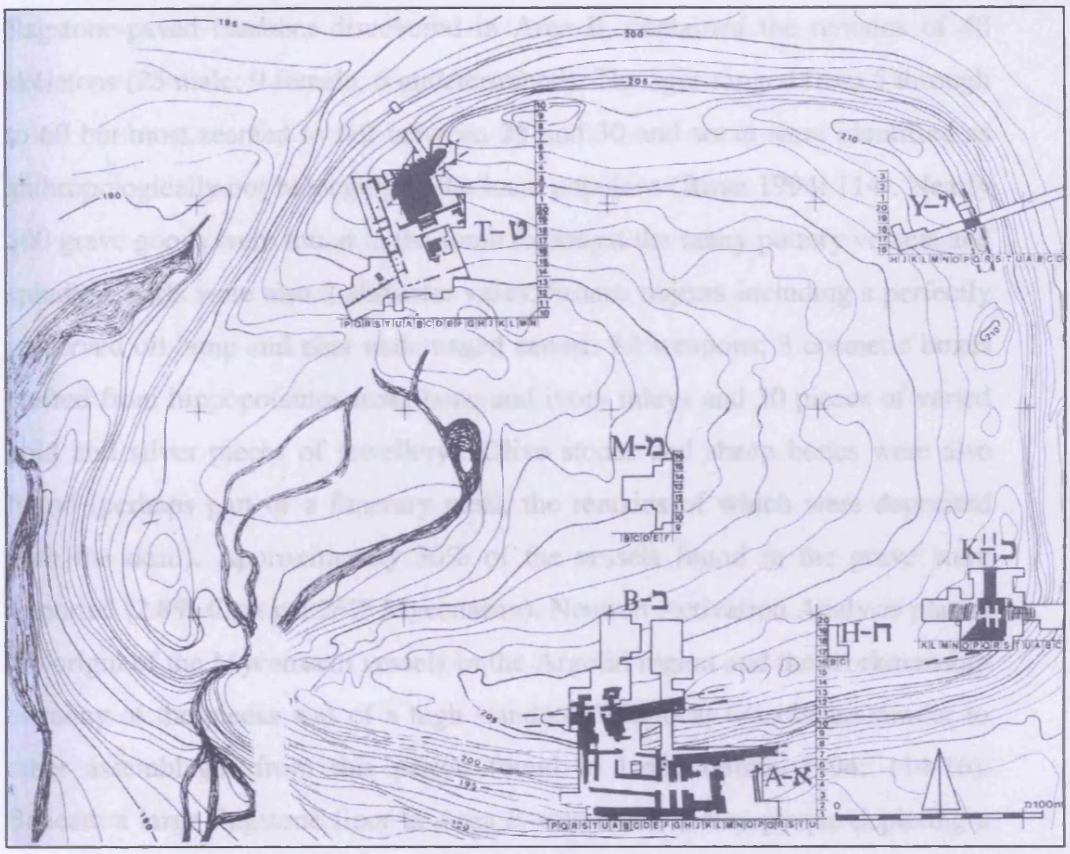


Fig. 3: topographic map of Tel Dan showing excavation areas (after Biran 1994: 25)

The Bronze Age / Iron Age Transition

The Late Bronze Age (LBA I – 16th-15th centuries; LBA II – 14th-13th centuries) saw an expansion on the Middle Bronze city (pop. estimate less than 3000 (Biran 1994: 91)). Notable amongst the finds from that period was the evidence of metal-working and the 'Mycenaean Tomb' but there were a number of other finds which hinted at a place of 'growth, development and cultural exchange' (Biran 1994: 108).

The metal-working finds are evidence of an industry which continued at the site through to the Iron I. Apart from the metal-working and an unusual jar burial of

a four week old infant discovered beneath the stone floor of a room there is a lack of material from the LB I period (Biran 1994: 108).

The LB II period is materially richer. The 'Mycenaean Tomb', a stone-walled, flagstone-paved chamber discovered in Area B, contained the remains of 40 skeletons (25 male; 9 female; 6 undetermined). The ages ranged from 5 through to 60 but most seemed to fall between 25 and 30 and some were identified as anthropologically not belonging to the local populace (Biran 1994: 114). Nearly 500 grave goods were found in the tomb (amongst the many pottery vessels and spindle whorls were also 2 alabaster vases; bronze objects including a perfectly preserved oil lamp and near undamaged censer; 83 weapons; 3 cosmetic boxes crafted from hippopotamus tusk; bone and ivory inlays and 30 pieces of varied gold and silver pieces of jewellery). Olive stones and sheep bones were also found (perhaps part of a funerary meal, the remains of which were deposited with the dead). Approximately 30% of the vessels found in the grave were imported (2.8% Cypriot; 26% Mycenaean). Neutron Activation Analysis placed the origin of the Mycenaean vessels in the Argolid region and the workmanship of many of the pieces was of a high standard. The local vessels are similar to other assemblages from this period found in Israel (Biran 1994: 114-16). Beneath a large flagstone floor in Area B was found a clay plaque depicting a figure (dubbed the 'Dancer from Dan' due to his pose) carrying what has been identified as a lute and wearing apparel similar to a kilt (akin to figures depicted in Hittite, Mesopotamian and northern Syrian plaques (Biran 1994: 120)). An Egyptian scarab of Rameses II was found in Area Y and is another find (along with those previous noted) which indicates the commercial and cultural activities of the city at that time although it is worth noting that Biran (1994: 122) considers this normal for the period (before the apparent collapse at the end of the Bronze Age which appears to have affected the entire eastern Mediterranean).

Iron Age I / II

For Biran there was a very clear Iron Age sequence apparent at Dan. The start of the period was marked by a distinctive change in settlement pattern and

material culture. There is a thin destruction layer of collapse and burnt residue visible which Biran (1994: 126) concluded marked the end of the Bronze Age and with it the end of Canaanite occupation of the city. The next layer, Stratum VI, was characterised by the deep storage pits which are found clustered together all about the site. Some of these pits were lined with stone, others were not. Animal remains found in the pits contained mainly sheep and goats, some cattle, fresh-water fish and molluscs (as well as the singular remains of a gazelle, a bird and a dog) (Biran 1994: 135). Biran (1994: 128) writes that the pits are evidence of radical change of lifestyle and indicative of a change of population at Dan. He speculates that the pits were dug by a people who were used to a nomadic / semi-nomadic way of life which fits nicely with Biran's preferred biblically driven interpretation.

Pottery found in the pits displays a change in character with a now complete absence of the richer Mycenaean or Cypriot imports. Instead many large amphora and pithoi appear which were mainly used to hold oil, wine and water (Biran 1994:129). Of these, the dominant type is the 'collared rim jar' which has so often been associated (albeit debatably) with Israelite settlement since Albright first suggested it in the 1930s (Biran 1994: 132). There is also the 'Galilean' pithos similar to an LBA type found mainly around Hazor and Dan (Biran 1994: 129). Bichrome decoration, which was common in the LBA still appears but in a degenerate form while other forms such as large kraters and cooking pots appear in large quantities, all of which, according to Biran, point to the material of a semi-nomadic society and represent the settling of the tribe of Dan after their conquest of the Canaanite city. This equation of 'pots equal people' has been discredited as too simplistic (e.g. Jones 1997, London 2003).

Equally one could suggest that in the aftermath of Bronze Age collapse the more semi-nomadic nature of the initial settlement on the site could have been a practical choice on the part of survivors from the previous site who had seen their previously prosperous city destroyed and friends and relatives killed. The storage pits and large amphorae were used so that the people there could swiftly decamp and carry supplies with them if a similar threat were posed while the large cooking pots and kraters associated with nomadic people may have been

adopted for the same reason. The absence of Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery appears unremarkable following the Bronze Age collapse and its effect upon trade and infrastructure. Biran (1994: 126) states that the Iron Age was a 'total change in character and material culture' yet the bichrome continues to be produced in a degenerate form, which is in line with processual post-catastrophe thinking (Renfrew 1979), and a variation of the 'Galilean' pithoi which was common in the LBA Hula region. The change in living style and material culture can be explained without population change and, more particularly, without need to resort to the biblical texts.

Stratum V shows a more urbanised settlement than that of Stratum VI. The limit of this stratum is marked by a thick (50cm or more) destruction layer across the city. Biran (1994: 135-38) dates this to the mid 11th century and offers no direct explanation for it except to link it in the vaguest terms to the biblical account of the capture of the Ark from Shiloh by the Philistines. Rather than linking this to a biblical event I suggest it is more likely to have been a result of early fighting between the Aramaeans and the city residents – perhaps the city had been largely independent at that point, unwilling to bow to Aramaean suzerainty, and had been destroyed and then controlled (even annexed) by Aram-Damascus? That would mean it was under the control of the Aramaeans for a century and a half before the Israelite incursion at the end of the 10th / beginning of the 9th century.

Although two distinct floor levels were discerned in Stratum V the walls remained the same. The pottery was very similar to that of the previous stratum apart from the appearance of a 'Phoenician' (Tyrian) type pithos so called because it is found commonly in that region as well as in the Galilee. There was also an increase in the variety of smaller vessels such as juglets, bowls and chalices which Biran attributes to an increasingly sedentary existence over the period (Biran 1994: 141). Rafael Frankel (1994: 29) claims that regional variation and continuity are the two most significant characteristics of pottery in the upper Galilee in terms of understanding the history of the region. The 'Tyrian jar' is found at Dan and other sites along the Lebanese border and its use is continuous throughout the LBA into the IA. The 'Tyrian jar' is contrasted

with the 'Galilean jar' which is found further south in the Galilee and indicates 'separate, long-range cultural development in each area' (Frankel 1994: 29). According to Frankel (1994: 30-31) the biblical account of the settlement of the tribe of Dan in the city is corroborated by the archaeological material. The name of the city, confirmed by a Greek inscription, and the presence of 'Tyrian jar' types, 'Galilean jar' types, the 'collared-rim jars' more prevalent in the central highlands and some Philistine pottery is indicative of a southern group of people (Dan's portion originally located within Philistia) moving into the area. According to Frankel (1994: 34) the continuity of Canaanite material is much more apparent in Phoenician sites than Israelite. Despite this assertion Frankel still eagerly maintains that the Upper Galilee had a largely separate cultural, material and geopolitical tradition in comparison with the highlands further south (Frankel 1994: 34). Of note also is a clay figurine head discovered in the Area T (Sacred Precinct) destruction level.

Despite the destruction, the city was soon rebuilt and along the lines of the previous city following the existing building walls. Stratum IV is also divided into two phases which straddle the Iron I / Iron II transition. Dan IVB (mid 11th – mid 10th century) sees a continuation of the pottery but the large collared-rim jar disappears and the Phoenician and Galilean pithoi become less prevalent. There is an increase in Phoenician bichrome ware and smaller designs including jugs decorated with red and yellow slip. Bowls, many carinated and of various sizes, with a similar decoration were found in the open areas of IVA (mid 10th – beginning 9th century) and are similar to assemblages found at other 'Israelite' sites from this period (Biran 1994: 145-46).

Metal-Working

There is evidence of metal-working at Dan from as early as the LBI period but the major activity appears to have occurred across Strata VI-IVB (12th – beginning 10th centuries). The majority of finds were uncovered in Area B (just inside the main gate complex) although other discoveries were also made in Areas Y and K (Biran 1994: 157). There is a curious lack of metal finds; only an unfinished copper axe and two bronze objects – possibly spear butts, have been

found at the site nor even any moulds (apart from one from the LBI) (Biran 1994: 153-55). What makes this so curious is the widespread evidence of metal-working. David Ilan (1999: 126) describes it as 'one of the most extensive workshops yet uncovered in the Iron Age I Levant'. Another curiosity is that no evidence of metalworking has been found dating after the beginning of the 10th century. This is not to say that other smaller workshops may have continued elsewhere (Biran 1994: 157 speculates this) but that work apparently ceased in the Area B workshops.

Area A – The Fortifications and Gate

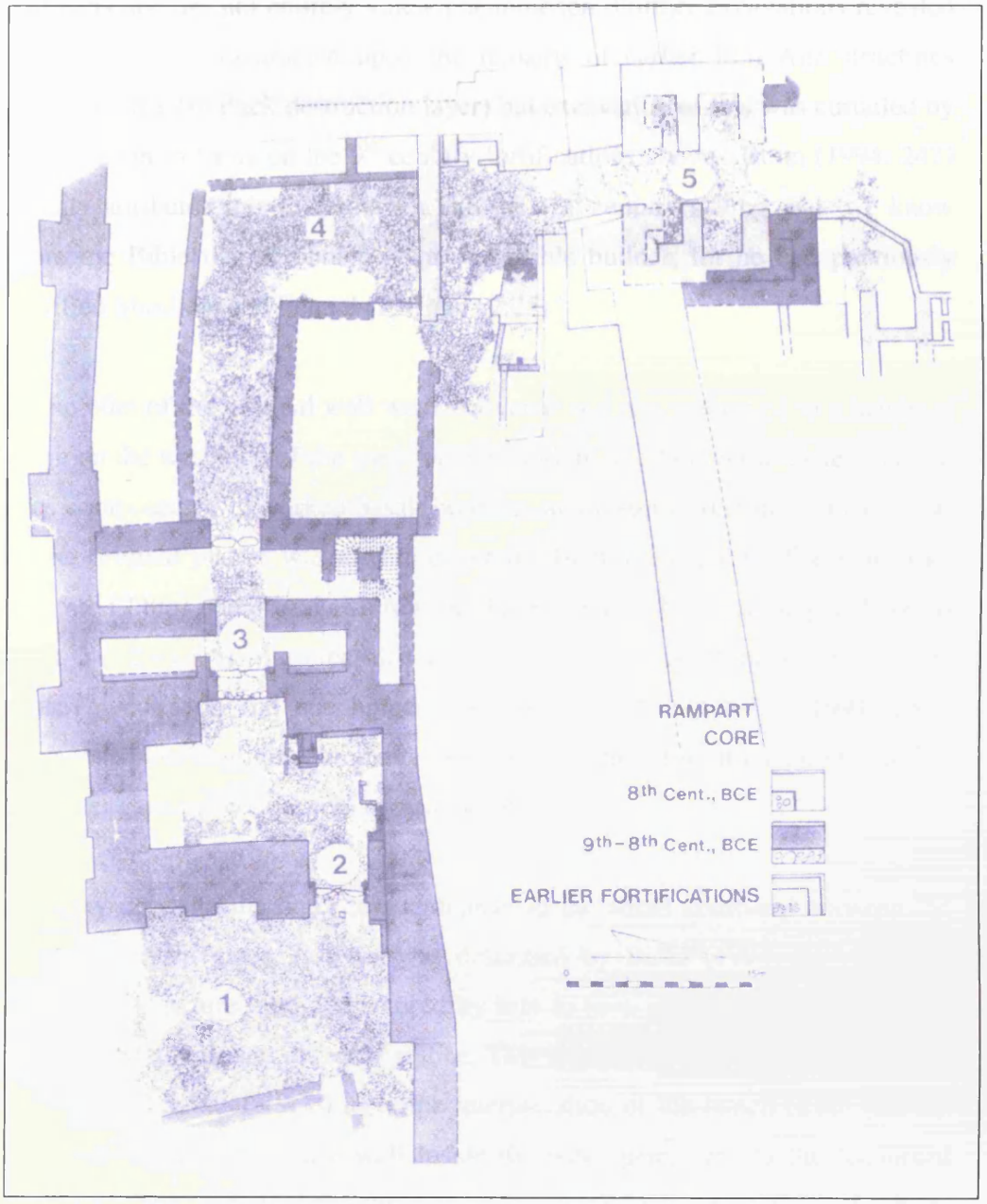


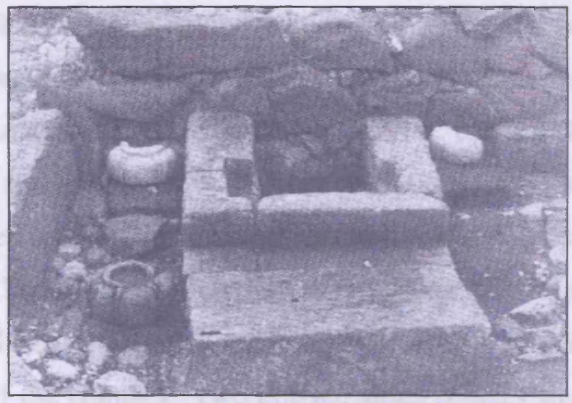
Fig. 4: plan of the city-gate complex. 1 – paved area; 2 – outer gate; 3 – main gate; 4 – paved way; 5 – upper gate.

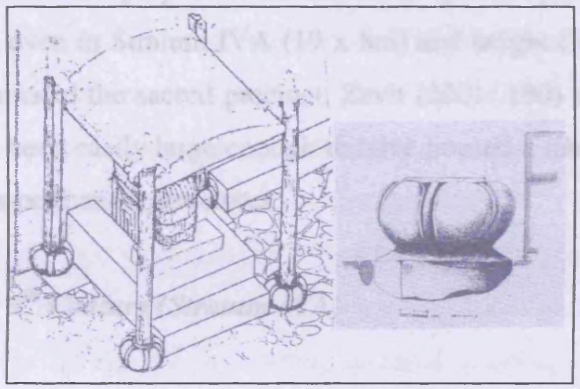
Located on the south central side of the tel, the wall and gate complex is one of the largest in the country, consisting of an east facing outer gate and a four-chambered main gate all set within a buttressed southern outer wall. These were constructed sometime in the first half of the 9th century according to Biran (1994: 246) and on that basis he attributed them to Ahab.

The 9th century fortifications are built at the foot of the Middle Bronze Age city ramparts and are not entirely a new phenomenon. Further excavations revealed that they were constructed upon the remains of earlier Iron Age structures (covered in a 1m thick destruction layer) but excavation of this was curtailed by the decision to focus on the 9th century fortifications above. Biran (1994: 247) readily attributed this to Jeroboam I in the 10th century stating that 'we know from the Bible that Jeroboam I was a capable builder, for he had previously fortified Shechem and Penuel (1 Kings 12:25).'

Some 60m of the original wall was uncovered and was preserved to a height of 1.4m on the west side of the gate complex and up to 3.5m on the eastern side. It was composed of unworked basalt boulders and a superstructure of mud-brick. Some original plaster was also discovered (Biran 1994: 237). The main gate (29.5 x 17.8m) comprised two towers (4.5 x 3.5m each) and four guard rooms (app. 3 x 2m each). Worn basalt slabs form the threshold of the 4m gateway in which a doorstop and one hinge socket was also found (Biran 1994: 238). Flagstone pavement runs throughout the gate complex, forming a piazza outside the outer gate and continuing up into the city.

Roughly opposite the outer gate entrance, in the small courtyard between the outer and main gates, is what was described by Biran (1994: 239-41) as a 'canopied structure' and conjectured by him to be a grand covered seat where the king would sit and dispense justice. This interpretation is again drawn from the Bible (2 Samuel 19: 8) as is the interpretation of the bench (Ruth 4: 1-2), that runs along the western wall inside the outer gate, next to the 'canopied structure'. The 'canopied structure' is rectangular (2.5 x 1.1m), built of ashlars with a step in front. This may have formed the platform for a chair and Biran (1994: 240) further speculated that some decorated pumpkin-shaped stones that were found (one *in situ*) may have been the bases of poles which would have supported a canopy. Assyrian reliefs from the mid 9th century show similar structures.





Figs. 5 and 6: base of canopied structure and suggested reconstruction with detail of base respectively (from Biran 1994: 239).

This speculation as to the public role of the gateway as more than simply a thoroughfare and fortification is further enhanced by another discovery. Immediately inside the outer gate, against the northern wall are five unshaped standing stones (30 – 50cm in height) which are presumed to have been *mazzevot.* Immediately to the west was discovered an assemblage of pottery vessels which appeared to reinforce the cultic association of the installation (Biran 1994: 245). The ruin of this complex has been dated to the Assyrian conquest of 732 and is based upon pottery discovered in the 1m thick destruction layer (Biran 1994: 246).

Area T – The Sacred Precinct

Area T is located on the north-west side of the tel close to a spring at the foot of the western slope. Prior to the start of excavations artefacts had been found in

the vicinity which hinted at a cultic tradition in the area. These were a 'Female Warrior in Smiting Pose' dating from the second half of the second millennium and an Egyptian statuette dated tentatively to the 14th century (Biran 1994: 161). The area above the spring looks out toward Mt. Hermon and the Lebanon Mountains as well as northern plain of the fertile Hula Valley. The dominant feature of Area T during the Iron Age was a large platform, identified as a *bamah* (Alpert Nakhai 2001: 184, Biran 1994: 168), (19m x 8m), at the north-north-west end of the complex. Two dressed stone courses were preserved to a height of 1.2m. The exact purpose of the *bamah* is open to speculation. Its large size (19 x 19m), even in Stratum IVA (19 x 8m) and height (3m) meant that it would have dominated the sacred precinct. Zevit (2001: 190) suggests that this area would have been easily large enough to have housed a tabernacle structure on it or other less permanent structures.

Late 10th / Early 9th Century (Stratum IVA)

The entire sacred precinct at this time occupied an area of 60m x 45m. To the west there lay an open area and rooms while to the east the area appeared to continue beyond the excavations (Biran 1994: 168). At the northern end of the precinct the structure identified as Bamah A (19m x 8m x 1.2m) was uncovered. Directly south of this, an on a lower level, was a collection of buildings in the middle of which was a courtyard with an altar. South of the larger room were found fragments from over forty bowls, plates cooking vessels as well as animal bones (sheep, goat and gazelle).

These lay on a pavement (6m x 5m) and Biran (1982: 35-36, 40) stated this may have been a food preparation area. The northern edge of the buildings abutted the southern edge of Bamah A. These northernmost rooms were identified by Biran (1994: 168) as storage rooms and contained an estimated 40 vessels, mostly storage jars (some showing Phoenician influence). In the smallest (5m x 2m), central room shallow plates and bowls were found (again with a Phoenician influence) next to two large (300 litre capacity) pithoi (red slip, decorated with red and black stripes) bearing snake motifs. A third pithos of the

same type was found outside south of the building. One of the pithoi had a seal impression depicting a man holding two ibexes (Zevit 2001: 181).

The complex does not appear to have been entirely enclosed. A wall runs down the western side and there are some buildings at the southern end. It is unclear, however, whether the eastern wall would have continued south to form an enclosure or whether a portion of wall further to the east would have performed that role. Perhaps the eastern side of the complex was left open. Within the courtyard was found what Biran (1994: 173) interpreted as the foundations of an altar, composed of basalt boulders (6m x 4.5m x 1m) covered over with two layers of large travertine blocks. The identification of these as the foundations of an altar is strengthened by it lying directly under the altar of stratum III. The courtyard surrounding it was cobbled and lying on top of the cobbles were found a decorated incense stand, the head of a male figurine and a bar-handle bowl full of small animal bones with a trident incised on the base (Biran 1994: 173). The lack of any roofing material or collapse on the cobbles led Biran (1994: 173) to assume that it was an open-air interior courtyard.

Four and a half metres south of the altar was a room built along the western wall of the complex. Along the western wall of the room, built into a raised terrace, was a sunken plastered basin flanked by two basalt slabs with a large sunken jar at either end. In the southern jar was found the faience head of an Egyptian king and in the northern jar was found a faience figurine of a monkey sitting next to the lower part of a person. A third faience figure, which may have been an Egyptian king, was found next to a broken snake-motif pithos located immediately north of the plastered installation but outside the room. Piled in the north-east corner of the room, alongside the basin installation were twelve dolomite stones of varying size and weight (e.g. 25, 40, 70kg), each with an apparently natural hole at one end. The floor of the room sloped down to the south-east corner where a sunken basalt receptacle lay. The nature of the plastered installation is debatable. Biran (1994: 177) rejects the notion of it being an oil press, although he does acknowledge that it resembles one. Drawing attention to the absence of olive stones, the unplastered (and therefore permeable) basin bottom and the large amount ash and burnt bone in and around the basin, Biran (1994: 177, 181) preferred instead to interpret the installation as

an area for water drawing rituals. Stager and Wolf (1981) contend that it was an oil-press, and this view has received much support (Dever 2005: 140); but there

Fig. 7: plan of sacred precinct (Stratum IVA). 1 – bamah; 2 – storage rooms; 3 – podium; 4 – plastered basin (from Biran 1994: 182).

are problems with that interpretation; Zevit (2001: 183) points out that the 'collecting vats' at each end of the installation are buried and their mouths too small to be used for that purpose. In what seems an amazing oversight Stager and Wolff also dismiss the possibility of the weights being 'votive anchors' because Dan is a 'landlocked site' (Stager and Wolff 1981: 96). Zevit (2001: 183-185) correctly notes that during the IA Dan was located only a few kilometres north of Lake Hula, that similar votive anchors have been found at Ugarit and that the presence of the springs at Dan may further add credence to the notion of water rituals occurring at the sacred precinct.

9th / early 8th Century (Stratum III)

This stratum was marked by a substantial reworking of the precinct. The *bamah* was extended and a floor of crushed yellow travertine was laid down.

The *bamah* was extended north to form a square platform approximately 18-19m along each face. Three of the faces were dressed with fine ashlar masonry in header-stretcher fashion. The exception was the north (rear) face. This face would not have been on public display and was positioned very close to the city wall. The northern half of the platform contains the thick (1.9m) foundations of fieldstone walls which appear to divide the space up into three small rooms. The east, south and west walls also appeared to have a stepped recess (3-12cm high and 20cm deep) along them. Biran (1994: 184) believed this to have been where a wooden beam was originally inserted into the construction and that it had subsequently rotted away (see 1 Kings 6:36; 7:12, Ezra 6:4). Biran (1994: 189) dated the reworking to c.860-850. The *bamah* may have been accessed by steps on the south side (Zevit 2001: 185). Continuing with his theory that that *bamah* may have supported a structure, Zevit (2001: 190) suggests that the expansion may have seen a new or larger structure, or perhaps realignment. Whether or not this was the case his notion of a tabernacle-like structure rising above the sacred precinct is an attractive idea. In the later phases, when the large altar would have partially blocked the view of the *bamah* and any ritual act upon it then the presence of an imposing structure makes more sense. We can then speculate that

this would have been the location of the *debir* (Holy of Holies) at Dan as there appears no other suitable area.

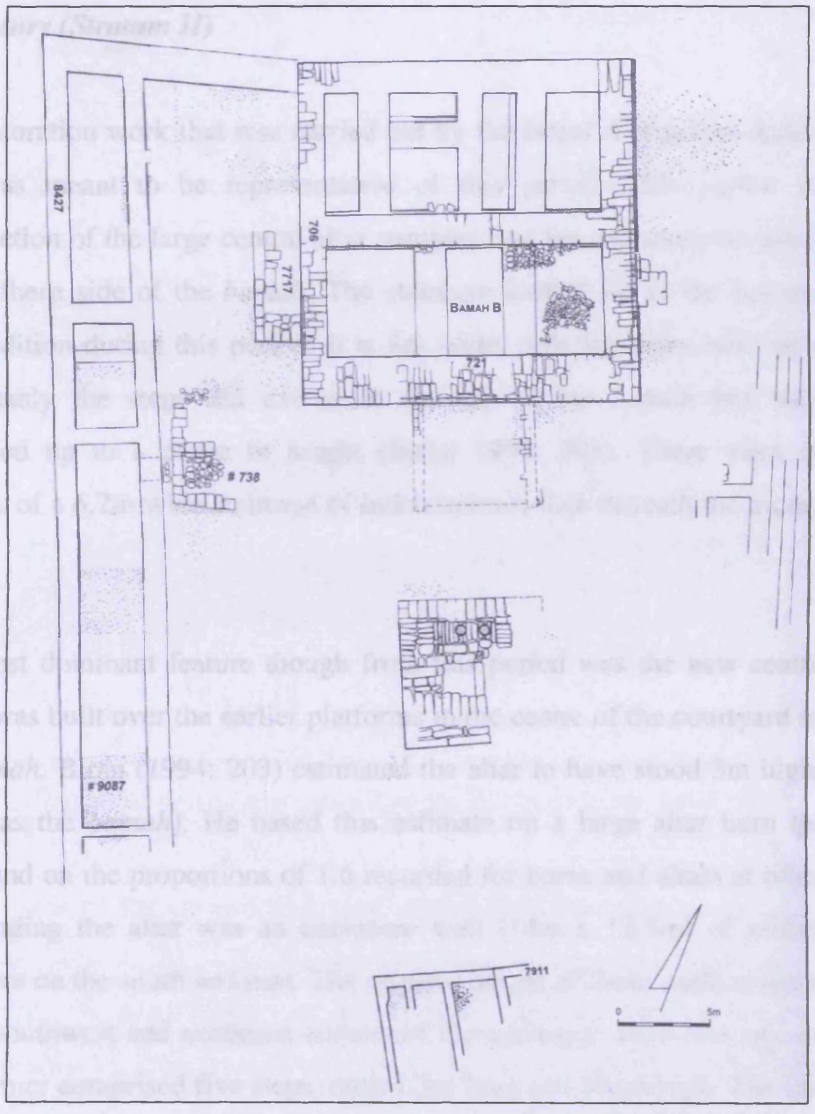


Fig. 8: plan of sacred precinct (Stratum III) (from Biran 1994: 149).

The area south of the *bamah* was cleared. The crushed travertine covered all the remains of the earlier courtyard buildings and extended further to the east and west as well as around the sides of the *bamah.* The effect was to leave an open space south of the *bamah* which previously had been quite cluttered with buildings. The platform south of the *bamah* (which may have been built on the foundations of an altar in stratum IVA) was extended by 2m to the east as well as being realigned to match the *bamah.* On the northern edge of this reworked platform there were found two plastered circles (50cm diameter) which may

have been the position of pillar bases. They were aligned with the exact centre of the *bamah* (Biran 1994: 191).

8th Century (Stratum II)

The restoration work that was carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority at Dan was meant to be representative of this period. This period saw the construction of the large central altar complex and the monumental staircase on the southern side of the *bamah.* The staircase leading up to the *bamah* was a new addition during this period. It is 8m wide, with the sides built of ashlars. Presumably the steps did extend to the top of the *bamah* but were only preserved up to a metre in height (Biran 1994: 203). There were also the remains of a 6.2m wide staircase of indeterminate date beneath the monumental one.

The most dominant feature though from this period was the new central altar which was built over the earlier platforms in the centre of the courtyard south of the *bamah.* Biran (1994: 203) estimated the altar to have stood 3m high (same height as the *bamah*). He based this estimate on a large altar horn that was found and on the proportions of 1:6 recorded for horns and altars at other sites. Surrounding the altar was an enclosure wall (14m x 12.5m) of ashlars with entrances on the south and east. The original height of these walls is not known. In the southwest and northeast corners of the enclosure were two sets of steps. The former comprised five steps, each 1.5m long and 50cm high. The latter had three steps, of the same dimensions. Biran (1993: 203) suggests that these led up to the central altar – nothing of which remains. In the northwest corner of the enclosure was found a 1.4m x 1m flagstone pavement. Thirty centimetres south of this was found a carved four-horned limestone altar (38 x 40 x 35cm). The upper surface was heavily calcined (Biran 1994: 203).

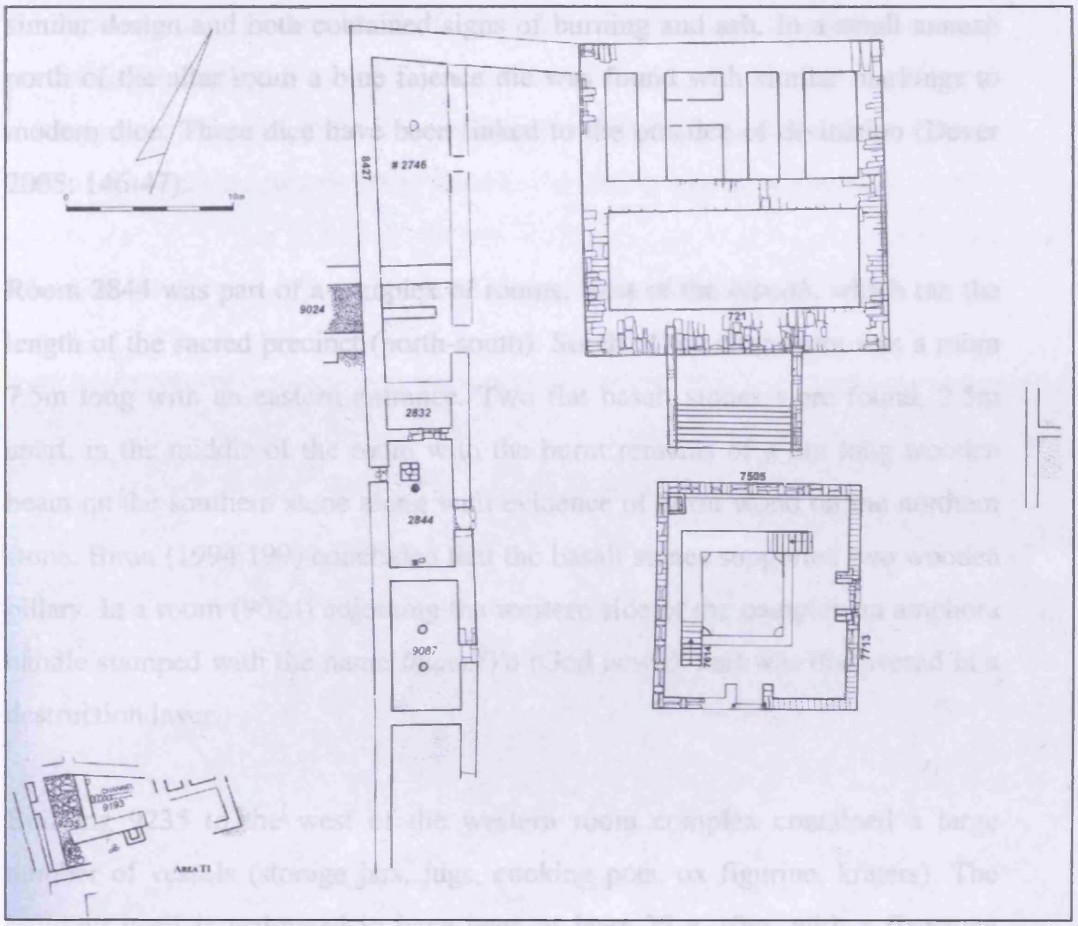


Fig. 9: plan of sacred precinct (Stratum II) (from Biran 1994: 163).

To the west of the *bamah* and altar, excavations revealed a room (2844) in which an altar (1.03 x 1.03m x 27cm) comprising five field stones was discovered. The identification of this feature as an altar was confirmed by the nearby finding of three iron shovels (two together 70cm north and one 1.05m to the south), a bronze carinated bowl (1.5m east) and an upturned, sunken half-jar (20cm south) full of ash. The ash contained burnt bone. There were also traces of burning on the surface of the fieldstones (Biran 1994: 192-195). The altar was found in a room which had entrances on both the east and west. The altar lay directly in front of the western entrance. Directly beneath the altar was found a bronze and silver sceptre head similar to heads found at Nimrud (9cm high, 3.7cm wide and hollow). It would have slotted on to the head of a sceptre. Such sceptres are associated with priests and royalty (Biran 1994: 198). Two more altars were discovered in the room, along the southern wall, these were made of carved travertine. The two (44cm and 30cm high respectively) were of

similar design and both contained signs of burning and ash. In a small annexe north of the altar room a blue faience die was found with similar markings to modern dice. These dice have been linked to the practice of divination (Dever 2005: 146-47).

Room 2844 was part of a complex of rooms, west of the *bamah*, which ran the length of the sacred precinct (north-south). South of the altar room was a room 7.5m long with an eastern entrance. Two flat basalt stones were found, 2.5m apart, in the middle of the room with the burnt remains of a 2m long wooden beam on the southern stone along with evidence of burnt wood on the northern stone. Biran (1994:199) concluded that the basalt stones supported two wooden pillars. In a room (9024) adjoining the western side of the complex an amphora handle stamped with the name *ImaddiYo* (God is with me) was discovered in a destruction layer.

Building 9235 to the west of the western room complex contained a large number of vessels (storage jars, jugs, cooking pots, ox figurine, kraters). The building itself is estimated to have been at least 25 x 10m, with a flagstone pavement (Biran 1994: 204-05). The entire sacred precinct was covered by a thick destruction layer attributed by Biran (1994:206) to the Assyrian conquest c.732.

The Direction of People

Zevit (2001: 190-91) suggests that the form of construction in Stratum II indicates a religious hierarchy. In tripartite and broad-room temples access is increasingly limited the further that one moves into the temple, the Dan site also has an exclusivity of access, though it is less obvious. The *bamah* and the raised altar (Stratum II) are obvious candidates for restricted access. The complex around the raised altar with its entrances to the east and south may have been a way of guiding the flow of people with their sacrificial offerings up to and away from the altar. Although the complex was only built during what has been identified as the last Israelite phase it may have formalised in architecture previous patterns of movement and ritual. In the same way, the altar room may

have been a place of sacrifice for those not privileged enough to have access to the full cult complex. If sacrifice was conducted in the altar room (as opposed to it being a cooking hearth) then participants would have been conducted either outwards (west) or inwards (east) towards the altar complex and *bamah.*

Mazzevot

Fig. 10: five standing stones (*mazzevot*?) to the right of outer gate (from)

Mazzevot (standing stones) are frequently mentioned in the Bible. They appear to serve different purposes such as marking epiphanies (Gen. 35: 14-15), commemorating treaties (Gen. 31: 44-8) and victories (1 Sam. 15:12) and as boundary markers. They were also, and this was perhaps their main purpose, used as representatives of the deity / deities. Their use was widespread amongst the Canaanites and other Near Eastern peoples and despite prohibitive orders to the contrary (Exod. 23:24; 34:13; Deut. 7:5) their continued use by the Israelites is also apparent (Negev & Gibson 2001: 325). There are five sets of *mazzevot* at Dan. Four of these are located so as to be viewed facing north (Zevit 2001: 194). Four of the five are dated to the Israelite period ($9^{th}/8^{th}$ C) and one (a set of

three stones on a platform) to the Assyrian period (7th C). The groupings of five stones in the earlier examples could represent five different deities while the latter set of three signifies a pared down version (Zevit 2001: 195). Their location, around main gateways, appears to suggest that they were readily accessible to all (Zevit 2001: 195). This raises the possibility that perhaps the *mazzevot* may have been intended to be a general representation of deities allowing passers-by to impose on them any specific identity they wished, thus reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of Dan.

Stratigraphy

There are conflicting versions of the Iron Age stratigraphy at Dan. In Biran's 1994 book *Biblical Dan*, which is an overview of 30 years of digging across the site, he divides the Iron Age into four separate strata (Biran 1994: 11). The Israelite sacred precinct falls into the latter three of these (IVA, III and II). Although there is architectural continuity between the strata, the sacred precinct is significantly reshaped between IVA and III, while stratum II sees a major remodelling of the central altar complex. Elsewhere the architectural works of strata III and II are seen as one phase, incorporated under stratum III (Biran 1982: 19 fig.4). These are the plans that Zevit (2001) has followed. Dever (2005: 139) also acknowledges that there is a problem.

Interpretation

Biran's interpretation was driven by the Tanakh. He continually anchored the history of the site to the texts. He spoke in a very matter-of-fact manner about the events related therein as if those events were universally authenticated and not the subject of intense and continued debate. Statements such as, *'We did not find the golden calf. Its precious gold was no doubt carried off by any one of the foreign kings who conquered Dan'* (Biran 1994: 168) attest to the nature of his approach. He was Schliemann-esque, with preconceived expectations of what he should find and its meaning. He attributed the material in Area T *'to the structures erected by Jeroboam I when he set up the golden calf'* (Biran 1994: 181). This was stated as fact and without ambiguity. Beyond this he speculated

as to where the golden calf may have been erected and drew ideas about ritual practice directly from the Tanakh (Biran 1994: 177, 181).

Questions of Identity

The Wider World

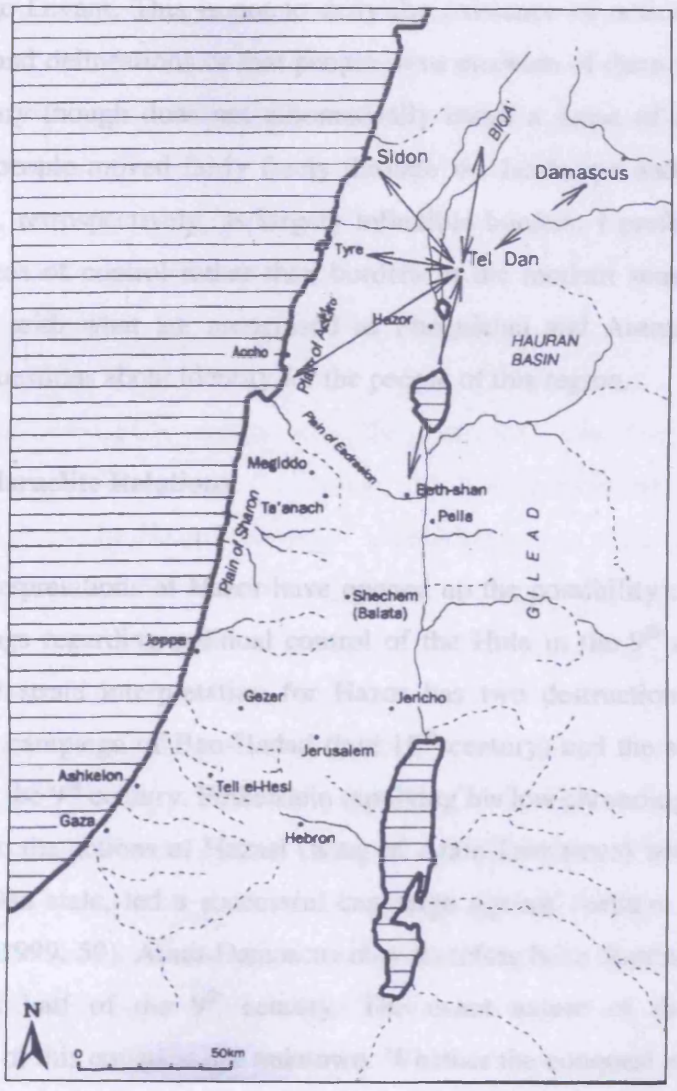


Fig. 11: Schematic depiction of Tel Dan's long distance exchange relations in Iron Age I (from Ilan 1999: 200) giving an impression of the region of distance to major cities.

Where does Dan fit in to the broader geographical area of the Iron I / II? Its relationship with Damascus, Sidon and Tyre would be as strong, if not stronger

than with Jerusalem (certainly) and perhaps even Samaria and Shechem. The modern concept of nations and statehood should not automatically be applied to the LBA / IA Levant. While it is apparent that concepts such as kingdoms, empires and territories were familiar to the writers of various historical texts (including the Tanakh) this does not mean an automatic leap to full-blown notions akin to modern ideas of nationality. Even the Roman idea of citizenship or the earlier Greek concept from which this is derived may be inapplicable to the Iron Age Levant. This is not to deny the existence of notional territorial boundaries and delineations or that people were unaware of them. To be aware of a boundary though does not automatically entail a sense of restriction. It seems that people moved fairly freely through the landscape and across what can be seen, retrospectively, as largely inflexible borders. I prefer to think in terms of areas of control rather than borders in the modern sense. The close associations with what are recognised as Phoenician and Aramaean peoples must raise questions about identity for the people of this region.

Aramaean-Israelite Relations

Recent reinterpretations of Hazor have opened up the possibility of alternative understandings regarding political control of the Hula in the 9th century. The conventional strata interpretation for Hazor has two destruction layers, one dated to the campaign of Ben-Hadad (late 10th century) and the second in the latter half of the 9th century. Finkelstein (applying his low chronology) attributes the second to the actions of Hazael (King of Aram-Damascus) who, according to the Tel Dan stele, led a successful campaign against northern Israel c.835 (Finkelstein 1999: 59). Aram-Damascus may therefore have dominated the area in the latter half of the 9th century. The exact nature of the scale and composition of this conquest are unknown. Whether the conquest was complete or partial and whether it was governed directly from Damascus or by a subordinate entity can only be guessed at (Finkelstein 1999: 60). According to Finkelstein (1999: 65), it appears evident that the Aramaeans were in at least nominal control of the area for significant periods of time up to the 10th century. Over the course of the next two centuries (up until the end of the 9th century) there were at least two more major incursions by the Aramaeans as mentioned

above. If these were either side of marked Israelite power growth and territorial expansion under the Omrides then Dan would have swapped hands at least three times over a century and a half. It was not the Israelites who managed to break the Aramaean hegemony in the area but rather the activities of Assyria, who laid siege to Damascus around the turn of the 9th century. It was only then that Israel was able to recover (expand?) its territories (Finkelstein 1999: 62). Finkelstein further elucidates upon his theory that the north remained unpopulated by the Israelites until the 9th century conquests of that area. Drawing upon work by Ilan (1999) he posits that the Iron I expansion of villages in the Hula Valley were the indigenous population (Canaanite?) recovering from the traumas experienced at the end of the LBA (Finkelstein 2000: 238). This theory dovetails nicely with the idea that the pits we see in Stratum VI at Dan were representative not of a new semi-nomadic population as Biran (1994: 128) suggested but of a wary indigenous population.

The Tel Dan Inscription opens with the statement *'the king of I[s]rael penetrated into my father's land'* (Lemaire 1998: 4-5). Finkelstein (1999: 60-61) believes this to be Hazael talking of Omrid expansion under Ahab and on this basis suggests that the area north of Galilee had previously been considered Aramaean by the Aramaeans. Although Finkelstein's article is concerned particularly with Hazor it raises a number of interesting points because of its undoubted parallels to Dan. According to the low-chronology, Dan IVA was the city destroyed by Hazael bringing forward Biran's dating about half a century. Speculation that after its destruction Hazael rebuilt Hazor (Finkelstein 1999: 61) leads one to ask what sort of reconstruction occurred at other sites that were conquered after the completion of the campaign. If the citadel at Hazor and the fortification of Bethsaida were attempts to strengthen the new border with Israel (Finkelstein 1999: 61) then it does not necessarily follow that Dan would have been rebuilt in a similar fortifying manner being set back far from the new border. However, in economical terms the site was located upon a prime trading route linking Damascus with Phoenicia and so it makes sound financial sense for Hazael to have ensured Dan was in a position to encourage and control trade. What affects the conquest, re-construction and continued administration of these sites (including Dan) had on the population is not easy to say from the

material culture alone. Finkelstein (1999: 67) argues for the existence of a heterogeneous population in the area during the Iron II on the basis of the variant inscription languages from the period. Because of a lack of information about culinary practices, Finkelstein (1999: 65) believes that it is not possible to determine from the material culture whether a site was Israelite or Aramaean at any given time. If the only way to determine Israelite from Aramaean is through culinary practice then this lack of evidence is testimony to the homogenous nature of the material culture of two apparently separate ethnic entities – Israelite and Aramaean. There is of course an assumption that there was a clear distinction in this area between 'Israelite' and 'Aramaean'. I am not so sure that such clean cut identities existed and that rather than identifying with the larger political polities people defined themselves much more regionally.

