

FROM AKKO/ACCO TO BEIT SHE'AN/BETH SHAN IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE

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Abstract: Tel Akko is an imposing site on the northern side of the Haifa Bay. It was active as a maritime hub in the Eastern Mediterranean during the 2nd millennium BCE. This study proposes that during the Late Bronze Age, especially in Late Bronze II, Akko's anchorage on the southern outskirts of the tell was the main maritime contact between Egypt and the Egyptian administrative centre in Beit She'an. This stood in contrast to the anchorage of the same period at Tell Abu Hawam, situated on the same bay, whose main trade network was with sites that lay to the north and west in the Eastern Mediterranean. The study deals with the route used for travelling between Akko and Beit She'an, as well as with textual accounts and petrographic analyses of the el-Amarna Letters.

Key words: Tel Akko, Late Bronze Age, Beit She'an, anchorage

Introduction

Two anchorages in Haifa Bay, barely 10 kilometres apart, were in use intermittently over the millennia. The largest of the two, the one associated with Tel Akko is situated near the Na'aman (Belos) River on the northern extension of the bay. The other, associated with Tell Abu Hawam (TAH) is situated on the Qishon River, just north of the Carmel Ridge on the southern side of the bay. Both sites had a river adjacent to them, an addition to their function as anchorages before the period of artificial coastal installations. The rivers were advantageous for the terrestrial routes to the economic hinterlands for successful commercial activities (HAMILTON 1934; BALENSI 1980; 1985; ARTZY 1997; 1998).

The two served as a common dual funnel, comparable to Stager's model, 'Port Power', suggested for the Early and Middle Bronze Age periods (2001, 634–635; 2002, 360). The site of Akko was already part of the maritime network in the Middle Bronze IIA period, as Stager notes, while TAH's important role as a maritime-terrestrial

focal site materialised only in the Late Bronze IIB period.

In more recent times, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the bay, especially on its southern side near the city of Haifa, fulfilled this role. Today, following the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan, a concerted effort is being made to construct a railroad to connect the harbour of Haifa with Beit She'an and thus to open the maritime trade to the Jordanian Hashemite Kingdom on the eastern side of the Jordan River. In this study, I would like to suggest that this route has its roots much earlier.

The settlement pattern of the two sites is not comparable. Akko was inhabited from the earliest Early Bronze Age until today, although its centre moved as a result of coastal changes (ARTZY and QUARTERMAINE 2015). Tel Akko itself is a large site, yet because of human intervention over the millennia, it is hard to estimate its exact size and habitation in any given period. It has an extensive agricultural hinterland. TAH, by contrast, is a very small anchorage. TAH was settled only in limited periods, mainly in the LB II, the Iron Age and the Persian/Hellenistic periods. Its size in the Late Bronze Age was c. 15 dunams. TAH was at a disadvantage because of its position on the fault line of the Carmel Ridge, the physical difficulties in crossing sand bars and swampy areas associated with the estuary and the course and swamps of the Qishon River. In addition, the steep nature of the northwestern Carmel Ridge prevented the use of the slopes for travel, by either human and/or pack animals. Today's major harbour is located within Haifa in whose boundaries TAH is situated, not near modern Akko (Acre) across the bay. This has more to do with the fact that the port of Akko became obstructed with sediment, to the extent that the British Mandate undertook earthworks deepening the bay on its southern side, thus making it possible to accommodate larger ships. In turn, the soil was used for land reclamation on the base of the Carmel Mountain (DUMPER and STANLEY 2007, 161).

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In previous studies, I entertained the possibility that one of the two anchorages, if not both, served other sites not necessarily in their immediate vicinity, and suggested that TAH, in the LB II (end of the

14th to the fourth part of the 13th centuries BCE), served Hazor, situated at a distance of c. one and a half-day's travel with pack animals (ARTZY 2013; 2016). I also propose that TAH was involved in the

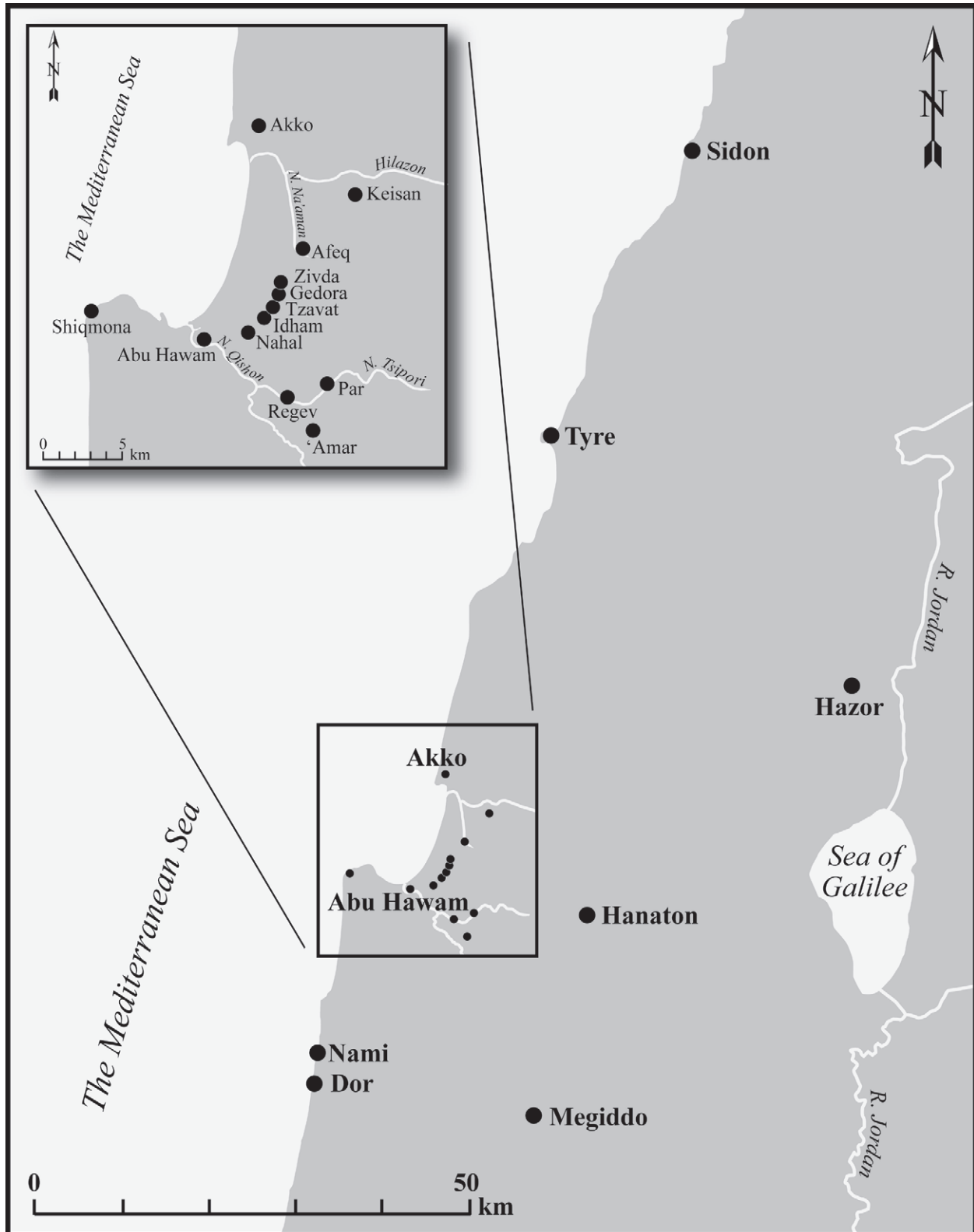


Fig. 1 The sites associated with the Haifa/Akko Bay (Drawn by R. Stidsing)

grain trade with Ugarit and the Hittites as a major shipping anchorage (see also SINGER 1999, 715–719). The material goods associated with TAH, from both the excavations of the tell and the anchorage, point to shipping contacts with northern and western regions: the Peloponnese, Troy, the Syro-Lebanese coast, and especially Cyprus. The activities of TAH can be shown to have included exports, for instance the substantial number of maritime transport containers found on the Uluburun wreck (Pulak 2008, 318–319), which have been associated with the Carmel coast, as well as the storage jar from Memphis (BOURRIAU, SMITH and SERPICO 2001, 140; SERPICO *et al.* 2003, 373), also associated with the Carmel coast. Both of these are dated firmly in the period in which the anchorage and the site of TAH were actively part of the Mediterranean trade network. Moreover, TAH's size, barely 4–5 acres, of which some were used for storage and cultic areas leaves little space for habitation. Its size could not allow for small industries, such as ceramic production, thus the neighbouring sites, such as Tel Nahal, Tel Idham and Tel Regev, situated near or on the banks of the Qishon River, were the likely suppliers as possibly Tel Par, and Tel 'Amar. It is hard

to appraise the relationships between the two anchorages/harbours and these sites, used as 'conduits' to agricultural and industrial goods in the LB II period. They were likely oscillating, considering the size of the region, barely 15 km along the coast from Akko to TAH (Fig. 1).

Returning to Akko: in the past, it has been suggested that Tel Akko's economic terrestrial hinterland was connected by routes to the Jezreel Valley and hence Megiddo (DORSEY 1991, 78), and from there toward the Jordan Valley. Another route proposed by GAL (1992, 9) passed by way of the lower Galilee. MORRIS (2005, 371) is not quite clear where she sees the route:

"...Akko would have undoubtedly been the most important Canaanite harbor for Egypt to control, as it was not only the busiest of the southern harbors but also provided direct access to a mountain pass that led inward to the Jezreel Valley and the Galilee."