If we accept that the United Kingdom of David and Solomon in the 10th century is an ideological construct created by writers living centuries later, then the Omrid kingdom in northern Israel in the first half of the 9th century appears to be the first attested territorial Israelite state (Finkelstein and Na'aman 2005: 172). The Omrid expansion pushed back the borders of the Northern Kingdom to encompass the Hula Valley at this time. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman (2005: 184) suggest that this would refer to the expansion of the Omrids just prior to Hazael's accession. This gave Hazael a *casus belli* for his invasion. Finkelstein and Na'aman (2005: 185) conclude that the actions of the Omrids resulted in the 'creation of a diverse, multi-cultural state which was ruled from the highlands, with administrative centres in key areas', one of which was Dan.

Amnon Ben-Tor (2000: 9-11) disputes Finkelstein's Low-Chronology dating, refuting the revised timeline he applies to Hazor. Ben-Tor readily acknowledges the suggestion that Aramaean conquests accounted for many of the destruction layers in the north and, further, that parts of the north may have been under Aramaean rule for certain periods (Ben-Tor 2000: 11-12). Although he accepts the concept, he highlights two problem areas. He notes that almost everything regarding Aramaean incursions into northern Israel is based upon biblical texts with the notable exception of the Tel Dan stele (Ben-Tor 2000: 12). He also

remarks upon the 'double standard' use of biblical texts, claiming that Finkelstein is willing to use them when they support his suppositions and to criticise them when others use them to support alternative theories (Ben-Tor 2000: 14). Finkelstein (2000: 242) refutes this criticism of his use of biblical texts, claiming Ben-Tor's 'take all or dismiss all' argument is too simplistic and fails to grasp properly the complexities of biblical research. Primarily though Ben-Tor (2000: 12) focuses upon the point that although there may well have been Aramaean activity in the area the Aramaeans remain archaeologically invisible and no distinct material culture has been assigned to them. How then are we to write archaeologically about them? This cuts both ways; one is equally capable of asking not, how are we to identify the Aramaeans? But rather – how are we to identify the Israelites?

Biran (e.g. 1994: 278) readily admitted that the city of Dan was located in an area of political turmoil throughout the 10th and 9th centuries when Israel was at war with Aram-Damascus. For Biran though it appears that the nature of the city was thoroughly Israelite and that while the political boundaries may have shifted the ethnic make-up of the site remained firmly Israelite.

Such clean-cut presumptions over the ethnic identity of the site are highly debatable. The people living at Dan can not be represented under a homogenous label. They may have developed into what would later be characterised as Israelite – or they may not have. The Assyrian invasion of 733-32 meant that the apparent Israelite history of Dan and the Hula was an abbreviated one, sharing the fate of the rest of the Northern Kingdom.

Even if we accept the notion that Dan was, ethnically, a wholly Israelite city throughout the Iron Age and even if Biran is correct in this assumption then I still believe that he has glossed over many important and interesting issues in attempting to understand the site and the people who lived there. His passing acknowledgement of occasional Aramaean hegemony of Dan begs questions that are never broached.

Politics and Regionality

One of the major problems for attempting to write a non-Israelite history of the region during this period is that there is remarkably little evidence to turn to. Itamar Singer (1994) attempts to reconstruct the period from the middle of the 12th century to the start of the 10th century. In order to do this he examines Egyptian archaeological and historical material and Philistine archaeology, but the rise of Israel is based upon the biblical texts and, generally, the narrative is accepted. For the very north of Israel though, beyond Hazor, Singer admits that 'the status of the region at the beginning of the Iron Age I is still shrouded in mist' (Singer 1994: 309). This 'mist' does not truly begin to lift until the latter half of the 9th century. It is from this time that the city can at, least tentatively, be said to be a part of the territorial polity that is identified as the Northern Kingdom of Israel. That is not to say that the people of the region were orthodox YHWH worshipping Israelites. Many writers (e.g. Dever 2005, Zevit 2001) have readily admitted the unorthodox, at least according to the Deuteronomic writers, even heretical nature of the worship there. Despite this they are readily prepared to identify the site as Israelite. Biran (1994: 132) was, on the basis of collared-rim jars discovered in the pits of a fresh occupation layer, prepared to identify the site as Israelite dating from the 12th century.

The idea that Israel grew from a number of relatively isolated Iron I highland settlements (e.g. Finkelstein and Na'aman 1994:10) leaves us with a number of questions regarding the Hula region. The Hula is not the central highlands. The apparent collapse in the Late Bronze Age of the dominant regional powers left a power vacuum which was filled by the rise of a number of smaller territorial polities such as Aram-Damascus, Moab, Ammon, Philistia and Israel. The creation of these new territorial powers does not necessarily suggest any sort of homogeneity of the people who fell under their rule. It is important to recognise the different regionalities within the broader controls of the polities. This factor is mentioned by Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994: 13-14). Although they are speaking about the Late Bronze Age it remains applicable at all times, and particularly in the Hula valley with its relatively isolated landscape (i.e. the

particular effect of the hills and mountains on three sides which creates an enclosed, knowable land).

Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994: 17) recognise the problem of applying the name 'Israelite' to what was surely a 'complex ethnic, social and cultural reality'. The lack of any distinguishing material culture means that use of the term 'Israelite' is simplistic, assumptive and destined to fail. Although Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994: 17) make it clear that their use of the term 'Israel' to indicate a political entity is only for ease of reference, this still has the effect of glossing over other cultural groups present within the territory. The name Israel carries with it layer upon layer of embedded meaning which a simple definition at the start of a volume, despite being a well-intentioned step, cannot overcome.

Like Whitelam (1996), Finkelstein and Na'aman (1994: 14) call for the history of the region to be viewed in much broader terms. This is so as to appreciate the 'Israelite Settlement' as part of a long-term cyclical process, this particular wave being preceded by one in the Early Bronze I and a second in the Middle Bronze II. While this approach has the merit of placing the often too exalted events within historical context it further exacerbates a problem already apparent in the archaeology of the region – that of trying to access the everyday lives of the people who lived at that time.

We have seen how the site of Dan has been interpreted. This largely biblically driven interpretation falls in step with the majority of archaeological interpretation in Israel. The following chapter examines how such a discourse has influenced, and in turn been influenced by, the political situation of the region and its continuing implications.

Encounter on the Road

A hush had fallen over the group. The regular sound of oxen hooves trudged monotonously marking the distance travelled and with a calm inevitably closed on their destination. The morning had been cool and damp and the men had chattered away, the ribald wit flying back and forth had made the journey quick and easy. As they had stopped for food and to rest the animals the last of the cloud coverage melted to nothing and the sun threw down zeal from its greatest height. In the face of the afternoon heat the banter had died away and the oxen heads hung ever lower and lower. The bird song still called idly but even that sounded half-hearted to the merchant's ears. The woody creak of the carts, the occasional cushioned clunk of the pithoi against one another and the discordant tread of the little group's feet were the only other sounds.

Heading steadily uphill for most of the afternoon they had stopped a few times to let the animals breathe and drink but were on schedule to reach the city by the middle of the next day. The merchant looked up and about at the sky, the sun was lowering itself behind them, and their shadows had caught them up and overtaken them. Not far ahead was a clearing he knew about which he had used many times before. He told the others, mainly for the benefit of the two new men, and this perked them up a little. They began to fiddle and fidget, adjusting themselves in anticipation of rest and food.

The regular men, practised in their movement, unhitched the carts and prepared for the night ahead. The new men had been sent off to collect some fresh water from a stream. The oxen were fed and watered, wood collected and a fire struck, all in an unhurried manner. The evenings at that time of the year compensated for the hard, hot days. The merchant checked over his stock. Each cart was piled high; animal skins, leather goods, rich dyed fabric, decorated plates and bowls. A couple of pithoi contained dried figs and dates. On his last trip he had taken an order from a trusted contact and knew that when he arrived there would be waiting some of the very best wine and olive oil in the region and he already had plans for that once he was back on the coast. It was then that the oxen would really need their strength; just one of the large pithoi that contained those precious liquids needed two strong men to lift it. Each cart had enough room for six, all securely bound and padded to prevent any cracking should they knock against one another. That was why he preferred the

oxen. Apart from their strength they were steady and sure of foot, less likely to spill or break valuable cargo.

The men were gathering around the fire. When all four were settled the merchant began to bring out the food: bread and hummus, olives, some fruit and dried beef. Before they ate he took from its place on one of the carts a single small stone stele, planted it in front of the fire, said a few words and tossed some wheat, kept specifically for that purpose, into the flames. As he returned the stele and the others started in on the food a group of four men with a single donkey in tow appeared, their shapes coalescing out of the gathering gloom. An unexpected encounter on the road always brought with it anxiety and a little suspicion. During the day traffic was often frequent, particularly on a major route such at the one they travelled but as light gave way to dark it was wise to be on one's guard. Everyone knew it, strictly he only needed two men to work the oxen and to lift but he always travelled with four. It paid in the long term to have some extra bodies.

One of the newly arrived group, a large man, lifted a hand and approached slowly, the others hanging back. The merchant rose and moved to meet him halfway.

'May your gods protect you,' hailed the large man, polite but confident.

'And yours also,' the merchant responded automatically to the formulaic greeting. He looked beyond the first man to the other three beyond. There was a certain similarity of look, in the eyes and mouth, brothers perhaps. 'You are welcome to join us, please, sit and eat. We have food enough.' He half turned and gestured toward the fire with an expansive sweep of his arm.

The large man inclined his head in acceptance and gratitude. The four men came forward more readily now that the social niceties had been observed. They saw to the donkey and then joined the others. Returning to one of the carts the merchant collected some extra food and handed it to one of his men before returning to the fire himself, where the others waited patiently.

'Please, eat,' the merchant urged, 'and...perhaps, a little wine?' This was met with enthusiastic and delighted approval as he produced a bloated wineskin and handed it first to the large man he regarded as the leader of the other group. The large man took a good, long mouthful and passed it back to the merchant who did likewise before passing it on around the fire.

'Are you all brothers?' asked the merchant by way of initiating conversation.

'Aye, well myself and these two here are and him over there with the strange look is a cousin – but we let him tag along, it is a duty to help the less fortunate!'

'I've a few members of my own family like that,' the merchant replied joining in the joke, 'you, yes you for starters!' He pointed at one of his group who was making a face of mock surprise and hurt. 'My sister's boy,' he announced to the newcomers in a way that explained everything, 'that big one over there is my brother and those quiet two are along for the trip, a pair of farmers who fled to the coast when the armies came through.' A little silence fell, which the merchant, suddenly and acutely aware of the stranger's dialect, tried to bustle through. 'Heading west?'

'West? Yes...,' it was obvious the large man had noticed the change in atmosphere also, 'we are heading to one of the big ports, the man I work for does much trade there.'

'You come from...?' One of the two quiet men whom the merchant had identified as farmers now spoke for the first time. The large man sighed, he had been through this many times before in the last year, 'Yes, from there, but I am not a soldier my friend.'

'I am no friend of yours.'

Looking around the group the large man could see the anxious and embarrassed looks on the faces, 'It is just an expression,' he said with soft resignation.

'You may not have carried a spear yourself but you are just as guilty as the rest', the quiet man was now warming to his task.

'And how do you reckon?'

'What's that you are carrying there? The riches of plunder? The spoils of war?'

'Enough!' The merchant, surprised and embarrassed by the normally quiet man's outburst felt compelled to intervene. 'These people are our guests. I for one am just happy that there is peace. War is not good for anyone, except kings perhaps. It is certainly not good for trade. And you are a farmer, what do you care who controls these cities and roads. Before them it was someone else, and before them others. I am from the coast, you from the valley, what does it matter? Whichever soldier mans the walls you pay taxes just the same. Just because you hand it to one man and not another, does that mean you have any more to eat?'

'I was not a farmer', replied the quiet man, a little calmer, 'I lived by the swamp. And this has nothing to do with taxes. I was in the city when they came, trapped, we waited, all of us there like rats caught in a grain pit. It was so quiet, just the whimper and moans of scared children. In the morning suddenly everything was

noise, the cries of the children were drowned under the roar and clash and the screams of women. I managed to get out, I don't even know how. I ran through the narrow streets, people were crying out for help but what could I do? Up on to the ramparts and I jumped. Then I just ran and ran and ran until my legs collapsed from under me.'

'That is a sad tale...,' offered the large man.

'I haven't finished yet!' The quiet man practically shouted, and then, more collected, 'I found myself on the wrong side of the city. I had to get back to my wife and daughter but though my mind pleaded my body would not move but remained stubbornly in that long grass watching as the flames went up and the sound of violence gradually lessened. As night fell I finally found it within myself to move. Making my way to the swamps that are north of the city I crawled and pushed through that murky refuge. The light of the city burnt up into the sky, a foul offering to your gods, and I used it to guide me through that black night. Other fires flared up and I knew that outlying settlements, places I knew, were falling under your sword. Occasionally I saw movement, friendly or otherwise I knew not, and cared not, my fear sank me deeper into the swamp. As I drew nearer I came across the huts of people I knew, had eaten with and swapped stories with, some were burnt, others still burned, at one I saw a number of bodies and I despaired of what I might find when I finally returned to my own home but my body continued to cringe in terror at every unknown shriek and crash, nearly paralyzing me. When I did arrive after what seemed an agonising amount of time – the hut was empty, things were strewn about, and my wife and child were gone.'

'I feel for your loss.'

'Ha! You do?'

'Yes, but I did not do this. Like this gentleman we are merchants, traders, war is not good for us either,' the large man knew his words were falling upon deaf ears but felt compelled to make the effort.

'Do you honestly expect me to believe that? You sit there rubbing your hands in glee and greed, and profit off the back of their conquests. You may not have scaled the walls or plundered the sanctuaries but what you did is worse, your taxes and tacit support killed my family as much as any soldier.'

The quiet man's chest heaved in anger as he glowered across firelight at the larger man. For what seemed a long time the heavy threat of violence flooded the air around them. The large man, slow and considered in his movement, turned to the merchant, 'I thank you for the place at your fire and your food and

wine, perhaps it is for the best however if my men and I find another place to rest this night.'

'Nonsense, nonsense,' the merchant demurred, but half-heartedly.

The large man and the others in his group were already rising. The merchant accompanied them politely to their donkey as they prepared to depart. His muted apologies were accepted but unnecessary. The large man told him it was regrettable but understandable and that he knew a man in pain when he saw one. The merchant went with them to the road and wished them well, apologising once more. He returned to the camp fire preparing to chastise the man but when he returned he found only three men. The quiet man had gone.

Chapter 4: The Politics of Archaeology

> ...more sins have probably been committed [in Palestine] in the name of archaeology than on any commensurate portion of the earth's surface...[an] unfailing source of cautionary examples.
>
> Sir Mortimer Wheeler (1956: 30, 53)

Zionism and the British Mandatory Period

The Zionist movement was a product of the 19th century but the idea of a Jewish return to Palestine had been around within Christian circles since the Protestant Reformation. This, what in retrospect can be termed, Christian Zionism was born out of a desire to see certain prophecies fulfilled and anticipate Armageddon, Judgement Day and the *Parousia.* The Zionist imperative in Britain was reflected in 19th century works such as Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and key establishment figures of the colonial age including Lloyd George and Disraeli and even Churchill were interested in links between Christianity and Judaism (Masalha 2007: 93). Without the support of the West it is debatable whether the establishment or maintenance of the state of Israel would have been possible.

It was the Balfour Declaration of 1917 that not only provided a massive impetus toward the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine but also served to highlight existing prejudice towards the existing Arab population. A combination of European fear of Islam, interest in the biblical past and the strategic importance of the Levant meant that the views of the native Arab population were largely ignored despite occasional lip service to the contrary (Glock 1999b: 448-49). Balfour, in 1919, said:

> Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land...
>
> (quoted in Masalha 2007: 100)

There was a debate between Ben-Gurion and another founding father of Zionism, Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi, as to whether there could be an assimilation of the Palestinians. This was based upon the idea that the Palestinian people could be the descendants of Jewish survivors of the various Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman assaults upon the region. These people would have continued to live locally and later accepted Islam when it swept through the area. This notion was abandoned in the 1930s in the face of increased Palestinian resistance to Jewish settlement however (Masalha 2007: 36).

By 1945 Iraq and most of Transjordan had received independence from Britain as had Lebanon and Syria from France. Only Palestine remained under foreign rule. In Palestine as in the other countries mentioned above there was no significant move to train Arabs in the practice of excavating their own cultural resources (i.e. archaeology). Palestine also had a significant Jewish population, who largely remained separate from the Arabs, establishing exclusively Jewish institutions. The same can be said of the British who, having opened institutions such as The Department of Antiquities and The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem had no Arab students working at either. Two Arabs and two Jews were appointed to oversee their respective cultural interests but this did not stop half of the excavated finds disappearing overseas in return for sponsorship money (Glock 1999a: 305-7).

Glock (1999a: 307-8) notes that although there were a number of Arabs employed by The Department of Antiquities the vast majority were in menial tasks and that there were only two who had university degrees (B.A.). Compare this with the nine Jewish employees who held degrees (including three doctorates – all from European universities). This is at a time when three-quarters of the population in the area was Arab. The European ideas of

nationhood and the past were easily picked up on by Jews who had been educated in these traditions and who were eager to establish their own nation. Arab scholars of archaeology were virtually non-existent and the few there were had also been educated in Europe and naturally tended to follow the thinking of European institutions. There was a distinct lack of an 'intellectual connection with Islamic tradition' (Glock 1999a: 314) with which to counter-balance the overwhelming European Judaeo-Christian academic traditions. This shared European cultural heritage was surely a major advantage in attaining positions of responsibility under the British. The under-representation of Arabs is further evidenced in the membership of the Palestine Oriental Society (POS) (founded in 1920 and a more open organisation than the British dominated Department of Antiquities) which in 1932, had only ten resident Arab members out of a total of 191 (there were thirty-three resident Jewish members). It is perhaps unsurprising to note that most of the Jewish contributors in the POS were educated in Europe and America and wrote about biblical sites or issues. Also, as one would expect, the history of the POS, from its establishment in 1920 to its final issue in 1948, sees an increasing domination by Jewish writers (Glock 1999a: 309-10).

The interest about archaeological activity amongst Jewish groups (with its underlying concept of establishing direct physical links to the land) was a powerful instrument of propaganda which played a major role in the forming of internal identity among the immigrant Jewish community and of external world opinion regarding the justification and validity of a Jewish nation state. This did not go unnoticed by the Zionist movement which, despite its largely secular nature, was quick to see the possibilities. The employment of the Bible and its traditions to reinforce Zionist claims can be viewed as a cynical political ploy. Ben-Gurion was a secular Zionist who, though he rejected the theology of the Bible, embraced its narrative and utilised it as the driving force behind the movement – it did not matter to him whether the history actually happened or not; what mattered was that most Jews believed it (Masalha 2007: 26). As well as its general propagandist qualities a number of other key elements were also derived from the texts; these were the selection of Palestine as the homeland, its territorial boundaries, the language of Hebrew and, from Exodus and Joshua,

the mandate to employ aggressive, militaristic tactics in the securing of the land (Kimmerling 1999:339). The book of Joshua remains required reading in Israeli schools (Masalha 2007: 21), the 1948 conquest being seen as a modern version of the ancient.

The Zionist appropriation of history for its own political ends is by no means a unique tactic – it is built upon the principles of European colonialist approaches. In order to promote its own version of history it was first necessary to destroy, or at least, reduce the significance of other histories which may have conflicted with its own preferred past. Benvenisti (2002: 300) notes that the traditional chronology adopted by archaeologists of the period since the Roman conquest is skewed so as to underplay the significance of the Arab periods. By dividing up the post-Jewish era into Roman, Byzantine, Early Muslim, Crusades, Mamluk, Ottoman and British, the nearly two millennia are separated into a series of conquering forces and the notion of a continued residence by a particular people is downplayed. In particular, the division of the Arab periods into three fractures the idea of a coherent group living in the region over a long period of time. Benvenisti goes on to note what he calls 'The convenience of the Crusades', by which he means that this period broke a monolithic period of Arab rule and that a period that only lasted between eighty-eight and two hundred years (depending on the part of the region) has been the focus of a massively disproportionate amount of scholarly attention.

The Mythic(al) Homecoming

The explicit consequences that Zionism's use of the Bible (augmented by Western scholarly discourse) has had upon the Palestinian population of the region is seldom directly addressed. The 19th century colonialist era was the milieu out of which Zionism was born. The theological and historical aspects of Zionism have provided a gloss over what is a classic European colonialist template. This involved the appropriation of land and the subjugation or displacement of the indigenous population – the latter under the euphemistic concept of 'Transfer' (Masalha 2007: 4-5).

The attitude toward the Palestinians was predicated upon a number of myths. The 'Myth of the Empty Land' was one of the most deep-rooted and pernicious but perhaps it has taken firmer hold in the minds of more recent generations. Early Zionists and settlers in Palestine could not help but be aware that the land was anything but empty. A 1914 quote from Moshe Shertok (Ben-Gurion's chief aide in the Mandatory period and Israel's first foreign minister) illustrates this, 'We have forgotten that we have not come to an empty land to inherit it, but we have come to conquer from a people inhabiting it, that governs it by the virtue of its language and savage culture' (cited in Morris 2000: 91). Other myths were necessary to justify the policy of 'Transfer'. The Palestinians were simply Arabs who happened to live in this region; they had no particular emotional attachment to the land and would be assimilated easily and happily into another part of the Arab world; the Palestinians were not a nation unto themselves (Masalha 2007: 6). Zionism as the fulfilment of two-thousand years of Jewish longing for a return to Jerusalem is another myth. Now that the state has been realised politically the 'fulfilment myth' has been reinforced but it is merely a teleological charade. Although always a spiritual home there never was any concerted political ambition to return to Palestine before the rise of 19th century Zionism (Masalha 2007: 34).

The empty land myth is perhaps the most deeply ingrained falsehood. Combined with the myth of a desolate and barren land (which only the Jews could make blossom – a similar argument was used to justify European colonisation of North America) the two make a perfect argument for justifiable colonisation. Such myths may have been propagated by the early Zionist movement but have continued to grow over the decades in the popular imagination. In 1967 the song 'Jerusalem of Gold' enjoyed tremendous success after the Six Day War, the writer Naomi Shemer received the Israel prize for it and it remains one of the most popular songs. Masalha (2007: 39) highlights the following passage:

> Jerusalem of Gold
> How did the water cisterns dry out, the market place is empty,

And no-one visits the Holy Mount in the Old City.
And through the cave with the rock winds are whining,
And no-one descends down to the Dead Sea en route for Jericho...
Jerusalem of Gold...
We have returned to the water cisterns, to the market-place and the square.
A shofar sounds on the Holy Mount in the Old City.
And in the caves within the rock a thousand suns do glow,
We shall again descend to the Dead Sea en route for
Jericho.

These myths form part of the grand narrative of Israel. They present an image of a glorious return, a justified return, the Jewish heroic return. In the 1990s establishment figures such as Binyamin Netanyahu and Yitzhak Shamir continued to trot out the same rhetoric, the latter quoting, at the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, Mark Twain's pejorative 1867 account of his visit to Palestine, 'A desolate country which sits in sackcloth and ashes – a silent, mournful expanse which not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life' (Masalha 2007: 43-44).

The State of Israel

The establishment of the modern state of Israel is unusual in that from the very beginning the role of archaeology was considered. On 16th December 1947 the leading Hebrew archaeologists met to discuss the future of archaeology in the new state. There were some who argued for a joint Israeli-Arab department to oversee the antiquities of the land but by the following year, when the political situation had deteriorated, there were also concerns about preventing antiquities from falling into Arab hands (Kletter 2006: 1-3).

The 1948 war was a period in which much looting of antiquities took place, either to be sold or for private collections. In July 1948 the Antiquities Unit (later to become the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums) was formed. Throughout the summer of that year a number of archaeologists were appointed to assess the extent and damage of the looting. Reports from that period show that there did not seem to be a focus on sites of purely Israeli interest. Observers visited many sites including Crusader remains, Arab sites

such as Acre and Byzantine as well as more modern but perhaps interesting buildings. A list of urgent preservation sites was drawn up as well as other recommendations, such as the highlighting of certain sites that could serve as future tourist attractions to help boost the fledgling states economy (Kletter 2006: 5, 7, 15-19).

The war saw hundreds of thousands Palestinians abandon their homes to flee the fighting and seek refuge in neighbouring territories. Their land, houses and property that remained behind came under Israeli supervision. The decision in late 1948 not to allow the refugees to return to Israel meant that all antiquities belonging to those who had fled (at least that which had not been looted) were turned over to the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (IDAM) (Kletter 2006: 31-32).The subsequent annexation of the West Bank by Jordan following the 1948 war left the Palestinians with no independent archaeological institution. The Palestine Archaeological Museum (now the Rockefeller Museum) continued to operate with a board of international trustees until it was annexed after the 1967 war and was taken over by the Israel Antiquities Authority. After 1948 the West Bank fell under the administration of the Department of Antiquities in Amman which chose to concentrate activity largely on the East Bank (Glock 1999a: 310-11). Another myth grew up around this, that of the miraculous abandonment of the land by the Palestinians, which came to be viewed as further justification that the Arabs had no emotional attachment to the land, that they were just as happy to be in other Arab territories. If it were otherwise then why did they not stay and fight? Masalha (2007: 56-65) undermines the notion of such a miraculous abandonment. His study of Israeli archival documents suggests that the Israeli hierarchy anticipated such a flight when the fighting began. It was, in many cases, the result of an active policy of expulsion (encouraged by atrocities e.g. massacres and demolition of villages) on the part of the Israeli forces, forces which (contrary to another myth – the David and Goliath myth where Israeli forces were vastly inferior in number to the Arabs) were superior both in number (app. 35,000 v 20-25,000) and technology (imports of arms from the Eastern Bloc). So, instead of an 'empty land', there was a cleared land. This land, as we have already mentioned (see Benvenisti 2002), was subjected to a systematic

Hebraicised renaming, a process which was largely accepted by the West which, because of its own focused discourse, was more familiar with the new names, many of which were sourced from the Bible.

The 1950s are often viewed as a period when Israeli archaeology was a tool for state ideology. Archaeology at that time was heavily linked with the government, many prominent figures were involved; Ben-Tzvi and Ben-Gurion both had keen interests (Kletter 2006: 295). At times direct influence was exerted. At Ben-Gurion's prompting the 'Jewish Palestine Exploration Society' changed its name to the 'Israel Exploration Society' due to the Prime Minister's objection to the use of the term 'Palestine' to represent the land (Kletter 2006: 314).

Certainly the early years of Israeli archaeology helped to create and nurture the nationalistic myths that were seen to unite the people of Israel, providing them with a common historical thread. Myths such as that of 'Masada' or 'the empty land' helped to justify the state. Jewish themes were stressed while later periods, in particular the Muslim period, were largely ignored (Kletter 2006: 315). According to Silberman (1997: 19), 'relatively little effort was made to preserve or protect archaeological remains from the later Islamic or Ottoman periods, which were of direct relevance to the area's Muslim and Christian inhabitants'. In defence of that period Kletter (2006: 316-17) remarks that this type of national archaeology was not unusual, being practised by other countries in the Middle-East such as Lebanon and Egypt in an attempt to establish direct continuity with the land and that such myths are a necessity, crucial to the forging of a state. With regard to some of the negative associations such as the loss of Arabic place names, he comments that 'Hebrew site names are often older than those whose loss is mourned...they are also a small remnant from the past. There is nothing wrong with using names such as Gezer or Megiddo when the identification is secure' (Kletter 2006: 318). What Kletter is overlooking is what lies behind the dropping of Arabic names and the reinstatement of more ancient Hebrew names, many of which are misapplied and/or modern inventions. It is part of the same process of the myth of the empty land or Ben-Gurion's appeal to change Palestine to Israel. It contributes to the erasing of

well over a thousand years of history - found to be inconvenient because it was a period when naught but a handful of Jews lived there. Kletter also appeals naively to historical precedent, 'Show me a long-term (historically known) conqueror of Palestine / Israel in the past 20 centuries that did not leave site names behind' (Kletter 2006: 318). Historical precedent cannot be used to justify action that is morally abhorrent. One could easily use the same argument, citing all the pogroms of the past to justify the holocaust.

In fairness to Kletter this is not the point I believe he meant to make. He goes on to state that the deconstruction of such myths is part of the maturing process and that now is the time that Israel needs to start this agenda (Kletter 2006: 318). He also highlights that even during the 1950s there were those who advocated an even handed approach. Shemuel Yeivin head of the IDAM at that time proclaimed that 'if we demand that foreigners respect the remains of our past, we must respect theirs...from my experience in recent years I have learned that among many circles of serious people there is complete contempt for foreign remains in our land; especially when Arab remains are concerned' (Kletter 2006: 316).

This contempt for both 'foreign' remains and their intellectual property rights was not limited to the 1950s. The removal of antiquities by both Israeli and foreign archaeological excavations went largely unchecked (despite the Hague convention, to which Israel had agreed, expressly forbidding such action) after the occupation of the West Bank territories after the 1967 Six Day War (Silberman 1997: 19).

In 1978 the Israel Antiquities Law declared that 'an antiquity' was only officially so if it had existed prior to 1700 C.E. (following a precedent set down by the Royal Commission in the UK using the date 1714 as the cut off for ancient monuments). Anything made after that period could only be an antiquity if judged so by the Israeli Minister of Education. Benvinisti (2000: 305) provides the example of Old Jaffa where only two post-1700 building have been considered worthy of antiquity status, i.e. the Israeli minister of education believed them to be of 'historical value. These two buildings are the 'Bilium

House' (an early Zionist house) and the first Hebrew High School. With the resting of power on whether a site is deserving of historical recognition or not in the hands of the Israeli government it is unsurprising that no post-1700 sites of Palestinian interest have been acknowledged. As Benvenisti (2000: 305) puts it, it is as if '300 years of human activity... [have]...been erased'[5].

Though it may have originally been a political tool the employment of the Bible to justify colonisation had consequences beyond 1948. In the 1950s, the then leader of the opposition, Menahem Begin talked about Jordan's annexation of the West bank in terms of an Arabic occupation of 'our homeland' (Masalha 2007: 37). Such boundaries had only ever existed in the biblical narrative; never had they been historically attested. The founding of the new city of Tel Aviv in 1909 signalled the Zionist secular intent that would see eighty percent of early Jewish settlers living along the Mediterranean coast – an area which had never historically been part of Israel, but rather was the homeland of Israel's traditional enemy, the Philistines (Masalha 2007: 26-27).

In 1967, after the Six Day War, the editor of *Christianity Today,* an influential American evangelical magazine, wrote: 'That for the first time in more than 2000 years Jerusalem is now completely in the hands of the Jews gives a student of the Bible a thrill and a renewed faith in the accuracy and validity of the Bible' (quoted in Masalha 2007: 109). This apocalyptic motive is still supported by conservative Christian groups today who have increasingly been adopting a crusading zeal in the light of recent polarisations between the Western and Muslim world. Masalha (2007: 112-20) notes how American dispensationalists (a particularly fervent Christian fundamentalist lobby) grew in political influence during the Reagan years and has exerted influence on US foreign policy. Such zeal is the child of dangerous idealism which leaves little room for practical consideration. Since the first Gulf war in 1990 such rhetoric has only increased.

[5] The Old City of Acre is a UNESCO World Heritage site. It was granted this status on the basis of it being both a superb example of an Ottoman walled town and its well preserved buildings and layout of the medieval capital of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. One could be cynical, however, pointing out that this status was granted not by Israel but by an international organisation.

The perception of the Palestinians as an ancient enemy of the West has recently received a further, perhaps even more ominous and invidious, revision. The Western, and in particular, American obsession with 'national safety' has been spectacularly bungled with its crass use of crusading rhetoric and misrepresentative equating of Islam with terrorism. In its attempts to sell a war to the public, the governments of the U.S.A. and Britain have used the language of reductionism which reinforces traditional divisions for the sake of a mollified present.

Said, Whitelam and the Problem of Discourse

The driving impetus for this thesis came from Keith Whitelam's 1996 book *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History.* The book is an attempt to explore the way in which Palestinian history has been ignored by the conventions of traditional biblical studies. It is built upon two platforms. These are, the 'revisionist' movement in biblical studies which began in the early 1990s and Edward Saïd's 1978 book, *Orientalism.* This current thesis grew out of an implicit question that Whitelam's book raised. That question is: as a white, middle class, Western academic steeped in the scholarly discourse of the past 150 years how can I approach the writing of a Palestinian history? Is such an attempt doomed to failure given my background?

The history of Israel is divided between its modern and ancient eras and the themes of its history are political and theological respectively. This apparent separation of the histories ignores the intertwinement of the two and their effect upon each other. Although many writers of theology / history / archaeology would regard their work as independent of the modern political situation it is impossible to be so. The acting out of everyday life in Israel involves political choices being made and put into effect. The very use of the name Israel along with the names of towns, hills, rivers and all the various toponymy of the land is an endorsement of the policy of systematic repression of the Palestinian past (see Benvenisti 2000). We have seen in the preceding section how the

archaeology of the region was actively employed by the Israeli government to help create these new names and establish the new state of Israel in the footings of the past.

Of course, Israel is not alone in utilising archaeology for nationalistic causes. The practice is widespread. Most countries, Britain notable among them, have indulged. The rise of nationalism in the Western world from the 18th century onwards influenced all aspects of society and scholarship was not an exception. Biblical studies and archaeology investigated the establishment of the state of Israel in the belief that it represented 'the taproot of Western civilization' (Whitelam 1996: 1). The state was perceived to be the most advanced form of nationhood. The rise of the modern state of Israel has reflected the ancient situation (or is it the other way round?) justifying and promoting scholarship along similar avenues of investigation. Israel, essentially an extension of the West, is representative of the ideals of Western nation-states and surrounded by hostile countries and cultures who do not share those ideals (Whitelam 1996:21). It is this preoccupation that has occluded the history of the Palestinian people.

> ...stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future - these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. As one critic has suggested, nations themselves *are* narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.
>
> Edward Saïd (1993: xiii)

Examples of nationalistic archaeology can be implicit or explicit, intentional or perhaps unconscious. Two examples touched upon by Whitelam (1996: 12-13, 16-17) highlight this. Yadin, writing about Masada, provides possibly the most famous example of overtly nationalist archaeology. Masada, an ex-Herodian

palace / fortress on an inaccessible cliff top overlooking the Dead Sea was the site of the last stand against the Romans by a group of Jews during the rebellion in 70CE. After a long siege, with the Romans about to break through, the whole group (apart from a few who hid) committed suicide. This event was not widely reported or considered in contemporary sources. However, using the accounts in Josephus, the stress laid upon the events there by Israeli archaeologists have elevated the site to mythical status within Israel and amongst the Jewish Diaspora as symbol of the struggle for survival against apparent overwhelming odds of modern Israel itself.

> We will not exaggerate by saying that *thanks to the heroism of the Masada fighters* - like other links in the nation's chain of heroism - *we stand here today,* the soldiers of a young-ancient people, surrounded by the ruins of the camps of those who destroyed us. We stand here, no longer helpless in the face of our enemy's strength, no longer fighting a desperate war, but solid and confident, knowing that our fate is in our hands, in our spiritual strength, the spirit of Israel 'the grandfather revived...We, the descendants of these heroes, stand here today and rebuild the ruins of our people.
>
> Cited by Zerubavel (1994: 84)

The above quote encapsulates the very core of nationalist archaeological ideology, which is the link to the land and evidence of an historical continuum. 'It is this continuum which is crucial to any claim to possess the land, a claim which effectively silences any Palestinian claim to the past and therefore to the land' (Whitelam 1996: 17).

Elsewhere the pervasive influence of nationalism and traditional biblical discourse may be less obvious. In assessing Finkelstein's *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (1988) Christopher Eden (1989) remarks that the survey work and investigations carried out in search of Late Bronze Age - Iron Age Israelite settlements in the central hill country are, albeit perhaps unwittingly, part of the process of affirming the history of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. Whitelam (1996: 18) points out that Finkelstein drew a stark line when deciding upon potential areas of investigation ruling out areas which were understood to be Canaanite in nature as having little relevance to the history of

Israel. This deliberate ignoring of the Arab Muslim past has been a hallmark of Israeli archaeology since the establishment of the state of Israel. When Glock was writing in 1987 no Ottoman site had ever been excavated (Glock 1987: 329).

Whitelam (1996: 1) suggests that the reason for the growth of Western academic discourse with regard to Palestine is 'because its object of interest has been an ancient Israel conceived and presented as the taproot of Western civilization'. A century and half of biblical scholarship as well as near two millennia of tradition have produced a discourse which means that attempts at alternative histories are viewed with scepticism (Whitelam 1996: 4). What has developed within Western scholarship (because of its focus on the history of Israel and its theological implications) is the effective creation of 'other' (see Saïd 1978) in regard to peoples who appeared in the Bible but were set in opposition to the Israelites. As Whitelam (1996: 39) notes, there are 'other entities such as the Canaanites, the Philistines...indigenous groups [that] might inhabit this time and space but...only on Israel's terms.' The notion of the 'other' was actively encouraged by early Israeli governments who were keen to establish their claim to the land. The replacement of Arabic names with Hebraicized versions became a key tool in this (see Benvenisti 2000).

Whitelam (1996: 45) notes that Western scholars are just as guilty when it comes to the phenomenon of naming and renaming. Reluctance on the part of the classic works of Bright (1972) and Miller and Hayes (1986) to actually call the people who live in Palestine, Palestinians is a prime example. This is despite constant use of the term when applying it to geographical or social factors, e.g. 'Palestinian coastline' or 'Palestinian economy' (Miller and Hayes 1986: 51). 'Palestine' essentially just becomes a shorthand term for the Holy Land, Promised Land or Israel, any sense of unique identity is lost.

The blanket use of the term 'Palestine' for the land has always been a bizarre practice. Palestine as a name has a very distinct origin. It is an anglicised version of *Palaestina* which was itself the Latinised version of the Greek word for Philistines. It was applied by the Roman Emperor Hadrian after the Bar

Kochba revolt (132-135CE). Why this name is so often used anachronistically is puzzling and confusing. In other areas such as early-medieval Britain names such as Pictland and Dalriada are used instead of Scotland; Cornwall is often referred to as Dumnonia while the entire island is collectively referred to as Britain. Although it is highly debatable whether or not these were the names by which the people living there would have referred to the land, they do at least focus attention on a particular place *and* a particular time. Modern Cornwall is not referred to Dumnonia. The same cannot be said for 'Palestine'. Despite knowing previous names for the land, the term 'Palestine' is used to represent the land over a thousand years before the name was coined. Chapter 2 of Coote & Coote (1990: 12-18) is entitled 'People of Palestine'. Coote and Coote (1990: 12-19) mention Palestinian houses, Palestinian society and Palestinian territory. The people living in Palestine though 'came from many regional, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds' (Coote and Coote 1990: 17). They were therefore *not* Palestinians. Palestine is merely a stage upon which other peoples play out their history. The reduction of the term Palestine to such a neutral position effectively emasculates it; only foreign powers and their actions there give Palestine meaning.

Archaeology, of course, requires funding and the research interests are often a direct reflection of the interests of the backers. Even the PEF which, when established in 1865, explicitly stated its non-religious intentions directed the vast majority of its excavations toward biblical sites (Glock 1987: 328). Of the thousands of antiquity sites identified, most major excavations have focused on one of the six hundred or so settlements mentioned in the Bible (Glock 1987: 327). As well as the choice of sites there is also an issue about the materials selected for study from those sites. Islamic strata are often ignored or given scant consideration with little or no records in order to reach the layers below, relating to the period of the Bible (Glock 1987: 329).

Glock (1987: 331) acknowledged that archaeological recording had improved in Israeli archaeology and that increasingly material from post-Byzantine periods is being recorded. The fact that the overwhelming majority of articles remain interested in the key topics outlined above however only serves as further

evidence of a deliberate policy of ignoring the Palestinian past, emphasis falls particularly upon the example of the Late Bronze – Iron Age transition. Although there are major disputes about how exactly the Israelite occupation occurred, there is displayed a uniform eagerness to identify the new settlements from this period as Israelite. This is despite the discrediting of the theory that artefacts such as the four-room house, collar-rimmed jars, plastered cisterns and field terracing are uniquely Israelite.

One of the main problems is that scholarship remains predominantly the preserve of Western (including Israeli) scholars and that historical focus on the Palestinians has focused overwhelmingly on the conflict with Israel (Whitelam 1996: 7). These factors help to maintain the illusion of the Palestinians as a people without an ancient history. The disproportionate weight of Western scholarship presents a distorted and unbalanced picture of the past in the region. Palestinian history is often ignored at the expense of Israelite / Jewish history because it is seen as more relevant to the development of Western religion (i.e. Christianity) and civilization. The culture of post-Byzantine / Roman Palestine had no meaning for the Western powers that came to dominate the region after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Their interest was strategic and historical (Glock 1999b: 344). The archaeological activity by Western powers in the Middle-East can be viewed as a part of the general Western expansion into the region (Silberman 1998: 179).

Redressing the Balance

The disenfranchisement of the Palestinian people from their own heritage can only be addressed, according to Glock, by the training of Palestinian archaeologists who can then excavate their own cultural traditions. They need to possess an intentional bias of their own so that they may counteract 'the agenda developed by foreign scholars for execution in a foreign country serving an alien social or academic need' (Glock 1987: 327).

The antiquities laws, allowing for expropriation of land to the state if deemed necessary, mean that archaeology is often viewed with suspicion by Palestinians (Glock 1999a: 316). Given that the conflict is primarily about land, any legislation which enables Israel to further acquire land is naturally viewed with hostility – and so by extension, are the antiquities which give rise to the legislation. Palestinians therefore tend not to be enthusiastic about identifying archaeological remains – even if that may be to the detriment of their own heritage. The independent self-development of a Palestinian history (constructed through archaeology) can only be seen as a threat to Israel, as the occupying power. The cultural bias established by the Euro-American Christian nations was one which focused on the archaeology of the Judaeo-Christian tradition at the expense of the native Arab population.

To truly explore the Arab past of Palestine a 'benevolent Arab government is imperative' (Glock 1999a: 315). Fundamentally such an exercise is impossible while the land is under occupation. The revealing of the Palestinian past is not in the interests of Israel and, therefore, they, at the very least, do not facilitate it and often actively prevent such an undertaking. '[Palestinian cultural] resources have suffered calculated decimation, whole villages destroyed, libraries and documents confiscated, [and] unique agricultural installations [have been] dislodged by force to be incorporated in Israeli museums' (Glock 1999a: 315-16). Beyond some localised, private attempts to preserve the Palestinian past there are no adequate public measures.

Post-Colonialism

> ...unified history and culture has always failed to cope with diversity. The distinction between nation and nation-state has frequently collapsed into contention, with ideas of self-determination and freedom, identity and unity colliding with suppression of diversity, domination and exclusion that overrides a genuine egalitarian pluralism.
>
> Partha Chatterjee 1993 (cited in Pearson and Shanks 2001: 36)

Post-colonialism is the antithesis of the grand narrative method of understanding the past. It promotes the understanding of local histories instead of national or global theories. It does this by attacking ethnocentrism, recognising the influence of one's own background and focusing on agency in an attempt to appreciate the heterogeneous qualities of both local (i.e. resistant) and colonial powers (Gosden 2004: 18-19). The approach consciously sets out to write alternative accounts of the past in opposition to the national meta-narratives that repress competing histories. The aim is a plurality of localised accounts rich in regional character and peculiarities. Further, ideally one would hope for a 'multicultural tapestry of peoples and histories' (Shanks 2001: 292) even within a particular region. Power differentiates colonised culture contact, creating an imbalance. It is skewed toward the colonizer. 'Colonialism brings a new quality (or rather inequality) to human relations' (Gosden 2004: 5).

The *longue durée* annalistic approach that Whitelam urges more historians of the region to use examines areas such as trade routes, centre-periphery, hegemonic relationships, economy, political and, sometimes, cultural cycles. It is the embodiment of the grand narrative and tends to be homogenising and anachronistic. It is a tool that, ironically, has been employed by nationalist ideologies to render certain people 'invisible' in the pages of history and even to their contemporaries (Koerner 2004: 214). To this end I feel that despite Whitelam's good intentions his methodology would simply swap one meta-narrative for another. However, it is difficult of course to write small-scale, intimate historical narratives without recourse at some time to the broader 'totalising frameworks' (Johnson 2004: 243-44) from which we are trying to escape. The agents of our accounts inevitably lived out their lives in a world about which the reader has some preconceived notion. Gosden (2004: 20) attempts to place local concerns within a broader framework. He acknowledges the problems that this may cause, e.g. prejudicing local variation, but believes that this approach, with more stress on material culture, can lead to broader understandings. This view is debatable: whether such harmonising between the scales of interpretation can ever be satisfactorily achieved remains to be seen. However, there are ways in which the broader context can be useful. For example, Given (2004: 16 after Fegan 1986: 98) provides an example of

Filipinos using an outmoded form of threshing because it was quieter so their overseers would not hear them and they would not have to declare it. From an archaeological perspective the form of thresher is meaningless unless we understand the broader context.

Post-colonial writing tends to portray resistance and subversion but, according to Gosden (2004: 7), lacks a material perspective. Post-colonial anthropologists though have examined how the same things may be attributed different values (e.g. Strathern and Stewart 2000). Archaeologically speaking the emphasis is away from economics and more about material culture and the ideological and cultural belief system and practices attached to their consumption (Gosden 2004: 16-17). Human relationships lie behind the material.

Is northern Israel in the 9th century a colonial area or are we applying the term anachronistically? Should we be using a different term? Or redefining current terminology? Or can we take aspects of colonialism and apply them? Does colonialism only occur at colonies? Colonialism is understood archaeologically through artefacts, architecture and burial practices that are distinct from the local population and that can be linked to the colony's parent power. How then should we think of a colonial power with very similar material culture and practices?

One way of conducting post-colonial archaeology is to search in the material culture for elements that may be interpreted as 'resistance'. That is to maintain one's culture in the face of a ruling power: diet, architecture, pottery styles. There is a danger, however, that in the search for resistance we may overlook a more multifaceted, nuanced relationship (Given 2004: 11). In order to access the various relationships that were played out it is necessary to examine not only the monumental élite architecture but, more crucially perhaps, the material culture of daily life. Ideally that material culture should be chronologically secure. That is, a material culture which we can say was part of a dominated society at a particular time (e.g. Aramaen in an Israelite dominated Hula Valley in the 9th century). Unfortunately the lack of excavations of the satellite settlements

around Dan is a stumbling block at this point. This should not prohibit speculation though.

The national epic of Israel that has been constructed does not attempt to encompass the Palestinians. They are not party to the single overriding factor that unites Israel – being Jewish. They are the modern Canaanites. Occupiers of a land that was not deemed theirs by the Jewish / Israelite God. And still they live in the land to this day. What I have just written in the last few sentences is misrepresentative, a stereotype; the conflict is political, not religious, but the narratives of national consciousness are wound around a history that is drawn from religious texts and religion in turn is drawn into the political conflict because it is another way of defining 'otherness'.

The deliberate construction of an Israeli identity inextricably linked to history is seen at sites such as Dan which are interpreted as belonging to the Israelite biblical narrative. The labelling of features around the site through the use biblical quotations in Hebrew and English (no Arabic) immediately announces to visitors that this place is Israeli and has been for three millennia and that this is verified by a respected tradition. This practice followed the European example of using archaeology as a means of establishing the post-Enlightenment nation-states and for providing them with cohesive histories with which to attempt to form a homogenous collective based upon a shared material culture (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 35).