In this study, I wish to present another route and thereby show that Akko's geographical link to Beit She'an during the LBII period avoided contact with Megiddo, utilising the routes with no mountain passes necessary, but only valleys.

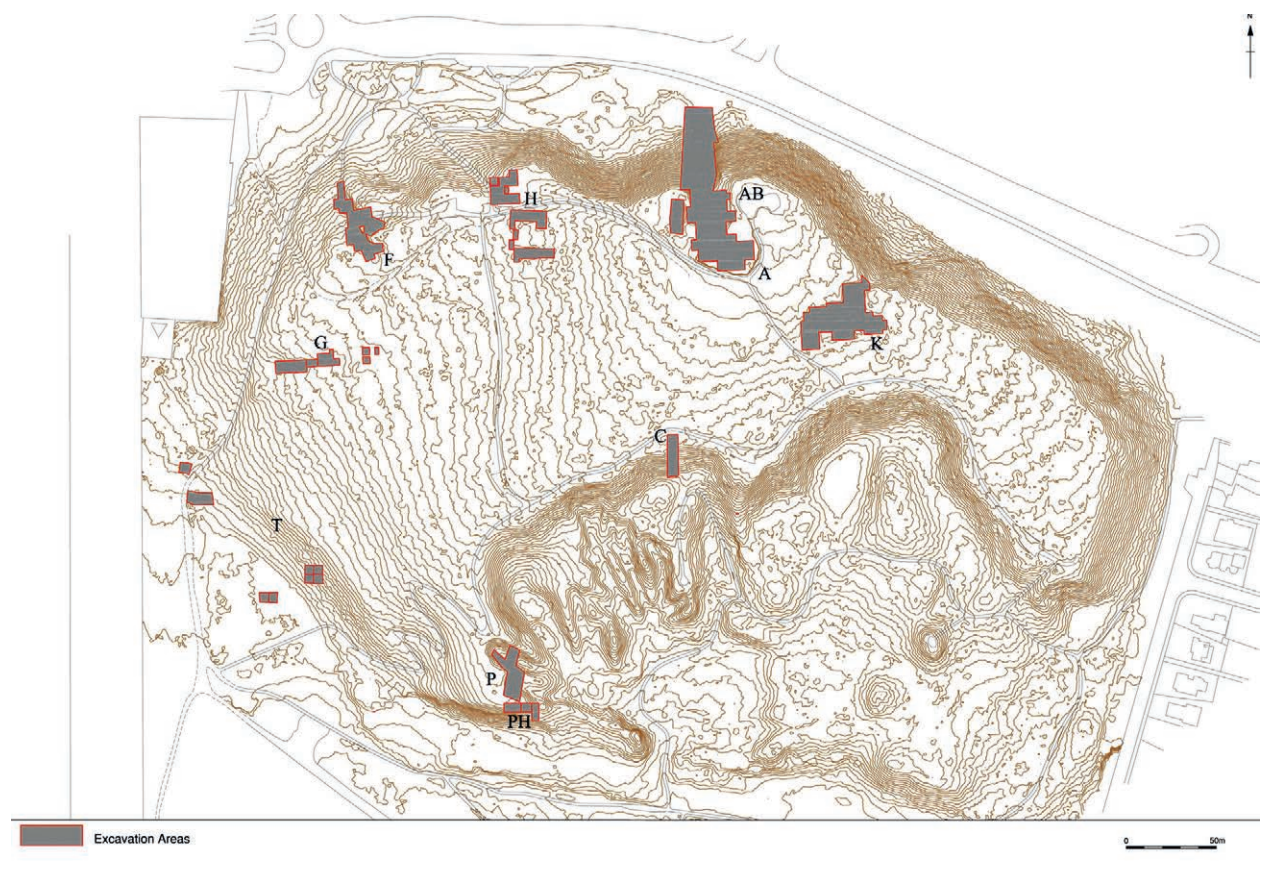


Fig. 2 Tel Akko: Excavated areas (Prepared by J. Quartermaine)

Tel Akko: The Site and Research History

Tel Akko is situated north of the Na'aman (Belos) River, c. one and a half km east of the present day coastline, within the expanding boundary of the modern town. It is a large site, in control of an agricultural hinterland. Excavations on the tell were conducted intermittently from 1973 until 1985, with a short season in 1989 directed by M. Dothan of the University of Haifa (Fig. 2). D. Conrad from Marburg University took upon himself

the excavation of an area on the tell, Area K, in the 1980s and was joined by others from various universities in Germany. A renewed project, named 'Total Archaeology' started in 2010, directed by A.E. Killebrew from Pennsylvania State University and M. Artzy from the University of Haifa.