In the past, as in the present, it is important not to simplify any power relations that may have been at work. It is not enough to say that the Israelites were the ruling party and that any Aramaen or Canaanite groups were subordinate / oppressed peoples living under / fighting against that yoke. Nor that when Dan was captured by Damascus these roles were suddenly inverted. Given (2004: 10) warns that to view the situation in such basic binary terms is to greatly underestimate the complexities of the relationships between apparently opposed peoples. Traders, farmers, men, women, priests to use just a few examples may well have had different perspectives. To have entered into a relationship with people other than your own may have branded you a traitor, collaborator,

renegade or heretic. From an alternative ideological viewpoint the same action may have been seen as liberal, progressive, broad-minded or enterprising. The biblical account of the 2nd century Maccabean revolt highlights the fractured nature of a society that was under foreign rule. The revolt not only aimed to throw off the Seleucid hegemony but also targeted those Judeans who had, according to the ideals of the Maccabeans, too readily adopted Hellenistic customs. It is necessary to bear in mind the possible existence of such multiple perspectives if we are to avoid the massive oversimplifications that characterised the 'us and them' stance of the former European colonial powers (Given 2004: 10). The rejection of these basic positions means that there is recognition of the agency of past people. That individuals and groups in the past were able to make informed decisions and perform intentional actions is one of the basic tenets of this thesis. These decisions are enacted through daily practice within a contextually situated material culture. The 'us and them' approach denies any aspect of choice.

Overcoming the Discourse

> The brutal fact is that the past is always distorted by our analysis to fit the needs of the present. The archaeologist must ask, whose "present"? A land of multiple traditions has many pasts.
>
> Albert Glock (1987: 339)

The world of archaeology is not sealed within a hermetic bubble. Any historian representing the past must be aware of the audiences they may reach and how the content of their work may impact upon them. The great weight of Western scholastic discourse has served to crush alternative histories of Israel. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a blueprint for ways in which other archaeologies of the region could be presented, archaeologies which are more inclusive and conscientious.

While of course we must interpret artefacts within their own cultural context it is also vital that we consider the modern cultural context in which that

interpretation is taking place. Archaeological material does not have a fixed meaning; it is imposed, and varies according to who is supplying the interpretation. This factor should always be taken into consideration when trying to understand how an interpretation has been arrived at. In an area as politically fraught as Israel, this is crucial. As Silberman (1997: 9) states, 'any serious study...must concern itself with not only *which* innovations or interpretations took place at which time, but also *why*' (italics original).

Much consideration must be given over to the terminology employed in any study. This region in this period and this thesis are no different in that respect. Miller (1991: 99) suggests the use of the term 'Iron I people' rather than Israelites or proto-Israelites. All labels carry with them preconceptions. Where possible then it is preferable to avoid any regional or temporal terms for groups of people. Davies (1992: 62) wrote, '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 Palestinians.' Similarly the term 'Canaanite' also suffers from many negative associations originating as it does from the biblical text. The lack of a discernibly distinctive Israelite material culture in the LBA or EIA leads Whitelam (1996: 35) to write that we should be investigating events during that period not as the beginning of Israelite culture but in the broader context of transformation of Palestinian society.

An important question I must address is whether I am writing this thesis in opposition to the biblically inspired discourse. That is, am I attempting to write a Palestinian history? The short answer is no, but then neither am I attempting to write an Israelite history. I do not believe that either of these ethnic appellations is applicable. I believe it is perhaps safer, certainly easier, to avoid particular titles which reverberate with meaning in the modern context.

The use of politicised and anachronistic terms is often unavoidable. This highlights problems in the attempts to construct history. Even the use of some concepts such as agency is in danger of projecting Western ethnocentric values on to the past (Given 2004: 1). Terms which I choose to employ when

describing, for example, the nature of relationships with other peoples, may help a modern audience create a picture of the past, but perhaps would have meant little or nothing to the people of that time. Modern ideas about freedom of the individual may not necessarily apply to the Iron Age Levant. 'Colony', an area under a parent power, is a very old idea. 'Colonialism' is not. There is a danger of anachronistically applying modern ideas about colonialism to the past (Gosden 2004: 2).

If we acknowledge that history is shaped by the present then it follows that we must apply the same thinking to ancient works, in this case the books of the Tanakh. Critical scholarship no longer approaches the biblical narratives with a view to being able to discern an objective historical reality. Histories are written at particular times for particular audiences with particular intentions (Whitelam 1996: 29-30). They are active constructs. By placing the discipline within its political context it can serve as mirror which can be used as a tool for self-consciousness (see Steele 2005, Bernbeck 2005: 112-14).

Conclusions

A failure of Syro-Palestinian archaeology is that it has often not recognised (at least not openly) the historical and political context in which it has been, and continues to be, written. A century and half of biblical scholarship as well as nearly two millennia of tradition have produced a discourse which means that attempts at alternative histories are viewed with scepticism (Whitelam1996: 4). Kletter is one of the few writers in the area who openly acknowledges that the past is essentially a creation of the modern. 'Everything related to archaeology in Israel / Palestine is immediately used as cannon fodder in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict' (Kletter 2006: XV).

Certainly the early years of Israeli archaeology helped to create and nurture the nationalistic myths that were seen to unite the people of Israel, providing them with a common historical thread. Myths such as that of 'Masada' or 'the empty land' helped to justify the state. Jewish themes were stressed while later periods,

in particular the Muslim period, were largely ignored (Kletter 2006: 315). The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, its ensuing struggle and the manner in which archaeology was used to aid that cause have only reinforced such a discourse. Although the past couple of decades have seen a move toward more 'sociological' accounts of Ancient Israel (e.g. Miller & Hayes 1986; McNutt 1999) these still adhere to the basic biblical structure. Whitelam (1996: 11-12) recognises that the construction of history is a political act that impinges upon the lives of people. He provides the example of a respondent in an internet discussion group who protested against the more sceptical approaches to biblical tradition complaining that 'his history was being taken away from him'. History impacts upon people's perceptions of themselves and their identity. Historical accounts then are competitive and difficult to harmonise. Dominant historical discourse silences alternatives.

This study actively seeks to break with such traditional representations by self-consciously placing myself, the site and the thesis within the modern political and scholastic context from which it is written. In some respects any challenge that archaeology may offer to the Bible as history is redundant in the face of belief. Material arguments make little headway over issues of faith. Indeed, despite the revisionist archaeology of the last thirty years, such views still prevail. It is debatable whether any archaeological discovery, no matter how startling, could have any serious political impact. Real events have overtaken the need to justify the state. It is a sign of Israel's security that that there are academics within Israel prepared to question the biblical history and Zionist narrative, to more than question, to deny even, but such views, although sometimes slandered by the more extreme nationalist and religious groups, are now not a threat to national security. However, the questioning of biblical historicity is still viewed as a direct attack by certain conservative religious and nationalist groups who often perceive revisionist studies as an attack on their own beliefs. The backlash can be spectacular. A review of Thompson's 1999 book *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* in the *Jerusalem Post* (24th December 1999) illustrates the vitriol and venom that can result: 'Is it possible he does not believe in anything? Apparently there is a certain book that he does take seriously. A mutual acquaintance told me that Thompson confided

in him that he is a staunch believer in The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' (quoted in Masalha 2007: 258).

Having outlined the general position of archaeology and politics and the relationship between the two as well as the traditional interpretations of Dan, the next chapter addresses in greater depth the flaws of previous and current archaeological approaches employed in the region.

Market Day

Market day was always an event. The city bloated with the influx. Farmers with livestock; old women with a sack of sage or pomegranates or figs; merchants and traders who had arrived from further inland or from the coast, carts laden with goods. Some of those who inhabited the swamplands had piles of reed mats, bowls and other little workaday objects; others had racks of dried fish, skins and furs. Sample pithoi full of wine and oil were presided over by representatives from the richer, more powerful families waiting for contacts from great, distant cities.

A thin haze of light had worked its way over the hills to the east. The snow-blanched peak of the mountain that surmounted the hills shone out giving notice of the emergent sun lurking upon the other side. The patient oxen and donkeys stood about scratching idly at the drying earth, flicking tails and shaking heads to dislodge persistent flies. The savoury tang of animal stench hung in the air. The merchants and traders milled about showing their wares, haggling, feigning disinterest, walking away, walking back and perhaps, eventually, agreeing upon a deal. A stone paved approach to the city gate marked the epicentre of activity. The established families of the city had their regular spots. Others took up their place more haphazardly. The slow, incessant activity manoeuvred against the backdrop of the half built city walls. The newly conquered city, part-refortified, already looked imposing and adamantine. The ramparts and walls of before had proved insufficient. The market bustle was augmented by the men scrabbling over the walls, shinning up and along their wooden scaffolds, setting, shaping and plastering - setting the stamp of strength of the new rulers of this place. The old had been breached and those that had done so now patrolled and oversaw and collected as was their victor's rights.

Pointing out a suitable spot the merchant left his men and swerved through the jabbering gaggle toward the main gate. He often saw the same old faces; the community of those who actually travelled the roads was not that great in number. Many seemed to stick to their regular routes and it was only a matter of time before paths crossed at one market or another. Because of the recent campaign he had not been this way for nearly half a year and had been forced to ply other, less gainful passages, made even more so by others like him also forced to seek alternatives. It was a relief to get back to his regular beat. Two or three times different voices, different accents hailed him as he made his way. A good tradesman picked up enough of the local vernacular to

smooth business and he slipped little regional peculiarities easily into his greetings and enquiries. The dialects the market attracted overlapped enough for most to get by but he found that a little extra effort with the language often yielded significantly extra reward.

Today the old men who normally sat and dispensed timeworn wisdom and wisecracks were absent. The bustle of the market had driven them from their regular spot and the merchant missed them a little, they would always call out for news and one of them invariably attempted his accent which inevitably ended in them gasping, grabbing each other and wiping their crinkled eyes in amusement. There were groups like this all over but his regular trips here had earned a comforting familiarity. He looked forward to the day when he could leave the business to his sons and take up his place at the gate in his own hometown. Two soldiers stood together at the gateway. It occurred to the merchant that perhaps market day was not the only reason the old men were not at the usual place today. It had been half a year since he had been here and he hoped nothing had happened to them in the fighting. The thought depressed him.

Behind the soldiers just inside the gateway a woman was very deliberately pouring oil from a small painted jug. The sleek, golden thread ran onto the heads of five upright stones of various sizes, the tallest of which was no more than a few spans of a man's hand. They were set against the wall, but in their own little area. Once she had anointed the stones she reached into a reed bag near her feet and produced some small reed dishes. One contained some grain; another had bread and another appeared to contain some cooked fish. These she placed reverentially in front of the stones, one dish in front of each; an offering to some god or other for something or other. She mouthed a few words which the merchant could not hear and then, after stooping to collect her bag, turned and disappeared through the crowd.

After watching her go the merchant looked at the two soldiers who looked back but let him pass on. They appeared a little anxious; perhaps the increase in numbers had unsettled them. He watched them step forward to ask another man some questions. They were young; to the merchant they seemed barely men and he thought that showed. When they challenged it was with a curious vacillating bravado. The other man could sense this too, it seemed, and he responded to their questions with a defiant, mocking tone that bore its own challenge. The soldiers hesitated before waving him on and retreating to back to the gatepost. The man stared at the two, his jaw tense, as if to open it would only

lead to trouble. Instead he leaned forward and spat deliberately onto the floor before walking away.

The incident had done nothing to improve the merchant's mood. He continued up into the city, the newly paved road climbing through the building site of the extra gateway and walls, as it climbed the massive yet inadequate ramparts. Absently acknowledging the standing stones set outside the inner gate he made his way into the city looking about for the old men but not finding them. The main street branched off either side into narrow alleys that ran between the houses. The grey basalt and mud brick walls enclosed about him. Many of the houses had a second floor and ran one into the other, their conjoined walls presenting stretches of uninterrupted façade; as a result the streets were in shade most of the day. It was a lot quieter here; the motion of the market had attracted a large portion of the city's residents.

From the direction of the market came a great uproar of voices. The hue and cry of confusion and anger funnelled clearly along the streets and brought a halt to the merchant's walk. Faces and figures began to appear in doorways, emerging from courtyards to look in the direction of the gate. A group of men came out and, shouting for others to join them, ran toward the agitation. The merchant ran too but could not keep up, his thoughts were of his brother and nephew and he pushed on despite the slice of fear in his gut.

As he exited the gate all he could see for a few moments was confusion. The regular market hustle had been forgotten. His first thought was to look for his own men. They were where he had left them, standing by the carts. His brother was talking to their nephew but looking on concerned at the commotion. The merchant followed his brother's eye line to where five or six men were backed up on the ramparts. They were engaged in an exchange with a crowd of perhaps twenty or so at the foot of the ramparts. The two groups were shouting and gesticulating angrily at each other on the verge of violence.

A single, insistent, repeated scream rose above the general din. One of the soldiers lay crumpled on the floor, his face pressed to the cobbles; his spilled helmet at rest an arm's length away. The other soldier stood with his back against the wall, legs supporting sagging body. He was staring down at his blood slicked hands that were failing to prevent his insides from slipping out. The soldier's screams at his own reduced state stopped the merchant who, despite the crazed movement and anger and horror

before him, felt frozen in that moment and feared within himself that the terrible shriek would never end.

The single act of violence had split apart the fragile harmony. The knife that killed the soldier also pierced the thin film of social order and briefly, through that rent fabric, raw memories and emotions spewed that gave rise to fresh brutality. The group backed up on the rampart hailed from the same place as the dead soldiers. The merchant could hear them now, shouting as they kicked out in defence, herding together for safety. Then came the soldiers, running in twos and threes, pushing back the crowd into their constituent parts, spears and expressions taut. The garrison commander's face stern yet somehow resigned as he ordered the dead soldier and the dying one carried away.

'What choice do we have?' asked the matriarch, 'I've tried to explain this to them but they won't listen. I lost a son in the fighting. In my dreams I see my son and when I wake I feel the pain of his absence afresh. In my heart I long for justice and revenge, as much as the rest of them. But what can I do? I have other sons, daughters and grandchildren.'

Not to mention your position, thought the merchant as he nodded sympathetically, but then reassessed himself and vaguely wondered what indeed he would have done in the same position. He didn't want to think about it, so didn't, and drank a little more and waited for the chance to get round to talking business.

'Don't misunderstand me, I've been there. This isn't the first time this place has been mauled. I was out, running around, looking to do who knows what. I can't do that anymore. You yourself are a family man. We have responsibilities. We have to take the long view – for the sake of our families. And they resent me for it! Some even of my own kin. It's not good, but what can I do?'

The repetition of this last phrase sounded to the merchant as much an effort for the matriarch to convince herself as a genuine entreaty. The merchant sat patiently on the plastered floor in the cool interior of the room. The bright afternoon light came in through the open door but direct sunlight was rare unless in the middle of the day. There had been some confusion along the way. The door, which on his previous visit had led to the matriarch's house, was no longer there. He had stood perplexed for a moment until an explanatory voice called down from the roof of the building behind him, the directions still reverberating down the narrow alley. He made his way round to the other side and could hear voices calling ahead of him so that by the time he was

at the correct door the matriarch was there waiting for him. 'Sorry about that, rebuilding work. The ever expanding family,' she had stated very matter-of-factly.

Business was on hold. The city under curfew and sealed. He and his brother and nephew had been given hospitality by the matriarch while the matter was resolved. He sat there patiently as the matriarch performed her role as the dutiful host and fretted over the situation. A series of people came and went, including the garrison commander himself. The matriarch dealt with each in turn and made small talk with the merchant in between. The merchant offered to leave but she hushed away his suggestion, as if this sort of thing happened everyday, although the merchant could tell that all was broiling beneath her placid exterior.

'We know who did it, two men from one of the outlying villages. Everyone saw. I don't know what they expected, the whole city to rise up with them? And now the soldiers are demanding we deliver them up. That was part of the deal. We have only just rebuilt. You should have been here before. What can I do?'

Again the matriarch asked, but expected no answer and the merchant offered none.

Chapter 5: The Problem with the Past

Chapter 2 traced the early development of archaeology in the region, the rise of biblical archaeology and the reaction to it that was Syro-Palestinian archaeology. The following chapter picks up from there and further critiques some specific issues with the approaches currently employed in the region. This deconstruction of traditional discourse undermines some of the political issues outlined in the previous chapter and opens the way for new and alternative understandings of the past.

The shift in focus from Biblical Archaeology to what has been termed Syro-Palestinian Archaeology is an ongoing process but will never wholly encompass the discipline. What it perhaps has achieved is to compel archaeologists to become more exact when defining their views and objectives. The two can now be viewed as separate disciplines. There are still Biblical Archaeologists whose express intention is to continue to search for past material which supports or helps to illuminate the biblical texts. The new wave of academics in the area has attempted to distance itself from such associations. The focus has shifted towards a more scientifically based approach, influenced heavily by processualist theory. Nevertheless, despite conscious efforts to attain some kind of positivist objectivity the prejudices and influence of more than a hundred years of biblically inspired discourse remain too often evident.

A recurring theme amongst scholars attempting to prise this period from the confines of traditional discourse has been to call for a broader view of history. This, they believe, will place the period in historical context, locating the events of that time in a larger Near Eastern context. This would remove the period, area and people under study of the burden / honour (depending on one's point of view) of uniqueness so keenly applied by those willing it to be so. I intend in this chapter to critique the ways in which the archaeology of the region has been interpreted. The shortcomings of Biblical Archaeology are well known and have been thoroughly discussed. These will be revisited briefly; time will then be spent on a more thorough critique of the approaches of current Syro-Palestinian

Archaeology and also the reasons behind my rejection of calls for a more annalistic based perspective if we are truly seeking to establish alternative narratives of the region.

Biblical Archaeology

> Of course, we knew from the Bible that Jeroboam had set up the golden calf at Dan [1 Kings 12:28-30]. We thought it might be interesting to see if we could find the locality where the golden calf would have been set. Could we find the sanctuary or the high place where the cult rituals took place? Deep in your heart, you always think, "Wouldn't it be wonderful to find the golden calf."
>
> Avraham Biran (internet ref. 2)

The blueprint for Biblical Archaeology laid down by Albright, for whom the outline of the biblical narratives was to be accepted as being generally historically accurate, became the dominant paradigm throughout the middle part of the 20th century. Classic works such as G.E. Wright's *Biblical Archaeology* (1962) and W.F. Albright's *New Horizons in Biblical Research* (1966) were indicative of the movement which at that time was all but undisputed. Its influence continues to resonate strongly in certain areas.

In 1994 Avraham Biran, the site director at Dan throughout three decades of its excavation, published an overview of the work carried out there entitled *Biblical Dan*. Biran was a student of Nelson Glueck, who was one of the more biblically conservative scholars, though Glueck's rabbinical background meant that, unlike some of the Protestant archaeologists, he allowed for non-literal interpretation of the biblical texts (Davis 2004: 89-90, 92). The manner in which Biran described the archaeology is very much in keeping with his choice of title for the book. His immediate association of the site with the Bible makes clear the approach he takes throughout the rest of the work. He limits himself to a physical description of the site, makes occasional reference to similar finds at other sites and where possible explicitly connects a find with a biblical reference. With regard to the area of Dan and the Hula Valley Avraham Biran's

work provides an example of traditional Biblical Archaeology. Biran's unquestioning embrace of the biblical narrative as historical framework is amply evident in chapter 9 of *Biblical Dan.* The evidence of metalworking at the site during the 11^{th} / 10^{th} centuries is outlined and the point is also made that the activity had been occurring in the city as early as the LB 1 which seems to indicate a tradition of metallurgy dating back some 400-500 years. Biran made three points which bridge the chapter entitled 'The Metal Industry at Dan', none of which is based upon the archaeological evidence. The evidence of metallurgy from the LB I and the end of Iron I prompted Biran to speculate whether the tribe of Dan acquired the skill from the Canaanite occupants of the city or whether they already possessed the ability when they arrived (Biran 1994: 147). He effectively provided his own view on this question by reference to three verses from Exodus (31:6, 35:34, 38:23): 'That such work was part of their tribal background may be deduced from the reference to Oholiab, son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan, who helped in the building of the Tabernacle' (Biran 1994: 151). Finally, he attributed the end of the metal industry at Dan to a possible monopoly established by the, then centralised, authorities of the Israelite monarchy (Biran 1994: 157).

That Biran's assertions were speculative is not, by itself, an issue (all historical reconstruction is to a greater or lesser degree an act of speculation) but that the speculation is not based primarily upon the archaeology is more problematic. Biran's *a priori* assumptions about the region were based upon the biblical texts – any speculation is already shaped by these presupposed interpretations. So, when Biran asked whether the skill of metallurgy was acquired or already known it is because he accepted the account of the Danite conquest of Laish as being essentially historically correct. His faith in the basic historical framework of the biblical texts meant that he was able to find an answer to the question he asked (itself based upon the biblical texts) elsewhere in the texts. Despite using the biblical texts to answer a question prompted by the very same work it does not appear that Biran entertained any worries about the circular nature of this form of enquiry. This circularity of argument is a classic feature of this form of archaeology (see Finkelstein 2007: 11-12 for examples). Biran's matter-of-fact delivery of the findings provides us with very little, if anything, of what life was

like in that period. The archaeology does not peel back the biblical veneer, though admittedly this was not his intention. Biran did little more than provide a list of artefacts and the positions in which they were found. The stones, artefacts and buildings that are described, however, are merely idle symbols of the past only given meaning through human action. Crucially it is this human action that is missing from Biran's account; instead it is overlooked in the search for the texts illumined.

Biran's traditional approach remains popular in many quarters, as testified by the publication of journals such as *Biblical Archaeology Review*. They openly pursue their ambitions of illuminating the biblical texts. There is a problem that arises through the use of the biblical texts, however. That is, where does one draw the line between those who (a) use the material to illuminate texts, (b) use the texts to interpret material or (c) use material to interpret texts? The three activities can be viewed as distinct from each other. With regard to the use of material to illuminate the texts, G.E. Wright's 'armchair archaeologist' (Wright 1947) used the results of excavations to help better understand the world in which the events of the Bible occurred and, in some cases, to try and prove the historicity of those events. Using the texts to interpret archaeology can be to the detriment of alternative interpretations. It effectively promotes a particular view of the past suppressing alternatives. A curious illusion occurs when the biblical texts are used to interpret archaeology. It initially appears that the texts are being used to give the material meaning; whereas what is actually happening is that the material is exploited to reinforce the supposed meaning of the words. When this approach is taken it can obviously become circular if those findings are used by those following the first method. The two approaches confirm and support each other. The third method, using material to interpret the texts, is the most open. It could be used to reinforce the texts or to discredit them depending on the writer's intentions. This is a selective decision. What it highlights is that the material is very open to interpretation and can be moulded to fit one's view of the past.

Textual Difficulties

The problem that we face when attempting to utilise historical records, i.e. written texts, is that ancient writing – particularly in the forms which have survived, e.g. the biblical texts – was written by and for the 'élite'. Groups that have been banded together under such generic titles as administrative, religious authorities, royalty and military authorities fall under this heading. These rarefied groups are not the focus of this study. It is the ability of archaeology to access the material conditions of everyday non-élite life that is so valuable. For this reason the use of historical texts will be treated circumspectly. Their use will be limited to background description and to suggesting gaps in the archaeology but any use will remain firmly secondary to the archaeological material. 'Biblical' archaeology has been trapped too long in a 'conceptual lock' (Whitelam 2005: conference), i.e. the texts have dominated methodology and interpretation in the discipline. For that reason aspects of society not mentioned in the text were neglected.

When interpretation is taken as 'fact' then it deters alternative approaches. The 'conceptual lock' is circular in nature. Many biblical histories follow the historical framework of the Bible to a greater or lesser extent. They are variations on a theme, embroidering around the original. Titles such as *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah* (Soggin 1993), *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Maxwell Miller and Hayes 1986) or simply *A History of Israel* (Bright 1972) are indicative of this. Such books cling tenaciously to the basic chronology of the Bible. These standard biblical histories in their turn help to perpetuate, nurture and immortalise the accepted structure of history laid out in the text. Whilst, admittedly, these are not archaeological works they all include references to artefacts and extra-biblical sources. Unsurprisingly these are regarded as supplementary evidence to the texts. There is an acknowledgement of the paucity of extra-biblical written material which leads Miller and Hayes to conclude that 'specific questions about Israel's origins must be answered through the texts due to lack of artefactual evidence' (1986: 72). The Israelite Iron Age is a quasi-historical era: at most only partly historical; at

the least only seemingly historical, i.e. being a later construct. As an example, Finkelstein (1988: 27-33) suggested using the Iron II political boundaries outlined in the texts to delineate ethnic territorial groups in Iron I. The main problem associated with this approach, that is the unreliability of the texts, was later recognised by Finkelstein himself. He also acknowledges that while outlined boundaries may be generally applicable they do not help in identifying the ethnicity of the inhabitants of any individual site (Finkelstein 1998: 14). Debate continues to rage as to where the reality of this situation lies. The historical veracity, accuracy and legitimacy of the texts continue to be argued over. This being the case, it is to archaeology that we must turn as the only viable alternative.

The archaeologist has to work with the available material remains. If an artefact is ascribed a biblical explanation then the interpretation is provided by a text which is far from homogenous in either its authorship or thought, which is constantly being re-evaluated by scholars, which deals with many non-historical subjects and yet, somehow, is meant to portray an accurate picture of society. This procedure also adds another layer of uncertainty to the process of interpretation, further removing it from the material culture.

Pervasive Biblical Influence

The influence of the texts is still prevalent. The biblical texts and the religions based on them are so famous that they carry with them preconceived notions and reactions. These, shaped too by factors as divergent as school, popular history and Hollywood, serve to provide us with residual images of what 'biblical times' were like. The academic too must cope with mountains of previous work all of which shape our ways of thinking and paint residual pictures of the past. An article from *'Atiqot* 44 illustrates the way that the Bible is still used as a default historical template in the absence of other clear diagnostic material. A tomb was uncovered in 1998 at Har Yona in the Nazareth hills. The isolated grave contained a minimum of fourteen human skeletons; both sexes were represented across a range of ages (from infancy to over 40).

They had apparently been laid out still articulated (Alexandre 2003:183). The pottery was a small assemblage and mainly local (13 vessels with perhaps a couple from further afield). Three simple bronze bracelets and six simple bronze rings were also found as well as a small bone spindle whorl and perforated rod (used in weaving) (Alexandre 2003: 185-87). Alexandre (2003: 187-88) notes that the presence of both storage jar forms associated with the end of Iron I and of long-necked juglets which continue into Iron IIA is a rare occurrence in the archaeological 'record' (author's use of word), and that chronologically the tomb should have an absolute date of the late 11th / early 10th century (or second half of the 10th century according to the Low Chronology).

The problem comes when the author begins to speculate as to the cultural identity of the tomb's occupants. In the very final paragraph she admits that 'on the basis of the finds...no clear-cut conclusions may be reached regarding the cultural affiliation of the deceased' (Alexandre 2003: 188). She rules out Phoenician or Philistine associations because of the absence of diagnostic pottery. Lacking any clear material identification Alexandre turns, without any apparent consideration of the nature of such a text, to assigning an identity based upon a passage from the book of Joshua (19: 10-15) as if it were attested history. According to Alexandre (2003: 188) the location of the tomb falls within the boundaries of the tribe of Zebulun (according to the Joshua passage referenced above). Therefore it seems probable to her that it should be seen as an Israelite burial. There is an assumption that the basic historical outline of the Hebrew Bible is correct so that, in the absence of any clear archaeological promptings with regard to ethnic identification, the interpretation of Israelite is always presupposed. This method of interpretation is inhibitive. It deters any further interpretative pursuit and is a barrier to alternative suggestions. It is also an example of the power of the texts. It is difficult to imagine any other area of archaeology in which interpretation would be so blithely accepted on the basis of a single, uncorroborated, historically debatable text. And yet, in this particular branch, it happens all too frequently. Such assumptions carry with them, as we have seen, political implications.

The New Archaeology and Syro Palestinian Archaeology

The tenets of New Archaeology were developed as a reaction to cultural archaeology. It sought to move beyond the culture-historical classifications of what, where and when. The advances in science bred a hope that the adoption of scientific method could lead to definitive answers as to *why* things happened in the way they did. The appeal for its introduction into what was then Biblical Archaeology was to counter the widespread, traditional use of the biblical texts as the interpretative standard. Dever's (1982) article calling for wholesale adoption of the principles of processualism came at a time when doubts were already being raised about the validity of many of the New Archaeology's methods (cf. Hodder 1982). Despite these doubts processualist theory opened up many new realms of investigation. What has not happened though are the transformations that have occurred in other areas, notably prehistory.

The New Archaeology was ultimately concerned with systems. That is, it sought to discover the 'deterministic causal relationships' (Hodder 1992: 7) that its practitioners believed lay behind, and governed, cultures. The first processual reference point was, of course, the artefact but after that it was not interested in symbolism, beliefs or the individual responsible for creating it. These were written off as stylistic variations which mattered little when pitched against the mighty systemic machinations. The artefact was created by individuals; the individuals were created by the system, ergo the system created the artefacts. This neat syllogism encapsulates basic processual thought. The question that it inevitably raises though is what exactly is the purpose of archaeology? What are we searching for when we dig? One of the main reasons for the rise of post-processualism was the drive to restore the primacy of place to people within archaeology. One of the central tenets of processualism had become its largest failing.

The process of archaeology lends itself to long-term studies. The relative paucity and partial nature of the archaeological record in certain periods is compensated for by its ability to look at long-term historical change. In order to

achieve this it requires the classification of material over long periods of time and across wide geographical areas. This drives the formulation of history in a particular direction – one that is represented by patterns of artefacts. These interests have arisen as a result of the form archaeology follows but they are not necessarily accurate or relevant, and they tend to produce dehumanized accounts of history. As John Barrett (2001: 143) points out this approach 'depends for its efficacy upon accepting that material categories...maintain the same value wherever they are encountered'. This normative approach is one that this thesis intends to move away from.

Processual approaches view society as a totality which is built from the structured actions of its constituent members. This immediately places the observer outside of the society and diminishes the actions of people to no more then cogs in a machine. It views society as a collection of inter-dependent mechanisms that function as parts of a 'socio-cultural' whole. Often an organic analogy is employed, comparing society to the human body with each organ representing areas such as economy, religion and government. Processual archaeology rejects the idea that society is homogenous in its motivations and attitude. Instead it claims that although society is a whole it contains within it a number of heterogeneous systems that compete with each other for influence and power; although there is competition they are also inter-dependent on each other. Changes in one area of society have inevitable repercussions throughout the rest of it. It sought to produce models of society which were based on cross-cultural observations. It was believed that an accurate model should be applicable to all similarly organised societies on certain developmental levels. To view society as a whole like this is again an artificial creation. Systems theory as applied by archaeologists tends to recognise quantifiable artefacts as the most important form of data. Systems theory relies on statistics to produce a model of those data. The immediate problem with this is that such a model only reflects the material in terms of dimension, frequency, spatial distribution – the levels of inference remain shallow. It also distinguished between function and style with regard to materiality. Emphasis fell very much upon function with style seen as unimportant variation. Subsystems such as 'economy', 'religious'

and 'social' (Barrett 2001: 146) were studied to establish their relationship and how an overall societal equilibrium was formed.

Processualist accounts describe a negotiated reality that is unduly influenced by considerations of economy, status and power. It does nothing to help us understand the everyday experience of people. These experiences, relationships, motivations and actions are multiple, varied, extreme and unique, and often unknowable. The processualist tendency to search for generalisations means that many unique factors are ignored because they fail to fit with the overarching, cross-cultural principles which are familiar to us and therefore understandable (Barrett 1994: 161). In the quest for these defining societal maxims processualism forgot about people. It also fails to explain change in a suitable fashion. If each area of society is inter-dependent then homeostasis would occur – we then have a situation, similar to that of the culture-history approach, where change can only occur through the influence of external forces.

When constructing any historical representation the social influences of the interpreter must always be acknowledged. Processualism has suffered from claims of ethnocentrism. It has focused on and stressed values that the West holds dear and assumed that these same core values applied to people in past places. When seeking to explain and describe past societies and behaviour, it has done so using Western values (e.g. economics, status, power) as the focal point. Syro-Palestinian archaeology suffers from many of the processual problems. In *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel,* Beth Alpert Nakhai (2001: 193) concludes that the cult sites of Israel played a vital role in state formation, economy and élites. This may have been true but such conclusions ride roughshod over the daily role of a temple in a person's life. What happened there? Ecstatic worship or staid reverence? How were they perceived? The variations of each individual place are largely ignored. There are a multitude of questions and impressions that are blanketed by these generically bland statements. This is not to deny these factors may have been relevant but to apply them broadly across a perceived society is far too general. Generalisation is doomed to failure. People do not all have the same motives, there are a multitude. Nor is it possible even to apply particular motives to

particular individuals. That is far too simplistic. Motives may be situational or alter through time and experience. We must also recognise that there may be unique motives (to a person or culture) which we are wholly unfamiliar with and may never be discernible but that is not to say that we should abandon the search for them.

Whitelam's wish for Syro-Palestinian Archaeology to be placed in a broader spectrum has been partially answered. Finkelstein's (1998) view of the rise of early Israel is that it is the third wave of a cyclical pattern of settlement in the region stretching back across the previous two millennia. Finkelstein bases his findings on extensive surveys that have been conducted throughout Israel and the Palestinian West Bank (particularly across the central hill country) in the 1980s and 90s. These provided information on numbers, size, population, location and, according to Finkelstein (1998: 10), 'the economic factors which dictated their distribution'. The settlement process is viewed as the result of socio-economic shifts starting as early as the 4th millenium. The factor that distinguished this third settlement pattern however was its transformation into statehood (Finkelstein 1998: 8). The development of the states of Israel and Judah is linked to two geographical areas: the first around Samaria (from Shiloh to the Jezreel valley), which was the more fertile and easier for habitation, and the second, to the south, the Judaean Hills (from the Beer-Sheba Valley to the Bethel Plateau) (Finkelstein 1998: 13). Time and again Finkelstein brings back the explanation to socio-economic and environmental factors. These determine the waves of immigration to the area over the millennia and the reasons why statehood began to develop after the third wave. They also determine the political units which are shaped by the geography of the highlands. Units which have been demarcated since at least the 14th century when Finkelstein (1998: 31) notes they were the only highland political entities mentioned in the Amarna letters.

Finkelstein claims that these surveys have 'disqualified many of the past theories on the rise of Early Israel and have opened the way to a *comprehensive understanding*' (Finkelstein 1998: 8, emphasis mine). Although Finkelstein is specifically talking about the surveys of the highlands his comments are

applicable to the annalistic method in general. If by comprehensive he means that it has a view large in scope then that is one thing. How can a viewpoint covering thousands of years be regarded as anything else? If, however, he means to imply that such a method leads to a detailed understanding then that is something else. I find myself in agreement with Jonathan Tubb (1998: 167-8) who notes that although there may have been three waves of settlement in the region they were not connected. Each wave had its own distinct reasons. Tubb cites specific socio-economic reasons for each wave but what he stops short of is considering the experience of the people involved. Their actions are reduced to mere predictable reactions. There is no attempt to engage with the way that people lived. Tubb's (1998: 167-8) criticisms of Finkelstein's (1998) paper focus on the inability of the method to identify ethnicity. This is something that Finkelstein recognises in the paper itself however. For all the information the surveys of the highlands have provided they cannot explain what apparently made these communities coalesce into the later political states of Israel and Judah. Tubb's (1998: 167) assertion that ethnicity becomes more a question of self-perception is something else I would agree with. However, in the search for Israelite identity Tubb (1998: 168) suggests that 'it would seem unnecessarily obtuse to look further afield for such a catalyst than the literary traditions of the Exodus and conquest preserved in the Old Testament'.

The problem with Tubb's criticism is that, while it makes some valid points about the shortcomings of Finkelstein's conclusions, it falls back on the biblical texts to provide the answers. We have already discussed how this is an unsound and unsatisfactory method of constructing the past. Instead we should be exploring different ways of interpreting the archaeology of the region.

There is a dominant emphasis on socio-economic and environmental factors in the *longue durée*. Finkelstein's conclusions about the LBA / IA I highland settlement are a classic example of this. This was the third wave of cyclical settlement pattern dating back to the EBA. Each wave in turn can be broken down into three phases (Finkelstein 1998: 24):

1. Initial settlement of small sites with no central administration centres.
2. Several major centres develop – locations of the ruling elite.

3. Collapse, only a few small settlements remain.

These different phases are caused by political and socio-economic factors such as the LBA collapse. Finkelstein (1998: 34) acknowledges that shorter-term events, e.g. foreign interventions, also help to shape each waves character. The make up of each is 'a combination of long-term history and short-term circumstance' and 'a balance between local developments and external influences' (Finkelstein 1998: 34).

So, it would seem that the broader perspective that Whitelam (1996) called for has been adopted by certain scholars. It has provided a depth to the research, contextualising the Iron Age of the region. For Whitelam, however, the aim of this was to remove the 'unique' label that has accompanied Ancient Israel throughout its representation in Western academic discourse. Despite attempts to revise the scales of investigation, and even with the application of certain 'minimalist' ideas, the thought of Israel as somehow special persists. Although Finkelstein (1998: 34) shifts the date, the uniqueness remains, 'the genuinely exceptional event in the highlands of Palestine in the late-second-early-first-millenium BCE was not the 'Israelite Settlement', but the emergence of territorial states in the 9^{th}-8^{th} centuries BCE'.

Ethnicity

The archaeological attempt to identify ethnicity through material culture has a number of inherent problems. The assumption that ethnicity can be determined because of the presence of distinct material assemblages is flawed. There is also no general agreement over how people should be categorised, i.e. whether it should be by race or other factors such as language, religion or nationality. If we are to use ethnicity as the basis then we discover a lack of definition of the term. Ethnicity is a fluid notion which changes over time. Ethnic boundaries can overlap, with people considering themselves of more than one ethnic origin. It is not necessarily bound to a single place nor does a single place necessarily contain only one ethnic group (London 2003: 146). Ethnicity is not the basic

essence of people but rather a fluid and historically contingent concept which is situated in daily practice (Jones 1997: 13-14).

The most straightforward and apparently logical attempt to identify people and cultures came in its use by the culture-history school. Distinct material assemblages were taken to denote equally distinct and homogenous ethnic groups. A material assemblage was taken to represent 'culture', and 'culture' as defined by V.G. Childe signified a common social heritage i.e. traditions, institutions, a way of living (Jones 1997: 15-17). Assemblages as a whole were valued higher than individual artefacts. In practice though, the identification of assemblages often hinged on a few key artefacts (i.e. the 'four-roomed house' and the 'collared-rim jar'). This basic method was used by scholars such as Childe and C. Hawkes to produce large-scale chronological and spatial charts, identifying historically attested groups. The identification of material assemblages is not an exact science. The establishment of such assemblages, and this applies to archaeology in general, is dependent of course on the survival and recovery of material which can be somewhat arbitrary.

In Iron Age 'Israel' these points are particularly relevant. Historical writing about this period often assumes sharp distinctions between 'Canaanite' and 'Israelite'. It may well be that no such clean divisions can be drawn. The existence of specific Israelite material culture is highly debatable. The only items that have been traditionally regarded as Israelite are the 'four-roomed house' and 'collared-rim storage jars'. But neither of these is exclusive to sites identified as Israelite (London 2003: 148). The simplistic approach of equating ethnic groups with pottery types has long been acknowledged as flawed. Variable factors such as trade, status and neighbouring cultures can all play a part in pottery distribution. The apparent uniqueness of both has been exposed by them also being found along the lowlands, the coast and all over the Iron I Transjordanian plateau. Finkelstein (1998: 17-18) concludes that both the 'four-roomed house' and the 'collared-rim storage jars' are the result of environmental and socio-economic traits but provide no clues as to the ethnic affiliation of the inhabitants.

Dever (1993: 24) writes that there is an archaeological identifiable ethnic entity (distinct from Canaanite or Philistine) along the highland frontier. This is a strange statement when one considers the material continuity not only between the LBA and the IA but also between the highlands and other regions in the IA such as the Transjordanian plateau. Although there is material continuity between the highland settlements and the later political entities of the Israelite state the same material culture was also present in regions with different ethnic groups which led to the rise of different political states (Finkelstein 1998: 14-15). Finkelstein questions whether archaeological material can ever reveal the ethnicity of a group. One archaeological factor that may prove useful in establishing ethnic affiliation is that of animal bone assemblages. These may be used to identify food taboos. There are problems with this approach (availability of resources, acculturation) but it appears to be one of the more promising methods of identifying the ethnicity of individual sites. The relative absence of pig bones in the Iron I central highlands when compared to contemporaneous sites in the lowlands and the Transjordanian plateau appears to show a clear pig taboo in this area (Finkelstein 1998: 20).

Language

In *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000-586 B.C.E.,* W.R. Garr attempted to establish the dialectical continuum and variation across Syria-Palestine. He began by stressing that differences in dialect are the result of a number of factors. Prime among these are historical, political and socioeconomic but he also includes physical geography, trade routes and religion (Garr 1985: 1). The area under study ranges from Syria-Anatolia in the north, south through the Aramaean states, Phoenicia and further, encompassing Israel and Moab, Edom and Ammon in the Transjordan.

Garr wrote that the region as a whole was one in which communication was not easy. The topography tended to make communication difficult and which promoted not only numerous dialectic variations but also local government exemplified by the Canaanite city states of, as Garr (1985: 7) wrote, pre-Davidic

times. This relative isolation was broken up by the major trade routes that crossed over the land. Along these arteries flowed goods, people and ideas and Garr (1985:7, 9) suggested that new forms of speech came with them and filtered, albeit slowly, out into the wider communities.

There are a number of problems with Garr's study. There is an acceptance of the traditional history and boundaries of Israel in Garr's work. He does not question the historicity of the Kingdom of David or the extent of the territory. Some of his philological conclusions are clearly shaped by the biblical narrative (Garr 1985: 231, 234-35). He himself recognised that there are inherent problems in trying to capture the dialects and speech patterns of 'normal' people. The sole reliance is, of course, on written sources. Written language tends to have a more standard form than the spoken word and as such can have a levelling effect, suppressing local variation (Garr 1985: 10). The texts which he used are not exact contemporaries, ranging across the entire period of over 400 years. On official documents such as stelae, scribes were employed, and these were highly educated individuals skilled in the language of the elite. These are hardly likely to employ the language of the common man in their work (Garr 1985: 10-11). While all of this does not necessarily mean that the everyday language of people was different to the sources the likelihood is that local nuances, slang, and variation can never be recovered.

Garr concluded that Hebrew would have been unintelligible to a speaker of Aramaic (Garr 1985: 231). This conclusion has a number of issues clouding it. A biblical quote is used in support with no discussion of the dating (Garr 1985: 231). More substantial are the temporal difference of the sources and the geographical considerations. Is it possible to produce such a continuum for a period spanning over 400 years when the subject is as organic as language? With particular regard to Dan and, more generally, the Hula Valley their geographic location is much nearer to Damascus than to either Samaria or Jerusalem. It lay approximately equidistant between Damascus and Phoenicia. Garr did note a difference between southern and northern Hebrew. He suggested that the physical location between Phoenicia and Ammon would have had a bearing upon the language (Garr 1985: 233). This being the case then it seems

likely that, given the position of the Hula Valley and Dan in particular (positioned on a major thoroughfare), the area would have had a fairly cosmopolitan blend of languages. Perhaps even a number in operation concurrently. Economic factors must also be considered. The dominance of Phoenicia in this respect may be the reason for Phoenician linguistic influences spreading inland (Garr 1985: 235). Again, the location of Dan on a major trade route between Phoenicia and Damascus probably meant that there was a linguistic mix on its streets.

Geographical factors are not deterministic, no single feature is. Garr wrote that political affiliation can also have an influence. The example he gave is that of the fractured political system of the Aramaean states, its relatively isolated communities resulted in a diverse set of dialects. In contrast, the politically unified Judah (from David onwards) displays a 'single linguistic entity' (Garr 1985: 234). Here, however, I believe, Garr's conclusions are reached under the influence of his preconceived notions. His observations about language lead him to make assumptions about the political nature of the places they herald from, rather than the other way around as presented. His belief in the existence of the Davidic kingdom is reinforced by the linguistic cohesiveness of the region. He also notes that this 'sociopolitical structure of Syria-Palestine...was very much atypical' (Garr 1985: 234) which is a classic example of the lingering influence of traditional discourse which proclaims the uniqueness of Israel (see Whitelam 1996).

Despite its difficulties Garr's work has some interesting points in relation to this thesis. He suggested that in several communities there were at least two dialects in concurrent use although admits that whether this is representative of the local community or simply in official use is impossible to tell (Garr 1985: 11). Nevertheless it reminds us that it can not be taken for granted that communities were homogenous in nature, be it with regard to language, ethnicity or political affiliation.

The Revisionist Position

A school of thought that has been labelled 'minimalist' (mainly by its critics) or 'revisionist' emerged in the early 1990s. Scholars such as Philip Davies (1992) and Thomas L. Thompson (1992) as well as Keith Whitelam built upon the findings of the seminal work by D.W. Jamieson-Drake (1991). There is a recognition by these writers that Biblical Israel (as portrayed in the biblical texts) is a literary construct, an ideological vision of the past created by writers working well after the events portrayed. As such any sound historical reconstruction of Iron I should be reliant solely on archaeology. We have already discussed how the texts, with their late dates and agendas make them highly unreliable as historical witnesses. The narratives of the United Monarchy have little to do with history. Their heroic-mythical character hallmarks them as stories of a 'golden age' (Lemche and Thompson 1994: 16).

Revisionist studies of ancient Palestine have concluded that the existence of two such fabulously powerful kings such as David and Solomon was simply not feasible. Jerusalem during the 10th century was not capable of supporting such characters let alone acting as the capital city of the state of Judah. The infrastructure was not there. Jerusalem was not the pre-eminent city in the region until at least the 7th century and possibly as late as the 2nd century (Lemche and Thompson 1994: 20)! Lemche and Thompson (1994: 20) provide examples of cities that they believe to have been the dominant ones (sc. more powerful than Jerusalem) in Iron Age Palestine, these were: Gaza, Ashkelon, Jaffa, Akko, Megiddo, Taanach, Beth Shan, Arad, Beersheba, Jericho, Hazor and Dan.

The United Monarchy should not, therefore, be considered historical reality. Finkelstein (e.g. 1998(b), 1996) is the most high-profile archaeologist working in the area to have been influenced by the 'revisionist' thought. His Low Chronology is a controversial re-dating of much of the material from the Iron Age I. Based purely on archaeological material Finkelstein shifts forward the dates of strata at sites such as Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer (which have

traditionally been associated with the Solomonic era) from the 10th century into the 9th century. Other material evidence associated with developed statehood is also missing. Monumental inscriptions, seals and seal impressions are not evident before the 9th century (Finkelstein 1998(a): 32). This shift is due to a lack of distinctively identifiable Israelite material and a rejection of the biblical texts as historically accurate.

Dever (2001: 23-52) acknowledges that the 'revisionists' have highlighted a genuine epistemological crisis in the discipline but despite this takes heavy issue with the 'revisionist' post-modern (as he sees it) approach. He claims that the 'revisionists' are working with 'a hidden agenda' and that their relative, radical ideologies are aimed at rejecting the discourse of the centre in favour of the periphery (Dever 2001: 24-25). Dever is wrong about two crucial aspects. The first is that the revisionist's agenda is not a hidden one. They are quite open in acknowledging their aims; what they are critical of are the tacit influences that affect others' work (see Whitelam 1996: 37-70). The second is that Dever notes these characteristics as a criticism of their approach. His mocking tone is apparent throughout the chapter. I believe that they are a strength. The city of Dan has a particular Iron Age Israelite portrayal, one which has been described by Biran on the basis of the biblical texts. The 'revisionist' approach helps us to deconstruct that representation and clear the way for alternate reconstructions.

A Need to Rethink

> The historian of ancient Palestine has to be content with understanding history in a broad sweep
>
> Keith Whitelam (1996: 9)

Archaeological writing is all too often concerned with long-term historical processes. While this is a necessary and vital part of history it has also tended to marginalise people in the past. The actions of individuals and small groups are lost under the weight of these historical processes. Where such actions are acknowledged they are portrayed as being determined by large socio-economic

or environmental forces. When processual archaeologists observe apparent patterns in the material culture they regard it as a result of these processes and not of particular actions of people in the past. There is a stark contrast between the lives that we live today, which move from moment to moment and in which actions are important and impactful, and life as represented in history when presented as the result of 'long term processes characteristic of social and economic institutions' (Barrett 1994: 2). An appreciation of the multitude of actions of which the longer-term processes are comprised is required. Although most archaeology focuses upon the long-term at the expense of the momentary it is the latter that is more 'historical' in the true sense. The actions of past people were real, daily events acted out within actual settings. It is these which create history. The long-term processes are interpretations of perceived patterns of action. These processes are then labelled and reified and in turn act as a framework for interpreting actions – a sequence which is inherently backwards. Logically then the answer is to revise the temporal scale in which archaeology works.

An 'agent's' behaviour is limited by his / her society and enabled by it. People determine their society and are influenced by it. The classic view of history and that of archaeologists has been to place the levels of influence upside-down. To use a geological metaphor – the base of history, perceived to be long-term historical and environmental processes is represented by massive slabs of rock. On top of these rocks sit smaller stones which represent the constituent parts of society expressed as concepts such as economy, religion and military. Finally on top of these stones is a layer of gravel which represents the people. These are seen as inconsequential, their place determined by the larger layers beneath them. One way of understanding the change in interpretative approach is simply to turn the metaphor upside down. Now it is the gravel, the actions of individuals, which provide the base of everything else. Let us take another step; the layers of stone and massive rock are removed so that all that remains is a mass of gravel. In effect we have acknowledged that history is composed of the effects of individual actions; all else are simply perceived patterns of action seen from an artificial perspective. That is not to say however that the actions of individuals are random and uninfluenced. It is not historical Brownian Motion.

Actions are considered and carried out within historical and social settings but it is important not to reify these into pertinacious external frameworks.

This is not to imply that this study intends to reconstruct historically identifiable individual lives. It will not apply names to specific people. If we understand that people lived their lives through engaging with the material and historical conditions which surrounded them then it should be possible to investigate the ways some of those lives may have been lived (Barrett 1994: 4, 5). The materiality of a person's environment at once restricts, enables and guides their movements and actions. They may be restricted from certain areas while new areas are created for them to explore and inhabit. They respond to this environment, architecture and to artefacts also. All of these are created and shaped by people with a recognition of what already exists (whether natural or man-made), these creations are imbued with meaning and memory. We, as archaeologists, have access to these creations (or at least a remnant of them) and therefore, indirectly, a means of recovering past ways of living.

> ...material culture is an *indirect* reflection of human society...it is ideas, beliefs and meanings which interpose themselves between people and things.
>
> Ian Hodder (1992: 3)

The acceptance of the above notion renders the principles of New Archaeology impracticable and obsolete. The reductionist approach that governs New Archaeology cannot be applied once it is acknowledged that all material culture is symbolic and, further, that symbolism is culturally specific. Rather than material culture being purely a product of environmental adaptation and survival and therefore subject to universal laws, this whole layer of inference makes each case particularistic (Hodder 1992: 4). There is too the awareness that the material culture in its turn influences and shapes the actions and lives of people but that does not mean to say that such influence is not open to cultural inference. Hodder (1992: 19) outlines two broad approaches to archaeological inference: materialist and idealist. Materialist archaeology assumes a direct correlation between culture and environment (i.e. culture is a result of adaptation; ultimately it is a question of survival (Hodder 1992: 21)). Idealist

archaeology assumes that the relationship is not direct, there being a layer of culturally specific meaning between the two.

Biran's work is typical of most of work in this field, and has revealed a large urban site. What the site at Dan affords us is an opportunity to be more ambitious in our interpretations. The archaeology there implicitly asks us a number of questions which, as yet, remain unanswered. The theoretical positions touched on above (and developed more fully in the next chapter) will be used to re-assess the site. The 10th and 9th centuries were a key period in this area. These two centuries saw the city and area contested, with control perhaps changing hands a number of times. Eventually this resulted in Israelite domination succeeding the hegemony of Aram-Damascus. What I hope to investigate is how these events affected the populace of the area, what can be said about the ethnicity of the region and how they lived.

This study recognises the valuable work that has previously been undertaken within Syro-Palestinian archaeology. It certainly has no intention of dismissing that work out of hand. Indeed, this thesis will be built upon foundations already laid by previous scholars. The hope is to address what I see as the largest failing of Syro-Palestinian archaeology: its lack of interpretative ambition. This is amply demonstrated by Biran (1994) and to a lesser degree by processualist approaches such as Alpert Nakhai (2001). We have seen that previous approaches in this area have put the culture or system before the people, as if somehow they existed prior to the appearance of humans. Such a view in inherently backwards, anachronistic and does not acknowledge the primacy of people over objects and perceived patterns or systems. This then is a call for a change of philosophy, of ambition, a change of theory. Archaeology is not about the history of objects; it should be about the history of people. Far more important than simply ascribing dates and geographical origins to artefacts (or an interpretation ripped from the biblical texts) is that 'archaeologists should seek to understand how people may once have lived out their lives' (Barrett 1994: 95). If we are attempting to understand how people lived their lives then we must endeavour to know the range of their understanding and the way in which they comprehended the world around them. Modern perceptions of

societal systems or the theological ideologies of élitist writers may not have been apparent to past people – let us place the emic before the etic. Nor were considerations of power, wealth or securing the positions of élites factors that affected the everyday experience of participants – at least not directly.

In a way it is unfair to criticise the work done by Syro-Palestinian archaeologists. Their work is designed with a particular set of research questions in mind. There is no doubt that these have brought new ways of understanding the region into the foreground. These make refreshing reading when compared to the tired discourse of the more traditional biblical archaeologists. Much of this new research, particularly many of the works we have looked at in this chapter, has investigated the question of Israel's origins. The location of this activity has largely been the highlands of central Israel and Palestine. However, even if we were generally to agree with the conclusions that have been drawn we would be no nearer to resolving the history of Dan and the Hula Valley in 10th and 9th centuries. The highland polities are a long way south of Dan. Although I do not want to put too much stress upon topography it appears clear the events happening in the central highlands would be unlikely to affect the Hula Valley, at least in any direct way. Despite the claim that the descendants of the Iron I highland people were the inhabitants of Israel and Judah (based on cultural and demographic continuity) (Finkelstein 1998: 8) it is extremely debatable whether these conclusions can be extrapolated reasonably to Dan and the Hula. The city and surrounding region need to be considered as a separate locale.

The Perils of Interpretation

In Syro-Palestinian archaeology, as touched on above, it is interesting to note that some of the most vociferous and polemical objections to post-modern / interpretative approaches have come from one of the leading voices in the calls that led to Syro-Palestinian archaeology, William Dever. Dever's recent 2005 publication, *Did God Have a Wife?*(2005) is a curiosity. As touched on in Chapter 2 there is much that I would agree with and applaud in it but his

methodology is confused and confusing. In the introduction (Dever 2005: ix-xvi), he provides a brief background for himself so that his own biases may be more apparent. This is something which I have done also and wish that more academics would also include in their work. What is most apparent about the book though are the often conflicting ideas which are laid out within it. The whole book is littered with methodological and theoretical contradictions. Dever (2005: xii) defines certain terms such as 'Hebrew Bible' and 'Palestine' (which he claims has no relevance to the modern political conflict) but leaves other words undefined. In particular he uses the word 'theory' in a curious manner, as if it is something divorced from the process of historical reconstruction (e.g. Dever 2005: xii, 85-86). He extols the virtues of archaeology and the weaknesses of the biblical texts and notes that the latter can only be used very circumspectly. In places he does this (e.g. Dever 2005: 125-26) but elsewhere he liberally sprinkles passages as background and on page 15 utilises biblical narrative as history.

The biggest concern, however, is Dever's own theoretical position. He makes a number of statements that any interpretive archaeologist would agree with. He acknowledges that the writing of history is influenced by personal bias, methodology and as such there can be no truly objective account of the past. Despite this he insists, and reaffirms a number of times throughout the book, that his account will 'employ archaeological data to provide an empirical, factual basis for understanding' (Dever 2005: 9). Dever attacks Whitelam as a 'revisionist' and claims that he maligns archaeology and archaeologists (Dever 2005: 78). Dever is wrong; what Whitelam complains about is the uncritical (and in other cases politically motivated) use of archaeology which perpetuates a particular historical representation of the region. Again Dever is contradictory in his writing – he comments that the 'revisionist' critique contains 'thinly-disguised hostility' and that he 'can only surmise that these [attacks are because these] ideologically-driven scholars know intuitively that it is *their* Israel that has been "invented", not ours' (Dever 2005: 79; italics original). Apparently Dever's Israel is not an invention but indisputable fact. On the very next page Dever then dismisses Thompson's and Whitelam's 'revisionist' views with the sentence, 'Fortunately, these two scholars who think themselves provocateurs

are marginal figures' (Dever 2005: 80). That will teach them for presenting an alternative point of view! Elsewhere Dever is equally dismissive, the rejection of 'facts' in favour of social constructs is denounced as 'postmodern piffle' (Dever 2005: 9) and revisionism as a 'fad' (Dever 2005: 82).

Dever is perhaps in more dangerous territory when he (2001: 37) claims that 'several of Whitelam's statements border dangerously on anti-Semitism; they are certainly anti-Jewish and anti-Israel'; as touched on at the end of Chapter 4 the charge of anti-Semitism is often the knee-jerk reaction to any criticism of Israel. What Whitelam is critical of is traditional Western and Israeli biblical scholarship and archaeology and the way it has constructed (and continues to construct) a discourse (be it consciously or unconsciously) that has promoted the history of Israel to the detriment of other alternative (in particular, Palestinian) pasts. He has also highlighted how this discourse resonates in modern times and has political implications. Whitelam's 1996 work may be sympathetic to Palestinian views but that does not mean it is anti-Semitic. Those who consider it to be so may already be of a mind that the two positions are synonymous.

The backlash against new theory and ideas is nothing new and it is not restricted to the relatively conservative realms of Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Even within British prehistory, an area noted for its embrace of the post-processual precepts, there has been resistance. In a 2005 *Antiquity* article Andrew Fleming launched a scathing attack on the methods and theory of two phenomenologically based works (in the style of Tilley 1994). His criticism is multi-pronged; language, observations and academic rigour are all called into question. These criticisms are generated out of an objection to the theory.

> Archaeological fieldwork has been well served over the years by a combination of empiricism, logical positivism and critical scepticism, supported by careful observation and recording. It comes as something of a shock to encounter a version of 'landscape archaeology' which is more dependent on rhetoric, speculation, argument by assertion and observations not always replicable when checked.
>
> Andrew Fleming (2005: 930)

What is apparent is that Fleming has not fully grasped the broader concept of Tilley's use of phenomenology. This is to offer suggestions of meaning of place from bodily, subjective perspectives which intentionally depart from the conventional positivistic approach (Tilley 2004: 1). Fleming's adherence to his own theoretical perspective is taken to extreme when he makes the rather odd assertion that:

> If those [people in the past] who chose the locations of the tombs *did* make highly idiosyncratic choices [as Fleming saw them], the resultant heterogeneous pattern would probably make it impossible to do any serious work on these questions, or to develop archaeological arguments beyond speculative assertion.
>
> Andrew Fleming (2005: 927)

Fleming rejects the possibility of idiosyncratic human choice in the past on the grounds that it is simply incompatible with the theoretical approach he subscribes to. His definition of 'serious work' appears to have very little to do with whether or not the past may be accurately represented (ignoring for the moment the problems associated with that) and more to do with the production of work that adheres to positivist maxims! Just imagine if those inconsiderate people in the past had just placed those tombs wherever they felt like, where would that leave all those models and hypotheses?!

The charge of relativism is often levelled at the post-modern approach. However, the acknowledgement that there is no objective history does not leave the creation of history open to absolute relativism. Rather it is simply recognising that there is no such thing as an interpretation which is not influenced by previous experience or expectation. Objections are

understandable when traditional discourses are suddenly open to revision, particularly in the area of Biblical / Syro-Palestinian archaeology, where you have the added complication of religion and politics. Absolute relativism, however, is simply not an option; any interpretation has to be firmly embedded in the material culture. It is only through this that the possibilities of living can be explored.

Conclusions

Biblical Archaeology and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology have made little effort in attempting to reveal the people behind the material. Much of it simply follows the steps of excavating, identifying and cataloguing pieces. This will not, by itself, advance our understanding of the past. The critical factor is how we interpret the material conditions (cf. Barrett 1994) that are uncovered. Archaeology in Israel has limited itself to either assigning artefacts a biblical explanation (i.e. identifying material with reference to the texts of the Bible) or explaining finds in a systemic / functionalist manner. Syro-Palestinian archaeology has not moved beyond the processual stage. The tenets of processualism have not even been universally embraced (although Syro-Palestinian archaeology can hardly be said to be unique in this). Both approaches briefly outlined above seek to categorise material according to pre-determined societal behaviour. The role of past people was largely overlooked in such approaches; their action was defined by either a text or a system that existed outside them. This is indicative of their hermeneutic philosophies, choosing to concentrate on external designs, viewing the people as defined by a text or societies as a whole with their inter and intra relationships. The Syro-Palestinian approach does not focus on the role of past people per se nor recognise their active and creative role in history. Culture-historians such as Hawkes (1954) did not believe that such themes were recoverable from the material; the New Archaeologists saw such activity as secondary to the overall system. Both approaches have constructed 'society' as an external thing and reified it.

> It is as if the extinct social totality could be conceived of as a number of rooms which existed whether or not they were inhabited; when the rooms were inhabited, however, their shape determined the behaviour of the inhabitants, who in turn left behind a record of that behaviour. The record is regarded as secure by us because it is unambiguously material and because it derives directly from the socially determined actions of people.
>
> John Barrett (2001: 147)

It is important to recognise that, contra Dever, history as it 'was really like' is far too simplistic a notion (Dever 2005: X). We are not denying that actual events took place in the past, simply acknowledging that it is not possible ever to provide a definitive account of them. Reinhard Bernbeck (2005: 114-15) notes that past realities as created by a historian are certainly not identical to any historical reality. Besides, this work does not seek to uncover an objective past. If, by history, we mean we are trying to write an account of past peoples then we must accept a multiplicity of experiences and histories. In the same way we must also accept that there is a multiplicity of interpretations, this thesis being one among many. Further, if we are trying to relate a history then not only do we have to accept multiple interpretations but also that it is our method of historical investigation that constructs history (Barrett 2001: 147). The methods that we use and the importance that *we choose* to bestow upon one category or another shape our historical narratives.

It seems clear that the rejection of the biblical texts as a trustworthy historical source, the lack of interpretive ambition in current Syro-Palestinian approaches and the ambiguous material remains of the Iron Age period opens the way for alternative interpretations. Although we may acknowledge that there is material continuity between the highlands and the later states of Israel and Judah it must be recognised that the same material assemblages gave rise to distinctly different ethnic groups in Transjordan (Finkelstein 1998: 15). In advance of those considerations though there is the question of locale. The basis of the renewed debate is the surveys which have been carried out extensively since the early 1980s and into the 90s. Their focus has been around the central highlands of Israel and Palestine. Even if one argued for the settlements there to be

regarded as Israelite (or Proto-Israelite) that reasoning can not be applied to the Hula Valley region. There is a tendency when dealing with the name or idea of Israel to automatically apply it to the traditional boundaries as defined in the biblical texts, as for example Finkelstein (1988: 27-33) was tempted to do.

The variant definitions of archaeology all have at least one thing in common. That is that archaeology is about the history of humans. It is with this in mind and, as well, with a general dissatisfaction with the approaches that are currently employed in the region that I shall begin to lay out my methodology in the next chapter: a methodology which I hope will afford access to a more regional and personal view of the past.

The Hunt

The five men stopped and looked back across the valley. Having set off at first light they had been following the road up the eastern flank of the valley. The Great White Mountain sat above them to the north. Although steadily climbing they were also getting nearer to its main body and as such it massive torso seemed only to burgeon, its minacious peaks stretching ever higher. Across the valley the hills rose away west, mirroring the east but lacking a mountainous twin. The wide, flat valley floor spread out before them, lush and green.

The unenviable task of bringing in the two men had fallen to the matriarch's nephew. He had listened in staunched silence, his fearful aunt countering any objections before he could make them with raised finger and that imploring way of hers. He had never liked the old woman. Not that he had any specific complaints, she looked after the family well enough but her manner listed from indignant anger to nauseating sweetness, and always that same self-righteous attitude throughout. And now she had charged him with this. His aunt's negotiations with the garrison commander, her wheedling to cling on to power ahead of the other major families, particularly the coastal incomers (as she still called them despite their having been in the city for generations) had ultimately brought him to this invidious mission. This would live with him, people would not forget. The others he had picked to accompany him already resented the fact, and he could not blame them.

He pulled on some dried beef, tearing off a strip between his teeth in a small act of frustration. He could see the city sat on its low hill, smoke rising in thin trails - probably from his father's forge. Scattered about were smaller settlements and in the distance, toward the other side of the valley, the other city. He knew them well: the places, the people. He had family in many, some close relatives, most distant - at least as far as blood was concerned.

The cloud was coming in low, though not complete as yet, shot through with spears of light clearly and individually discernible against the gloomy backdrop. He followed one from the heavens to its end where it shimmered out across the waters of the lake. Other shafts similarly lit up the surface but the clouds were thickening and, one by one, the lights were being strangled. The water turned grey, in tune with his mood. Rain was sweeping up the valley from the south; the winds stirring the tall reeds of the swamplands, beautiful in their angered coordination. The

swamps were four, five times the size of the lake itself and it was they that dominated and defined the valley more than any other single factor. From this perspective he could see how they all lived on the edge of it; not just those peasants eking out a living in its humid midst.

Picking a piece of beef out from between his teeth he turned and looked up towards the mountain. 'Come on,' he muttered, shouldering his way past the other four without looking back to see if they were following, 'let's get it done.'

'You are not gonna find them. There's too many people round here who would've done the same. I mean, let's face it, you don't even really wanna catch them, do you? You're just gonna have to head back and disappoint She-who-must-be-obeyed.'

'Easy for you to say.'

'Hey, you know if I knew anything about where those boys were I'd tell you. Right?'

The matriarch's nephew turned away from staring glumly at the rain and looked at his cousin's husband. He was drawing out a jug of wine from the amphora. 'Right?' he repeated, not able to keep the smirk from his face.

The matriarch's nephew shook his head and started laughing, 'You lying bastard.'

'Is that any way to speak to an old friend?' came the reply accompanied by feigned attitudes of shock and hurt.

'Gimme that wine.'

It had been the same everywhere. He had understood soon enough but a mixture of one-part duty and four-parts not wanting to face his aunt had kept him going. At least then it would look like he made an effort. For ten days people had lied to his face, he knew it, they knew he knew it. Some, knowing the politics, had sympathised with him - others were less understanding. A woman from one of the swamp dwellings had spat at him which he had dodged adroitly. The others had laughed about it for days afterwards even as they trudged up one side of the valley, down again and then up the other side. They had initially headed east up above the city on the basis of some spurious tip-off which he had always felt was a hoax from the start. And so it had proved. They had climbed high enough to see across the great flatlands to the east that ran away as far as you could see. One of the main roads that linked the inner-country with the coast and brought wealth to them all also went that way and he had wished he were on that path instead. They followed the highlands south meandering

between villages and farmsteads, most of which sat on the western slope of the eastern hill. These often amounted to little more than a family (some large, some small) working the land and their flocks independently from the city families. Many of these people had remained untouched by the fighting; they had seen the smoke and heard reports but kept to themselves and their own only occasionally heading to the markets. No, they had no idea about the men they were looking for but all offered hospitality. The matriarch's nephew, aware that the burden of providing food for five men was significant declined all but one offer, instead accepting lesser rations so that honour could still be satisfied.

They had dropped down to the eastern shore of the lake and followed it to where it began to drain away south. It was a sparkling day when they arrived, the river running clear of the marsh in a golden thread that was the life source of an even greater lake beyond the hills, the daughter of this lake, one that had outgrown her mother in both size and beauty. They had to march a way downstream to the ford where a reed rope had been strung across for extra support. The rains of the previous few days had swollen the river but only enough to make them giggle as they held on and shuffled across waist deep in the buffeting water.

They stayed away from the city this end of the valley. Word had been passed anyway between the garrisons and the matriarch's nephew found it hard to believe that the two fugitives would take shelter in a city that was regularly patrolled by soldiers. If it were him he would be away, to the coast. He had been there once, it was beautiful, the mass of blue putting this inland water to shame. Their clothes had dried out in the midday sun and they walked on, taking their time, in no hurry to get back and inform his aunt of their failure. They had places to check but he had already decided they would never find them. The others knew it too and this took a weight of all of them. They had visibly relaxed over the days. This was like a boyhood jaunt now, each of them enjoying themselves, the brothers wrestling and boasting over their respective manliness. He told them they were both the worst type of preening princesses compared to him – probably the only real man in the group, if not the valley. He waited for the reaction. The brothers were known for their broad backs, that was why he had chosen them, and they set off after him. He ran too, his legs carrying him away from them, taunting them as he went, the other two joined in as well, they were all running, laughing, gesticulating and shouting threats of emasculation at each other. He was confident in his own pace to keep ahead of them, confident

enough to turn and run backwards so he could mock them the better. So confident that he never saw the stone he collapsed backwards over. They were on him, triumphantly hoisting him up and running him down to the lakes edge before tossing him in an inelegant arc through the air his limbs still flailing as he crashed into the water. He broke the water's surface, spat out a mouthful of muddied water and parted the wet curtain of hair from in front of his face, 'As I said, princesses!'

The circumnavigation of the lake and swamp was complete. He had returned to the city and told his aunt. She had not been happy but, as she was so fond of saying, what could she do? He had repeated his account to the garrison commander who had listened in silence and dismissed them at the end with a wave of his hand. His aunt worried enormously about what this reaction meant but it seemed to him that the situation was closed, the effort had been made, or more importantly had been seen to be made, the hunt may have been a sham but it had been a necessary one for all concerned.

The matriarch's nephew flipped over a stone in his hand, decided it was not the fit he needed and tossed it back, he scanned the pile, selected another he thought more suitable, lined it up and then slipped it into place. Its fit was satisfyingly snug. He had spent the morning walling off a section of his aunt's house to be used as a granary. There was a problem with rats getting at the supplies and some had grown beyond the size you would ideally want a rat to be. There had been some fear that they were big enough to take a child which he had his doubts about but that his aunt had concurred with. She even related a tale from her own childhood about a giant rat terrorising the city and that her father had heroically dealt with. Again he had his doubts, his aunt was forever telling stories - most of them over and over again, he had never heard this one before though. Some others in the city had created little walled off granaries only accessible from the roof and this seemed to be working. He waited for the inevitable call and it came, 'See if you can do *this* properly.'

The light from the doorway diminished and when he turned he saw a soldier of the garrison there, another just behind him waiting in the alley. They beckoned him to follow but would not say why. He skin prickled with self-consciousness as he followed them through the city, others watching him pass. He tried smiling and waving casually but understood their stares, he would be looking too if it were someone else. Outside the gate, a little way

from the city the garrison commander stood talking with another man. The matriarch's nephew recognised him; he farmed some of the land belonging to one of the other major families in the city. When he arrived the farmer would not look him in the eye but waited to be dismissed by the commander and then hurried away.

The matriarch's nephew cut around the city to where his own families land was. He grabbed a boy who was ferrying some provisions out to the workers and gave him a new task. A little while later he saw the four men coming toward him, he sat high up on the rampart and watched them approach. They waved toward him, friendlier now after their recent excursion. When they reached the bottom of the rampart the eldest brother looked up, 'Are you eager for another dunking?' he asked, smiling broadly as the merriment of the others showed on their faces at the memory.

'They've found one,' the matriarch's nephew said simply, stifling their smiles.

They trudged west in silence, heavy legged and heavy hearted, each in the company of their own thoughts.

'Bastard!' exclaimed the younger brother suddenly, 'I never liked him.' The others ignored the outburst but the younger brother continued, 'I think after we've done this we should pay a call to his house too.'

'You think he did this alone? Off his own back?' interjected his older brother, 'Don't be a fool – he wouldn't do this without the family's knowledge, no more than you or I would without speaking to the matriarch first.'

'I agree,' piped up the matriarch's nephew, 'he couldn't even look at me. He's been put up to it. They're trying to curry favour, increase their standing at the expense of my aunt and now they can't lose. They'll get the credit from the commander and we get this stinking job of dragging him in.' He shook his head ruefully at the way things had turned out.

They headed out to the courtyard, the balding head of family huffing and struggling to keep up in their wake calling out that they had no right and he would tell the local commander. The matriarch's nephew, ignoring the protestations, directed the others with him to a grain pit in the courtyard. It was covered over with a tightly wound reed mat held in place by rocks on each corner. The men brusquely shifted these to one side and removed the matting. The pit was like so many others in the area, so many from his own city that people had used to store grain for generations. This idly

put him in mind of the work he had been doing for his aunt that morning. A scattering of grain covered the bottom of the pit which was about the depth of half a man. He nodded to the elder brother who jumped down and swept the cereal aside with his foot. By now they had been joined in the courtyard by others, locals of various ages who looked on but made no move to interfere. At the bottom of the pit lay a slab, the dusty residue of the grain coating it, the elder brother felt along the edge for a grip, his fingers snaking under on either side once he found a suitable place. His feet planted on either side of the pit he hefted the slab up in one move and tossed it onto the courtyard floor. Dust blew up and the sound of the slab hitting the courtyard floor was a dull tone that died quickly.

There was now revealed a hole where the slab had been, a narrow mouth that opened up into what appeared to be an underground silo. The light of the day lit up a secret store of grain, the villager's own little stash - safe from the eyes of officialdom, and sat on top of the illicit pile, looking up and rubbing his eyes against the fresh light was the man they had come for.

'All clear?' the man asked casually, his eyes still not adjusted to the truth of his situation.

The matriarch's nephew felt a hand on his shoulder, it was the bald man, his objections now silenced, who leaned in close and whispered conspiratorially in his ear, 'No need to tell them about the grain, eh?'

'I suspect they already know.'

Chapter 6: Moving Toward a Different Past

This chapter will look at the way that certain concepts within interpretive archaeology can be used to reject traditional ethnocentric meta-narratives in favour of small-scale, regional, even personal accounts of the past. This chapter will outline the theoretical ideas which have influenced my thinking and how I am employing them in this thesis. I will discuss the general use of analogy and agency followed by a more in-depth look at landscape and narrative. These ideas are familiar but I will be taking certain aspects from each to build an argument in favour of small-scale, story-narratives.

Analogy

In post-processual archaeology analogy has often been used in preference to the hypothetico-deductive method (Thomas 2004: 240). Instead of setting up testable hypotheses in an attempt to establish definitive statements about how the past was, analogy has been used more recently to offer alternative ways of looking at the past and to challenge Western ways of thinking (Whittle 2003: xvi). Analogy can provide us with implications with which we can explore what the past may have been like (Thomas 2004: 241).

Ian Hodder states that historical re-creation is driven through questions and answers. Why build here? Why use this material? What questions we ask and how we answer them depends not only on the material 'but also on historical imagination, something which is very much affected by our knowledge and understanding of the present' (Hodder 1991: 99). Ethnographic material is a way of expanding such imagination but its use as analogy must be underpinned by contextual relevance – even though it may be geographically and temporally distant (Hodder 1991: 148-49), although relevance of course, like all other parts of the discipline, is debatable.

There are, however, a number of problems associated with the use of ethnographic analogy. The cross-cultural application of ethnographic material is

often used in a simplistic, reductive manner. This process has resulted in a vision of communities as 'other' when compared to Western culture, grouped together in a homogenised mass and / or compartmentalised into sequences of social evolution (Thomas 2004: 239). The use of analogy without due consideration of local context and agency is reductionist, ignoring choice and practice. The 'wood = life, stone = death' material analogy which Mike Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina set up has been criticised on this basis (Barrett and Fewster 1998: 848-50).

John Barrett and Kathryn Fewster (1998: 849) object to the setting up of universal arguments based upon analogy, such as that of Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina (1998). They note that universal arguments become challenges to find exceptions; this achieves nothing beyond the rebuttal of an argument and does not promote further understanding of the past. The main point they wish to make is that while universal arguments will always suffer from such a weakness those who employ them could easily avoid such a problem by modifying their language (Barrett and Fewster 1998: 847). There needs to be an acknowledgement that analogy is vulnerable. Rather than making definitive statements about *how the past was* we should be saying *this is how the past may have been* or, more probably, *elements from this analogy may help us to understand the past better after having considered local context and practice.*

Julian Thomas (2004: 241) points out that analogy does not simply involve the transposing of ideas between two contexts and that a third context, that of the archaeologist, also needs to be considered. The observations and relations between the ethnographic material and its application to a past community are filtered through the archaeologist and this must be recognised. P.J. Watson (1999: 52-56) rejects criticisms that ethnography should not be used. She acknowledges that the projection of the present on to the past is a potential problem but does not accept that this renders the entire process redundant. She also rejects accusations that ethnographical work is too particularistic. Although stopping short of using analogy to discern universal maxims there and denying that ethnographic work can ever be used for direct inference (so avoiding Binford's (e.g. 1978) middle-range-theory) she does state that emphasis should

be placed upon generalisms, 'because it is always better, scientifically speaking, to describe and explain groups or classes of phenomena rather than individual (particular) cases' (Watson 1999: 59). Watson's views towards generalisms are tempered by her acknowledgement of particularistic studies and the values they hold. Generalising statements are peculiar beasts; they hold a value only when archaeology is spoken about in the abstract. When individual sites or cases are cited then they are not applicable. Particular case studies must be considered individually and within their context. Interpretations of a site can add to generalisms; however, when generalisms begin to dictate interpretation, there lie a host of potential problems.

The acknowledgement of the limitations of analogy does not weaken its use but provides a way forward. I intend to use analogy as a means of suggesting alternative approaches to understanding the area around Dan in the Iron Age. The problems associated with a singularly material approach have been touched on above and so it is my belief that the use of analogy, with the appropriate caveats, is a way to enhance our possible understandings.

Agency

Agency, in this thesis, is understood as the attempt to restore to history the primacy of human action. This does not mean the actions of ambitious and powerful characters in their quest for power / wealth / fame or other assumed driving forces. The tendency within archaeology has been to write about the past at a broad, generalising level. With regard to people this may mean at a societal level or, within a society, across a gender or class, e.g. *all* women, or *all* priests. The individual is then representative of the society or aspect of society in microcosm (Knapp and Meskell 1997: 189). This essentialising process allows no room for unusual, original or even idiosyncratic behaviour.

The story-narratives are not about relating the tales of 'big men' or glamourising the role of the archaeologist. All too often the only form of agency apparent in Syro-Palestinian archaeology is the pseudo-agency of the 'Bible Big

Man'. When Biran wrote about why Jeroboam constructed the sanctuary at Dan (Biran 1994: 165) his discussion is driven by a biblical-functional interpretation. Rather, agency represents the quotidian actions of people who are knowledgeable about the society in which they have been raised. These actions are informed but not determined and can be creative, original and even iconoclastic. In turn they can reshape and / or reinforce the mores and customs of their sociality (e.g. Barrett 2001). The theory is linked closely with Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus* and Anthony Giddens' (1984) 'Structuration Theory'. This emphasised the routine actions of people, i.e. socialisation. People operate freely but their actions are influenced by attitudes, values and habits in their own society, many of which are tacit in nature.

In line with Arthur Bernard Knapp and Lynn Meskell (1997: 189) this is not to imply that this study intends to reconstruct actual individual lives of historically attested figures. It is not the search for specific individuals in history. Dating, although relevant, will be secondary to considerations of meaning and motivation. If we understand that people lived their lives through engaging with the material and historical conditions that surrounded them then it should be possible to investigate the ways some of those lives may have been lived (Barrett 1994: 4, 5). The materiality of a person's environment at once restricts, enables and guides their movements and actions. They may be restricted from certain areas while new areas are created for them to explore and inhabit. They respond to architecture and to artefacts also. Both are created by people with recognition of what already has been created; these creations are imbued with meaning and memory. We, as archaeologists, have access to these creations (or at least a remnant of them) and therefore, indirectly, a means of recovering past ways of living.

John Barrett (1994: 70) dismisses claims that belief, meaning and motivation are beyond the grasp of the archaeologist. He states that, 'If we recognise that knowledge is implicitly involved in action...then we may wonder why something of that knowledge is not also embedded in the material conditions and consequences of that action'. What Barrett proposes is an alternative

approach to interpreting archaeological finds. He rejects the notion of a *material record* which implies that the static discoveries of archaeologists somehow have printed upon them a faithful and accurate reflection of a dynamic history. This approach is based on the assumption that there existed an objective, social totality. This totality is reflected in the *material record.* The more complete the *material record* is the more accurate history will be. For Barrett though, archaeological material does not constitute a record but, rather, 'reveal(s) the conditions under which certain knowledges become possible' (Barrett 1994: 71). This approach abandons any notion of a single reality and instead concentrates on the various possibilities of living within certain *material conditions.* 'Agency' is not something to be *found* in the material record. If we accept that the *material record* does not exist then to talk of how to discern it in the record makes no sense. We have replaced the notion of a *material record* with the idea that archaeology uncovers the *material conditions* which enable and are shaped by life. 'Agency' played a key role in the creation of such *material conditions.* It is inherent in every artefact, every building, and every shaped stone. An 'agent's' behaviour is limited by their society and enabled by it (see Giddens 1984). It is a reflexive and recursive process. Post-processualism has seen a conscious effort to restore to history the primacy of human creativity and action, the outcome of such action may be intentional or unintentional (Barrett 2001: 150) Reacting against the processualist ideas of positivism and cross-cultural systems which were seen as determining human action, 'post-processual archaeology has sought to recognise the past as the product of multiple and specific moments of cultural creation' (Barrett 1994: 164). People have the individual ability to interpret and interact with the realities in which they live out their lives. The way they think and the methods they employ are shaped by their surroundings but not exactly determined. Each reality is different and the actions that result from these multiple experiences influence the shape of future social realities.

Agency should not necessarily be conflated with the individual. There is an issue of scale, can groups exercise agency also? And can individuals exercise agency individually *and* as part of a group (see Martin Wobst 2001: 47-48).

Agency expressed by individuals has often been considered from a top-down model; this thesis consciously opposes this approach.

Knapp and Meskell (1997: 198) highlight the problems associated with the concept of the individual in the past. Whether the notion of individuality is an inherent, universal awareness or whether it is a post-enlightenment bourgeois concept this has not prevented the archaeological search for the individual in one form or another. Chris Fowler's 2004 book, *The Archaeology of Personhood*, notes that while the contemporary idea of the individual is a highly influential one, ethnographic studies have provided alternative conceptions of personhood. The term *personhood* is used as an umbrella to encompass all aspects of a person, physical and social. *Individuals* from a Western perspective possess their own uniqueness, their own *individuality*. Although this particular construct of the individual predominates Western thinking, Fowler (2004: 7-9) alerts us to other ways of thinking about the persons. *Dividuality* is a state where people are regarded more as a composite of social relations, a multiplicity of features which are not fixed but alter through interaction. Fowler (2004: 8-9) further breaks down this notion into *partibility,* a state where parts of oneself are recognised as objects which originated in others and can be extracted, and *permeability,* where qualities permeate a person and affect their internal composition – but are not recognised as objects but rather, as 'a flow of substances'. Perhaps the problem lies in sweeping statements about the individual in the past rather than within the idea itself – I feel it is beneficial to contextualise the individual within a culture (as Fowler's concepts above are) but that setting should only provide a starting point, not an absolute determining framework.

> One could argue that any discussion of the individual in antiquity relies on three fundamental layers of interpretation. First, experiencing oneself as an individual entity is part of human nature, although it is generally within the locus of each living individual. Layered upon this is a more culturally specific determination of what it is to be a person in a given time and place, with specific thoughts and beliefs about one's body, mind, self or soul. Overlying this second stratum is a finer layer of interpretation, that of individually determined experience, which depends on factors such as one's age, status, sex, class, life history, ethnicity, religious

> orientation or sexual preference, all of which will produce individual difference or variation. No two people experience themselves in exactly the same manner. Such an interpretive framework is itself conditioned by modern Western modes of thought that we cannot ultimately escape. Attention to anthropological and archaeological sources, however, may assist in producing some necessary distance.
>
> Knapp and Meskell (1997: 198)

If we accept John Barrett's dismissal of the notion of a *material record* and the establishment instead of *material conditions* through which people lived out their lives, we must abandon ideas of a direct materially reflected historical reality (Barrett 1994: 71). Instead we must concentrate on trying to understand the various possibilities of living within certain *material conditions*. Again we return to Dever's notion of discovering what history 'was really like' (Dever 2005: X) because such a homogenous historical reality never existed. Such simplified notions of the past will not withstand scrutiny. Dever's objectified notion of the past carries with it the idea that the past is directly reflected in the archaeology. An objectified, reified past presents a relatively straightforward path to reconstruction – a path that is quicker, easier, more seductive, an apparently more logical, 'obvious' path but one which turns out to be a behemoth of a motorway that was built over all the intricate pathways of the past.

This work does not seek to uncover an objective past. If, by history, we mean we are trying to write an account of past peoples then we must accept a multiplicity of experiences and histories. In the same way we must also accept that there is a multiplicity of interpretations, this thesis presenting but a few. Rather than striving to discover *how history was*, we can only attempt to reconstruct *possible ways in which historical realities were experienced.* The material conditions were shaped and re-shaped by human action and are imbued with meaning and knowledge. Archaeologists have access to the material conditions (at least in partial form) and so can attempt, on the basis of this, to reconstruct past actions. Nevertheless such reconstructions are the creations of a historian and we must acknowledge the influences inherent in our writings that result from our own modern realities. R.G. Collingwood (1946: 236) employs

the analogy of the landscape painter to highlight this point, 'He [the painter] may fancy that he is reproducing in his own medium the actual shapes and colours of natural things; but however hard he tries to do this he is always selecting, simplifying, schematizing, leaving out what he thinks unimportant and putting in what he regards as essential.' Just as we attempt to recognise the influences (political, economic, ideological etc.) that affect our historical accounts so we must make the same considerations in judging how such factors affect the way we write. 'Agency' then, as a term of use in this thesis is an implicit acknowledgement, with regard to both the past and the present, that it is human decisions and action which continually (re)create the world around us and subsequently, as we investigate the past worlds of people, history.

Hodder (2000: 22) notes that in post-processual archaeology, instead of being used to write accounts of individual action, the 'agent' been used to underpin theoretical moves away from deterministic models. Little attention has been lavished on the intentionally small-scale. Those past people without any particular power or control who attracted little attention and yet lived their lives in a personally meaningful manner still appear as trends or groups rather than individuals. Traces of individual action are always apparent in the archaeology. It is taking what are often no more than moments and piecing them together into an individual life, or at least inferring individual thought and action, that is the difficult part.

Hodder (2000: 26) believes that small-scale interpretation is necessary because the large-scale accounts that archaeology is so often concerned with fail to explain the sheer variety of everyday action adequately. Such variables which fall either side of the line of a long-term model are too easily discounted. A different approach is required if we are to include them.

> ...at a methodological level it is interesting to note that the search for agency seems best to be conducted using small-scale studies as representatives of wider changes, in both a temporal and spatial sense.
>
> Matthew Johnson (2000: 227)

Landscape

The traditional form of historical representation in archaeology is to provide an account of a site through a series of blueprints which convey the layout of architecture as well as the location of artefact finds around the given site. These 'snapshots' of history tell us little in themselves of what it means to experience the site or, more importantly, to have lived within and through such an environment. These historical overviews apparently afford us privileged positions: we comprehend the site as a whole and all at once, we observe it from a distance - removed from the 'time' contained within it, outside that time, like any form of representation it is limited. It may provide a shortcut for familiarising the observer with the location of particular aspects of the site. It also provides clues as to the appearance of buildings. Such 'facts' are then compared with similar finds from other sites to provide them with context and meaning.

What is more telling is what such plans do not provide. The angle of observation they provide is one which was never available to the people who actually lived in and helped to create the reality that the plans represent (see Ingold 2000a: 219-42). The map and plan portrays a site through an abstract frame of reference. Impressions of place by those who lived there were composed of layers of experience built up through repeated journeys along different pathways through the landscape. These pathways varied in their familiarity. Certain pathways would have been used more frequently than others, access to some may have been restricted, still others encountered only at certain times of the day and in a certain order. All these would have comprised an impression of the city or region very different from ours. There would, of course, have been a whole multitude of impressions – one for every person who encountered it. The key point about the representation of the site as a two-dimensional plan is not that it does not represent any of these multiple viewpoints but that it could not possibly do so and, further, has not even attempted to. So in what way can it provide an accurate or relevant reality?

> It is quite clear that simply measuring and quantifying aspects of a thing tell us very little about it. As a form of representation of that thing these measurements are a very poor substitute for the rich sensuous qualities that we know to be characteristic of actual human experience and dwelling in the world.
>
> Chris Tilley (2005: 203)

We have already noted how the New Archaeology sought a positivist approach, able to objectify and measure abstract and cross-culturally applicable concepts. With regard to landscape this involved factors such as distance, site distribution and resource location. Aspects such as these were of primary importance and culturally specific symbols and stories were considered insignificant in comparison. While such considerations may be important in order to help understand site location they tell us nothing about the people who occupied the site. If cross-cultural paradigms are solely applied then there is little to allow us to distinguish between Canaanite, Israelite, Aramaean, Moabite, and Phoenician. It is generally accepted that these were distinct cultures (with some overlapping cultural elements) but the material culture provides little or no means of distinct identification. Conventional landscape approaches render culture-specific identification near impossible, or worse, redundant. Are we to rely wholly upon the historical sources from which to garner distinctive details? An overriding feature of the New Archaeology is its consistent lack of ambition concerning the potential for interpretation of archaeological material and this is highlighted again here.

Not everyone experiences a landscape in the same manner. Particular landscapes may contain different references for different groups of people or even individuals. Or, they may contain the same references which are interpreted differently. Differing cultural traditions, as well as other factors such as gender, age, class, generation as well a whole range of possibilities, events and associations piled up during a life may affect the meanings a landscape holds; 'landscapes might thus be said to be multiple or fragmented' (Thomas 2001: 176). An article by Veronica Strang (1999) illustrates this using the example of the competing perceptions of the aboriginal community and the Euro-Australian cattle herders of the Cape York Peninsula. Consideration of

multiple landscapes is crucial if we are to try to understand a site such as Dan which was conquered and re-conquered and had satellite settlements of apparent Israelite, Canaanite and Aramaen character. There are questions here of interaction, identity and memory which can be accessed through the landscape.

Barbara Bender stresses in the introduction to *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives* that there is a need 'to deny the primacy of the European 'viewpoint'' (Bender 1993: 1): that is to move away from the notion of landscape as it was originally coined, by the landed gentry. Their view of landscape stressed the visual and aesthetic. Rather, we should be exploring alternative, contextualised understandings and perceptions of landscape. These understandings may not rest on the visual. They could be aural or tactile, varied, gender-specific, class-related, have different temporal and spatial scales, be conscious / unconscious and in a continual state of renegotiation (Bender 1993: 1-2). In short, understandings of landscape should be regarded as multiple and particularistic. To illustrate this Bender uses the example of V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival.* Naipaul was brought up in Trinidad but felt much more familiar with the 'landscapes' of India and England: the India of his grandparents and an England constructed from film and literature. The book tells of the many different understandings of landscape and how a single person can experience them in different landscape settings or indeed the same setting. There is an awareness too of how the author, experiencing new and different landscapes, was forced to renegotiate other landscapes he thought he knew well (Bender 1993: 3-9).

In order to approach an understanding of the relationship between people and their landscape it is necessary to understand and define ideas of social space. I have deliberately used the expression 'their landscape' (as opposed to 'the' or 'a' landscape) to illustrate what I believe to be the very personal and subjective nature of that relationship. Each person effectively creates their own landscape, imposing and drawing meaning from it simultaneously. One hundred people standing in the same place will may have one hundred different experiences as they reference past events. If, as archaeologists, we are interested in human history, then we must acknowledge these multiple experiences. Part of the key

to telling about the past is attempting to locate both the individualities and the commonalities of experience. There can be no objective history or objective time/space in the writing of human experience. I am not objecting to Newtonian concepts of absolute space or time (cf. Altenberg 2003: 22-23) but maintain that they are irrelevant. What it does not take into account is the culturally specific perceptions that affect humans and make their experiences subjective.

Landscape, Dwelling and Phenomenology

There have been moves to break away from the universal, Cartesian, positivist models of landscape. The human geography approaches, while moving more towards a culture / experiential approach, still maintained that there was a dualism between the 'reality' of a place which could be accessed and known and the perceptions of people who came to inhabit that place (Thomas 2001: 170-71). This leads to questions about what form of history we, as archaeologists, actually want to write. It is well acknowledged that archaeologists are in a unique position to be able to consider the long-term. This does not mean that writing about the short-term, immediate, everyday, moment-to-moment life as lived by people in the past should be overlooked or ignored. Another key challenge is how to link the different scales of interaction. If we are to write the history of human beings rather than objects then it is necessary to acknowledge that landscape and people are all bound up together. Lives are acted out in certain places in the landscape. People were shaped by the landscape they dwelt in and helped to reinforce and reshape it. In this way the landscape can be viewed as a set of references through which people place themselves and their actions in context, as a marker of past and future acts (Gosden and Head 1994: 113-14). This section will look at two of the key writers in this area.

Ingold's Dwelling Perspective

Tim Ingold believes there is an integral relationship between anthropology (social, cultural and biological) and archaeology (Ingold 1992: 694). He is also keen to stress the passage of time in human lives and that lives, as they are

played out, also create landscapes. These two factors, *time* and *landscape*, combine to form the focus of his paper. The landscape is an active part of life. It is continually created and recreated as lives are lived out within it. It is not simply a background against which life is set but an involved and influential aspect of human history. It also acts as something of a palimpsest, i.e. as a record of the generations who have lived within it. Ingold (1993: 153) calls this a *'dwelling perspective'*. The landscape holds certain associations, marks and memories which we can hope to access. As we engage with the landscape we create our own experiences which may help us to understand those of the past. While we must acknowledge that we will not be approaching the landscape from the same perspective as those in the past there is at least a same basic level of interaction. Perspectives differ according to social influences but the basic vehicle through which we experience the world, the body, remains unchanged.