Akko could have been self-sustaining because of its size, its environs, including water and arable land, and its proximity to the Haifa Bay and the Na'aman River, which allowed for continuous



Fig. 3 Tel Akko's position vis a vis the bay (Photo by M. Artzy)



Fig. 4 Tel Akko view from the south (Photo by M. Artzy)

international connections. A likely anchorage spot is being studied just outside the southern boundary of the tell, situated on the bay and the estuary of the Na'aman River (MORHANGE *et al.* 2016). The bay as it was in antiquity is currently under study as well (ARTZY and QUARTERMAINE 2014; GIAIME *et al.* 2018). It was settled and urbanised over a long period, at least from the early 2nd millennium BCE, and human impact on the ecology due to urbanisation in the period has been noted in recent studies (KANIEWSKI *et al.* 2013, KANIEWSKI *et al.* 2014).

The shape of Tel Akko is that of a half moon, or banana (Figs. 3, 4). Questions as to the reasons for the peculiar shape have usually been answered

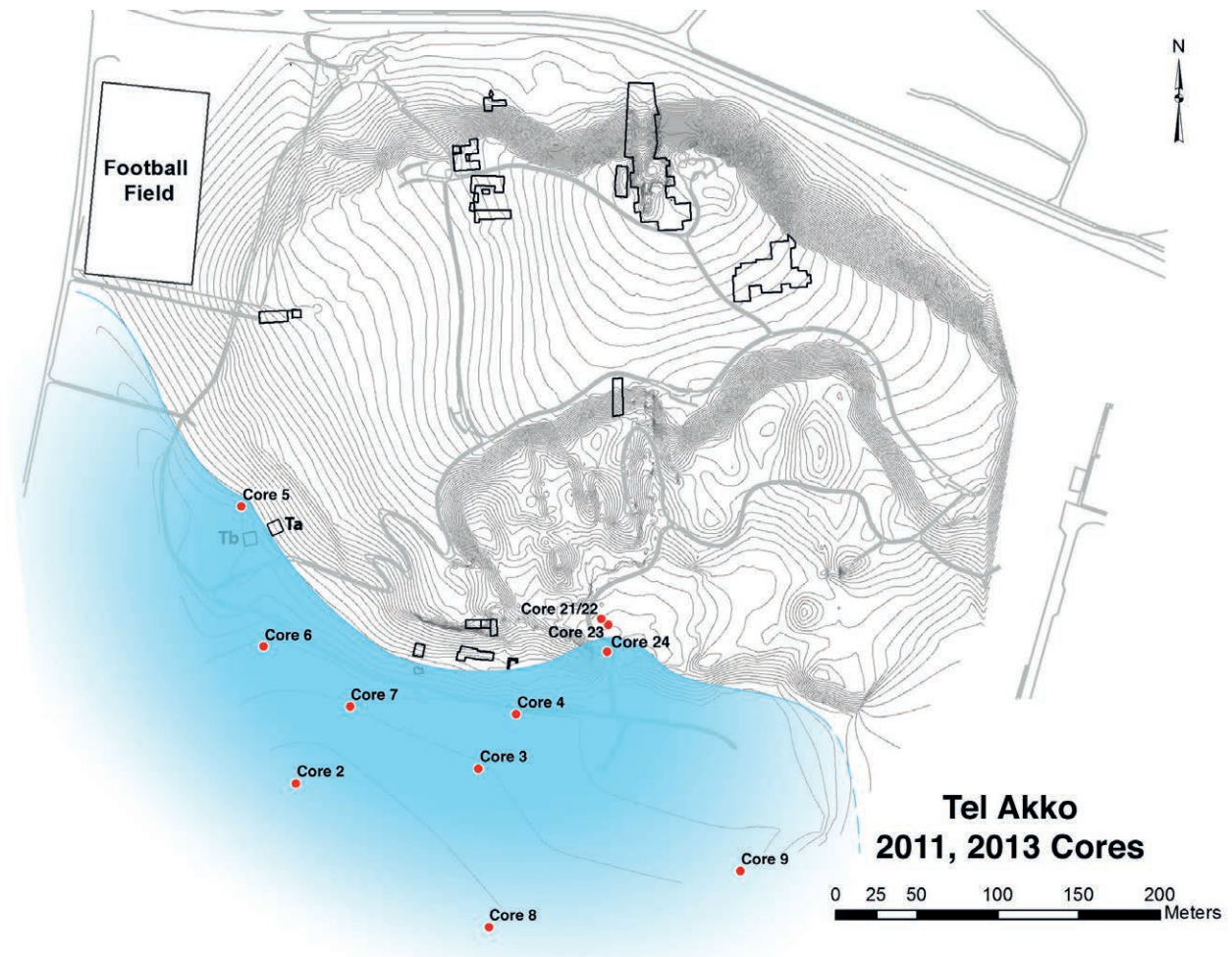


Fig. 5 The bay's extension below Tel Akko in the Bronze Age

by pointing to the British Mandate's attempt to drain the swamps created by the Na'aman River by utilising soil from the tell. However, in a recent study it was shown that, although the British Mandate might have caused some damage to the site, the tell's shape well before the mid-1940s was similar to that of today. The unusual shape can be seen in maps dating to the last of the 18th and mid-19th centuries CE (Artzy 2016). A. RABAN (1991, 31*–32*) suggested that there was an inner anchorage within the southern confines of the tell. However, recent work shows that the bedrock is far too high to have been covered with water and thus to allow, even small boats, entrance to that area (Fig. 5). The research being carried out presently will hopefully establish the likely area of where the anchorage was exactly located.