> In short, the landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them.
>
> Tim Ingold (1993: 156)

To explain more fully what landscape is he provides examples of what it is not. The landscape is not 'nature' nor is it 'space'. The landscape is not simply the physical attributes of nature (e.g. hills, trees, rivers etc.) or some standard set of symbolic meanings applied to these features. Indeed, Ingold (1993: 154) distances himself from dichotomies, such as 'mind and matter, meaning and substance'. Instead the landscape holds multiple experiences given meaning through human interaction with it. It is a holistic experience that encompasses human activity. The activity is as fundamental to the landscape, in the formation of memory and meaning, as the features (which themselves are not separate but understood as part of a whole). With regard to 'space', Ingold (1993: 155) uses the example of a cartographer and how the way in which he / she represents the world is completely different from the way in which they experience it. The landscape is experienced through journeys – series of linear perspectives that can only be experienced in a certain order. The cartographer however, as we have already mentioned, produces an artificial representation which is removed

from any experience that humans are capable of. While it provides us with certain rudimentary information (i.e. distances, height, terrain type) it provides very little in the way of understanding. This example highlights the way in which the landscape is often delineated into separate areas whereas in actuality the landscape is not segmented. It is a whole which is given meaning by humans through activity, and while certain features may be viewed as boundaries or markers they are not. They may be regarded as such by humans but they are still part of the landscape as a whole.

The concept of temporality proposes that historical events are not simply isolated acts at points within a constructed chronology. Rather they are part of a continuum which retains elements of the past and affects the future. Ingold (1993: 159) rejects the idea of time as segmented. Because human history and activity is a participatory event, meaning that it is created by people, and these activities are continuous and affect each other then so it follows that time is continuous. 'Our actions do not transform the world, they are part and parcel of the world's transforming itself. And that is just another way of saying that they belong to time' (Ingold 1993: 164). The dividing up of time is, like the geographical boundaries above, an artificial creation – in the case of time applied, anachronistically, to history after the events.

Human activity is vital in the creation of a landscape. Maintaining previous avoidances of dichotomies Ingold (1993: 158) does not distinguish between social and technical activities. Rather he insists that the two are one and the same. Technical activities form part of the normal process of daily social life. These activities are given the epithet *taskscape.* All tasks are interrelated and embedded in the social fabric of life which imbues it with meaning. There is also an insistence that the taskscape (as indeed with the landscape) is qualitative and heterogeneous (Ingold 1993:158).

The landscape then is a continuous, organic process. It is created by the activity of people and is permanently being reinvented by sustained and renewed activity. The enduring nature of the landscape though enables traces of past activity to be recognised within it. As Ingold (1993: 162) says, 'the landscape as

a whole must...be understood as the taskscape in its embodied form'. It is important to note though that taskscape and landscape are created simultaneously. To be active in the landscape is to 'dwell' in it. The taskscape is not simply limited to human activity however. It is also what one can hear as well as the surround as a whole. He uses the examples of dogs, birds and migrations. Going further still activity must also incorporate the effects of wind, rain, tidal movements and flooding. There are also the motions of the celestial bodies and seasonal effects. Ingold (1993:163) notes that whilst these are rhythmic (and that people base their lives upon rhythms) they are not the result of human action.

Ingold (1993: 164-171) illustrates his points by using the painting *The Harvesters* (1565) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The painting depicts an autumnal scene in which the wheat harvest is being cut and sheaved. In the foreground some workers are resting and eating in the shade of a pear tree. By focusing upon the various features in the landscape and teasing out their possible meanings and relationships Ingold attempts to access what it may have meant to dwell in that landscape. Going beyond the obviously visual aspects he stresses too the aural qualities. So too is there an acknowledgement of the fixed point of view – lacking, as it is in both the ability to look about or move – still, it serves as an example. Several elements are considered encompassing the topography, buildings, flora and people. Physical descriptions are used as reference points in an aid to further understanding. The emphasis is always holistic, recursive and temporal. The landscape is where people think and act, any place where people think and act is a landscape. Although such landscapes are not eternal they are durable. Such durability provides another means of access for the archaeologist. A landscape does not need to contain archaeological material in order to be relevant to an archaeologist. Terrain, pathways, rivers, flora and fauna all affect the ways in which interaction take place. At the very least landscapes direct movement, predisposing certain paths due to their physical composition. They also influence thought – action and thought are reciprocal processes. The presence of people in the landscape inevitably has an effect upon it and these effects are often enduring.

Ingold's (1993) idea of 'dwelling' in a landscape is a key part of creating identity. Particular landscapes, over time, become laden with cultural memories, remembrance and tradition (Altenberg 2003: 30). Karin Altenberg's (2003) study attempts to apply notions of social space, landscape, experience and agency to a number of marginal, rural, medieval sites in south-west England and Scandinavia. She makes an effort to break away from previous quantitative methods of studying the landscape and move toward investigating 'the social meaning of specific archaeological contexts' (Altenberg 2003:1-2). In order to do this 'we must introduce a methodology that explores questions of individual or communal choice, agency and identity and attempts to reconstruct factors that shaped the quality and experience of...life' (Altenberg 2003:2).

The study focuses on three levels of enquiry:

1) Social and regional identity and the relationship between the settlements and prehistoric and natural features of the landscape.
2) Settlement layout, mobility and transaction.
3) Social interaction on a household, local community and regional level.

Altenberg (2003: 8)

Cultural memories shape a landscape in peculiar ways which cannot be accessed by someone who is not familiar with the traditions of that culture. This is not to say, however, that this results in a deterministic relationship with the people of that culture. Rather, it is that they have access to that 'cultural' store and can be affected more or less by different aspects of it, be it through choice or otherwise. So, individual thoughts and actions are key also. We must consider too that this does not set a person's character. They are not two dimensional – the good one, the bad one, the greedy one, the megalomaniac. A person's thoughts, motivations and actions can vary throughout their life and from place to place and amongst the company they keep. Throughout a lifetime a person will play out many differing roles e.g. father, brother, son, husband, colleague. Each of these, in their way, affects behaviour. There is no guarantee either that the way in which these roles are perceived in modern, western society is the way they were in the past. 'It is impossible to link certain tasks or activities

consistently with social identity, gender, class or age as those are notions that are constantly changing in time and space' (Altenberg 2003: 32).

Tilley's Landscape Phenomenology

Chris Tilley (1994) is concerned with investigating why certain locations were chosen, for living and for monument erection, above others. He does not reject more conventional approaches to the subject, i.e. economic and / or strategic, but feels that they offer inadequate, partial explanations of sites. If we can juxtapose these more 'logical' reasons with other culturally symbolic and meaningful interpretations then it should be possible to provide a more rounded understanding of a site. Tilley's investigation was on Neolithic sites in Britain and therefore all his inferences were drawn directly from the landscape and archaeology. In many of the areas in Palestine there are aetiological tales associated with sites. These tales are usually of a religious nature – often associated with epiphanies or patriarchal events.

Tilley (2004: 1) defines phenomenology as:

> ...the attempt to describe the objects of consciousness in the manner which they are presented to consciousness. It attempts to reveal the world as it is actually experienced directly by a subject as opposed to how we might theoretically assume it to be.

Such an approach is in contrast to empiricist / positivist approaches. These perspectives seek to quantify and classify objects. They believe that there is a reality that is distinct from variant perceptions. This, however, is to disassociate people from objects. It relegates people and their understandings to a secondary position and gives primacy to the object. There is also an arrogance to this approach which claims to have divined the 'reality' of an object. It is a reality, however, defined in the positivist's own terms rather than that of past people.

Phenomenology as a philosophy is not a monolithic concept. Tilley (2004: 2) concentrates on the work of Merleau-Ponty. There is an emphasis, in the French philosopher's writing, on bodily experience; that is, the way we move through and encounter the physical and material aspects of our surroundings. This

provides us all with a fundamental grounding of experience to which we relate and from which we construct notions of the world. This does not mean that the body is simply a mechanism for the recovery of sensation which is then interpreted by the mind. Merleau-Ponty does not subscribe to such a mind/body dualism. Rather the mind is part of the whole body and it is through this, and only through this, that we are conscious in the world. There is also a rejection of the nature / culture dichotomy. Nature is not external to human culture: rather human activity and being is something which occurs in the world; '...as such it is mistaken to draw distinctions between natural and cultural landscapes and places or the material and mental. They are intertwined in social Being' (Tilley 2004: 24).

Tilley (2004: 4-5) identifies six basic dimensions, which he terms *'bodily dyads'*, of how the body relates to the world. These are up/down (or above/below); in front/behind and right/left. He also uses other terms such as here/there and near/far. All of these terms are used (apparently universally(!) (Tilley 2004: 5)) to place our bodies within the world and our movement through it and perspective of it. These movements are also associated with ideas and concepts. For example, Up/down are equated in Anglo-American culture with life/death, good/bad, virtue/depravity (Tilley 2004: 5). Front/behind in Samoan villages is linked to seaward/inland, light/darkness, civil/uncivilized, formality/informality, and women's work/men's work (Tilley 2004: 7). The Amboyna of Indonesia link right/left with male/female, sky/earth, worldly/spiritual, interior/exterior and old/new (Tilley 2004: 8). Tilley (2004: 6) believes that up/down is a more important orientation than the others. The orientation of right/left is dependent on front/back and both combine along a horizontal plane; up/down is on a vertical plane. These notions are useful, and the ethnographic studies he uses to illustrate them suggestive. They should be taken as no more than that however. The fundamental problem which we, as archaeologists, face is in attempting to uncover the specific set of societal values which accompany these relational directions. Without these, we are guessing, but that does not mean to say they should be dismissed. Rather they are subject to the same qualifications we acknowledged in regard to analogy earlier in this chapter.

Our perceptions of the world are continually reinterpreted as our bodies encounter it. We can never fully experience the world however because of the physical composition of our bodies. The terms here/there and near/far illustrate that our body can only ever be located in a single physical place. Although we may move our bodies from one location to another we may only occupy one at a time (Tilley 2004: 10). We are not omnipresent, nor are we all-seeing. The way we see the world is through a series of framed images. We may see in front and, to lesser extents, the sides and above and below. How well we see things is also dependent on the distance of objects, atmospheric conditions as well as the health of our eyes themselves.

The visual is not the only sense that Tilley wishes to draw upon. Synaesthesia – the fusion of the senses (Tilley 2004: 14-16) - affirms the importance of touch, smell, hearing and taste as well as sight. Tilley (2004: 16) declares that, 'In the actual practice, as opposed to the representation, of a person's encounters with landscape and place, the senses are always involved in a dynamic intertwining'. Although he recognises that many cultures place precedence on senses other than sight, such as hearing, he is keen not to automatically diminish the role that the visual plays (Tilley 2004: 15) and prefers to consider a rounded synaesthetic approach.

One of the case studies in Tilley's *The Materiality of Stone* (2004) is that of the Neolithic temples of Malta. Tilley seeks to build upon the thesis of Robb (2001) which suggests that the unique character of these temples was not due to isolation (as has been traditionally suggested) but rather down to the inhabitants seeking to express their unique identities (Tilley 2004: 87-89). The construction of the temples was a conscious expression of the construction of their distinctive culture. Tilley (2004: 89) attempts to place the temples within their broader Maltese landscape in order to understand better how such an identity was mediated and maintained and how it ultimately lost meaning.

Tilley (2004: 93-99) provides an overview of the geographical composition of the island and the type of stone found there. He then relates two main stones

types to their use in temple construction. There is an emphasis on the appearance and texture of the material and how all but one of the older temples appear to be mimetic in design, referencing visible rock outcrops (Tilley 2004: 97). Consideration is also given to the temples' location with regard to the sea. There follow detailed descriptions (or re-descriptions (Tilley 2004: 1)) of the sites as Tilley moves through them; the accent is upon impressions, views, texture and feeling (emotional and physical). For example:

> The flagstones of the corridor rise slightly as one moves inside, passing through a space which at first constricts, then widens. Walking on a paved floor which gradually heightens, experiencing a roof which is well raised, then lowered, before soaring up at the point where the first side apses are reached – all these features emphasize this corridor as a transitional from inside to outside and are designed to mark this directly on the body as it moves through space.
>
> Chris Tilley (2004: 102-3)

These re-descriptions lead to Tilley identifying a number of 'structuring principles' (Tilley 2004: 133-43; cf. Barrett 2001). Examples include dualism (of the islands, temples, material and examples from other Maltese material culture such as double vases and twin seated figurines (Tilley 2004: 134)); movement (of winds, birds, temple interiors (Tilley 2004: 134-35)); relation to land and sea. Through these principles the temples are tied to the land around them. They reference the land and transform the experience (enacted through the materiality and design of the temple as well as in the use of substances such as honey, water and ochre) of those attending the temple (Tilley 2004: 134-143). In this way the temple can be said to have been created in the image of the islands while concurrently creating and maintaining a distinctive image of culture for the inhabitants.

The phenomenological approach intentionally offers alternative views of the past. The focus on changing perspectives and individual meaning reminds us that material and landscape are not branded with a single monolithic meaning. We have already looked at how Fleming (2005) has criticised the (as he sees it) arbitrary and relativistic results produced by such a method but meaning

changes through time and perspective and is continually being renegotiated. Hodder (2000: 24) criticises the work of Tilley (1994) however for ultimately ascribing to monuments in the landscape a meaning of control, for animal, migratory routes or pasture. There is very little emphasis on subjectivity and individual lives (Hodder 2000: 25).

Landscape and Phenomenology in Syro-Palestinian Archaeology

In contrast to the descriptive, exploratory accounts of Tilley and Ingold above, Syro-Palestinian archaeology has remained firmly entrenched in the mores of the New Archaeology as well continuing to rely upon biblical texts to supply interpretation.

T.J. Wilkinson's (2003) overview of landscape approaches in the Near East covers a very broad range of approaches. This variety is used with two express purposes: to promote the use of landscape studies in the Near East and 'to provide a context for the rise of early states and empires' (Wilkinson 2003: xiii). Although he recognises the profusion of alternative landscape attitudes from empiricism to post-processualism he states that overall he will 'be seeking a better grasp of [the] general processes' of history (Wilkinson 2003: 3). Wilkinson (2003: 4) believes that the plethora of landscape studies should be drawn together into an integrated approach though is careful to acknowledge problems associated with such an approach. He breaks landscape studies down into three broad schools which are cultural-historical, processual and post-processual in their style. The historical approach of the first was followed by the more positivist models of processualism. Wilkinson appraises post-processualism as being concerned with 'subjective elements of the landscape such as memory, power, identity, [and] human agency' (Wilkinson 2003: 5). Despite this, he still pushes for a synthesis of all landscape studies but warns that the post-processual reaction against environmental determinism has led to 'an unwitting tendency to understate the significance of natural events' (Wilkinson 2003: 9). He is attempting to negotiate a delicate balancing act, one which he does not achieve. Wilkinson's approach, whilst stopping short of environmental determinism, is essentially large-scale and positivistic in nature

with smatterings of what he refers to as the 'cultural landscape' (Wilkinson 2003: 4) on top to provide some culturally specific markers. The approach is typical of many in the region. It acknowledges the post-processual / interpretative approach but largely disregards it as peripheral when actually considering sites. Roads and borders are considered only in economic / power terms (Wilkinson 2003: 60). Questions about how they help to shape experience are not explored. If we are trying to restore to history the primacy of human thought and action then it is not enough simply to note the occasional cultural oddity. For example, he states that 'landscape must...be seen as both actively influencing the lives of the inhabitants as well as being, in turn, heavily influenced by the activities of those inhabitants' (Wilkinson 2003: 6). Such a dualistic relationship is already well recognised by writers such as Ingold (1993) and Tilley (1994) and appears to be a welcome development of thought in this area of archaeology. Wilkinson, however, is talking about the relationship between man and the environment as separate entities and as such is perpetuating the false nature / culture dichotomy which Ingold (1993: 154) warns against.

Another landscape study from the same year has good intentions but is ultimately rather conventional in its conclusions. The scholarly balance between large scale urban sites and smaller rural sites has often been tipped toward the former. Aren Maeir's (2003) article is an attempt to, in part, redress this imbalance. This does not mean that he wishes to relegate the importance of urban sites but rather seeks a more even view of the interaction between the two as part of a whole (Maeir 2003: 61). After spending time establishing what constitutes urban centres from rural (essentially function not size (Maeir 2003: 62)) he discusses the '"Sacred Landscape" and the Urban/Rural Matrix' (Maeir 2003: 63). His section follows the theme of functionality describing a probable hierarchical relationship between urban and rural cult centres which 'would then be a reflection of political domination, the interrelated cultic/ideological framework serving as a legitimizing force of such dominance' (Maeir 2003: 64). His description of an 'urban/rural matrix' also assumes a dichotomy that may not necessarily have existed.

B.A. Levine's (1993) article reconstructs the pattern and meaning of worship undertaken at Israelite (and non-Israelite) open-air sanctuaries. To do this he attempts to discern the relationship between form, function and meaning. He stresses that more emphasis needs to be paid toward the archaeological material when pursuing phenomenological reconstructions. Levine (1993: 196) cites two works which he views as paradigms in the field. The first, by M. Haran (1978), is however a textual analysis which he is trying to move away from. The second, by T. Jacobsen (1989), focuses on a Mesopotamian example but is a synthesis of text and archaeology which Levine believes is the way forward.

Levine notes that there is a general similarity amongst Levantine open-air altars in courtyards, be they Israelite or non-Israelite. He discerns a 'bi-directional dynamic' (Levine 1993: 199) which contains a vertical and horizontal orientation. The invocation of the deity (deities) was achieved through burnt sacrifice which rose to satiate the deity and induce it down onto the *bamah* (high place) or into the *debir* (holy of holies), this is the vertical. The worshippers would then be considered to be in the presence of the god(s), this is the horizontal. Both the open-air sanctuary and the enclosed building maintain levels of separation, holy from profane, through the *bamah* and *debir* respectively. These distinct areas he compares to a manor house and its courtyard (Levine 1993: 202). The courtyard was an area where menial tasks were undertaken by attendants and was very much secondary compared to the house itself which was reserved for the lord of the manor.

Levine sets out to use more of the archaeology in his interpretation of cult sites with open-air altars. In terms of form and function he is successful but meaning is supplied through the biblical narrative. He quotes a number of biblical passages from the Tanakh to illustrate his points. Although this is in line with Levine's intentions (after Jacobsen) it leads to questions over his hermeneutic process. Is he using the text to support his analysis or is his interpretation text-driven? This is an inherent problem of the relationship between texts and material culture. Scholars face three major problems when considering the suitability of biblical texts of this period for aiding material interpretation. They are:

1) élitist
2) anachronistic
3) part of a living faith

Any of these may apply to texts in other areas but all three are pertinent here.

Critique

There are methodological problems with the landscape-phenomenology approach. If the world can only be experienced through the body then what room is left for abstract thought? What about the experience of reading a book or listening to a tale? Yes, we hear and read through our body, but there is no direct bodily experience. The words and ideas of the story may be informed by prior bodily experiences but we are also able to incorporate ideas of things that move beyond experience alone. Notions of an afterlife, deities, and mythical creatures relate not to things that we have directly experienced. Although Tilley (2004: 10) acknowledges that our bodies provide 'fundamental experiences' prior to any such abstract thought there is doubt even over these.

Phenomenology is a physical process. As such it can only be undertaken properly in a physical world. It is in the material world that the body moves. Textual based phenomenology is necessarily lacking the fundamental materiality required to attempt such a reconstruction. The ideal way to experience a landscape is to immerse oneself within it. By being in, and moving through, a landscape one can have a direct and immediate exposure and participate in the continuing narrative of that place. One necessary result of the descriptive process is that it creates an added layer of interpretation. The reader is restricted to interpreting an interpretation (i.e. that initially made by the archaeologist). Pictures, video – multimedia aids can all make the experience more immediate but they are still, ultimately, substitutes. This added layer is regrettable but necessary. At least it approaches the topic by the most direct route possible. What it does not do is to create a wholly artificial perspective.

If the cornerstone of phenomenology is experience, both of the past people and for the archaeologist attempting to empathise, then how is it possible to relate

these experiences to an audience in any meaningful manner? There are inherent limitations in every communicative medium. Joseph Kosuth's artwork 'One and Three Chairs' is inspired by Plato's writing on forms. The work consists of an actual chair, a photo of a chair and a written description of a chair and neatly depicts the nature and problems of language, representation and reality. We have already discussed the disconnection of maps and diagrams. Photos capture an image, one limited snapshot from series of continual framed images which the eye sees. Such an image is only representative of vision; it is bereft of the other sensual encounters. Film is better with sound and vision, although currently there is no medium which is able to convey a fully synaesthetic experience. This thesis is, of course, being related through the use of writing, pictures and diagrams – some of the very things criticized. Tilley (2004: 28, after Geertz 1973: 3-30) talks of '...a richly textured carnal phenomenological 'thick' description in which we truly attempt to reflect on the character of our experience'. The use of language, in the form of description, remains the best medium for attempting to relate that sought after synaesthetic experience.

Tilley (2004: 3) picks up on the theme that the body is a combination of 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' and states that this is how experience and knowledge are acquired. Whilst I do not wish to argue that there are certain fundamentals which all bodies may experience, e.g. heat/cold, light/dark, up/down, I do take issue with the value of these experiences. The categories are useful starting points but no more. While they themselves may be considered 'objective' they are still subject to individual experience and interpretation. For example, while walking across the Negev in January 2006 to try to experience the desert at that time of year, I encountered a camelherd. Having walked for a couple of kilometres and worked up a sweat I was enjoying what was a relatively mild winter day. I remember actually comparing the day to that of a cool summer day (climate-wise) in South Wales (where I grew up). Wearing only a t-shirt on my torso I stopped to ask the camelherd directions. It struck me that he was wearing a thick, all-in-one body suit, fully zipped up. He looked at what I was wearing somewhat incredulously and a similar reaction was, no doubt, etched across my features also.

The point of this little anecdote is that although he and I were both walking about in the same landscape on the same day our apparently 'fundamental bodily experiences' were not the same. He was putting on clothes to stay warm; I was peeling off layers to stay cool. This is, of course, before we take into consideration that I was wandering about a landscape that was new and unfamiliar and he, in all probability, knew every valley, hill and wadi for miles around. I was trying to consider the landscape in terms of archaeology and already trying to figure how I was going to use this in my thesis; he was perhaps thinking where to take the camels for best grazing and water. The list of differences is all but endless. This does not mean to say that I feel a phenomenological approach is without merit but that Tilley's approach is not without its problems.

> Social identity is always experienced and enacted in specific contexts...material forms may therefore act as key sensuous metaphors of identity, instruments with which to think through and create connections around which people actively construct their identities and worlds.
>
> Chris Tilley (2004: 217)

If we accept this proposition then it follows that the best way to experience and attempt to understand a site is through actual bodily presence. It is, of course, an impracticality if not an impossibility for everyone to visit and spend time at a site. And where does this leave sites that have been reconstructed by others? We are experiencing, at least partly, somebody else's interpretation. Writing and photos are the medium chosen for relating those experiences and ideas to others. As discussed above, although far from ideal, it is the least deficient method. Plans, diagrams and archaeological reports are all extra layers of interpretation. These are usually extra-bodily and esoteric in their nature, not readily understandable to non-archaeologists. A further problem with the conventional archaeological approach is, as Tilley (2004: 219) highlights, that such reports represent what is now destroyed. Trenches and strata do not survive the process of archaeology and are therefore lost forever. This means that the physical experience associated with them is not reproducible. Phenomenology is open to

all to re-investigate, experience afresh and to reinterpret because it is based around the landscape and standing material culture.

We have already touched upon how Andrew Fleming (2005) is highly critical of this form of landscape phenomenology. He attacks the phenomenological approaches of Tilley (1994; 2004) and Cummings and Whittle (2004). With particular reference to the latter, he takes issue with the accuracy of many of the reports, citing loose language and ambiguous terms. More fundamentally, however, it is his attack on the theoretical foundation behind the three works that forms the larger part of the article. Fleming takes great exception to the form of phenomenology practised in the works he is critiquing and launches a reactionary broadside. He essentially accuses the writers of relativism. When Cummings and Whittle (2004: 20) reference monuments to rock outcrops and claim they were deliberately placed there because if they had been placed only a few metres away the rock outcrops would not have been visible, he claims the same could be said of any other phenomena, e.g. 'farmhouses, football pitches' (Fleming 2005: 924). He also claims they produce 'observations [which are] not always replicable' (Fleming 2005: 930). What Tilley and Cummings and Whittle offer us are alternatives, possibilities and suggestions of what past monuments *may* have been constructed for and what they meant to those who built them. Fleming either has not grasped this or refuses to accept it and appears to be holding out for that which archaeology cannot provide - definitive proof. The multiple interpretations of the Ffyst Samson monument concern Fleming (2005: 926) as does the notion that the builders of these monuments may have constructing them without any apparent pattern. Fleming (2005: 927) does not like this suggestion because it '...would probably make it impossible to do any serious work...or to develop archaeological arguments'. This rejection of non-patterned construction on the grounds that it does not fit with conventional archaeological research has, at one and the same time, both missed and illustrated one of the main purposes of landscape phenomenology; that is, new ways of thinking about the past.

There must be an acknowledgement of what it is that we are seeking to achieve when employing a phenomenological approach. Rather than a definitive answer

or testable hypotheses the process of landscape phenomenology offers new ways of looking at sites and new ways of understanding their histories. It also allows the interpretative process to continue and offer fresh alternatives and possibilities. 'The aim is not to control or fix knowledge but rather, through practice, to open up perspectives and create opportunities for further understanding' (Tilley 2004: 220). There is also a recognition that although we may place ourselves bodily in an environment once dwelt in by past peoples we are drawing upon different cultural backgrounds to place those experiences in context. Meaning will not necessarily be the same for everyone who visits these places but the constant factor remains the landscape and materials. They limit and enable our interpretations.

Conclusions

This study is an attempt to remove the divide that is often apparent between the investigations of the 'site' and the 'landscape'. Such a division was recognised by Richard Bradley (1997: 216) who noted that the two fell under the categories of 'social archaeology' and 'landscape archaeology' respectively. Instead there will be an attempt to place the sites *within* the landscape. In fact even that last phrase is somewhat misleading for there is no distinction between them, since the site forms part of the *taskscape*.

We should be regarding landscapes as products of social action. Such social action derives from specific and heterogeneous cultures. There is an urgent need to recognise that human activity, although shaped and limited by certain factors, can never be consistently predicted. Rather than continuing the search for apparent patterns and regularity across cultures we need to acknowledge the scales of variety. This variety occurs throughout the 'cultural strata' – both between cultures and within them. The landscape is shaped by day-to-day activity which is engendered with meaning as it is set in a wider cultural context. Although the landscape is continually being reshaped it still retains marks of the past which are open to interpretation. As activity shapes the landscape so the reverse is also true. The sheer diversity of landscapes means they must be considered on an individual basis. 'The specificity of place is an

essential element in understanding its significance...[and is] intimately related to the formation of biographies and social relationships' Tilley (1994: 11).

The term 'landscape' is one which has been reinvigorated. In the archaeological context 'landscape' is not the static, two-dimensional artists' representation of an idealized nature. Rather, it is the world which we inhabit. It is a term representative of a place which we move through, dwell in, experience, act upon and are influenced by. There is a relationship between the landscape and those who dwell within it which is dynamic, reciprocal and recursive. The landscape is a place in which we situate ourselves and our emotions. It is linked with a sense of identity and shapes our ideas (Tilley 2004: 25).

The approaches outlined above are geared towards acknowledging a history which is particular and ephemeral. This forms a crucial part of this thesis which aims to change the philosophy of historical thinking currently deployed in Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Plans, charts and diagrams have a place but are far too impersonal to provide more than one kind of understanding. For too long the weight of historical scholarship in this area has leaned towards the long term eschewing the everyday incidents that actually shape the past. What we are faced with is the notion that making one's way through a crowded Damascus Gate, with its press of people, heat and all manner of tradesmen raucously hawking their wares, may provide a more genuine 'historical' experience than only perusing charts and plans.

Narrative

The question about the nature of historical discipline was encapsulated by an argument between two scholars in the early 20th century. J.B. Bury claimed that history was 'a science, no less and no more'; this was utterly refuted by G.M. Trevelyan who stated that 'the art of history remains always in the art of narrative. That is the bedrock' (Callinicos 1995: 44). Paul Ricoeur (1980: 171) noted that many historians consider what they do to be an 'explanatory endeavour that has severed its ties with storytelling.' The same broad

brushstrokes may equally be applied to archaeological writing. It will not be a surprise to learn that this thesis is in agreement with Trevelyan.

The divorce of science and the humanities in the 19th century has meant that narrative is often considered secondary to scientific explanations. Too often a comparison is made between the two, apparently divergent, disciplines to see how effectively narrative can communicate scientific findings. Rather, we should be considering narrative on its own merits (Pluciennik 1999: 654-55). Further, if we are trying to relate a history then not only do we have to accept the possibility of multiple interpretations but also that it is our method of historical investigation that constructs history (Barrett 2001: 147). The methods that we use and the importance that we choose to bestow upon one category or another shape our historical narratives.

Why Narrative?

All archaeology attempts to relate its findings to an audience via one form or another (Given 2004: 20). It is this attempt to articulate the past through a particular methodology that constitutes the narrative. So-called scientific 'truths' are, in their own way, themselves narratives. There is a specialised knowledge required to read the narrative of a chemical equation in its purest form, e.g. Na + Cl = NaCl. Chemical equations are relating information which may be relayed in another manner (Pluciennik 1999: 658). A 'story-narrative' structure allows events to be related from the perspective of past agents, in a (con)sequential manner. Michael Given (2004: 1-2, 8, 24-5) uses an example story-narrative of women on a threshing floor at night. The story- narrative provides interpretation of the material culture while setting up a number of questions such as why are the women threshing at night? Why is it the women threshing and not the men? What do other members of the village think of this action? The story-narrative framework allows us to endow past agents with not only action but also with thoughts and emotions.

So all archaeological representation is a form of narrative and if we move beyond statistics and charts to prose then we are entering the realm of

storytelling. Like Given above, J.G. Gibb's (2000) article is about the use of storytelling not just for the sake of accessibility but also as a tool for further inquiry. He sets out his conclusions as follows:

> ...interpretive historical fiction holds great promise for engaging and educating specialist and non-specialist audiences; and it can provide a powerful analytical tool, an explicitly subjective, but rigorous, means of exploring archaeological and archival data.
>
> J.G. Gibb (2000: 3)

The experiences of creating, performing and observing can all serve as stimulants for further exploration. Settings, circumstance, thoughts and actions automatically create questions of opposition. Why this way and not that way? Why have they acted in that particular manner when they could have done otherwise? The process of creation may also raise lines of enquiry as yet unconsidered by the archaeologist.

Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) wrote about narrative from an anthropological viewpoint. He claimed that the use of narrative reflects part of one of the most basic aspects of human action, storytelling. Storytelling, according to MacIntyre, whether it be about a person's own actions or fiction helps us to understand our, and others, place in the world (Callinicos 1995: 54). This approach has the attraction that it encompasses both author and reader in the same process. The narrative is a way for both to find understanding of themselves and the world around them (although these may be very different understandings). It is this ubiquitous appeal of the story narrative, its very accessibility that favours it above other methods.

For Hodder (2000: 30-32) narrative is a way of explaining the small-scale. The variables and contingency of everyday life can be accounted for. We are able to tell how individuals react and adapt to different situations and experience life. While it appears difficult to reconcile the long-term and small-scale aspects of archaeology Hodder (2000: 31-32) writes that there is a need for both but that each requires its own particular ways of writing.

Alternative narratives – alternative histories

> ...narrative as story – a chronologically ordered and somehow unified or related sequence of events with a beginning, middle and end.
>
> Mark Pluciennik (1999: 654)

This definition of narrative is a somewhat conventional one. That there should be a coherent chronology of events is key to our understanding. The narrative structure does not have to be presented chronologically but the reader needs to be able to follow a plausible path – even if this is done retrospectively.

The typical aim of historical writing is to document and explain events in the past. The problem with attempts to explain things is that the explanations are often not explanations but constructs reflecting the mores of the author and the ideology of the society that author inhabits. Is it necessary for a narrative to be explanatory? That depends of course upon the aims of the writer and the definition of narrative employed. Certainly historians have been concerned with explaining change since the concept was first developed. *Historia* in the original Greek is related to learning through inquiry (Chambers Dictionary of Etymology 1988: 483). This technique was used by ancient writers such as Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius to help explain major events in their culture's history (Callinicos 1995: 57).

Rosemary Joyce (2002: 4-6) talks about the 'thread' of archaeological storytelling. This is what she calls the intellectual tradition which shapes current and future archaeological practice. By re-presenting and extending the thread of conventional archaeological discourse not only are we reinforcing that discourse but also discouraging alternative approaches and thought.

According to White (1975: 427-8) the role of the Ironic historian by subverting the narrative process, for example by offering incomplete stories, is not attempting to produce a better representation of historical reality but is questioning the very practice of historical representation. Such self-conscious

historical writing is as much about the mechanics of writing history as history itself. Further, for White the two processes were the same, there being no distinction between them (Callinicos 1995: 52). As such the metahistorian realises that all attempts to represent a historical reality are futile because of the essentially fictional nature of their composition (Callinicos 1995: 53).

Mark Pluciennik (1999: 657) summarises the view of White (1987) who argued that the use of narrative was different in its use, as a medium, but that the information conveyed remained essentially unchanged. Although the information may remain the same what is important is that the use of alternative mediums can produce different meanings. Meaning, however, is always a two-way process; a combination of the creation of the writer and the interpretative angle the reader brings to bear upon it (Pluciennik 1999: 657). White claims that this process is inherently influenced by the narrative *topos* (story type) that people choose to identify. Indeed the *topoi* have a greater effect upon people's understanding of the story than the detailed content. e.g. Israel as hero! Or villain? A tale of resistance or complicity? The Aramaeans as conquerors or liberators?

Talking about Greek art, Michael Shanks noted that it was 'a subject heavily overlain with standard narratives' and that he '...was in search of...an authentic alternative, to represent the indeterminacy of history' (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 10). There is a parallel here in many areas of archaeology. Contemporary archaeologists must contend with the weight of tradition which shapes conventional thought. Particularly in historical periods there are also the added writings of historians and, in the area of Syro-Palestinian archaeology (a field which is inevitably linked to the Bible) there are also theological writings. The narrativisation of archaeological knowledge begins long before it is written down. Historical conventions, on-site activity and discussions of meaning all help to formulate narrative (Joyce 2002: 2). All of this literature impinges upon archaeological interpretation.

> Archaeologists, partly because of the mode of production of archaeological knowledge and ordering and partly because of

> dominant and persistent structures of Western thought such as the separation of subject and object and the linearity of time, have tended not only to work within limited understandings of the possibilities of narratives but also rarely step outside the single-voiced, third person narrative form itself.
>
> Mark Pluciennik (1999: 668)

Joyce (2002: 7-10) promotes a 'multi-voiced' approach to writing archaeology based upon the principles of Bakhtin's 'dialogic' perspective. Put simplistically this view of language recognises a (minimum) three-way relationship which impacts upon the meaning of any word (discourse). These principal influences are those of the speaker, the listener and all the various meanings and nuances which have been applied to that word (discourse) in the past in different situations. This means that the word / language / discourse is in a constant state of (re)negotiation. Even works that have been lauded as alternative approaches have rarely been more than self-conscious texts which lack any genuine multi-vocal perspectives or new ways of constructing the past or of listening to other voices in the past or present. Pluciennik (1999: 667-68) suggests many different 'Other Ways of Telling', which include constructing narratives which specifically have no overall meanings or plot, multi-stranded narratives, fragmented pieces, non-linear forms, simultaneous multi-sensory experiences and different media.

Examples

The fluid nature of narrative means that attempts at absolute definitions are futile. For example, Lawrence Stone (1989: 3) defined the narrative as 'the organization of material in a chronological sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with sub-plots.' Stone is forced to abandon this definition however, as he acknowledges that many historians do not adhere to this form of narrative. In particular he notes that Peter Brown in *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971) employs what Stone calls a *'pointilliste'* style, using a patchwork style of description of different areas such as literature, religion and art and an interest in what people were thinking to develop an overall picture (quoted in Callinicos 1995: 45).

Janet Spector's 1993 book *What This Awl Means* was an attempt 'to reconnect with the past' (Spector 1993: 1). What had brought her to the point where she felt disconnected were the traditional forms of archaeological writing. She felt that they only succeeded in further distancing the past from the reader. The conventions of academic writing – the dry taxonomy, the impersonal style, the scientific reports (Spector 1993: 4) – all left her feeling cold and further removed any sense of empathy which may have stirred her archaeological curiosity in the first place. Spector was also concerned about inherent androcentric and ethnocentric bias within archaeological writing. Writing particularly about representations of Native American culture she noted that there was an emphasis amongst archaeologists toward 'European-made artifacts produced for Indians rather than Indian-made artifacts' (Spector 1993: 6) and to ignore Indian communities under the assumption that the archaeologists were better informed than, as they saw it, descendants so far removed in time as to have lost any sense of meaningful relationship. This was partly as a result of the domination of Euro-American white, middle-class males in scholarship. These same people often produced work that trivialized the position of women and, instead, made certain assumptions about the leading roles that men took in society (Spector 1993: 7).

The site in the book is a Wahpeton Dakota Village, known as Little Rapids, from the first half of the 19th century. What marks *What This Awl Means* as different, however, are two factors – the initial considerations and preparations for the dig itself and then the write-up afterwards. In an effort to move away from non-engaging, traditional accounts Spector provides a narrative based on a single article, an *awl*. The short story she writes is a speculation about how the artefact came to be deposited where it was, who it may have belonged to and what it may have meant to that person. This device allows much more than the *awl* to be related. It places the *awl* within a context and allows us see a world through a meaningful, i.e. an agent's – in this case a girl's, perspective. The tale that is woven around the *awl* is contrasted sharply by Spector (1993: 31) in the next chapter in which she compares how the same artefact may have been written up in conventional academic terms.

Gibb (2000: 4) uses one set of narratives in particular, *Tales of the Vasco* (Praetzellis et al. 1997), to highlight their usefulness and sets out the methodology used by the writers for the composition of the pieces. These tales formed part of a rescue archaeology assessment of an arid Californian canyon prior to a reservoir construction. After identifying three principal research contexts, primary and secondary questions were asked and the relevant archaeological data sets chosen. Archaeological methodology and finding were subsequently documented. Once this initial work had been undertaken then a number of tales were created in an attempt to convey what the archaeology meant to those who excavated and to those who lived amongst it on a daily basis.

One of the tales Gibb (2000: 5) uses to illustrate his points is that of Louis Peres, a Jewish French immigrant who marries and later divorces a Catholic Mexican and lived in a ranch house in the 1880s. These are matters of public record but his second wife, the Jewess Palmyra Levy, and daughter are fictions. Louis is reluctant to talk about his first wife in front of Palmyra or his daughter; is this simply because of his second wife's jealous nature or does it hint at deeper questions about religious tolerance and societal attitudes? It is through the use of such plot devices that questions, intentionally or otherwise, can be raised and issues for further research stimulated.

In *Yours Faithfully* Philip Davies (2004) edited a collection of virtual letters written between biblical characters, e.g. Isaac to Abraham, Samson to Delilah. These letters range in tone and content, some are serious, some are flippant and some even include characters who never spoke at all in the Bible, i.e. the big fish to Jonah. Some follow ancient modes and others are openly modern constructions but all open new lines of thinking upon traditional areas.

Michael Shanks (1999) has outlined a methodology he labels *rhizomatic* and employs in his paper *Three Rooms* (2004). He does not set out to deliberately compare and contrast each of the eponymous rooms because this would involve making definitive statements of knowledge about each. Rather 'layer is piled on

layer' so that ultimately it is the reader who must make their own interpretation (Shanks 2004: 152). Shanks' article is about the archaeology of three rooms from very different contexts – Greek Corinth, 19th-century Wales and contemporary London. It is an 'exercise in empirics' in which he 'attempts to compound...sources, layering them in the presentation rather than re-describing them as a working model, or seeing through them to what may be conceived as really going on.' He declares that the aim of this is to 'try to hold on to the empirical texture of our archaeological sources' (Shanks 2004: 148-49). The accounts of the three rooms are interspersed and varied - lists, narratives, reports. Accounts quickly move beyond initial description, placing them in a much broader context all of which serve to give each of the rooms a deeper meaning. Two of the accounts have something of a narrative arc, the other more arbitrary. No conclusions are drawn. This allows readers to develop their own thoughts and opinions up to a point because it is after all Shanks who defines the debate.

One practical approach toward a fuller understanding is outlined by Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks (2001: 64) through the use of 'deep maps'. The term is taken from a 1991 book *PrairyErth* by William Least. The book is an integrated account of Chase County in the American Midwest. It uses what may appear to be disparate elements such as journalism, topography, memoirs and folklore. '...the deep map attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the factual and the fictional, the discursive and the sensual' (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 64). The advantage of this technique is that it offers a multivocal and rounded approach when compared with the flat, one-dimensional accounts so often represented in conventional archaeology. Mike Pearson employs this method in his 2006 book, *In Comes I.* Pearson (2006: 4) draws upon local history and personal memory, puts on performances and undertakes excursion to places – the locales acting as mnemonics – and attempts to investigate the 'entangled nature of land, human subject and event'.

The form of Mark Edmonds' book *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic* came about more through accident than design. Originally written conforming to academic convention and by Edmonds' own admission 'rather lifeless' (1999: ix), a re-write was forced on the author after two burglaries in three days meant he lost all copies. This unexpected chore became an opportunity for Edmonds to re-evaluate what he had written. The standard structure employed in the original draft had left him cold and feeling detached from the time and people he was writing about. In order to redress this he opted for an alternative, unconventional approach, dispensing with references, adopting a flowing narrative style as well as inserting a number of short (story) narrative pieces aimed at illustrating 'how some of the places and concepts that we study may have been understood and carried forward by people at that time' (Edmonds 1999: x).

> ...for all our technique and rhetoric to the contrary, the study of the past is an act of imagination, bounded by convention and by evidence, but creative nonetheless
>
> Mark Edmonds (1999: x)

Aims of this Thesis

Before any narrative reconstruction of the past can begin it is necessary to deconstruct the process. By injecting meaning and purpose into narrative which is not in the data Ernst Axel Knauf (1991: 48) believes there is always a danger of history becoming myth. While I would agree that narrative reconstructions of the past amount to what is essentially a story (the historian as author) the same is also true for any information about the past. Knauf appears to believe that there is an objective history (or at least, an objective process for constructing history) a concept with which I would wholly disagree. All information requires interpretation (quantitative data tells, in its own way, a story) and this is before we consider the decision making process which led to the data collection initially.

There is an inherent problem in that although we are attempting to move away from meta-narratives they often form the background to new narratives that we may create. There is a circular and recursive process at work through which our present conceptions shape the past and are shaped by the past. Any reinterpretation of the past has to be relevant to the present which we understand; such a 'conceptual lock' has a significant influence upon the type of past that we can describe. This perspective places the emphasis for archaeological writing upon understanding the present as much as the past (Rudebeck in response to Pluciennik 1999: 670).

Pluciennik (1999: 655) refers to the work of Hayden White (1981; 1987) who looks at the differences in style between annals, chronicles and narratives. Annals are lists of (perhaps) unrelated events; chronicles link events thematically; a narrative 'endows events...with a significance they do not posses as a mere sequence' (White 1987: 14 as quoted in Pluciennik 1999: 655). Although White was referring to meta-narratives it is his emphasis on meaning that distinguishes the narrative. The aim of this thesis is to write more personal, people-based accounts of the past and to move away from the meta-narrative. As Pluciennik (1999: 656) notes, such '...goal oriented interpretations [as meta-narratives]...are used to impose a telos on the past [and] seem to have a particular political resonance with colonialist, imperialist, and nationalist projects'. Although he warns against the meta-narratives and their teleological tendencies Pluciennik (perhaps unintentionally) also heads down that same seductive path:

> ...it is the configuring function of plot – its ability to bring potentially disparate events within an overarching framework and attribute a common meaning which is more than the sum of its parts – which defines narrative.
>
> Mark Pluciennik (1999: 656)

Narrative has a valuable place in the telling of the past. While narrative is an obvious link between fiction and history the two are patently not the same. The plotting and narrative arc that is evident in novels for instance is not something that necessarily exists between happenings in the past. Novelistic devices are

there so the reader can *make sense* of the story. Here we face a dilemma in the use of narrative for archaeological or historical writing. The reason we use narrative is for the same reason, so that the reader can *make sense* of the past. What we must avoid, however, is reducing the past to, on the one hand, a simple tale of cause and effect and, on the other, a grand design. While acknowledging that composing narratives of the past in effect creates history I do not believe that, as the above quote outlines, disparate events can be drawn into an overarching framework – nor do I believe that they should be. For that leads us back down the teleological, meta-narrative path, that tool of imperialism from which I am trying to disassociate myself.

Events are reliant upon perspective. Mike Pearson (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 21) uses the example of a fight breaking out in a crowd to highlight the way space and perspective are constantly in flux and renegotiated. The ebb and flow of the spectators, in this case, is representative of all space and place, landscape and personal. When two fights break out, in the example, a single spectator is forced to make choices. What will she do? Focus on one fight? Oscillate between the two? Walk away? Watch the watchers? If she decides to watch one fight in particular she may still hear the sounds of the other. The cheers of those watching the other fight discordant with the events she is witnessing. Decisions are made (or not) and actions happen and experiences are left imprinted upon a person. I was there, says one, so was I, says another, and yet their experiences in no way relate. Or maybe they do.

The natures of the narratives told in this thesis are necessarily short-term. One of the traditional advantages of archaeology is that it is in a unique position to help to explain long-term change. This lends itself readily however to the meta-narrative. I am not saying that the meta-narrative has *nothing* to offer our understanding nor that the ability of archaeology to offer long-term understanding of the past is redundant. Andrew Sherratt (1995: 3) suggests that it is the way that meta-narratives have been used and their areas of study that is at fault not necessarily the method itself, that there is a need for them to move 'beyond the crude dichotomy of materialism and idealism'. The meta-narrative is in itself a story, but only one amongst many – that recognition of course leads

to its own problems, how to reconcile the long-term with the everyday, or if that is at all possible. I have already noted my objections to this form of writing about the past. When we create 'micro-narratives' we are *not* writing about how history was, or setting out definitions, or maxims; instead we are telling very narrow accounts of how a particular place at a particular time may have been from this or that point of view. As Pluciennik (1999: 660) puts it '...partial rather than totalizing narratives, in the sense that the "end of the story" is obviously arbitrary and provisional...without claiming that no other stories remain to be told or that other narratives referred to in the text...must begin or finish at the same point.'

Of course there must be some admissions for my own part. By creating narratives I am choosing to impose a certain construct upon the past. I recognise that such a narrative is a creation based upon certain arbitrary material remains as well as other research that I have determined the nature of as well as selecting only those research parts I have deemed suitable to use. When laid out in such a manner the nature of historical writing can be seen as a process of authorial discretion (the thesaurus also suggests 'capricious', which I was tempted to use but decided against at the last second! Notably perhaps it also offers 'unscientific'). It is important not to perpetuate ethnocentric / imperialist notions of the objective superiority of the archaeologist. One way to avoid this is to openly acknowledge and reflect upon the methodology and cultural influences of the archaeologist and how this may have affected the story-narrative (Given 2004: 23).

Conclusions

A valid question then is what makes a narrative good or bad? Without the apparent empirical standards of science how are narratives to be judged? Narratives differ from science in that both content *and* form are open to experimentation. Evaluation rests upon different pillars – moving beyond the traditional boundaries of archaeology into the realm of the aesthetic. Factors such as style, richness and 'followability' become measures and these themselves are dependent upon wider cultural mores and prejudices (Pluciennik

1999: 659). So, we recognise once more the role of the present in the creation of the past. The question of what exactly we are writing when we create a historical narrative is not straightforward to answer. One way of approaching this is provided by Gérard Genette (1988: 15), who asks another question, 'How does the author know that?' For Genette the difference between fiction and non-fiction is that, for the latter, the author must provide evidence and reasons for his writing. It is up to the reader however to make a judgement on whether or not they are convinced by the argument built upon the evidence.