Recent pit survey work carried out during the 'Total Archaeology' project indicated that at least some of the inner pan of the crescent functioned as a rampart already during the 5th–4th centuries BCE (ARTZY and QUARTERMAINE 2014). Archaeological

remains point to a complete abandonment of the tell by the mid-2nd century BCE. The movement of habitation towards the 'Old City' of Akko/Acre on the peninsula took place starting at the end of the 4th century but especially in the 3rd and mid-2nd centuries BCE. During the 13th century CE, a fortress attributed to the Templars was built on the tell (ARTZY 2015). Until the early 1970s, Tel Akko was utilised for agricultural tillage and was plowed. Only sporadic remains were noted above the surface.

Tel Akko in the Late Bronze Age

In several areas of the tell, architectural remains dating to the LB period were noted, most dating to its later stage. There are finds associated with the period in Areas AB, F, H, and PH (Fig. 2). These four areas are situated on different parts of the site, yet most share one common element: namely that the remains of the LB IIC (last of the 13th–early 12th centuries BCE) were constructed directly

on the remains of the MB IIA rampart (ARTZY 2006). The next period of habitation seems to be the late Persian/early Hellenistic period. Graves associated with the MB IIB–LB I period (16th century BCE) were noted in Areas AB and H, with meagre or no habitation elements discerned. Area PH, likewise, revealed no signs of habitation in the MB II, or for that matter, the transitional period between MB IIB and the LB IA in the 16th century BCE. The gap lasted during the major part of the Late Bronze Age.

In Area AB (Fig. 2), on the summit of the tell, industrial metalworking installations used during the latter part of the LB were identified. Parts of crucibles with metal remains were found in the vicinity of a furnace (ARTZY 2006). The reason for the position of the furnace might have to do with the prevalent winds from the west (the sea), feeding the fires and blowing the fumes away from the tell and the habitation areas. Area H seems to have had some importance for cultic use: an altar with engraved ships was found there. The importance of the small Area PH is its proximity to Area P where, according to Raban, a gate was located in the vicinity of what he envisioned to be the river estuary (RABAN 1991, figs. 19*, 31*); and, indeed, more recent studies show that if it was not the river (Fig. 3), the bay extended well beyond the middle of the southern edge of the tell (MORHANGE *et al.* 2016). In the vicinity of the assumed gate, in Area PH, there are clear signs of habitation: stone-lined pits, some comprising Cypriot wares, as well as floors and possible walls were excavated (ZAGORSKI 2004). Besides the imported Cypriot ceramics, Mycenaean-style wares, most of Cypriot product (especially Late Helladic IIIB), Egyptian imports, and even imports from Anatolia (ZAGORSKI 2004; ARTZY and ZAGORSKI 2012) were noted.

Literary References to Akko in the Second Millennium BCE

In Egyptian sources, Akko and its Semitic ruler are already mentioned in the Egyptian Execration Texts from the early 2nd millennium BCE (POSNER 1940, 31–34). It is also mentioned in Thutmose III's list (SIMONS 1937, 161) dating to the Late Bronze Age. Mentions of Akko include ones associated with the 19th Dynasty in a text attributed to

Seti I (SIMONS 1937, 161). Ramses II in Karnak (SIMONS 1937, 161) claims to have destroyed the site. In addition, in the Papyrus Anastasi I Akko is mentioned as a coastal site; it is the only one in the Akko Plain to be mentioned (PRITCHARD 1955, 475–79). Dothan, the excavator of Tel Akko, reported in 1976 that traces of destruction levels attributed to Ramses II had been noted during the early part of the excavation on the tell (DOTHAN 1976, 20), although thus far, in the new 'Total Archaeology' project, no traces of that destruction have been noted, at least not to date.

The name appears numerous times in the Amarna Letters as will be shown below. It is also mentioned in Ugaritic texts, for instance in a letter sent from the king of Tyre to the king of Ugarit, RS18.031, in which the king of Ugarit is told that a boat from Ugarit is safe at Akko following a storm (BORDREUIL and PARDEE 2009, 238–239).

Akko in the Amarna Correspondence

Akko is mentioned in the el-Amarna archives of the 14th century BCE, both in letters originating in other cities and letters from at least two kings of Akko, Surata (EA232) and Shatatna/Shitatna (EA 233, 234, 235), his son (MORAN 1992, 291–294). The importance of Akko during that time is further emphasised in Amarna letter EA 85, in which the king of Byblos (Gubla), Rib Adda, asks the Pharaoh to give him a comparable grant to that of Surata (King of Akko), which consists of 400 men and 30 pairs of horses (MORAN 1992, 156). Akko is further mentioned in several letters sent from other cities, such as Damascus, Megiddo and even Babylon.

Akko controlled a rather limited territory in the early 2nd millennium, as is indicated by the Execration Texts, which mention Achshaph, a site likely located in the general area, E11 in the Brussels Group, identified as Tell Keisan (Tel Kison) by most scholars (BEN TOR 2006, 75–76).² Ben Tor mentions that there are few remains dating to the early 2nd millennium found in Tell Keisan by its excavator, Seton-William. Several scholars have tried to estimate the territorial control of the various kingdoms located in the northern part of the southern Levant using the Amarna texts (BUNIMOWITZ 1989; FINKELSTEIN 1996). They have addressed the demography of the kingdoms and the available work force needed for building and

² It should be added that in a salvage excavation carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority in 2006, as yet unpub-

lished, remains dating to the period were found (A. Abu Hamid, personal communication).

controlling the kingdoms. The questionable temporal element in the length of the letter exchanges, but especially the lack of spatial and numerical certainty, limits the viability of their conclusions. Despite the fact that several other cities are mentioned in the immediate vicinity, such as Achshaph and Hannaton (Hinnatuna), Akko was an important player in this spatial puzzle. As Na'aman rightly pointed out, harbours might only control limited geographic areas, but because of their locations they could maintain hired manpower (NA'AMAN 1997, 605). We might add that harbour towns tended, much as in later centuries and up to our own time, to attract various itinerant sailors who could also provide extra working hands. In addition, Akko's anchorage controlled an important position in Stager's economic 'Port Power' network from the Middle Bronze IIA period, similar to the one suggested for Ashqelon (STAGER 2001, 634; 2002, 360).

I suggest that the parameters to be considered in a case of a harbour kingdom/city are numerous and complex. Applying existing models of harbour towns, especially to ones on the Carmel Coast and north of the Carmel Ridge, is further complicated due to their position *vis-à-vis* the Syro-Lebanese coast and their contacts with the Mesopotamian world, Anatolia and its coast and kingdoms, especially the Hittite State, the Aegean, and Cyprus and its diverse regions. The position of Akko as a harbour for the immediate vicinity was further enhanced by the fact that it may well have served as the harbour of one of the important political entities of the 2nd millennium, namely the Egyptians. This was suggested in the past for some part of the Late Bronze Age by Weinstein, who wrote:

"...it would be quite surprising if Acco were not utilized by the Egyptian military, in view of its magnificent harbor at the north end of the Haifa Bay." (WEINSTEIN 1980, 45).

MORRIS (2005, 371), quoting Weinstein in her monumental work noted that it is plausible that Ramses II:

"...transformed Akko into a full fledged Egyptian base following its conquest".

She does, however, note that there are no archaeological data to support it archaeologically. She also noted that Akko

"...would have undoubtedly been the most importance Canaanite harbor for Egypt to control..."

I wish to emphasise the fact that the position of Akko and its anchorage *vis-à-vis* the valleys existed well before the period of Ramses II, and Akko's Egyptian connection existed already in the Middle Bronze Age II, as well as the transition from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze Age (DOTHAN 1976; 1990; BEERI 2003; 2009; BRODY and ARTZY to be published).

While it is usually assumed that the Egyptians controlled the northern area of the coast and valleys during the LB II, I suggest using a model proposed by LIVERANI for the Assyrian Empire's growth in the Habur/Middle Euphrates area (1988, 90) and discussed and applied to the New Kingdom pharaohs of the southern Levant by BENZ (2016, 18–33).³ Both scholars argued that ancient Near Eastern empires controlled a web of key nodes rather than controlling entire territories. Benz directs the reader to the routes of the campaigns of the different pharaohs which he shows had followed a pattern until the end of the Late Bronze Age for which written sources are available. Thus, the Egyptian sphere of influence was expressed through a network of outposts, 'nodes', along the routes and not through complete control of the areas. I will present such 'nodes' which show a direct Egyptian influence on the route from the maritime site of Akko to Beit She'an.

The Harbour of Akko and its Egyptian Connection

In Amarna letter EA 245 the king of Megiddo, Biridiya, blames Surata, the king of Akko (Akka), for letting yet another king, Lab'ayu of Shechem escape:

"...It had been Surata that took Lab'ayu from Magidda and said to me, 'I will send him to the king by boat: *a-ni-yi*'" (MORAN 1992, 299).

This suggests that Akko could have been the anchorage/harbour serving Egypt's interests. Biridiya further blames both the king of Akko and the king of Hinnatuna (Hanaton) for having set Lab'ayu free, probably for some financial remuneration. Note that Biridiya did not plan to send

³ Benz covered the reasons for his acceptance of this model and presents the reader with a detailed account and a wide bibliography.