We are, in a way, writing fictions, although it can be argued no more so than all historical writing (Edmund Leach (1989: 34) arrived at the conclusion that all ethnography is fiction). We have already acknowledged the problems with 'facts' in archaeology which are often so broad as to be meaningless. Working from the material culture then, what we are doing is creating meaningful fictions – which I believe are more valuable, relative and productive than meaningless 'facts'. Traditional academic writing can be uninspiring, cold and esoteric. Story-narratives are, hopefully, engaging, communicative and open. They should draw the reader in, allowing them to draw their own conclusions and interpretations (Given 2004: 22-3).

The various elements of interpretive archaeology that have been drawn out in this chapter have come together in the form of the story-narratives included in this thesis. The issues and outcomes of these narratives will be discussed in the following chapter.

Two Soldiers

Slow tread stepped foot over foot round the loomed large walls. This side of the city, in the pre-dawn dark, the rush of water dominated the senses. The slow light of day bled into the air, the freshly illumined land blunting the dominance of that churning, charging voice. The soldiers, on their own course, welcomed the onset of day. The scent of dew in their lungs revitalised them a little. The vulnerability of the night had been left behind but the uncertainty of the day lay ahead.

The city still bristled with the murder and the repercussions, of which they were part - drafted in to bolster numbers. This in itself was a joke. Doubled in size, they were now fifty; amongst a city of a few thousand. A token army - a residual emblem of the power that less than a year before had burnt and pillaged and laid claim. This thought did not comfort them on their rounds. The same theory had applied before and that had not stopped two of their number being stabbed to death in full view. They acted out their sham patrol from before sunrise to midday and knew that it achieved nothing but resentment.

'I hate this place,' announced the first soldier, the older of the two, his voice small and dejected. The pair walked on. The partner of the dejected soldier was distracting himself by looking for their own tracks in the mud and dust, imprinted during previous circumnavigations, and deliberately and exactly retracing his own route when he was able to. They nodded mute acknowledgements to two other soldiers as they passed by the main gate. As they stepped off the cobbled road and he once again scanned the ground trying to pick up their previous tracks he waited for his partner to comment. It took a little while longer than usual but just as he located his own footprint it duly came, 'When are we going to get gate duty? Tramping round these bloody walls...' the complaint tailed away. Smiling to himself with an imperceptible shake of the head, the younger man listened stoically and trod carefully, trying not to overlap the steps of his previous path.

A young man appeared from out of one of the newly erected buildings on the back of the sacred platform and the crowd quietened a little in expectation. Aware of this he flashed an embarrassed smile and brief wave before adjusting some props and disappearing back into the doorway at double time. The general murmur and chatter picked up once more. A steady stream of people flowed in swelling the already overstuffed ranks. The

two soldiers stood at their allotted positions trying their best to look stern and attentive. They had managed to get some sleep in the hot afternoon but now as the sun faded the whole garrison had been put on extra duty. The rededication ceremony was important, so the commander had told them, important for the city, important for the people and important for their own position in the region. There were to be no repeats of the killings the month before, extra-vigilance was required. Now, standing there, the crowd pushing in on them, that vigilance was kept fresh by a nervous churn in their stomachs.

'I don't like this,' muttered the older soldier, 'there are too many.' His partner, often irked at his sullen companion's complaints, could not this time disagree. He could see other soldiers posted around in pairs but this brought him small comfort.

They stood at the entrance to the sacred precinct. Behind them an open space surrounded by buildings framed a square pavement set in the middle of the courtyard. The pale slabs of the pavement had been scrubbed and it sat proudly, floating in a pool of crushed travertine the colour of gold. On the northern end of the pavement two parallel pillars stood freely to attention, atop freshly carved bases, mimicking the attitudes of the two soldiers but with none of their anxiety. Perhaps a dozen strides beyond the pavement was the most striking feature of the remodelled sanctuary. The existing platform had been built up and relined with large, carved ashlars so that it rose to near twice the height of a man. Its depth was also extended and priestly buildings had been erected on the rear of the platform. The platform and the courtyard were enclosed within a border of straight walled buildings that formed the sanctuary as a whole into a rectangular shape, the longer side running from the south to the platform in the north. The sun, just beginning to dip beyond the hills to the west, cast long diagonal shadows over the courtyard, cutting the slabbed pavement in two across its angle and, where its dying rays still reached, transforming the crushed yellow floor into fevered amber.

As the light faded further a pair of boys emerged from the rear of the platform with lit torches and ran down either side of the sanctuary courtyard lighting oil lamps sat on shelves that jutted from the mud-brick walls. The flames burned true in the still evening air.

There was movement at the rear of the crowd and for a moment the soldiers were concerned before they realised what it was. The crowd was parting to let pass the sacrificial bullock. An acolyte, trying to look serious but revelling in the importance of

his role and the attention, led the animal toward the sanctuary. The white of its coat still shone in the little remaining light. People reached out from the crowd to touch it as it marched passively by. Massed arms and hands flowed over its smooth coat sucking up the blessing inherent within. The white bullock was sacred, flawless in its arrangement, the unblemished beast. Having been briefed the two soldiers acted their part by crossing spears to bar the path which prompted mock boos from those gathered. The acolyte raised his head and hailed the sanctuary as if he were a weary traveller seeking shelter. It occurred to the older soldier that the acolyte was approaching his task with a little too much zeal.

The crowd, reverentially quiet as the bullock passed, now began to cheer as they saluted the arrival of the priests as they emerged from the buildings at the rear of the platform. Four came out first and lined up along the edge of the platform in pairs, a conspicuous gap between them. Silence from the throng once more. The priests spoke as one, answering the weary traveller. Unhappy with their response the acolyte called out again. An exulted, redoubled roar rose up as a large, powerful looking man, made his way to the front of the platform and took his place, as High Priest, in the centre. He stood for a few moments basking in the adulation. He raised a hand and the assembled dutifully fell quiet. The five priests, black clad, looked both resplendent and formidable as they looked down on all from their imposing rostrum. The High Priest and the acolyte made some further, ritualised exchanges which ended in the High Priest, in his deepest voice, ordering the soldiers to stand aside and admit the traveller. This was done, accompanied by another cheer. When acolyte and bullock were within the heart of the sanctuary, the acolyte stood on the pavement, the indifferent animal trailing behind, the High Priest began a speech that revealed the nature of the house the traveller had happened upon. He spoke of the gods in general and the particular powers and attributes of the gods who dwelt within the sanctuary itself. The acolyte, playing his part, offered his only possession, the bullock, to the gods in return for their favour. The High Priest, the mouthpiece of the gods, dutifully accepted upon their behalf.

The four lesser priests turned back from the edge of the stage. They, each in their turn, took an ever so slightly unseemly scrabble down a ladder at the side of the podium, hitching up their robes a little in order to descend. The watching concourse jostled for position, fewer were able to see now that the action had moved to the courtyard. The priests, each with a fine bowl in their hands,

positioned themselves about the bullock as the Head Priest continued to address the crowd. He spoke of blessings and curses, hope and despair, male and female, sacrifice and appeasement. He spoke too of recent events and the need for acceptance and forgiveness, even praising the efforts and work of those who had rebuilt the sanctuary anew. This last met with a muted and mixed reception. This prompted a look of fatherly disapproval from the High Priest and a burst of fresh sweat across the soldiers' necks. His speech at an end the crowd murmured expectantly. The High Priest descended the ladder himself. Turning, he looked at a lad nervously standing in the shadows at the side of the sanctuary platform, and gave him his cue with a little nod and smile. At a formal pace the boy covered the short distance to the High Priest. In his hands he held a long handled axe, the blade polished and alive in the lamp light. One hand cupped waist high under the long sleek head, the other holding the shaft near his neck. The elongated handle continued up above his head into the night. The strain of the weight showed on his face but his step remained measured and true. The High Priest took the blade from him, a broader smile in place now, and ushered him away once more. His task performed, the boy skipped off, all thoughts of sedate pace forgotten. A little laughter spread amongst those who could see.

A low chant began to rise up out of the courtyard. The four priests about the bullock intoned with an ominous solemnity. The High Priest moved with regulated pace to his position by the side of the animal. As the intensity of the voices rose he stroked the animal's neck in an unnecessary calming gesture, the animal had never been anything other than wholly docile. The chant unexpectedly flattened off and died away. A collective breath was held by the mass as they watched the High Priest step away from the beast and arc the ceremonial weapon through the air above his head. Briefly the head disappeared into the night, the lengthy haft at its highest point above the reach of the low slung lamps, before shimmering down, the flames streaking its thin broad face, into the neck of the bullock with a thumping slice. The blow did not severe the neck entire, the blade bit a near third of the way through. The weight of the head, now mostly unsupported, fell forward like a hewn tree even as the legs gave out and the body crashed down. The legs had crumpled under the body which remained in a largely upright position that was considered especially auspicious. Seeing this, the largest roar yet went up from the crowd, for each considered themselves favoured by the gods in their own way, and they surged forward against the soldiers bringing with them a rush of body heat and an underlying odour of sweat.

Three, four more strokes cut away the head completely. The standing priests rushed in and filled their bowls with the hot blood but still it spilled out over the pavement and crushed rock, black in the firelight. Taking one of the bowls the High Priest daubed both of the standing pillars with the viscous liquid calling out to the gods to accept this offering.

This appeared to signal an end to the main ritual. Two of the priests came forward to the soldiers and bade them stand aside. They began to usher in the crowd, who began in a quite orderly fashion to enter the courtyard and queue – waiting their turn to approach the High Priest and receive the divine blessing. A dash of blood on either cheek from the High Priest's hand administered the favour of the gods and then a quick exit left out of the courtyard.

The soldiers looked on. They had not been stabbed. The mob had not carried them off to be sacrificed in an ecstatic fervour. They had played their part, but were not part of it. The ritual was familiar; they had both experienced similar things, but this was not their sanctuary, not their city – for all the garrison commander insisted, they knew inside it was otherwise. As the priests butchered the carcass of the bullock, preparing to roast it, as the people turned away from the sanctuary anticipating the feasting to come, the blessings on their faces crusting in the warm night air, the soldiers remained apart.

Old Men – A Failed Narrative

Topics

- *New people, new gods, the revamped sanctuary*
- *Previous attacks*
- *The grain storage pits and this new way*
- *The politics of the city*
- *Incomers*
- *Fortifications*

They can talk about the changes to the fortifications and also to the sanctuary – there are major changes here between strata IV and III. What are these changes representative of? Obviously of a change of political rule but also how has this affected them – not much perhaps, they are old men after all, but how will their families be affected? They remember back to what it was like before. Try to link these reminisces into thoughts of what life was like – can they perhaps remember tales told to them by their grandparents? How far back does that go? Work this out and see what the situation / archaeology reveals of that period. One of them is an incomer and that can offer up an alternative point of view. Another old man can belong to the Sea People group and so there are even alternative points of view amongst the population – emphasis as always on heterogeneity.

- We are all _____ now. (the eldest is referring to the conquerors – his is a practical approach to survival)
- Speak for yourself!

Idealism versus Pragmatism

He was old, yes. But his back was still straight and his eyes were good. And his legs were fine too, thank you very much. That morning, like most mornings if he was being honest, he was off to take up his place at the gate and sit and talk and watch the world. It was summer, which he preferred; winter was not for him, not at his age. It was also a selfish little thing, when it rained he and his friends could not gather at the gate. Instead he would stay around the house and though he performed little tasks – whittling a child's toy, repairing furniture – he would often just drift off into a fugue of boredom which he would try to pass off, masking his face with a concentrated look, as contemplating the wisdom of the ages. He

remembered the distinguished look of his own grandfather and tried to recreate it.

The other three were already there. He was the last to arrive as usual. He liked to be early but never seemed to manage it. They always ribbed him about sleeping ever longer or his failing legs (even though he was very proud of their continuing stoutness!) but that morning was no different, the others were already there, leaning in and chatting. Stepping out a little longer in his stride, just to show he could, he crossed the last short distance to where they sat on the bench. The discussion was already in full flow when one of them, who had lost a couple fingers during a ploughing accident, noticed him and with exaggerated action held up his mutilated hand and announced, 'Quiet! Here he comes,' completing the act by looking side to side in mock suspicion. His late arrival was greeted by Three Fingers in the same manner nearly everyday.

'Nice of you to join us this evening,' chimed in another as he unconsciously stroked his long, black and grey beard, commenting on his friend's arrival. The third of the group on the bench was by far the oldest, his back was so curled that his shrivelled date of a face struggled to look up to the sky. He twisted his neck sideways to watch the approach of the latecomer and smiled a little gummy smile. From the bald and angry red ridges in his mouth only one overlong brown tooth sprouted. They joked about it calling it his own personal *mazzebah* and occasionally offered up mock worship. When he ate it was like a sacrifice to it.

'Are you two still alive? My prayers go unanswered for another day.'

'Sorry to disappoint you, again,' said Three Fingers.

'I live in hope,' he squeezed the shoulder of the gummy old man in a gesture of affection as he sat and completed their group, 'the gods will answer me some day. Someday soon, I hope!' He adjusted the fabric of his garb from under him till he was comfortable, 'What's all the chatter about?'

'We were talking about the chair,' Long Beard said nodding towards it, 'it's finished.' The chair in question sat directly opposite the gated entrance. Two steps led up to the dais on which was an ornately carved wooden chair, its back against the wall of the inner gate. The monumental steps and dais and chair were covered over by a canopy of finely woven reed which was supported by four carved pillars whose bases slotted in to rounded stones shaped that reminded him of closed water lilies before they revealed their beauty.

'So they have, nice of them isn't it? To provide a place where *we* can dispense *their* justice.'

'That's not how it is,' interjected Three Fingers.

'It isn't? What is it like then?'

'Well…'

'It's a token,' supplied Long Beard, 'a token of their willingness to make things right, like the sanctuary as well.'

'Make things right?!' his voice shrieked and nearly broke, 'By bringing in a few stonemasons? Most of the work was done by our own people anyway, taken off the land to do it. You've all addled minds, have you forgotten last summer?'

One of the young boys of the city came through the gate, the old men stopped and acknowledged him, he gestured reverentially toward them and continued away up into the city. The interruption halted the flow and took some of his righteous anger with it, he looked up in the quiet after his outburst at the line of sunlight against the wall above their heads. It would sink toward them as midday approached bringing its heat with it. The high walls of the gateway afforded them shade for most all the day apart from when the sun was at its highest and strongest. It was then that they would part until the heat passed over. The bench they occupied jutted from the same wall the chair was backed against and allowed them to watch the comings and goings through the main gateway of the city opposite where they sat, all traffic through there passed under their scrutinous gaze. It was only in recent months that they had been allowed to take up their place once more at the city gates. For a while the place had been constantly manned by soldiers and the presence of the old men made them nervous, or paranoid, or uncomfortable, or something, the old men weren't too sure. The Garrison Commander had actually called at the house of the bent Old Man and blurted something about 'policy' and 'security'. The Latecomer had laughed at that, scorn in his voice, but the Old Man had hushed him saying that at least the Garrison Commander had come and taken the time to explain personally which was not something he had to do and the gesture should be appreciated. The Latecomer, for all his scepticism, said nothing to that. It was not his place to contradict, not when the Old Man used that tone of finality, as if that was the way things were and are and should be.

Old Man steps in here giving his take on events – seen it all before, cycles, such is life, blah blah blah…

'Haven't you died yet?'

'Oh ho! He speaks, he's alive! Thought you had just passed on there.'

What do I want to say about the chair? Was there a previous incarnation of it like the sanctuary? If so rebuilt for what reason? Similarities with other chairs found in Assyria. Links to further traditions and ideas across broader regions.
The memory of the old men can be used as a device to tell us more about how the city used to be. The grain pits, previous attacks, the changing face of the sanctuary. What can be made of this in terms of the people? Changing ideas, changing identity.

Want to portray the idea of continuity and change. A friend of mine believed that I should have a running motif, something to tie the narratives together. Only half seriously (or half jokingly) he suggested an ancient rock, scarred with time and jutting significantly, on which an old man would sit telling tales of the past to all and any who would listen like something from The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner. *His idea reminded me more of the mysterious monolith from* 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Need better balance between character and place and time.

Alternative Version

The dais consisted of only two steps but that was enough to lift it up and imbue it with a presence. The carved blocks formed a square upon which sat an ornately carved wooden chair, it's back against the wall of the inner gate and directly facing the south outer gate – the main entrance to the city. The throne and dais were covered over by a canopy of finely woven reed which was supported by four carved pillars whose bases slotted in to rounded, worked stones that were perhaps representative of the closed water lilies of the lake.

Remnant?

Perhaps twenty metres east of the *bamah* is a bench upon which one can sit and look out across the flatlands north of the tel. I did this, sitting alone, eating some crisps and drinking much needed refreshment. The solitude of the place – even on a national holiday the place is restful and tranquil. Was this how it was? I doubt it. The hills to the east are immediate and run away north, cutting across the horizon in the hazy distance. In the hush of the day the crunch of crisps rang loud; a bee or some such bantam insect buzzed with malicious intent somewhere behind me. A length of trench – military not archaeological – cut along the rim of the tel. It seems like a modern intrusion, as having no place here, a desecration almost, but they are already regarded as part of the history of the tel. Above it a sturdy placard testifies to this, it tells a tale of a boundary skirmish between Israel and Syria. One of those panorama maps accompanies the inscription. My eyes flick back and forth from the map to the view trying to locate the reality from the representation. Just looking out at the scenery I had not seen it but, thanks to the panoramic aid bringing it to my attention, I was able to pick out the husk of a Syrian tank rusting into the landscape.

At the Kibbutz where I was staying I had spoken to Ravit, a thirty-year old teacher, who had moved there from Acco. She waved away my questions about Tel Dan:

– Ancient history? You mean the Bible? They are stories and have nothing to do with the situation now. There is the Bible history and there is the history of modern Israel.

– But Israelis and Palestinians use history as a claim for the land.

– If you find some archaeology and it's Jewish then, woah, you can't touch it. You can't do anything there. The Jews won't let you. But we have to look at the situation now. We are both here and have to find a way to live together. I don't believe that anyone is happy here, truly. We are worried, we are stressed. These separate lands, these boundaries, this wall – they are not working. We need to try something different and if that doesn't work something else because at the moment there is nothing, no hope. There should just be one land and everybody can live here. It is no good just some Palestinians come here and work for the day and then go back. The only way to live together is to live in the land

together, as one country. You know there are some Jews who would shoot me for saying such a thing.

I wondered whether she identified with Dan at all, to which she answered:

- This is the Israeli way, we prefer to shop, eat, relax. We don't want to go to these old places. I feel much more places where soldiers happened. You know, where things happened with soldiers. I think that this is the same for all Israelis, we really feel for our soldiers. I identify with Dan, not because it's in the Bible but because I live here. I identify with Banias too.

- Even Nimrod?

- Yes, even Nimrod.

The road that runs east from Qiryat Shemona cuts across the north of the valley. Before it rises into the foothills of the Hermon a number of kibbutzim flank the road, as does Dan. The same road then begins to wind and climb up into the eastern heights passing both Banias and Dan. The draining of the lake and its swamps in the 1950s changed the face of the Hula. There remains a smaller lake, now a nature reserve, and areas of water and reeds are still apparent - some of which I passed along the road on the way to Dan.

On the way up to the archaeology I had spoken to Or, a third-year Israeli student, by the shallow pool:

- I am here with my girlfriend actually and her family. Her father has a birthday. And I was here as a kid, it was nice; I remember the water especially…not the archaeological site. I've never been there.

- How much of history do you believe?

- Oh, that's a problem. Not so much. Not so much.

- Why do you doubt?

- Because they say history is written by winners, so what's going on with the losers? And you know today with history, when you write it you have many interests, the man who writes it.

- What do you think about the way the myth of Masada has been used in Israel today?

- Oh, Benji, you know Benji? Ben-Gurion. He decided that we needed to be a normal country, not exiled Jews, what happened in the Holocaust, so we need fighters, the new Jew. And this myth is one of the things they built here to make this new, powerful Jew. He's taking his land, living in his home and not fearful of anybody. So it was his fault.

- Interesting you use the word 'fault' - like it is a problem.

- Well maybe then...it's hard to judge what happened then now, but maybe then it was the only thing, or one of the best things to do. But today...kind of a problem.

I had left Or and continued on my way to the Tel. I had the sanctuary all to myself when I arrived there. After a while I wandered off up a path, which is where I found the bench and trench. I ate my lacklustre provisions and thought about the site. As it is presented now the sanctuary is a mish-mash of periods - the Iron II *bamah* and steps, a Hellenistic plastered water basin, a sunken Roman fountain house. In the centre of the courtyard stands a modern metal framework representing where the raised horned altar of Jeroboam II is believed to have stood. And of course there is a huge tree rising near the corner of the *bamah,* its dominating canopy providing welcoming shade. In a way I was surprised that they had not propped up a little reconstructed golden calf somewhere - though perhaps that would not have sent out the right message.

When I returned to the sanctuary there was a couple looking about, I approached them. Amir and Nicole (**in bold**), both American Jews in their late thirties who had made Aliyah, were friendly enough:

- What do you know about this place?

- What we know so far is this has been inhabited for seven thousand years. This was a Canaanite city and it was conquered by Joshua, when the Israelites came over and conquered the land and it's been inhabited by Jews, I guess, since then. And it was abandoned when? Roman times? I don't know, I didn't read...

- I saw the timeline go up to then but I don't know what happened directly after.

- The timeline goes up to the Roman period because that's what they are interested in.

- The good stuff (slightly ironic).

- And what do you think are the most important sites?

- What was fascinating, in the Old City, for us, the Second Temple era...

- ...Oh yeah the Temple tour was good and the City of David. So what was important to us? I guess it was our history.

- When you say 'our history'...?

- We're Jewish.

- What do the different names for this land, Israel, Eretz-Israel, The Holy Land, Palestine, Canaan, mean to you? Are they the same or different?

- Very different.

- In what way?

- Well we definitely don't refer to it as Palestine.

- How much faith do you have in history? When you come to a site like this and you read a sign saying this was built by Jeroboam, how much do you trust that?

- I put a lot of trust in it. I studied the Tanakh, so when we see Israel we actually see it as what we read about in the Bible.

- There seems to be a big overlap here. I don't know if the archaeologists have a certain agenda but it does appear, reading from the ancient text...that things appear in stone, the way they appear in the ancient text. I guess it's more verification that that happened.

We have a friend who makes documentaries often based on archaeology and he just did a movie called 'Exodus Uncoded' or something like that; finding historical proof of the Exodus. He was in places, in Egypt, where they are extremely careful not to identify anything as having been Israelite. Anybody who sticks his neck out and says this may have been related to Jewish presence, they suddenly don't get a license to dig anymore. It was amazing talking to him. He said there were things that people would say off camera which they wouldn't say on camera. He was looking at different timelines; how it could be the Jews did live there and then left. He said he was interviewing one archaeologist about this and the guy said 'No, absolutely not, the times are wrong, they don't work'. Then they took the camera away and the guy said, 'I totally agree with what you're saying but I don't have tenure yet, I have a big mortgage on my house. If I agree with you I'm gonna get put in the wacko camp and I can't afford to do that to my life'. And they have places, he said, in Egypt where they take archaeological sites and every year they just plough them over. Isn't that sad? A university should be a place where, you know, let's be open minded. Explore and research, go to the sources, see for yourself.

The conversation turned towards archaeological thinking about early Israel:

- Israel and Judah are quite secure, historically attested, but before that David and Solomon are kind of quasi-mythical figures...

- (disbelieving) Oh come on! Oh come on, Jews don't trust anyone okay. If you're gonna feed us...these are very old texts right? So at some point someone would have had to introduce the lie, that's the difficulty, right? It would be very hard to imagine that that would be a mythical character. There's so much evidence.

- But in archaeological evidence there's not, actually. There is evidence going back to the split with fairly strong, extra-biblical inscriptions, not many, but a few. David and Solomon though, considering they are such massive figures...

- What about all the psalms and Song of Solomon? They're references. Why look further than the Bible? It's so huge. I mean, you know what, I think the problem is people have a chip on their shoulder about religion in general. So, because it's written in that way - well, we'll kind of discount that but if we find it on a rock and it doesn't have religious connotations then that's good evidence!

I started to think about Nicole's mention of the timeline. Conventionally Dan is regarded as an Israelite site. In my mind I began to run through my own timeline of the site - Canaanite, Aramaean, Israelite, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman. But what is it that defines the identity of a site? Political control? The people who lived there? Even after the Roman period the site fell under the control of various Caliphates, the Crusaders, Mamluks, Ottomans and Egyptians - even the British for a while. Apparently the site was abandoned during the Roman period but even if we restrict our thoughts to when the site was occupied that still leaves three millennia (excluding the Neolithic). Three thousand years of rolling occupation and re-occupation, of massacres, of exile and deportation, of immigration, of ideas, of trade, of social and political transience, of memory, of change.

To my surprise a group of young men turned up. They were five American students (all early twenties) wearing Kippurs and backpacks and studying at an (ultra) orthodox yeshiva in Israel.

(* indicates a new speaker)

- What do you know about this site?

- Not much, I know King Jeroboam was here, and he was a cruddy king. I read a book about him.

- You mean the Bible?

- Yeah.

- Which sites would you say are the most important?

- I like archaeological sites in general, you see the past; how our ancestors lived and how they acted. You feel part of it, and Jerusalem is the place to be because that's our past. Everyone's past actually because all the cultures in the world came through there at one point.

*- * Ancient Palestinians? There's no such thing, they're illegal immigrants, they came over here from Jordan and Syria and refused to leave.*

*- * There weren't Palestinian people here when...?*

*- * They're not the same, they don't look back to-*

*- * They never wanted our land; they just kicked up from Syria and Jordan.*

*- * There were Palestinians here when the Jews arrived but they never had the land.*

- Are you talking about the Canaanites?

- Yes but they died out. They haven't been on the map of history for three thousand years. The Arabs who arrived later didn't want to be associated with Israel and so changed the name.

I asked them about their views of the Bible and history:

- In essence if it was a biased text it wouldn't say bad things about the Jews, about this king, this king who stopped all the Jews from going to Jerusalem. Imagine in the Koran if there was this guy who stopped everyone going to Mecca and Medina, would you hear about that in the Koran? No. But the Bible does the opposite; it shows our whole history, our faults and our strengths.

Then moved on to politics and archaeology:

- In history you prove that this land was ours, that the Jewish nation lived here. If you find Jewish artefacts from eight hundred years you find that we had right of possession for eight hundred years of this land.

- Have you been to Nimrud's Castle?

- *We're on our way.*

- It's a great site, it was built by...

- *King Nimrud.*

- No, it was built by Muslims.

- *Eh?!*

- It was built just after the Crusades by Muslims.

- *Which proves they were here four hundred years ago, which we don't deny.*

- So where did you say the Palestinians came from?

- *Most of them are Jordanian refugees.*

- How old is the state of Jordan?

- *Not old at all.*

- So when was the final exile of Jewish people?

- *The last one? About 1900 years ago.*

- So who lived in the land then?

- *There were always Jews, a small amount. Romans...some Turks, Arabs, Jordanians and Syrians.*

- Again you're using modern terms.

- *This place was more or less uninhabited, unclaimed, it was like a no man's land.*

- So who were the Crusaders fighting against when they came here?

- *The Egyptian army - Saladin.*

- Saladin came at the end to fight the Crusaders .

- Okay, so the First Crusade? Who were they fighting against? The inhabitants of the land. Arabs.

- Arabs. Not Palestinians?

- Are you saying that Palestinians claim they've been living in the land for five hundred years?

- They claim they've been living here for more like fifteen hundred years.

- So how come they left in 1948? How come they left again in 1967?

- Because there was a big war and they were scared.

- So they left.

- They went to friendly countries.

- That turned out to be not so friendly. I think they left hoping the Jews were gonna be wiped out and then they could come in, and it didn't turn out the way they hoped, so in America how would they view people like that?

A number of times the students mentioned that Palestine never had a proper government:

- Now we are entering an argument about what defines a nation. Who ruled over Palestine before the British?

- The Turks.

- And before that?

- (thoughtful silence) I don't know, I thought no-one actually. Tribal, nomadic, but I don't think the whole country was ruled by one sovereign.

- So, even if we argue that there was no unified government, you can't deny that people still lived here. They may not have had a stamp on a passport but they still lived here, and their fathers and forefathers. Are you saying that these people had no claim on the land?

- Read the Bible. God gave us the land. They were guests here. Ultimately everything leads back to the Bible.

- So ultimately it's a divine right.

- If you want to look at it from a political right go back before they lived there, who lived there before that?

- But as Americans that doesn't stand up because you should give the land back to the Indians.

- I might agree with that.

*- * They should have joined with us, fought for their independence instead of allowing other countries to battle against this land and lean on it.*

- Fight for their independence from whom?

- (silence) Well...the British left, the Mandate was over. We needed a government - so fight for your right to have a government.

- But they didn't need to fight because it was already their country.

- But there was no government. They needed to fight.

- Against whom?

- Against the Arab attack - Egypt, Syria and Lebanon.

*- * At that point Israel would have provided for them; made a good government for them with a functioning economy and everything. But then the Arabs attacked, so whose side are they on? The Palestinians I mean. They should have been our side.*

- To bring it back to archaeology and politics.

- It usually creates a ruckus and a stir, but at the end of the day the people who were politically strong before remain politically strong even after the archaeologists. I don't know the underlying reasons behind any major political shift but you never really see

the shift come because everyone's mind is changed because of an archaeological dig.

At the start of the research trip I had taken a communal taxi to Ramallah and found myself in an office trying to speak to a couple of academics who were, at best, not overly welcoming and, at worst, suspicious of my presence and intentions. The main man sat squatly behind his large desk, an imposing figure in wrap-around shades. With my shiny new dictation device forlornly confined to my bag I scrabbled down odd lines and sound bites onto my pad, wishing that I knew shorthand.

He opined about the overuse of the Bible in Israeli archaeology. Seeking archaeological support for the texts, he believed, is a way of seeking support for your own narrative if the two are linked. The prohibition on digs during the occupation was a clear and understandable frustration. Despite this he dismissed the role of archaeology in the conflict to, at best, a minor role; much more telling for him was the maxim 'might is right'.

When I asked if any particular sites were more important than others in the Palestinian narrative he responded by expounding the virtue of all the land of Palestine, that the history was in the land, the two inextricably bound together. He cited the example of The Holy Mount and asked in turn whether it was useful to write a history of only that. He preferred to write comprehensive accounts.

- I write Palestinian history but am objective about anything that impacts upon the Palestinians. I try to be comprehensive, objective and truthful. The Israelis were trying to invent history; the Palestinians are trying to find history.

It didn't seem like the time to get into a post-structuralist debate.

Chapter 7: Exegesis

Throughout this thesis I have advocated both a style and form that distances itself from conventional academic writing. It is hoped that such a change can help to emphasise alternative histories but also remind the reader that any account of the past is a construction of the present. With this in mind this final discussion chapter is intentionally conversational.

One of the key questions of this thesis came in response to something Whitelam tacitly asks in his 1996 book, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: the silencing of Palestinian history.* Traditional Western academic discourse has buried, discouraged and repressed alternative histories. Whitelam specifically talks about Palestinian histories and shows the way this process has worked and then offers suggestions as to how such history may be reclaimed. The question then is whether I was deliberately setting out to write about lost Palestinian history. The short answer is no.

Although I have made clear my Palestinian sympathies throughout this these I did not want to produce overtly political narratives of the past - neither Palestinian nor Israeli. I simply wanted to be able to show how other histories of a region could be told. Now, this in itself may be regarded as a political act. Any attempt to move away from the dominant discourse could be viewed as subversive. I understand that, and am aware of it, but my own intentions were at least to negotiate a line that was neither supporting one side nor the other but instead trying to focus on the historical people of the region because personally I do not believe that they regarded themselves as Israelite or Palestinian. The idea that those people who lived in what we now call the Iron Age would recognise their descendants today in the area is a nonsense; that idea of a thread between the past and present is one which only exists in the present and has been cast back hoping to catch something of significance. With this in mind I have avoided the use of names of any kind. The problem with names is not one of knowing them or applying them correctly (although this of course can be problematic) but that they are in themselves political labels. To have given the

occupants of the city personal names is to immediately set up a narrative of one side oppressing another. Supposing I had applied Israelite names - then suddenly the narratives are not about the past but instead provide yet another cautionary and inspirational example of the threat of invasion to the homeland by aggressive near-neighbours. Or perhaps I switch the roles: instead the armies march from the south, they are Israelite – then the narratives become about land grabbing and occupation, Israel as villain instead of hero. My hope was to avoid the narratives being hijacked, simplified and employed as jingoistic totems. Of course, as a colleague pointed out, the identities of oppressor and oppressed may well be read implicitly into the texts anyway.

Each narrative was a deliberate construction designed to illustrate particular issues. These points, be they about the past, the region, politics or the act of writing history, were born out of my own experience and the archaeology. Or were they? Stripping the construction process back reveals a starting place where I had a list of points that I wished to make. These probably came first; it was then a question of searching my own experiences and the archaeology in order to create a narrative through which each point could be explored. It is interesting to note here that the points came first – then the archaeology, although this is in line with the general tone of this thesis. Or rather, there were some initial points that I wanted to make, i.e. effect of conquest and occupation, broader landscape settings, differing viewpoints, post-colonial writing. These general themes were then supplemented by more specific elements that arose out of the archaeology - trade, the swamp, the rebuilt fortifications and sanctuary, the reconfigured houses. Each step was one which I deliberated, decided upon and chose to include. There were no prerequisite factors. This highlights once more the very personal choices that are made in the construction of a past.

The Narratives

Trip to Birzeit University

Issues – otherness, Eurocentrism

The first narrative is an attempt to look at the issues regarding writing about a culture, or the history of a culture or people, when one is an outsider. Beyond not being an indigenous commentator there is the further issue about Palestine being a non-Western country and I, a white, middle-class European male steeped in the traditions and discourse of my own upbringing. Being British I am also from a country that, tacitly at least, supports Israel.

In my mind I am there, I am with my Palestinian brothers! If there is a debate at university I will speak in favour of the Palestinians but I cannot escape that feeling of difference. That sense of 'other' is pervasive, when I am in the taxi, on the streets of Ramallah and at the university itself. At the checkpoint when the Israeli soldiers look in and they see a blonde, white guy sitting there they may look at your passport but inside you know that they are not going to do anything to you, they are not going to pull you out and search you or make you wait for hours by the side of the road. In regard to my experience and description of the streets of Ramallah, the language I use is that of stressing the chaotic movement of people and traffic. I emphasised, again, the difference between the scene in Ramallah and what I am personally used to. This came naturally to me when I was writing – how different the experience was. Do Palestinians view it in the same way? Or to them is it just the everyday street, normality? The crush at the checkpoint – yes, I am there, I am part of it for five or ten minutes. Should I pretend this gives me any kind of insight into the situation? Then I am picked out by the soldier because I look different, I am different, and when that chance comes to take advantage of my British passport and go through ahead of the others, to escape the crush – I do not reject it out of some imagined solidarity. I take it. And with regard to the interview and my disappointment, why am I disappointed? Not because I felt there was an

opportunity missed to promote the Palestinian cause but because I did not feel I gained anything of use for my thesis.

Three Sites

Issues – separate histories, attitudes towards the past.

The idea that perhaps different histories require different sites, exclusive sites, is in some ways the flip side of the coin to the idea of one site having different histories. Undeniably there are alternative stories to be told at every site – there is never a single narrative, but perhaps in an area where there remains political conflict and different peoples then exclusive, separate sites circumvent competing histories. In the narrative Dan was packed with Israelis, Banias seemed a place of international neutrality and Nimrud one for Muslims. The idea was that each, shall we say faction, could associate specific sites with their own history and were happy to do so.

Even as I write I realise this is a naïve suggestion. The very nature of history, a form that is constructed and reconstructed continually in the present, means that modern political conflict is inevitably thrust into the past also. Battles are fought out both in space and time. Perhaps only an outsider could suggest such a thing, could even attempt to write a politically neutral history (a nonsense of course – I do not believe such a thing is possible), or separate histories. As a Western academic I am likely to produce a work that neither side will accept. They might look at it and nothing will speak to them. 'Whose past is this?' they may ask.

Edge of the Swamp

Issues – broader landscape, swamp, malaria.

One of the major things I was concerned about was the broader setting of Dan, in both a physical and cultural landscape. Often I feel that when sites are dug and discussed, while artefacts are linked to artefacts elsewhere, the tendency to focus on a single site often has the effect of isolating it. I have often read about

Dan and had the impression of it floating as if in a void. Only the briefest of locations are referred to, its modern geographic location and / or its relative setting compared to other major sites. These, however, convey very little about the locale: the valley, the swamps, the lakes, the other settlements. I wanted to provide the reader with more than just technical details of the various digs. I wanted to build up an impression of life within the valley by focusing on different aspects of it and blending them together.

To this end I decided to begin the reconstructions of the past outside the city. Indeed the city itself is only actually reached in the third narrative set in the past and in total features only directly in three of the narratives. It is mentioned in all of them but often only in passing. I did not want to focus on the city to the detriment of other aspects of the valley.

The lake and its swamps would have dominated the landscape of the valley, shaping both where and how people lived and died. The effect of malaria is something that has been touched upon previously and I wanted to say something more about it other than to trot off a statistical estimation about 50% of children succumbing to the disease. Since the lake was drained in the 1950s the malaria problem has disappeared from the region but prior to that it must have been one of the overriding aspects of life in the valley. The tragedy and pain that lie behind the child fatality statistic are too significant to not warrant further attention. I wanted to portray it as a part of life, one concern among many.

In the first draft of this narrative the conversation between the mother and daughter was significantly longer. They talked about how she was feeling, her mother reassured her and they then chatted about the father and whether he would be returning that day. A friend of mine, upon reading it, commented that he had not realised that people in the Iron Age Levant spoke in the same way as in middle-class Hertfordshire. He suggested that people living by a swamp should have a more limited vocabulary, something along the lines of 'Ugh!' This was a point well-made. Re-reading the dialogue I could accept his criticism and stripped it down to its current minimal exchange.

His observation led me to wonder about the responsibilities of placing words in the mouths of people who lived in the past. There are a number of issues here which I will run through. Firstly there is a matter of whether one is writing dialogue for historically attested people. There is a danger of using the character as a mouthpiece to voice opinion. Fortunately this was not the case with these narratives; the people are creations, part of the exploratory process of writing about the past.

Any attempt to write dialogue for people in the past is flawed. Obviously the language is different, and language shapes the way we think about ourselves and the world about us. So to change the language is to immediately distance ourselves but for practical reasons it is necessary. We must also make a choice about how we portray our characters and the way they speak. As writers should we try to reflect social status in speech? My friend's suggestion of 'ugh' conjures images of animal skins and clubs, but in a similar vein would it be more or less appropriate to attempt to portray the syntax and accent of a working class mother from Essex? Or Cornwall? Or the South Wales valleys? Any of these choices will affect the way the past is perceived by the reader. I am also making assumptions about the social system and creating analogies of class. Such portrayals are risky, of course they project the modern back into the past - that is inevitable, but they can also be patronising to both the characters in the past and the readership of the present.

I decided not to create different speech patterns for different characters. Instead I wrote in straight, yet informal English. Equally this approach can be viewed as Eurocentric, making the people in the past like us. Such familiarisation of the past may be incorrect but it is at least preferable to casting them into the role of an indecipherable 'other'.

Encounter on the Road

Issues – trade, transport, the lingering effect of war upon ordinary people.

Dan is talked about as occupying a key strategic position on two main trade routes. This led to thinking about how this trade was actually conducted. This narrative along with Market Day explores this. How were goods moved over land? What was traded? Particularly the massively heavy pithoi when they were full. Were there convoys? Isolated merchants? Patrolled highways? Was banditry rife?

Something to consider in the argument around the fire was what form to take. I avoided issues of state as I do not believe that the tub-thumping form of nationalism often encountered in the West today is applicable to this period and area. That notion of loyalty to an idea of the nation-state is often projected back into the past, so that modern Israel is seen as a re-fulfilment of ancient Israel which is anachronistic idealism. Instead I opted to focus on the more personal aspect of the events, i.e. how it affected a family, and so circumvented questions of claims to the land and sovereign rights. Rather it is about the way the after-effects of that violence rippled out, the anger of normal people and the effects upon them of what have been the major preoccupations of archaeology, e.g. war and conquest. The man fled and is only now returning, not knowing what he will find. The Merchant is a neutral figure, inconvenienced but not touched directly, and he finds the friction of the situation socially embarrassing.

Market Day

Issues – trade, economy, occupation, internal politics.

The narratives are situated nominally in the first half of the 9th century. At this time society had no coinage. This raises some very interesting questions about how exactly trade was conducted, not so much in regard to macro-economics as there are plenty of books on that subject, but rather on the micro level. None of the books I looked at talked how the actual mechanics worked between people

on the personal level. How does the interaction work in the small-scale, even personal level? In my mind I pictured the old women who one so often sees around the streets of East Jerusalem; they often gather near Damascus Gate. There they sit with their bundles, their small harvests, and there they remain until the have sold what they have brought for the day. A bag full of olives, posies of herbs, fresh succulent figs offered individually to passers-by as momentary refreshment and relief from the heat. Each bag or posy or fig exchanged for a few small coins. If we remove the medium of coinage though how do these very small scale interactions take place? Was this how the ancient market place worked at all? Perhaps exchange at this level was achieved all through personal contacts. The idea of stalls and people offering their wares is one natural to myself but may not have been the case at all at Dan. Perhaps market day was a prescribed time (the first Thursday of each month and co-ordinated with other cities so that they allowed time in between for travel) when traders arrived and negotiated but that it was no place for the personal / family level shop as we think of it today. Dan was a city surrounded by swamps and workable land, how was that land divided up? I entertained the notion of certain powerful families maintaining positions of both control and responsibility over the city who for all intents and purpose owned tracts of land which were worked by the equivalent of tenant farmers. Did they distribute food? There certainly appear to be places and times when grain was collected centrally. Who organised this and, following on, who was in charge of distribution?

At one point I write that the Merchant was collecting wine to take back to a customer in his hometown. This led me to think about notions of profit and wealth. When he delivers this wine, what does he get in return? How does he accumulate wealth and become rich as we may think of it? I have him making the trip with some family members and two others he has hired. How does an act of 'hiring' occur in pre-coinage society? Is 'hiring' an anachronistic term in this context? Would he perhaps have some sort of indentured men working for him instead? Servants? Slaves?

Market Day and Two Soldiers are the two most archaeologically heavy narratives. In this narrative the backdrop of the work on the re-fortifications, the

paved area and small altar, the gate complex, and the city streets and re-worked houses all figure prominently. They only provide the setting for the events though and pose many more questions than they answer.

The changing external face of the city with its new walls and gate is only part of the effect of the conquest. The little scene the Merchant witnesses as he enters the gate between the young soldiers and the older man is an attempt to represent the internal change of the city with the tension and resentment that lurk. The scene itself is taken from my own experience when accompanying a Palestinian man through an Israeli checkpoint. The Palestinian, in his thirties, deliberately spoke in English to the two soldiers. He was confident and assured and spoke better English. They were young, probably on national service and despite possessing large firearms were surrounded by Palestinians. The Palestinian toyed with them, smiling as he spoke but never giving a straight answer, laughing good naturedly at their confusion. When one said something to the other in Hebrew he offered them a cigarette, just to show he understood, but continued to speak in English. He then made a show of using his phone and speaking loudly in Arabic. I sat there feeling awkward. 'I love to fuck with them', he announced as we drove away then turned his head and spat through the open window.

The stabbing of the soldiers is again an attempt to move away from the large scale acts that are talked about so lightly in the past. Destruction layers at Dan and elsewhere are important archaeological markers but very little is often made of the horror that those must have represented. I wanted to get across some of the visceral agony of that in the attack upon the soldiers. Does the attack elicit an emotive response? Where do the sympathies of the reader lie? Are they feeling for the soldier or cheering on those who struck a blow for...what? Freedom? This is another notion that needs to be rejected.

The dramatic effect of the soldiers being stabbed had the effect on one of my readers of overshadowing the rest of the narrative in his memory. Perhaps this is a drawback of the story-narrative, the story overpowering the history (are the

two separable?). In this case the rebuilding of the walls, the sacrifice at the small altar and the close packed housing were not retained in his memory.

The Hunt

Issues – landscape, wider community, politics, resistance.

One of the points that arose out of the writing was the familiarity of people with each other. The idea of a knowable landscape was one I wanted to try to incorporate into the narratives. The Hula Valley is a large area, but also a confined one. For someone growing up there, living out their life there, its pathways and rises, slopes and waterways, vegetation and beasts would all be familiar. And people too. Today many of us walk in cities and towns where all but an occasional few are unknown to us; the encounter of someone we know is a surprise. We call Dan a city but the population was perhaps 3,000. That is not many people. Of course such things are relative. I do not doubt that in the Iron Age that many people were a significant number to be gathered in a relatively small area. Such a number though is knowable, even if they were not personally acquainted, they may not know the name but they would know the face. More than likely know the relation; that is such-and-such's brother's wife's cousin... And what of the traders? They plied the same routes, stopped at the same cities, dealt with the same people.

What is the effect of this? Now it is the face of someone we do not recognise that would be the surprise, even at a relatively cosmopolitan site such as Dan. Is it a world ruled by gossip? Everybody knows you, knows what you do? Should I portray Dan as an ancient *Cranford* (Gaskell 1853) where gossip travels down a street faster than people could walk? Or would that be a caricature?

The grain stores mentioned in The Hunt provide a little example about the way that a basically functional feature of life can be imbued with significance. It is a good way to illustrate the power of the story-narrative. The closed central rooms apparent in houses at Dan have been suggested as a signifier of an increased sense of security. The pits of previous strata giving way to roof accessed

granaries because of the decreased risk of flight. Perhaps, I do not necessarily disagree with this interpretation but have instead offered a less dramatic reason – vermin. I thought it would be interesting to juxtapose this more mundane side with the role the other granary, the bell-shaped silo, played. The idea of resistance being shown through archaeology is not straightforward and like any other attempt to tell about the past requires construction. Perhaps it is only there if we look for it, which again is something all archaeological reconstruction can be accused of. The set up of the bell-shaped silo topped with the granary pit was too tempting not to use. It lends itself to subterfuge. In this case I not only had it as an illicit grain store but also as the hiding place of a wanted man.

The intra-city politics are further stressed in this narrative. The information about the fugitive is supplied by another family seeking perhaps to supplant the Matriarch and her family, jostling to gain favour with the occupying force. Again this is a further attempt to distance the narratives from the cosy, romantic idea of brothers-in-arms banding together against the heinous occupying force. In a number of places throughout the narratives I have wanted to show that while there was a general feeling of resentment toward the conquerors of the city there were also other attitudes and emotions at work. These ranged from anger and rage through resignation and acceptance to collaboration and seeking to gain advantage. Simplistic motivations and representations are not satisfying in their depiction of the past. Whilst I do not believe that any depiction of the past can truly capture the complexity of life the story-narrative at least enables us to begin to explore such issues rather than abandoning them as unknowable. I think it is important to at least try to move beyond black and white accounts and to acknowledge that people and cultures are not homogeneous in their thinking. The introduction of the Matriarch in the previous narrative and this current narrative of The Hunt are attempts to reject simplistic notions of us and them, of colonisation and resistance. I wanted to create a picture of different motives, of power politics on a city scale that have individual and familial interests and considerations. Some actions are taken which ideally one would not like to undertake but has to for various reasons – maintenance of position, fear, duty. The Matriarch may not like the situation but she judges the situation and chooses to play it a particular way i.e. in the way she believes will benefit her

and her family the most. In The Hunt we see action being taken for one reason and the resentment and subverting of that action so that it is carried out only technically and unsuccessfully.

The plot device of The Hunt also gave me a chance to describe the geography of the valley once more. I particularly wanted to include an overview. Inevitable parts of every valley are the hills that form it. Dan sits (metaphorically if not literally) in the shadow of the eastern hills and the elevated views across the valley one is afforded from the hills are impressive and would no doubt have been very familiar to anyone who travelled up the valley's flanks. Anyone herding or following the route from Damascus to the coast would have experienced this view. It also allowed me to further portray the valley as a knowable world, and that it is well populated.

Part of the attractiveness of a story-narrative is that it is easy to be able to inject character and other human qualities, such as humour and other emotion. Obviously the narrative forms I have utilised are short and therefore quite shallow. It is not easy to develop in-depth characters in such a short piece. I did regard it as important however not to create simply functional characters who used tools and built things and fought. I did not want to portray simplistic shadows of people who are only shown in their relationship with archaeological material. The play fighting of the group of men in this narrative, culminating with them tossing the Matriarch's Nephew into the water is something not dependent at all on the material. It is entirely a creation. That is not to say it is without purpose. If its only role was to help bring alive people in the past rather than them being colourless numbers then I would regard that as sufficient justification for the section. That is certainly one reason for its inclusion. It also helps to serve as an emotive piece that allows the reader to compare the emotions of the men in that situation with the dour mood later when they are on their way to apprehend the man hiding in the silo. In this way I hope it displays the silo as something which was not simply functional but, through human agency, became a thing of resentment and anger for some of the men of that valley.

Two Soldiers

Issues – alternative viewpoint, religion

A key part of this thesis has been to promote the use of different voices and viewpoints when telling about the past. So far I have utilised the viewpoints of a woman living near the swamp, a merchant from outside the valley, a matriarchal-head-of-family-figure, and her nephew. These have supplied the main focus and the narratives have also included contributions for other characters – a refugee, a trader from the same region as the soldiers etc. All hopefully offer slightly different perspectives. I thought it important to include a point of view also from the occupying force. Perhaps the obvious choice may have been the garrison commander but I preferred to opt for the ordinary soldier because I wanted to focus on experience rather than a top-down political view that may have come across more from the garrison commander.

The sanctuary at Dan is perhaps the main archaeological attraction. It is impressive both in its stature and its preservation. Of course it has been restored as well and by itself is quite an evocative site. The problem is that it has immediate associations with certain passages from the Bible. In case any visitor was not aware of this there is a handily placed plaque with the relevant passage inscribed into it. Whether or not these passages are accurate in their placing of a Golden Calf at the site we do not know. Biran appeared to have believed it. Of course being named as the home of a Golden Calf made the site idolatrous in the eyes of the biblical writer but I wanted to move away from direct ideas about theology and creed and once more try to focus on the experience of attending a ritual there.

This narrative is perhaps the one which relies most heavily upon the archaeology. The direct descriptiveness of the sanctuary is supplemented with touches of imagination but most of the source material was already in place. It was then a question of how ritual and spectacle would play out within that environment.

The priesthood here is not full-time. They are members of the community who take on the mantle when required. The head priest is a popular man, an influential man who they all know, not some inaccessible esotericist. The ritual is an invention. I have taken certain elements from Iron Age religion in the area and imagined how they would tie in together. The ritual has a theatrical aspect to it, important to the people but not solemn or too serious. It put a colleague of mine in mind of the opening of parliament and Black Rod banging on the door of the house, the ritualised opening that he related to the crossed spears of the soldiers.

I was interested to play upon the difference in experience between the soldiers and the local people, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the participants and the observers. Thoughts about this scenario were drawn from incidents and observations of Muslim holy days in Jerusalem when thousands flock to the city to worship. Inevitably there is tension as the crowds are marshalled by Israeli soldiers. The soldiers in the narrative play their roles despite their nervousness. In the end their fears, while not being unfounded, are unrealised.

I suggested in the narrative that the rebuilding of the city had been done by the conquerors. The re-fortifications may be seen as a necessary work, strategically important, the rebuilding of the sanctuary could be considered less obviously so. Many archaeologists, e.g. B. Alpert-Nakhai 2001, describe the sanctuaries as playing vital roles in early (Iron I) Israelite state formation. This political role of the sanctuaries is debatable. I argued in my MA dissertation (Smith: 2003) that the inherent similarities between Canaanite religion and early Israelite religion place any such notions in doubt. In the narrative I have not suggested that any new religious creed has been forced upon the people of the city, rather that the work carried out there could be viewed as a gesture of goodwill – a carrot after the stick. Again the focus is on experience rather than strategy although one can certainly read political overtones into it.

Old Men – a failed narrative

Issues – construction of narrative, memory, temporal context

I did not want to present the narratives as a self-contained story with a narrative arc. Conventional fiction has a three act structure consisting of set-up, conflict and resolution. In simpler terms these are a beginning, middle and an end. A journey is undertaken, there is transformation and conclusion. For myself, there are two key points that separate creative writing about the past and pure fiction. The first is obviously the archaeological and/or historical material that, while open to interpretation, remains as the basis of every narrative. The second is the avoidance of neat solutions, of resolution; this is necessary in order to avoid teleological conclusions.

That said, I felt that I needed a narrative to provide further context and reflection upon the events touched upon. The narratives set in the past have had the aim of suggesting how people may have lived and experienced certain events in a particular time and place. However, just as I was concerned with placing Dan in a broader landscape context, I also wanted to place it in a slightly broader temporal context. To this end I decided to develop the idea of old men reflecting upon the events and linking them to their youth and to the stories they heard from their elders when they were young. This device would allow me to tell of events up to perhaps a century earlier. There were particular elements that I was keen to include: their attitudes towards their conquerors, the rebuilt walls, gate and sanctuary, previous attacks upon the city, incomers, i.e. new arrivals to the city and region.

I began to write but for some reason I could not work it the way I wanted. I stopped and restructured it, abandoned the piece and started again, but still the narrative would not fall into place the way I would have liked. This was frustrating but also instructive. It further reinforced the idea of the construction of history and the process behind it. Having chosen a way to write about the past, having deliberated upon the form of narrative I simply could not get it to say what I wanted it to say. So, I changed aspects of it, changed the form

(something I had done in previous narratives I was not happy with) but still, for me, it was not a success. For whatever reason – my own limitations as a writer perhaps, time constraints maybe – the narrative failed. This is not to say it was a waste of time. As a story-narrative it failed, but as an illustration of the deliberate decisions and process of writing history and how conditions in the present can affect the history that is written then it was a positive experience. Of course, we are influenced by our social backgrounds and political situations but there is also the more quotidian aspects to consider. Aware as I was of the need to begin this discussion chapter I could not concentrate fully on the Old Men narrative and felt pressured to finish it.

This experience provided a nice link between the narratives set in the past and the final interview piece. It breaks down the barrier between the past and the present, or rather, it exposes the frame on which the picture of the past is painted.

Remnant?

Issues – public opinion, residual ideas, propaganda.

This narrative is actually an edited form of a collection of interviews which took place on a research trip (most at Dan itself, some at a nearby kibbutz and one at Birzeit University) to Israel and the West Bank in January 2006.

Although I have stated that the thesis is not an attempt to write an expressly Palestinian history it will be obvious to readers that I certainly have sympathies toward their plight and situation. I went with the intention of being a neutral interviewer but inevitably became dragged into argument, e.g. the yeshiva student interview. I broadly agree with Whitelam that the stifling of Palestinian history is part of the larger plan of occupation and suppression of the Palestinian people. Western countries have been complicit in this act despite the odd protestation. Western academic discourse has played a role in this.

The reason I have placed the interviews at the end is because I wanted them to demonstrate and represent some of the views still prevalent amongst people, views I have attempted to puncture throughout this thesis. Many of them display ideas so ingrained that it may well take another 150 years of alternative discourse to filter down into the public psyche and change them. Although I suspect that people will always latch on to the narrative they feel best represents their cause this does not mean that alternative narratives should not be presented. People can only choose those narratives they are aware of.

One of the main problems so deeply ingrained is the idea of the nation-state. This is problematic in that people sometimes cannot see past it and cannot envisage an area of land and people not bound in the conventions of a nation-state. The trappings of government (e.g. taxes, armies, borders, centralised control of law and infrastructure) are so entrenched and ubiquitous in the West that people do not see them. We only see them when they fail. When such things are taken for granted the idea that people can exist in a land without these is anathema. In the case of what is now Israel people were living there for generations, centuries but because the region was part of a much larger empire rather than being a self-contained area it is difficult to entertain the notion that the people who lived their did have a sense of local and regional identity and considered the land theirs. The laws and logic of the nation-state are applied retrospectively in attempts to justify the taking of land.

The end of the interview narrative may appear flippant but it has a serious point. It is a line that tells us a lot about attitudes towards the past, an attitude that is informed out of hostility and a belief in ones own narrative and scepticism towards others. What is lacking is a healthy scepticism towards one's own narrative. Within that statement resided also the insecurity of the Palestinians. It contains both criticism of their opponents and justification of themselves. The state of Israel is now established both in its own defensive security and in the eyes of the world as a proper country (or at least in the eyes of the Western world). Such security enables self-reflection and criticism because it is not a serious threat. Questions about the historicity of the Bible are not going to threaten Israel's sovereign territory any longer. It is too late for that. Israeli

indifference to international pressure, UN Resolutions and Geneva Conventions mean that it is hardly likely to feel threatened by the assertions of certain academics. That said of course, any suggestions that the traditional accounts may be flawed are still met with outcry from conservative religious groups (Western Christian and Jewish) as well as those who feel that such versions are somehow an attack on their identity which is bound up so much in their own perceived pasts.

The Palestinians have not reached the stage of self-critical history. How can they have? In order to do so they need to be able to write their own histories first before they can critique them. There needs to be a first wave before the second wave can reflect upon it. They need to feel secure in their own homeland before they can even contemplate examining their past in more critical detail. In a way they are at the same stage that Israeli archaeology was in the 1950s, though perhaps even less so given the relative political situations of 1950s Israel and modern day Palestine. I have spent a long time in this thesis criticising Israeli archaeology, its methods and theoretical approach, its use as political propaganda. I am not saying that Palestinian archaeology would be any better; it almost certainly would not, perhaps that is inevitable – perhaps these are pathways that any nationalist archaeology has to travel. I am just hopeful that Palestinian archaeology will at least get the chance to walk that path one day.

Reflections

The use of characters and drama to drive the narratives along was something I deliberated over. These may seem two obvious factors in any story but I thought hard about whether I should make them part of what is first and foremost part of an interpretive tool. Tilley's application of 'thick description' in his 2004 book, *The Materiality of Stone,* was certainly detailed and speculative but also cold and a little dull. It was so detailed that one became lost in it, failing to see the wood for the trees. Mark Edmonds use of narrative in his 1999 book, *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic*, almost wholly avoids speech. The first narrative does contains a long speech but this essentially stands in the place of description

and there is the odd single line of comment but never any dialogue. Most of the narratives are entirely without speech. The effect is certainly more engaging than Tilley's descriptions of the Maltese temples but there remains a sense of distance – which may be considered appropriate given that the events described are set in the Neolithic – but personally I feel that it also makes the people described there more difficult to relate to.

The narratives that I have created recount certain scenarios but I found it necessary to inject a dramatic conceit into them in order to provide them with narrative traction. The characters are tools for illustrating points as are the narratives as a whole; however, in order to make the narratives effective I did not want this to be apparent. Therefore the dramatic content is to keep the reader involved so that the archaeological details become absorbed almost unwittingly, as by osmosis.

A colleague of mine, who is a historian, told me that the thing she took away from the narratives was the creation of atmosphere through description and quotidian events. Pathways, the changing light, the shape of things – these were the material things she took away with her. The most memorable parts were, interestingly, not the great dramatic events but the little moments – the old men laughing, the woman enjoying the feel of her fingers mixing the food, the soldier retracing his footsteps, the little boy at the sanctuary ritual. These were the moments that brought the narratives to life because they surprised her in their incongruity to conventional historical writing and their lack of functionality. I was heartened to hear these words. There is a difference between the study of the material remains of the past and studying the past through the use of material remains. The former is about the material; the latter is, for me, about the people.

What is important is that any narrative piece is not just a narrative for its own sake. There has to be a balance between being entertaining and educational. Essentially the narrative is both an interpretative tool and a way of expressing the ideas raised in the process. It includes specific artefacts and sites and suggests ways in which they may have been part of people's lives in the past.

The emphasis always falls on the people and not the archaeology; we are trying to write the history of people not of things. It does not matter that the characters in the narratives never existed; what is important is that people like them *may* have existed. It is important to create characters that the reader can empathise with. Blank-faced figures of the past often move about like shadows in Sheol. It is true that the characters in my own narratives are nothing more than archetypes enlivened with a few individual traits and idiosyncrasies but hopefully they are believable within the context of the narrative and therefore useful in relating ideas about the past.

The narrative is an interpretative tool not only for the writer but also for the reader, the idea being that questions will arise in the mind of the reader. For example, one of my test readers remarked upon the point in the narrative Edge of the Swamp where the mother feels her daughter's forehead for signs of illness. This led him to question whether people in the past would have been aware of the link between body temperature and illness. He noted that I had assumed they would. This I admit, although of course everything we say about the past is based upon assumptions made from knowledge here in the present. Perhaps it was not so straightforward, even if they did know that extremes of body temperature were a sign of illness then they may have believed the cause to be supernatural or of external origin, we do not know. In the end he resolved the issue himself by deciding that the exact technique did not matter because the act of feeling a forehead to check for signs of illness is representative of any equivalent action to check for sickness.

I think it must be recognised that many of the responses I have had noted that the things that remained with them after they read the narratives were certain scenarios, images, impressions, turns of phrase, e.g. the merchant travelling through the hills, the small domestic area next to the swamp, the atmosphere of the crowd at the sanctuary. When I pressed for specific material details, what we might call more orthodox archaeological detail, some were better than others in their recall. One friend almost completely failed to remember any physical details, another was better but the memory was more general, a third reader picked up on more. Generally however the recall of specific material description

was not something that stayed with the reader. Whether this is an important issue or not is a moot point. Personally I do not consider this to be a drawback of the technique. I have stated all along that I am trying to write about the way that people may have lived in the past. The archaeology is the starting point in this process, supplemented with other sources such as anthropology and texts.

The use of language was raised by one reader, another historian, who highlighted the use of informal words such as 'knackered'. He admitted that when first reading such words they jarred his academic sensibilities. The use of words not in the formal register of scholarship was something he found a little troubling. In order to tell alternative accounts of the past it is necessary not only to change the content but also useful to change the form. This can help to reinforce the idea of difference and, particularly if we are attempting to create more personal accounts of the past, informal language can be more intimate and descriptive. The hope is that by juxtaposing the conventional chapters and the narratives the differences are accentuated but that the two also complement each other providing a fuller and rounder understanding for the reader. That said the narratives are designed to stand alone, perhaps to be read by non-specialist audiences who are put off by what can be seen as the inaccessible, esoteric and boring scholarly works.

Another reader remarked that the use of dialogue left her conflicted and could not decide whether the use of modern language was a good thing or not. Unable to describe exactly how she felt she managed to convey that the dialogue reminded her that the narratives were a modern construct. This was a good thing she decided finally, but felt a little at odd with the description that for her felt more mysterious, more atmospheric more of *the past.* Her problem was that she could relate to the direct speech too well. That familiarity perhaps ripped her from the past back to the present.

The description for her raised more questions about what was archaeology and what was not. What was actual, and where had I filled the gaps creatively? An interesting notion was that she considered that the dialogue had told her too much, that perhaps reported dialogue instead of direct dialogue would have

been better, a subtler approach she thought. This is something I considered because it avoids some of the problems associated with writing in a different language. The argument in Encounter on the Road could have been written indirectly – the anger of the quiet man, the merchant's embarrassment, hot words spoken in accusatory tones. In the end I decided not to do it this way as I felt that I would be denying the reader intimacy. Mark Edmonds' lack of dialogue is conspicuous by its absence. They give the impression that people in the Neolithic were all a fairly taciturn bunch, monkish in their conversation. Direct speech provides an insight that reported speech does not: the latter, I feel, is removed from the scene, observing from afar.

One of the questions I asked some historian friends who read the narratives was whether they would react differently if I were to put words into the mouths of characters who were historical, rather than creations. One colleague noted that when reading about people in the past he sometimes had to remind himself that these were real people and not just lines in academic text books. People are often written about in their simplistic terms. Their characters defined by their actions as recorded by history. This flat representation of people can be problematic. My colleague used the example of a First World War veteran and I suggested that if a narrative was used, perhaps in the form of a letter to his wife from the trenches, then this could tell us plenty about not only conditions in the trenches, experiences and the political situation from the ordinary soldier but it could also, with the addition of personal flourishes – enquiring after his wife and her family, a shared joke, a reminiscence – help to humanise the veteran so that he is not simply an expository tool but also a real person in the mind of the reader.

Another example that occurred to my colleague was a particular riot. Instead of the political interests and movements of particular factions within the riot over the course of five hours he was more interested in the experience of people within the riot. How members of the rival groups saw the event and experienced. I added that one could also write from the point of view of an innocent bystander caught up in the violence and also of a policeman who may even have conflicting loyalties, sympathies towards one group's views versus

his duty as a servant of the government. The riot event is an excellent example of how the story narrative can be used to provide insight and alternative perspectives away from the general overview. Its multiple viewpoints allow for a more meaningful telling than the simple logistics.

The use of different characters and dialogue allows the presentation of different opinions and ideas in an easily accessible and readable form. One can be a sceptic and cynic perhaps, while another presents things in a more balanced perspective. The exploitation of personal viewpoints and opinions does not exclude the inclusion of broader ideas of politics or economy for example.

Although the narratives are in story form I did not want them to be a story in the complete sense. I deliberately did not provide them with a cohesive plot. I did not want a beginning, middle and an end. Rather I was trying to convey a collage of events and characters, linked in geographical and temporal context but not all characters in a novel. Although the narratives follow on from each other chronologically I avoided neat resolutions. I did not want to have the narratives leading to a larger point, e.g. the establishment of the northern kingdom of Israel or the use of sanctuaries in state formation. Instead each narrative is a little slice from which hopefully people can take something away from. Taken together they form a collage of sorts but not one which has any grand meaning.

Conclusions

The idea of Dan and the Hula Valley in the Iron Age as a wholly Israelite city and region has fallen by the wayside. That Dan was conquered seems almost certain. How many times the city was attacked, by whom and with what results on the population, all are debatable issues. Dan of that era was a cosmopolitan city. The city's location meant that people arriving, trading and passing on from far and wide would have been a common occurrence. So when we write, we must consider whose viewpoint we are writing from. Impressions of a place between people of different cultures and backgrounds are inevitably varied. Which shall we convey? In the Two Soldiers narrative, for instance, there is the

basic set up of occupier and occupied. This is too simplistic, however, and to focus solely on such a relationship is to miss the more nuanced experience of a place and time that is influenced by issues such as gender, age and socialisation. The narrative has to be read in the context of the others – not in isolation. The idea is to build multivocal layers, each voice revealing something different. To use a broad term 'Danite' – to attempt to talk about what a 'Danite' experienced about the city is immediately doomed to failure, as if every one who lived in the city at that time had a standardised view and experience of life. One may as well try to tell of London from the view of a single representative 'Londoner'. Rich, poor, powerful, marginalised, city dweller, farmer, trader, man, woman, child – and even these distinctions are only caricatures. We could continue to sub divide until we reached individuals and even then we could examine the way attitudes, perceptions and experience change with age, assuming of course that present ideas such as that of the individual are equivalent with thinking in the past.

So where does this leave us? If we continue to critique *ad nauseam* then there is the risk of paralysis. We can be viewed as having undercut the footings of any apparently logical accounts of the past. It may appear that this is what I have spent much of this thesis doing. I hope this is not the case. It is true that I have spent time exposing the flaws and misconceptions of certain 'histories' but I have also been keen to stress that I do not believe that this means that attempts at writing about the past are redundant or futile. Acknowledgement of the limitations of our attempts to recreate the past should be regarded not as a weakness but as a strength. Such transparency of argument can only help to provide a fuller understanding of how and why histories are created. The conventional chapters of the thesis have been used initially to provide a context of site, region, historiography and politics. My critique of approaches previously and currently employed in the archaeology of the region was followed by an outlining of a methodology based upon certain ideas prevalent in what has been called 'interpretive archaeology'.

I have rejected any notion of a uniquely valid historical narrative. The idea that there is a complete knowable past that eventually will be revealed through

increased discoveries and refinement of thinking has been discarded. Sites dug, artefacts discovered and inscriptions found will only ever tell us so much, only reveal certain angles. Even then what we can know about the past 'beyond reasonable doubt' is based upon certain ways of thinking about the past. The legal analogy of constructing the past, where 'evidence' is used to make a case, is acceptable as long as the flaws in the system are recognised. In the case of history there is no final judgment – the case is constantly being retried, new evidence coming to light and previous evidence re-examined in different ways. It is a simplistic analogy and one that fits a simplistic understanding of the past. If we accept that no clear-cut judgements can be made about the past, that it is actually more nuanced and complex than simple accounts allow for, then we must start thinking in terms of multiple, parallel, interwoven and even competing histories.

In Remnant, Nicole, an American Jew, uses the term 'our history'. Can history belong to someone? Can you appropriate history? There is the history of Israel and the region but does history belong to particular groups or people? I think there is an important distinction to be made here. History is an idea, a creation, a story. I have already stated many times that there is no single narrative of history. There are many and they do not belong to any particular person or group. This is not to say, however, that people do not claim histories, reify them and forge themselves deeply to them, linking certain accounts of the past with their identity, making particular a particular history intrinsically part of themselves. Writing about the past is a political act. This is why people get upset at the idea that such a history (i.e. one particular version) may not be *exactly how the past was*. Questioning the validity of history can be tantamount to questioning someone's identity and core beliefs and this applies on a national level as well as a personal one. Problems arise where histories are mutually exclusive. They cannot exist without contradicting each other.

What is the contribution of this thesis? It is true that the use of a story-narrative form has been utilised in history before and shorter narratives have been used in other archaeological works. The introduction of the form to Syro-Palestinian archaeology though is something which I hope can be used to address certain

issues, namely the movement away from meta-narratives and the exclusion of alternative histories. There are two parts to the thesis. The first is the setting out of a methodology which is partly in response to Whitelam (1996) and suggests a way of being able to tell alternative histories. Rejecting Whitelam's suggestion of following the *longue durée* I instead opted for a more intimate approach that I felt was effective at both avoiding the overwhelming biblical discourse and being able to relate alternative and subaltern voices. The narratives are my case study. I have produced a number of narratives with the intention of creating alternative accounts of Dan and the Hula. By juxtaposing these narratives with the more traditional academic chapters I hope to highlight the effective ability of the story-narrative to throw fresh light upon sites and regions – with particular emphasis falling upon the way people may have lived. The adoption of such an approach could result in the creation of multiple micro-histories each portraying their own picture of lived experience across the region and period.

Although the narratives have attempted to remain neutral it will be clear to any reader that I have sympathies with the political and humanitarian plight of the Palestinians. This thesis adds some small weight to the collective calling for academic freedom for Palestinians. The right to excavate and explore their own past is a vital process in the ongoing struggle for an independent state. While my narratives have not overtly been about a Palestinian history, I hope they have shown a methodology can be used to tell alternative histories.

Histories are written in the present, of course. The recognition that the once rigid barrier between history and fiction is illusory may make the past a more uncertain place but also opens the way to deeper, richer and more intense revivifications. It is perhaps impossible for archaeology by itself to irrevocably change one's views or provide answers to the past. The game is fixed. Archaeological material is ambiguous. It cannot provide definitive answers because the questions we ask of it are loaded. All we can do is to break open the constraints of certain forms of academic discourse and encourage an enfranchisement of the past. This does not necessarily have to be solely a political issue but rather applies to multiple accounts of the past, multiple viewpoints – both in the present and the past. I have suggested a story-narrative

as a suitable tool for this. It is a flexible instrument which allows a blend of different sources and personal flourish. Had I the time I would have liked to have been able to investigate questions of exactly where the line falls between academic historical writing and historical-fiction. All histories are fiction, but some are more fictitious than others. I have encountered issues about what factors define my narratives as particularly archaeological. For my own part I have used archaeology to create a narrative and attempted to write about the people of a particular site and region. I found it necessary to inject drama and characterisation to carry the narratives. I have tried to be open about what is archaeology and what is creative. I found, however, that the lines merged: I was writing a blurred genre. Certain areas of my thesis could develop into a more detailed examination of the past as a creative process and the role played in that by fiction and other popular culture such as movies and music.

I would encourage other academics to be more creative in their writing though I realise this will not be an approach for all. This is something that is beyond the job description of most archaeologists. I suggest that projects could be entered into with professional writers. We have ghost written biographies, why not ghost written histories? Historical fiction is often deeply researched but its prime motive is to entertain not to tell about the past. This is not to say that writers of historical fiction are unconcerned about the past but it is not their *raison d'être.* Collaborative projects could be prove fruitful for both academic and author – again the process itself as an interpretative tool. Products could benefit from being both readable (and therefore more accessible to non-specialist audiences) and from having the respectability of historical 'authenticity'. The idea of collaboration may not be viable for all because if we are using narrative as an interpretative tool then that may be a very personal investigation into the past. In that case any joint effort may feel like a compromise. This is understandable. While I have criticised other approaches in this thesis it has only been to reveal weaknesses in argument. All approaches have their flaws. I have been open about the limitations of the story-narrative. Although no approach is perfect I would not call for it to be abandoned. This would go against the spirit of historical pluralism.

The legitimacy of my narrative creations is open to question, critique and revision. This would be welcome; one of the purposes of this thesis is to promote discussion. I would never be as bold or obtuse as to claim that the narrative accounts which I have produced are accurate representations of an actual past. At best I have created pictures of a place and time based on certain artefacts and ways of thinking. Whether or not I have done this in a convincing manner I will leave to others to judge. All I can hope is that this work may act as a stimulus for further debate and help to develop alternative ways of thinking about the past in this region. Do my narratives have any less legitimacy than the stories of the United Monarchy? Mine are at least based upon archaeological material and do not claim to be anywhere near as fabulous or exalted.

Appendix: archaeological basis of the narratives set in the past.

The Edge of the Swamp

In attempting to place Dan into a broader landscape I felt it was important to write about people from outside of the city who nevertheless had a connection with it. Despite there being a number of other settlements throughout the Hula there has been very little excavation of the relevant (i.e. Iron Age) strata. Hopefully this situation will be resolved in the future. This frustration led me to search for other alternatives which, in turn, led me to the Ghawarna.

The Ghawarna were a collection of people living along and near the shores of Lake Hula and its swamps during the 19th and first half of the 20th century. They are documented in a number of sources, two of the more prominent ones being Yehuda Karmon's *The northern Hula Valley, its natural and cultural landscape* (1956 - Hebrew) and Natan Shalem's *The Hula Valley* (1935 – Hebrew). These two Jewish publications produced disparate accounts of the people. Karmon (1956: 63-4, quoted in Gorney 2007: 468) described them as 'a mixture of degenerate Bedouins' living in 'a wretched village' who move 'to new dwellings when the level of dirt increased'. This is in contrast to the post-drainage Zionist paradise where the 'plantations are and fish ponds shine in the sun' and no more water buffalo but instead 'broad fields where one can see tractors' (Karmon 1956: 95).

Little more than twenty years previously Shalem (1935) had portrayed the same people in a much more positive, albeit perhaps slightly patronising, manner. They were individuals with their owns customs, traditions and values who worked hard, cultivating the land and harvesting the reeds and the other bounty the region had to offer (Gorney 2007: 470).

Whatever the exact origins and nature of the Ghawarna the descriptions of them residing by the lake and swamps and of them utilising its bounty struck me as a

template for the activities of the Iron Age inhabitants of those areas. This was further enhanced when I was able to locate photographs of the region and the local populace.

"In the fading light the woman's tough fingers shuffled across the loom winding another reed into what would become a mat."
"...the curved reed roof of the shelter"

"The shelter stood between the hut and the water's edge."

Fig. A1. Palestinian woman at handmade loom weaving reed mats. Source: National Library of Australia.

"The house was a simple construction, a wooden framework wrapped in sheets of bound reed"

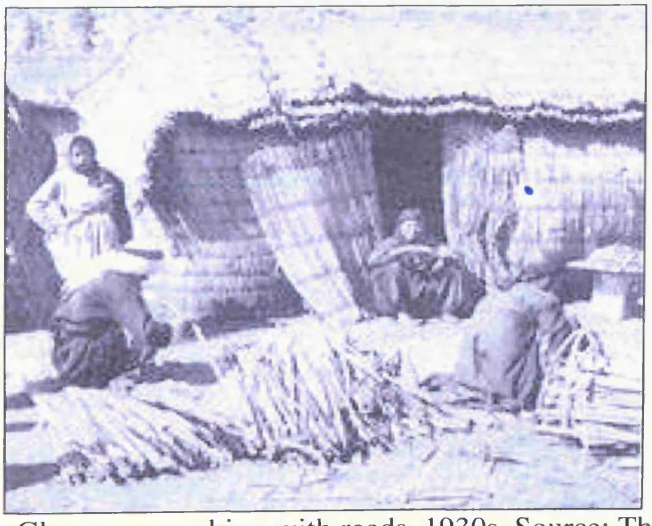


Fig. A2. Ghawarna working with reeds, 1930s. Source: The Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

"A catfish, caught and smoked only the day before, was stripped off the bone and mixed with some fava beans in a plain basalt bowl."

Studies of faunal remains have revealed fish bones (Ilan 1999: 110). Catfish remains were found in Iron I strata at Sasa in the Upper Galilee (Ilan 1999: 184). Although it was only a single example it is suggestive of the type of diet provided by the lake.

"Well, not the lake itself but the swamp and reed beds to the north."

See Fig. A3 at end of section.

"A number of other families also lived along the edges of the swamp and lake, some in larger groups, some in villages, others, like themselves, more alone."

The origin of the Ghawarna is debatable. Ritter mentions them as early as 1850 but there was disagreement as to whether the Ghawarna were a 'tribe' of that name or whether they were a collection of people to which 'Ghawarna' referred – the term then being derogatory and representative of a low class member of society (see Khawalde & Rabinowitz 2002). It is also unclear whether the Ghawarna lived together in Ghawarna villages or whether they inhabited the fringes of 'respectable' villages (Khawalde & Rabinowitz 2002: 229). The photographic evidence echoed these reports showing some houses together and others standing alone.

Fig. A4. Reed house on shore of Lake Hula. Source: National Library of Australia.

Fig. A5. Reed-mat houses on the shores of Lake Hula. Source: Internet ref. 3

"A few had been there generations, but most had newly arrived, or at least had been there no more than a generation – and from all over it seemed."

Barslavsky (1955: 116) suggests that the Ghawarna were a mixed people who lived in the swampland regions for many generations and it was this that they were named after. A *ghor* in Arabic is the name for a plain at the lowest point of a drainage system (Khawalde & Rabinowitz 2002: 227). Karmon (1956:61-66) further adds that the composition of this perceived group was made from immigrants to the area during the 19th century. These new arrivals came from all over but a key point came in the 1830's when remnants of Ibrahim Pasha's

legion who after their masters revolt against his Ottomon masters settled in the region and the increased security they brought to the area further encouraged other poorer peoples to settle in the Hula, an area which hitherto had not been very attractive.

"Towards the end of the previous summer her son had fallen ill. He had complained of feeling dizzy and, though she had initially paid little attention, after he vomited she sent him to lie down."

Greenberg (1996: 24-7, 45) suggests that population growth in the area must have always been due to immigration due to the endemic effects of malaria. Despite a lack of archaeological evidence to support this it is interesting to note that Karmon (1956: 73) noted a lack of growth amongst the Ghawarna due to malaria. Ilan (1999: 170) states that with proper drainage and cropping malaria could be somewhat but even so roughly fifty percent of children succumbed to the disease although those surviving to adulthood developed immunity from it.

"They washed his body and burnt a little grain in offering before her husband punted out to the deeper water in which he placed her only son."

It is curious that given the numerous Bronze Age and later Roman-Byzantine burials in the region that the evidence for Iron Age burials is almost wholly lacking (see Kletter 2002). It appears unlikely that they could have simply gone undiscovered until now. Given the lack of evidence one can only speculate as to why this may the case – Ilan (1999: 208-9) suggests a change in worldview to simpler, less adorned burials that would mean a lack of diagnostic material. Kletter (2002: 39) suggests a continuation of the Late Bronze Age style of burial which could not easily be distinguished or, more radically, that the dead were left untended.

"...exchanged their wares for the oil, wheat, fruit, sometimes a little beef or mutton."

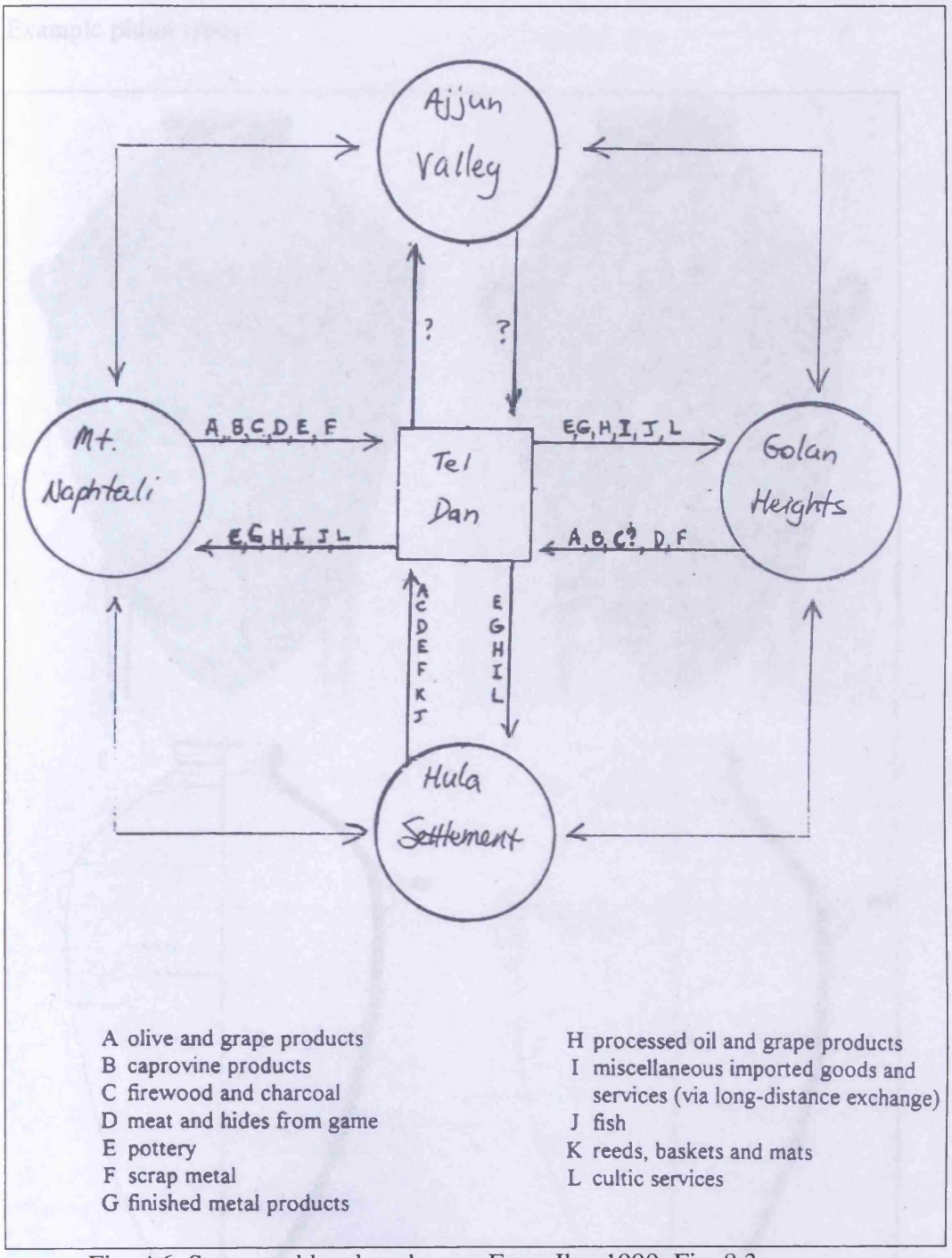


Fig. A6. Suggested local exchange. From Ilan 1999: Fig. 8.3

"She tipped some water from the pithos"

See discussion on p.66-7.

Example pithoi types:

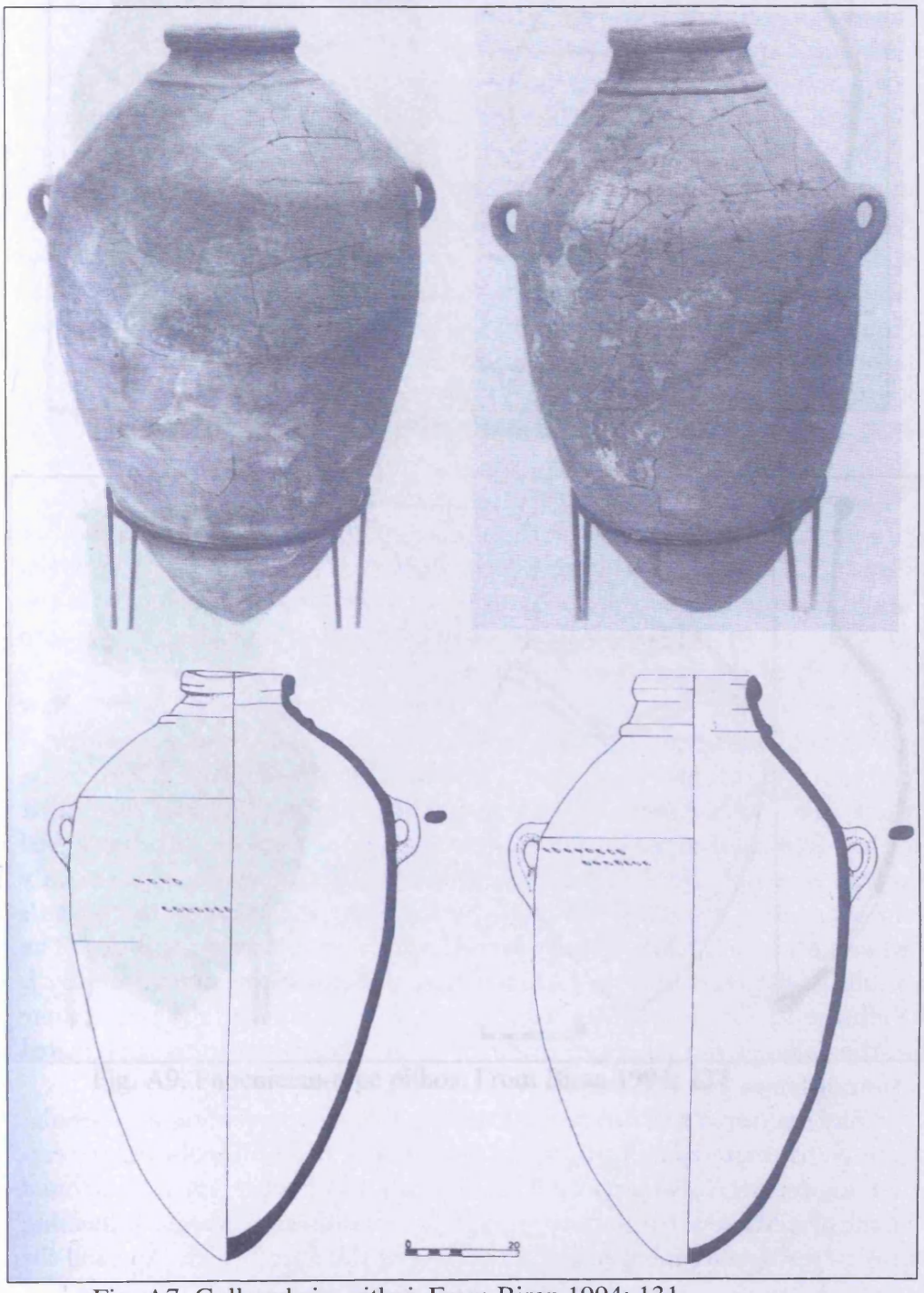


Fig. A7. Collared-rim pithoi. From Biran 1994: 131

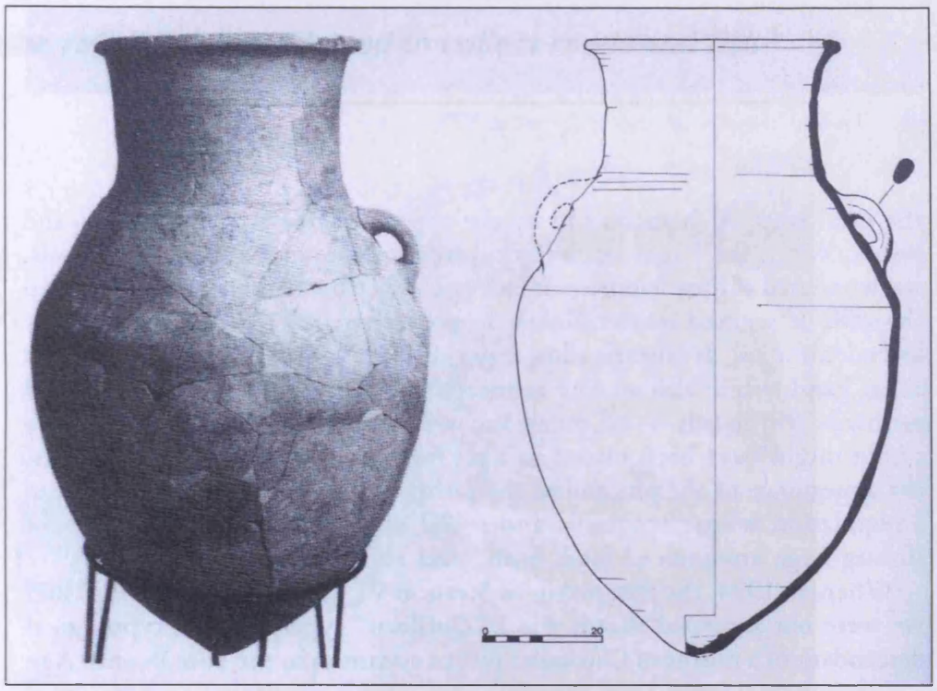


Fig. A8. 'Galilean'-type pithos. From Biran 1994: 130

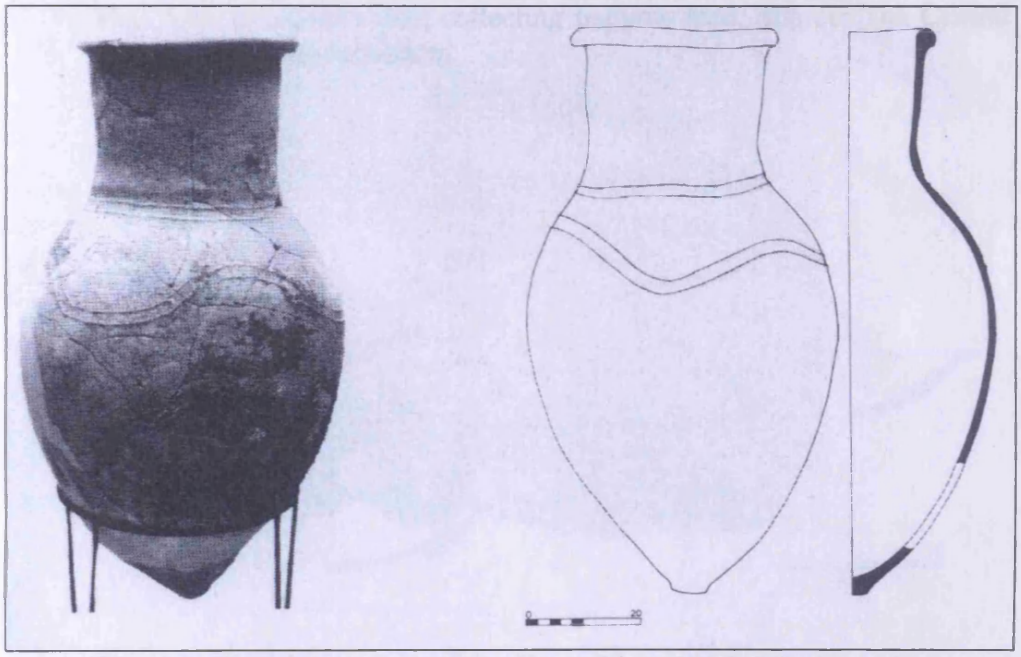


Fig. A9. Phoenician-type pithos. From Biran 1994: 137

"...the raft her husband used to collect reeds and fish"

Fig. A10. Ghawarna men collecting papyrus reed. Source: The Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

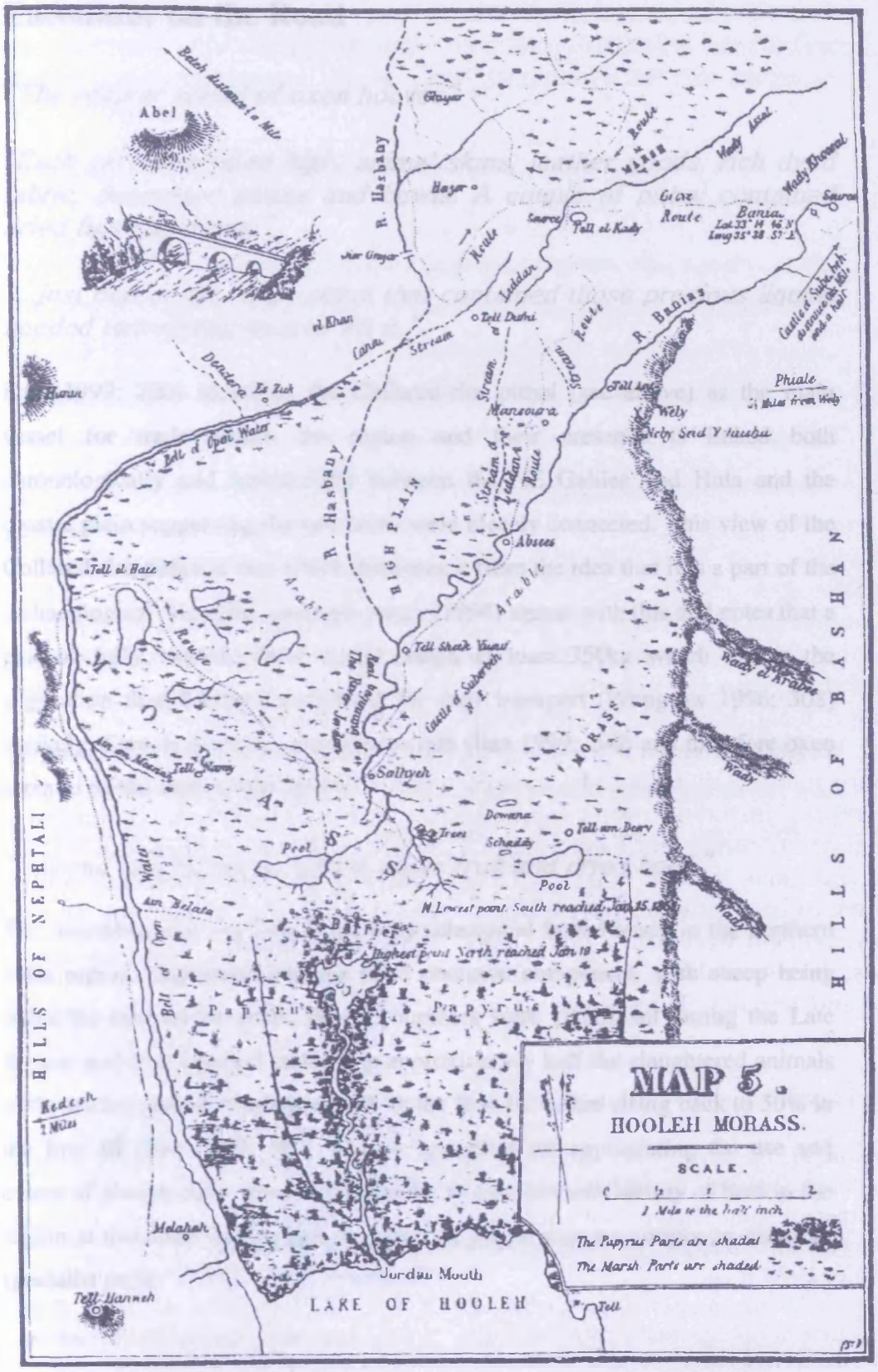


Fig. A3. 1868 map showing swamp regions north of the Hula. Dan is noted under its Arabic name of Tell el Kady (from Zevit 2001: 184 after MacGregor 1869).