Lab'ayu via the Via Maris which crosses Nahal 'Iron (Wadi 'Ara), where Megiddo, his city, is located, but rather would send him along the coastal route to Egypt, which is usually assumed to have been the preferred route. Of course, Akko's kings (father and son), as loyal vassals of Egypt, corresponded with the pharaohs. Here I would like to present yet another letter, which I feel also suggests that Akko could have served as the harbour for Egyptian interests. In letter EA 8, sent by Burnaburiash, the Kassite king of Babylon, to the pharaoh, Burnaburiash complains that a caravan sent from Babylon to Egypt was attacked in Canaan and the merchants were robbed and killed. The culprits, we are told, are Šutatna of Akko and Šum Adda of Shimron met in Hinnatuna (Hanaton). Of course, this situation is interesting because of the 'international law' of the time and the responsibility of the pharaoh towards the king of Babylon to keep the route safe since "Canaan is your country" and thus the pharaoh must pay for the misdemeanour of his vassals. But the question should be asked as to why the merchants were in the vicinity of these two sites. One plausible answer is that they were there to unload the goods and ship them to Egypt from the harbour of Akko.

Placing these letters in the context of the period, we wish to suggest that the anchorage of Akko served as the preferred harbour in the northern part of the southern Levant for the Egyptian authorities. Akko, on the northern side of the Haifa bay and north of the Qishon River, was in close contact with Beit She'an and not with Megiddo, whose king Biridiya complains to the pharaoh.

Akko and Beit She'an

As noted above, letter EA 232 was sent by Surata king of Akko, and letters EA 234–235 were sent by Shatatna, his son and heir to the throne (MORAN 1992, 292–294). According to the petrographic analysis carried out by Goren (GOREN, FINKELSTEIN and NA'AMAN 2004, 230), both rulers sent their letters from the Egyptian centre of Beit She'an. Yet nothing in the text of the three letters hints to it. The letters were thus written by a local Beit She'an administrative scribe serving in the Egyptian centre and utilising the local clay for the production of the tablets. These scribes also served other 'loyal nodes' along the route from Akko to Beit She'an. The loyalty of Akko, which could have served as the main harbour for Egyptian

interests, to the Egyptians is indicated in EA 234 in which Shatatna, king of Akko, writes: "Akka [Akko] is like Magdalu in Egypt..." which refers either to Akko's loyalty to the Egyptian authorities or to the Egyptian nature of Akko (MORAN 1992, 293, note 5).

In EA 234, Shatatna explains why he held a person that had defected from the service of Biryawaza of Damascus (MORAN 1992, 292–293). The deserter probably passed through Beit She'an on his way to Akko. The dispatch of this letter from Beit She'an might be explained on the assumption that Shatatna first negotiated with the Egyptian authorities of Beit She'an (the garrison city mentioned in lines 13–17), a site located on the way to Damascus, and wrote his own version of the episode there (GOREN, FINKELSTEIN and NA'AMAN 2004, 239).

Thus, it need not come as a surprise that the clay of the Akko letters originated in the Beit She'an area, and whether the negotiations took place in Beit She'an or not has no importance here. In general, the letters from Akko were dictated to the scribe in the Egyptian administration centre of Beit She'an by the kings of Akko or their messengers. This conclusion is further strengthened by the other two letters from the kings of Akko whose provenance was Beit She'an, namely EA 232 and EA 235. Thus "the reason why the other two letters were written at Beth-shean remains inexplicable" (GOREN, FINKELSTEIN and NA'AMAN 2004, 239) is no longer so enigmatic.

Scribes studied their profession, both language and script, from a very young age before assuming their position in the court. This was a burden on the cities dispatching them at a very young age. In addition, we assume that there was more than one scribe in a given centre. The Egyptian centres, where the scribes were positioned, in this case, Beit She'an, fulfilled the needs of those who did not find it necessary to keep a scribe and the expenses associated with it.

The Route from Akko to Beit She'an

As to the route along which the messengers likely travelled from Akko to Beit She'an, Zvi Gal, in whose publication one can find the history of the various routes suggested by scholars working in the area, has dealt extensively with possible routes of the lower Galilee as well as the connecting routes to Megiddo and from there to Beit She'an (GAL 1992, 8–9). His feeling is that the "...need or