Encounter on the Road

"The regular sound of oxen hooves"

"Each cart was piled high; animal skins, leather goods, rich dyed fabric, decorated plates and bowls. A couple of pithoi contained dried figs and dates."

"...just one of the large pithoi that contained those precious liquids needed two strong men to lift it."

Ilan (1999: 200) identifies the Collared-rim pithoi (see above) as the main vessel for trade within the region and their presence is linked both chronologically and functionally between the NE Galilee and Hula and the coastal plain suggesting the two areas were closely connected. This view of the Collared-rim pithoi is one which distances it from the idea that it is a part of the archaeological 'Israelite' package. Artzy (1994) agrees with this and notes that a pair of fully loaded pithoi would weigh at least 350kg which makes the suggestion that donkeys were used for their transport (Wengrow 1996: 308) unlikely. Camels in Iron I contexts are rare (Ilan 1999: 200) and therefore oxen seem to be the most likely option.

"...bread and hummus, olives, some fruit and dried beef."

The assemblage at Tel Dan is the only substantial faunal study in the northern Hula region. Caprovine was the most common component, with sheep being twice the number of goats. Bovine numbers were significant during the Late Bronze and Iron I period making up approximately half the slaughtered animals in the earlier period, dipping to 17% in the Iron IA before rising back to 50% in the Iron IB (Ilan 1999: 193). This is important for appreciating the use and extent of plough cultivation as well as the widespread availability of beef in the region at that time leading one to speculate that it was not simply an elitist or specialist meat.

"Before they ate he took from its place on one of the carts a single small stone stele, planted it in front of the fire, said a few words and tossed some wheat, kept specifically for that purpose, into the flames."

See discussion upon p. 80.

When we remove the biblical narrative from consideration what remains, at Tel Dan, is a large area identified as a sanctuary and a number of standing stones. In this case I drew upon Zevit's (2001: 195) notion that the sets of standing stones, located as they were in major gateways, were open to all, representations of whichever deity one happened to worship. This henotheistic or monolatristic approach to religion seems a practical one in a city that was located upon major thoroughfares and trade routes.

An extension of the above is that if mazzevah are representative of a deity / deities then those who travelled may have wished to carry a form with them. While mazzevah could be collected together, such as Tel Dan, they could also stand alone, they could be grandiose or diminutive for personal use or in family shrines (Dever 2005: 118). Many mazzevah are natural, unworked stones (see Fig. 10, p.80) and as such individual stones would be almost impossible to identify when not in a broader cultural context.

"...aware of the stranger's dialect"

See discussion on page 138-40.

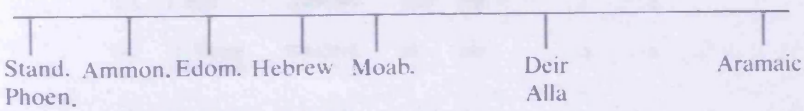


Fig. B1, Dialectical continuum of Syria-Palestine (from Garr 1985: 231)

"Other fires flared up and I knew that outlying settlements, places I knew, were falling under your sword."

See Fig. A3 (cf. Dayan 1962).

Ilan (1999: 164-5) classified the settlements of the Hula according to an 'impressionistic coefficient of architectural density, sherd density and breadth of distributuion.' The three different classifications are described thus:

> 1 = first order: settlements with dense and extensive architecture, stratigraphy and heavy sherd concentrations (>100 per dunam (1000m²)). In Iron I only Tel Dan and, probably Tel Abel, fit this category.
>
> 2 = second order: settlements with some architecture, neither dense nor extensively distributed, and / or sherd scatters that are either confines to a small area or sparsely scattered over a wider area (20-100 sherds per dunam).
>
> 3 = third order: sherd scatters of les than 20 total sherds per period. Most of these probably represent ephemeral camps, farmsteads or, at most, small hamlets. These form the majority of sites.

	Site	Israel Map Coordinates	elev.	nearest water source	LB	IAIA	IAIB
1	Kh. Sanbariyeh	2082/2929	140	<100		2	2
2	Tel Hasas	2085/2930	120	<100	3	?	
3	Tel Abel Beth Ma'acah	2045/2963	366	<100	1	1	1
4	Tel Beit Achu	2060/2924	165	250		3?	
5	Tleil	2083/2730	70	<100		?	2
6	Tel Reemim (Tell a-Roman)	2048/2774	75	<100			3
7	Ein Alumim (Al-Maniyeh)	2054/2753	80	<100		3	
8	Tel Ron (Tell Sheikh Yosef)	2081/2875	85	<100		3	3
9	—	2033/2853	140	250			3
10	Tel Malaha	2047/2772	75	<100	3	3	3
11	Durijat	2100/2699	150	900			3
12	Tel Shahaf (Tell Ablis)	2069/2743	75	150		3	3
13	Ein Avazim (south)	2037/2848	75	<100	3		3
14	Kh. Zahmol	2099/2781	78	±100			3
15	Nahal Dishon	1990/2751	350	2.5 km	3	?	
16	Sheikh Mahmoud	2110/2817	100	<100	3	3	
17	Tahunat el-Tabgha	2102/2915	105	100	3	?	3
18	Tell Ein Tina	2104/2759	80	<100			3
19	Humin	2012/2918	670	1.2 km		3	
20	Darbashiyeh	2112/2770	240	<100	3	3	

21	Tel Qalil	2111/2887	85	<100	3	3	
22	Urfiyeh	2115/2795	272	400			3
23	Ein Aqed	2024/2907	360	100		3	3
24	Tel Ein Azzaziat	2128/2927	85	<100	3		
25	Tel Hazor	2032/2691	210	200	1	2	1
26	Tel Dan	2111/2959	200	<100	2	1	1
27	Tell el Wawiyat	2056/2910	95	<100		2	
28	Tel Anafa	2105/2870	90	<100	1	2	?
29	Ayelet Hashahar	2045/2698	220	800	3	3	3
30	Tel Mashav	2008/2692	405	300		3?	3
31	Tel Tzafa	2040/2691	220	1 km	3	3	
32	Kh. Kuba'at	2006/2672	490	100		3?	3
33	Kh. Luzia	2046/2677	240	<100		3	3?
34	Kh. Katana	2040/2665	250	<100		3	
35	Kard el-Bakara	2069/2691	220	1.6 km		3	3
36	Arbel Yarden	2074/2674	200	800	3		3
37	Tel Ateret	2090/2678	70	<100		2	2
38	Almin	2093/2667	144	<100			3?
39	Kh. el-Bey	2061/2665	140	<100			3
40	Rosh Pina	2002/2641	520	200		3	
41	Bir Hasin	2050/2713	120	<100		3	3

Fig. B2, LB, Iron I and Iron IIA sites in the Hula Valley (from Ilan 1999: 165-6).

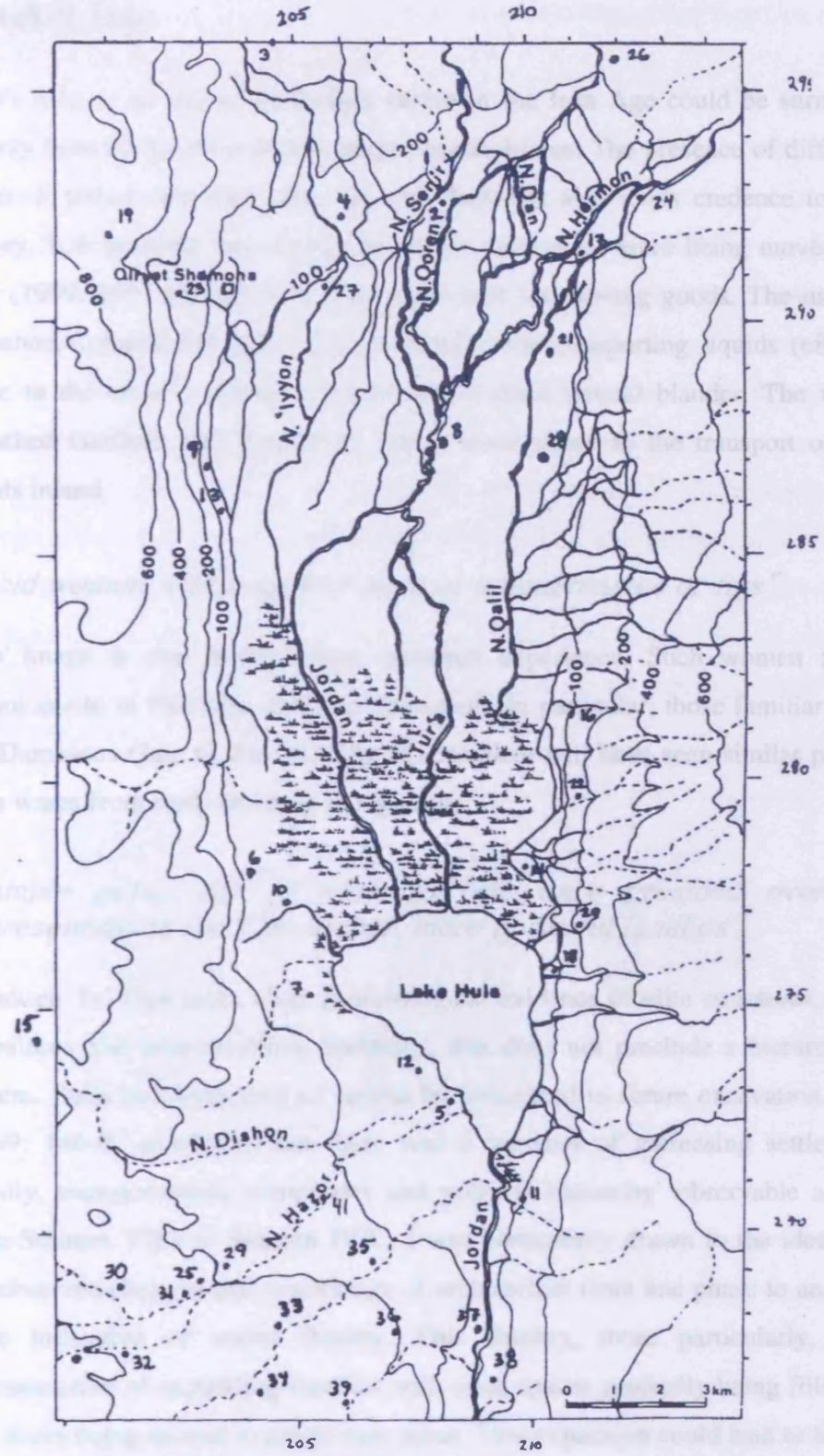


Fig. B3, Map of LB, Iron I and Iron IIA sites in the Hula Valley (from Ilan 1999: Fig 5.2).

Market Day

Dan's role as an important trading centre in the Iron Age could be surmised merely from its location on tow major thoroughfares. The presence of different types of pithoi (see Figs. A7, A8, A9) however also lends credence to this theory. It is possible that simply the pithoi themselves were being moved but Ilan (1999: 199) suggests that they were used for moving goods. The narrow mouthed Collared-rim pithoi appear suitable for transporting liquids (oil and wine to the coast?), perhaps sealed with a dried animal bladder. The wider mouthed Galilean and Phoenician pithoi more suited to the transport of dry goods inland.

"...old women with a sack of sage or pomegranates or figs"

This image is one derived from personal experience. Such women are a common site in Palestine and East Jerusalem. In particular, those familiar with the Damascus Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem will have seen similar plying their wares from early morning to nightfall.

"Sample pithoi full of wine and oil were presided over by representatives from the richer, more powerful families"

Although Tel Dan lacks clear archaeological evidence of elite structures, such as palaces and administrative buildings, this does not preclude a hierarchical system. Such buildings may of course be uncovered in future excavation. Ilan (1999: 146-9) concludes that there was a 'process of increasing settlement density, socioeconomic complexity and political hierarchy' observable across from Stratum VIIA to Stratum IVB. I was particularly drawn to the idea that the observed changes and reworkings of architecture from one phase to another were indicative of social fluidity. This fluidity, more particularly, was representative of expanding families with open spaces gradually being filled in and doors being moved to create new areas. This expansion could lead to larger social units than the multiple family, perhaps, what Ilan (1999: 148) calls, lineage groups, with common ancestors, who congregated into neighbourhoods. This notion, combined with the absence of elite structures, is suggestive of a

place led by a dominant family or families, a place of competing families, rather than by some imposed elitist system.

The evidence for both olive oil and wine production is more circumstantial than would ideally be liked. There is no archaeological evidence for large scale olive oil production at Tel Dan in the Iron Age apart from one installation in Area T from Stratum IVA. The nature of this installation is debatable however, see discussion on p.73-4. The use of olive wood in archaeological contexts is common throughout the region (see Liphschitz 1996: 9) and the presence of olive pits at Tel Dan suggests that oil production in and around the city was a likely activity even if the pressing perhaps only occurred in basalt bowls with mortars (Ilan 1999: 191). Wine production is even more circumstantial lacking any archaeological evidence whatsoever. Viticulture seems likely given the viable landscape but no pips or wine presses have been found in Iron I contexts although vessels designed for wine were discovered in all Iron Age levels (Ilan 1999: 147, 191).

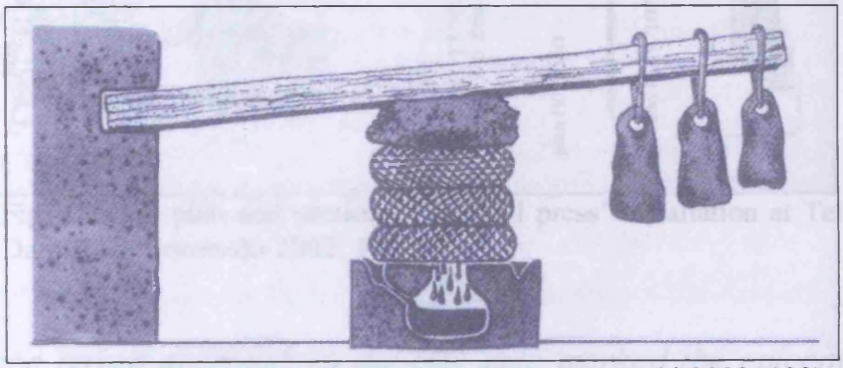


Fig. C1, example of beam olive press (from Borowski 2002: 122).

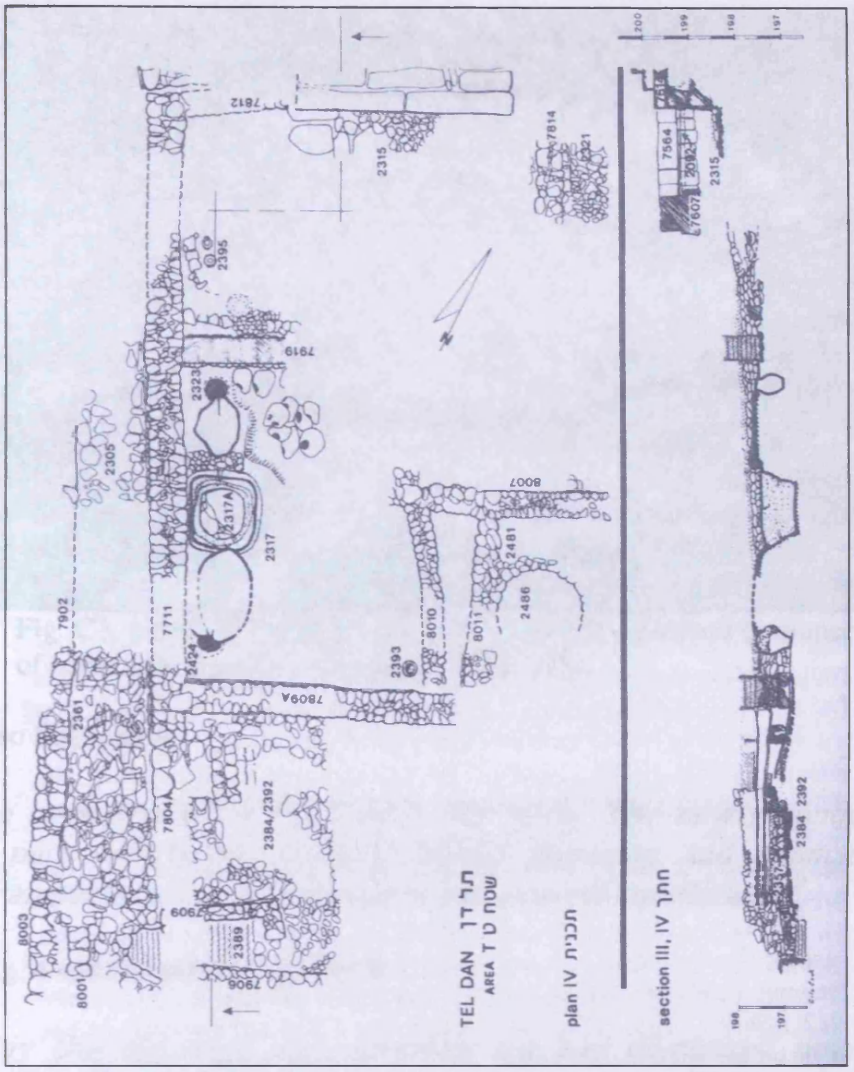


Fig. C2, top plan and section of the 'oil press' installation at Tel Dan (from Borowski 2002: 124).

"A stone paved approach to the city gate marked the epicentre of activity."

Biran (1994: 246) links the paved area with a market space, even suggesting that such areas may have been used for the setting up of foreign concessions.

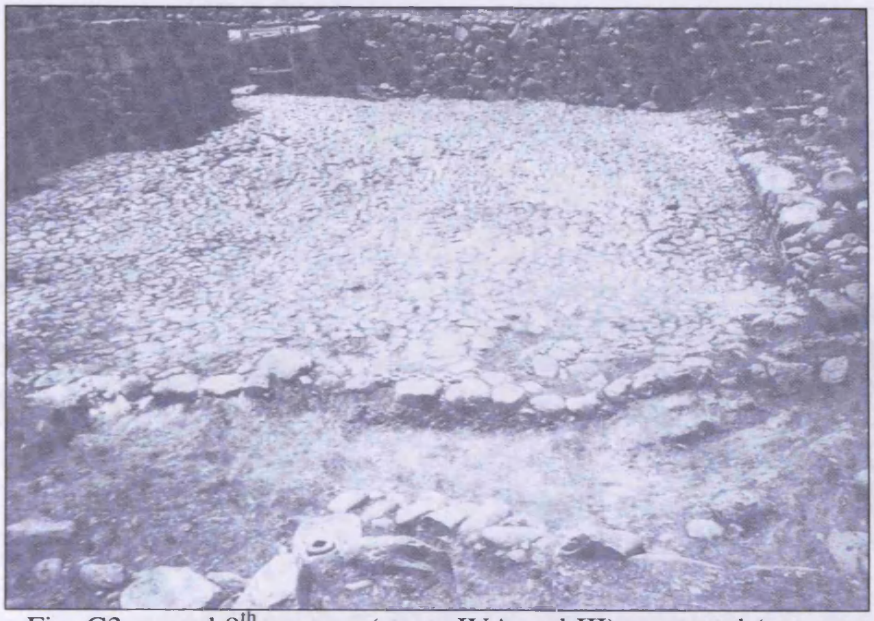


Fig. C3, paved 9th century (strata IVA and III) courtyard (entrance of outer gate top left) (from Biran 1994: 275).

See also Fig 4, p.69.

"...the backdrop of the half built city walls. The newly conquered city, part-refortified, already looked imposing and adamantine. The ramparts and walls of before had proved insufficient."

See Fig. 4 and discussion on p.69-70

"Today the old men who normally sat and dispensed timeworn wisdom and wisecracks were absent."

Biran (1994: 238) links the bench found in the chamber of the southern gate to various biblical passages (Psalms 69: 13, Ruth 4: 1-2, Genesis 19: 1) all of which mention the benches as a place where city elders would gather. There is no discussion as to the reliability of these textual references.

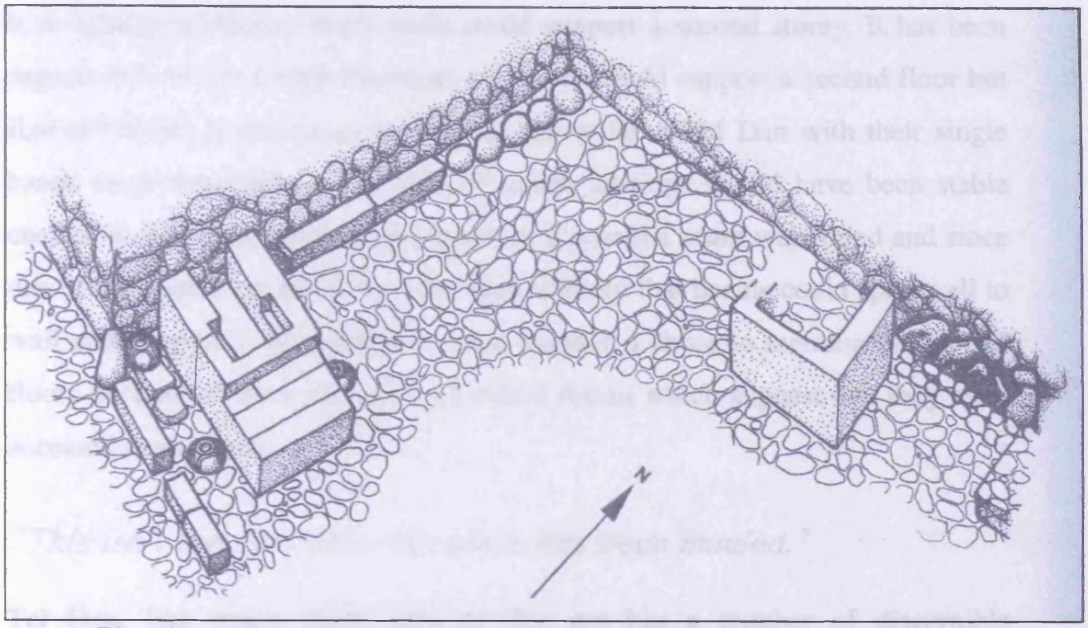


Fig. C4, artist's reconstruction of complex inside the outer gate chamber. Note bench running along western wall (from Zevit 2001: 194).

"Behind the soldiers just inside the gateway a woman was very deliberately pouring oil from a small painted jug. The sleek, golden thread ran onto the heads of five upright stones of various sizes"

See Fig. 10, p.80

"The main street branched off either side into narrow alleys that ran between the houses. The grey basalt and mud brick walls enclosed about him. Many of the houses had a second floor and ran one into the other, their conjoined walls presenting stretches of uninterrupted façade"

Figs. C5 and C6 below show us Area B Strata V and IVB. A north-south road can be discerned. This was comprised of soil, brick debris, weathered potsherds and small pebbles (Ilan 1999: 52). There appears to be two areas of building either side of the street, B-west and B-east.

The walls were constructed of basalt (or less commonly travertine) fieldstones. These provided the foundation for either a stone or mudbrick superstructure. Stratum IVB saw the introduction of double rows of smaller stones for foundation instead of single larger ones (Ilan 1999: 29-30).

It is debatable whether such walls could support a second storey. It has been argued that walls of their thickness (c. 50cm) could support a second floor but Ilan (1999:44) is unsure as to whether the walls at Tel Dan with their single basalt stone foundations and lack of trench footings would have been stable enough to do so. In one instance however a wooden beam was found and since one of the rooms are more than 6m then it likely that beams could span wall to wall and support a second floor in that manner. I chose to mention the second floors because of the instances of doorless rooms which suggest that they were accessed from above.

"This isn't the first time this place has been mauled."

Tel Dan, like many other sites of that era has a number of discernible destruction layers. The LB / IA transition is marked by a conflagration layer (Biran 1994: 126) and many of the subsequent IA strata are marked by a destruction later (see Biran 1994: 138, 181-183, Ilan 1999: 51, 56).

"The merchant sat patiently on the plastered floor in the cool interior of the room."

Area B of Dan provides the largest exposure of Iron I levels. There is a reuse of walls in the strata that stretches from the LB to the Iron II and even beyond. These same rooms then, over time, had a succession of floors which ranged in material from tamped earth, slab-paved or, less often, plaster (Ilan 1999: 30).

"The door, which on his previous visit had led to the matriarch's house, was no longer there."

Ilan (1999: 43) notes that there are not enough doorways given the number of rooms and walls uncovered. Often particular access to rooms could not be discerned. Perhaps these were in unexcavated balks but there were rooms where all four walls had been uncovered with no sign of a doorway e.g. the area represented by Loci 685, 688, 607 and 698 which led to speculation that these rooms had become basements. Perhaps they were accessible only from the roof? Doors also noticeably changed location. A door in Room 4723 (Phase 10 see Fig. C5) set in W4316 was closed off and transferred in Phase 9 to W4344

which appears to have changed the access from internal to external as well as negating the use of trough or bin L4710 (Ilan 1999: 43). These evident changes through time give some idea of the dynamic social arrangements of the occupants. Phase 8 (see Fig. C6) sees increased structural alteration although a similar basic layout remains. Whether the stimulus for change be domestic or due to destruction is debatable – I have suggested a little of each.

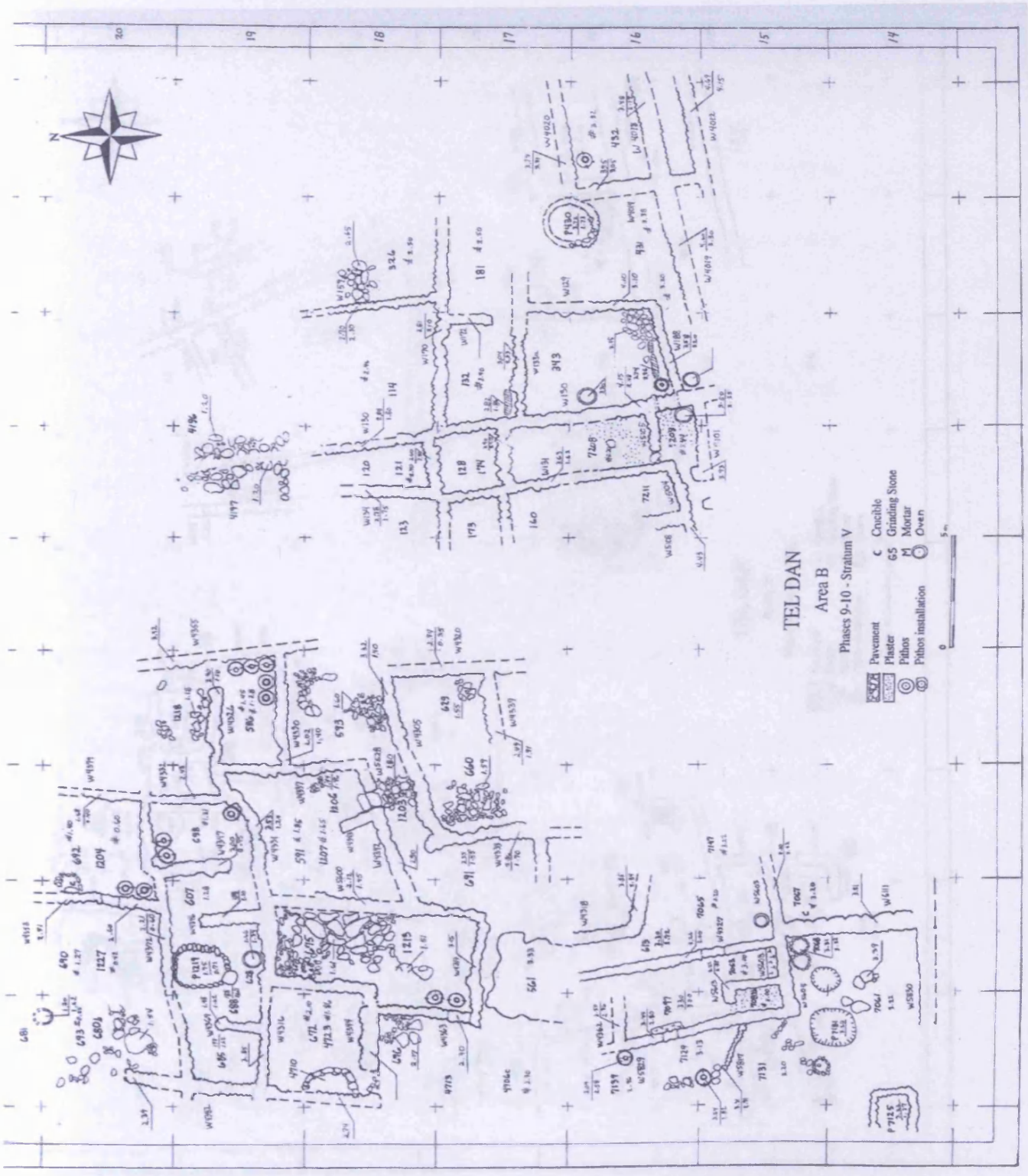


Fig. C5, Plan of Tel Dan, Area B, Phases 9-10, Stratum V (from Ilan 1999: Plan 3)

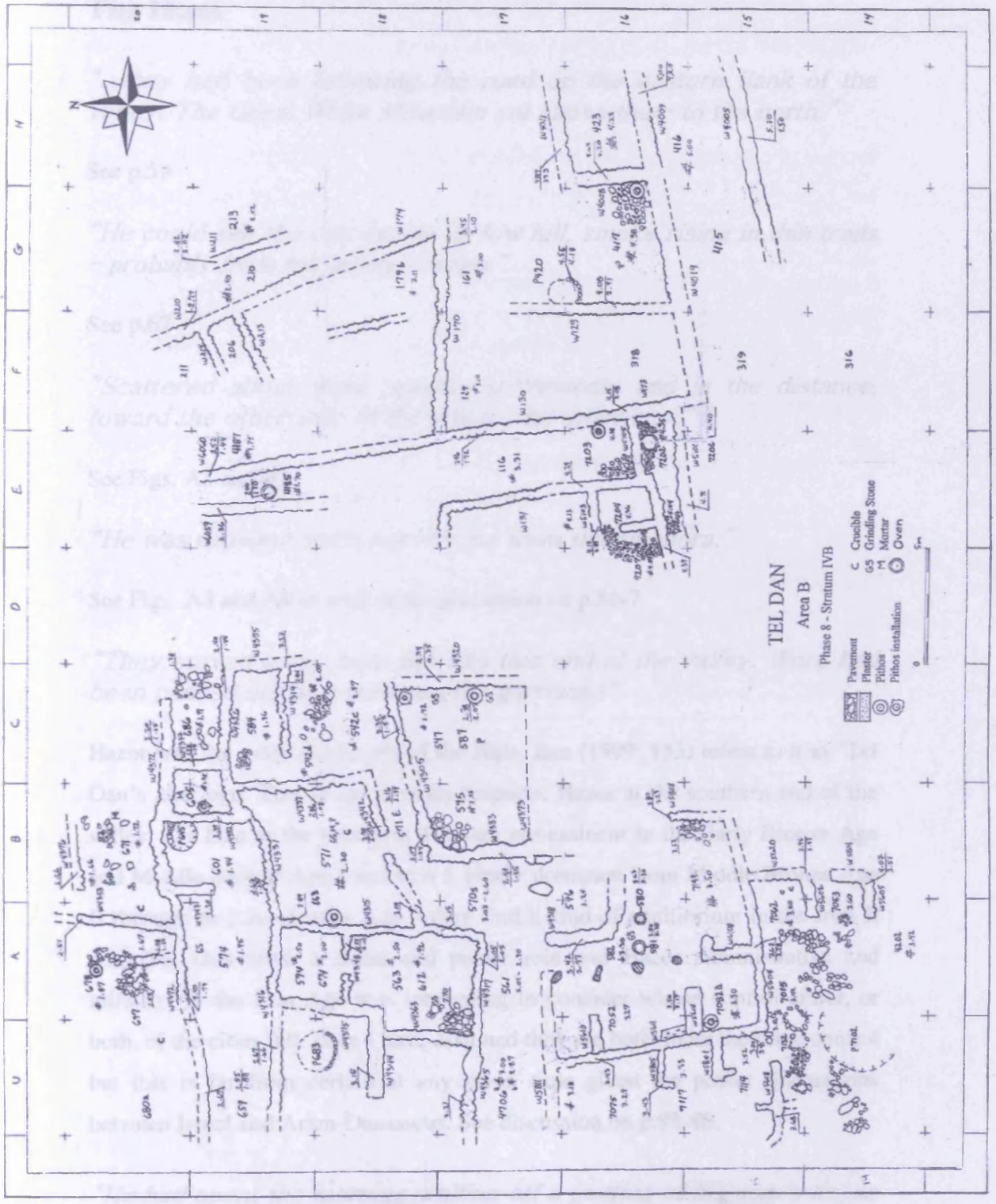


Fig. C6, Plan of Tel Dan, Area B, Phase 8, Stratum IVB (from Ilan 1999: Plan 4)

The Hunt

"...they had been following the road up the eastern flank of the valley. The Great White Mountain sat above them to the north."

See p.59

"He could see the city sat on its low hill, smoke rising in thin trails – probably from his father's forge."

See p.67

"Scattered about were smaller settlements and in the distance, toward the other side of the valley, the other city."

See Figs. A3 and B2

"He was drawing out a jug of wine from the amphora."

See Figs. A8 and A9 as well as the discussion on p.66-7.

"They stayed away from the city this end of the valley. Word had been passed anyway between the garrisons"

Hazor was the other major city of the Hula. Ilan (1999: 153) refers to it as 'Tel Dan's alter ego. This is apt in many respects: Hazor at the southern end of the valley, Tel Dan at the northern; Tel Dan pre-eminent in the Early Bronze Age and Middle Bronze Age I and Iron I, Hazor dominant from Middle Bronze Age II through to Late Bronze Age – they find a kind of equilibrium in the Iron II with Tel Dan more a cultic and public role and Hazor administrative and military. In the Iron Age it is interesting to consider whose control either, or both, of the cities fell. Here I have assumed they are both under the same control but this is far from certain at any given time given the power fluctuations between Israel and Aram-Damascus. See discussion on p.83-86.

"He had spent the morning walling off a section of his aunt's house to be used as a granary... Some others in the city had created little walled off granaries only accessible from the roof and this seemed to be working."

There are various suggestions as to why storage pits fell out of use: ritual, affected by water, increased security (see Ilan 1999: 122-4). Actual reasons are unknown and may vary from place to place.

For a possible example see Figs. C5 and C6 and the transformation in squares 19-20 of L698 into L605.

"The matriarch's nephew cut around the city to where his own families land was. He grabbed a boy who was ferrying some provisions out to the workers and gave him a new task."

Ilan (1999: 190) notes three elements that suggest grain was an important factor in the economy:

- Grain was found in Iron I pits (e .g. Pit 336 in Area B-east)
- Large number of storage pits.
- Presence of many sickle blades with silica sheen.

"The pit was like so many others in the area, so many from his own city that people had used to store grain for generations."

See discussion on p. 64-5

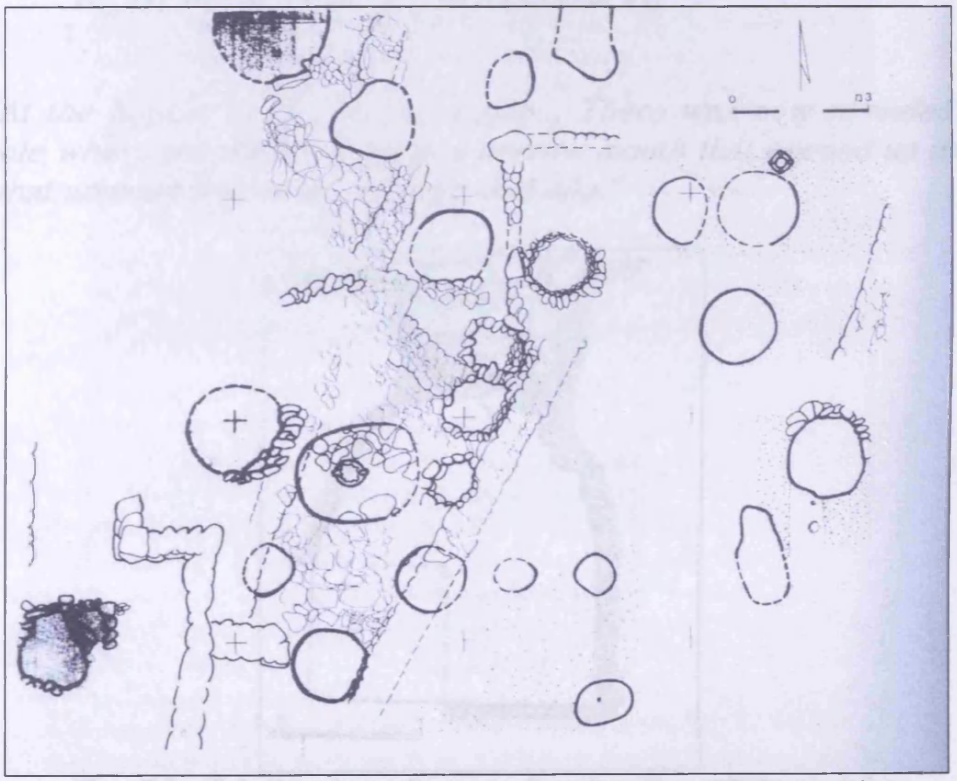


Fig. D1, plan of pit location in Area B (Stratum VI) (from Biran 1994: 128).

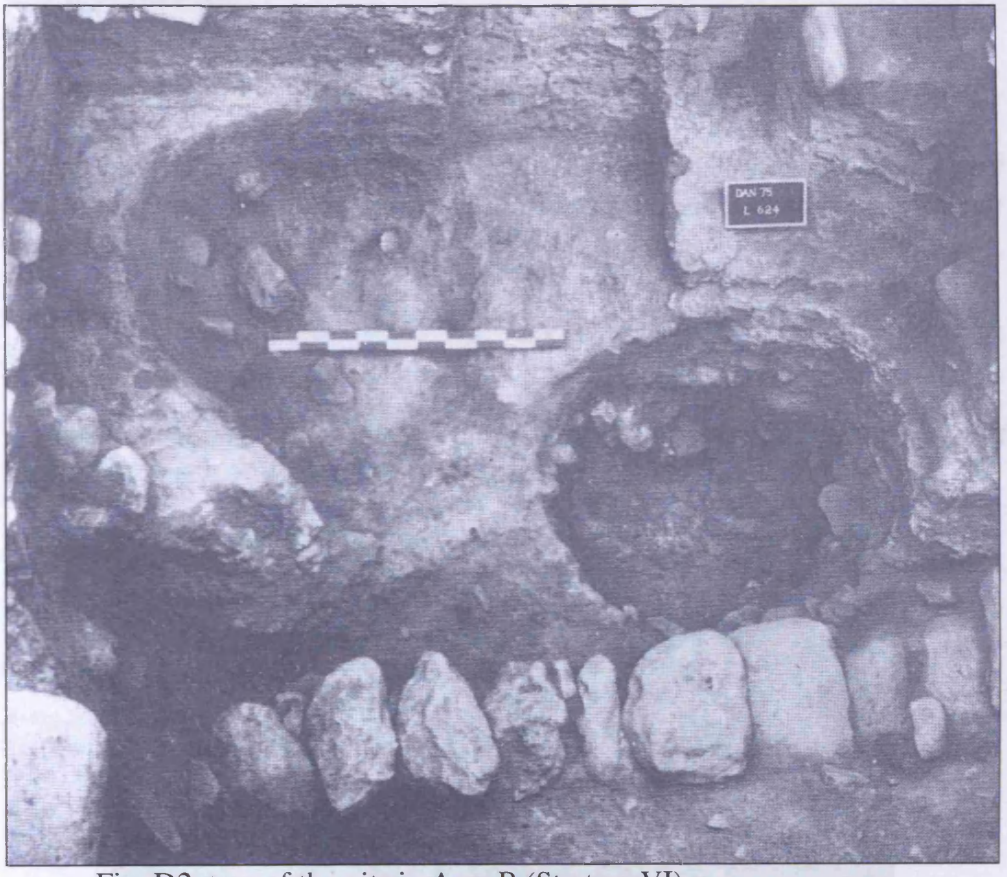


Fig. D2, two of the pits in Area B (Stratum VI).

"At the bottom of the pit lay a slab... There was now revealed a hole where the slab had been, a narrow mouth that opened up into what appeared to be an underground silo."

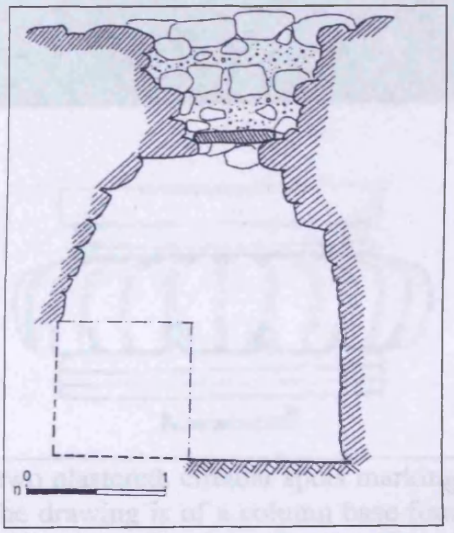


Fig. D3, Tel Wawiyat, Stratum X silo (Ilan 1999: fig. 5.1, originally from Onn *et al. 1995*).

Two Soldiers

"...the newly erected buildings on the back of the sacred platform"

"They stood at the entrance to the sacred precinct. Behind them an open space surrounded by buildings framed a square pavement set in the middle of the courtyard."

Area T at Tel Dan is discussed in some depth, see p.71-9. In particular see Fig. 8, p.76.

"On the northern end of the pavement two parallel pillars stood freely to attention, atop freshly carved bases"

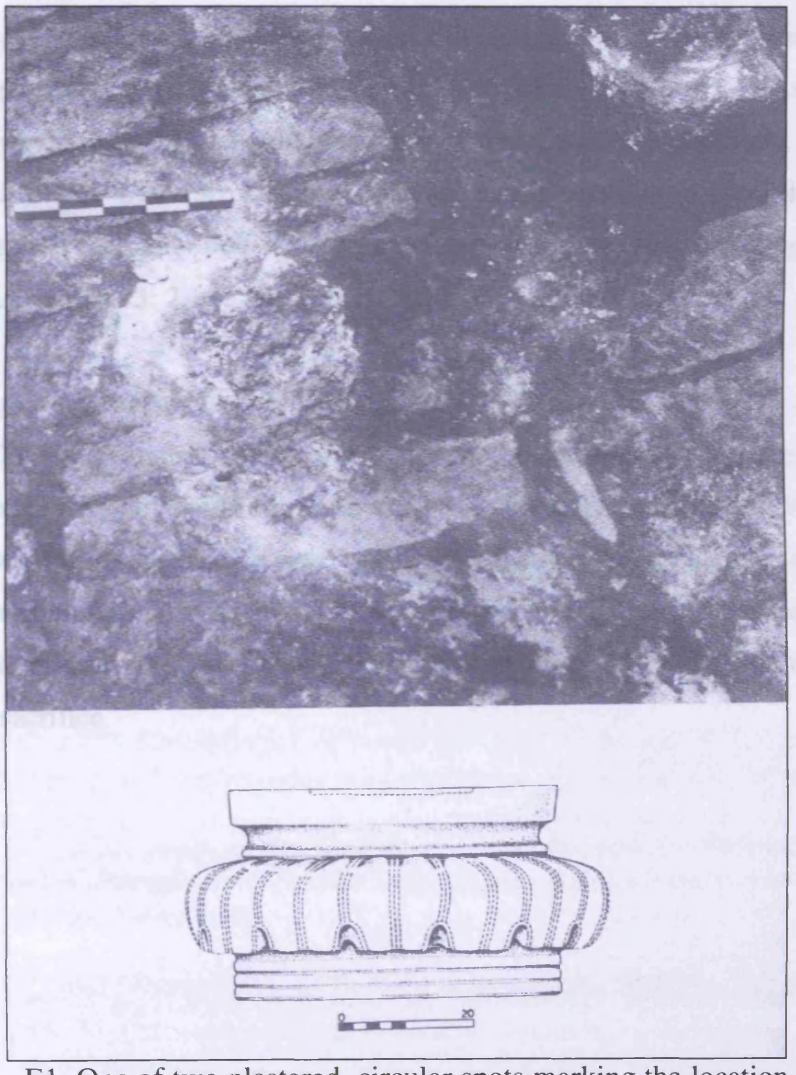


Fig. E1, One of two plastered, circular spots marking the location of column bases. The drawing is of a column base found in secondary usage in a Hellenistic wall; the diameter of the base matches that of the plastered circle.

"The existing platform had been built up and relined with large, carved ashlars so that it rose to near twice the height of a man."

"The platform and the courtyard were enclosed within a border of straight walled buildings that formed the sanctuary as a whole into a rectangular shape"

Compare Fig. 7 and Fig. 8 and refer to the discussion on p.72-7.

"The acolyte, playing his part, offered his only possession, the bullock, to the gods in return for their favour."

The links between the sanctuary at Tel Dan and the form of the bull are well known. 1 Kings 12: 26-9 tells how Jeroboam, King of Israel, placed a statue of a golden calf in both the sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel in order to stop his people travelling down to Jerusalem to worship (see Biran 2001). There is also a connection between El, the principle deity of the Canaanite pantheon, and the form and title of 'bull' (see Dever 2005: 136) and if passages of the Tanakh are to be taken at face then bull worship persisted within the northern kingdom of Israel (e.g. Hosea 13: 2, see Zevit 2001: 453).

Focusing on the archaeology of Tel Dan, in a 1977 study of the faunal remains of Tel Dan by Wapnish, Hesse and Ogilvy they observed divergences in the animal bone assemblage. From these they concluded that more of the bones in Area T were from the 'choice cuts' of the animal which was indicative of elite / cultic consumption (Ilan 1999: 111). For the important rededication ceremony portrayed in the narrative I thought that an unblemished bullock would be a suitable sacrifice.

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