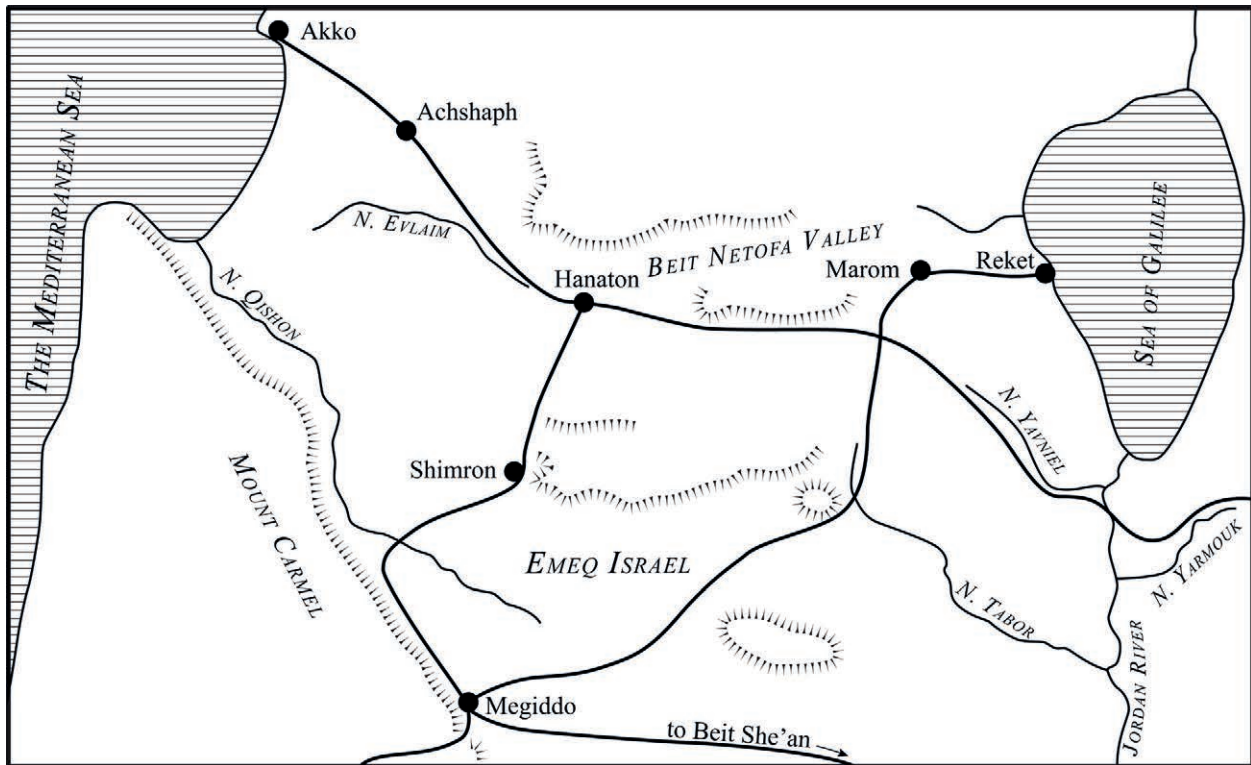


Fig. 6 Routes suggested by Gal (Drawn by R. Stidsing following Gal)

desire to reach the Acco Plain was limited.” He does, however, mention the Babylonian caravan (EA 8), proposing that the route it took was via Beth Netopha Valley, although this does not appear in the letter itself. This, he felt, was not the situation during the later Roman and Crusader periods and especially later, in the Ottoman period, when a route named Darb el-Hawarna was used (Fig. 6):

“It appears that the most popular road in Lower Galilee was that known during the Ottoman period as Darb el-Hawarna: the Turan plain heading toward Beth Netopha valley and Hannathon. From this city the road continues with Nahal Iblin whose outlet to the ‘Acco plain is found closer to Tel Keisan situated not far from Akko and its harbor.” (GAL 1992, 9).

DORSEY, in his treatise on the roads of ancient Israel (1991), presents the route from Akko to Hannathon, but it then follows the route to the Yavneel Valley (Tel Yenoam) and then to the area of ‘Ubeydiya (DORSEY 1991, 105–106).

I would like to suggest a different route used during the Amarna age (Fig. 7), one that is more traversable, but only parts of which were noted by either Gal or Dorsey. Leaving Akko, this route could have passed via Tell Keisan (Tel Kison), although the distance of less than 10km between

the two of them would have made it unnecessary for the traveller, especially a messenger, to stop there on the way to Hanaton, which is less than 10km from Tell Keisan. A distance of 20km in one day can be considered a day’s travel, especially in this area, which is rather flat and traversable. The next stop could have been Tel Shimron, in the Jezreel Valley. The distance, again, in easy travelling terrain, is around 10km. From there I suggest that the route continued to Tel Shadud, a distance of 7km, then to Tel Shunem (EA 365), again less than 10km away. From ‘Afula and Tel Shunem Dorsey’s route T. 8 (DORSEY 1991, 110, Map 5) leads to Beit She’an. This is the longest stretch of the route.

The proposal that the route went via the Jezreel Valley is further strengthened by the results of petrographic analyses carried out by Goren, Finkelstein and Na’aman. An Amarna tablet that they analysed, EA 224, is one of two from Shamhuna (identified as Shim’on, Tel Shimron) and its king Šum Adda, whose identification is accepted by other scholars, although only the name of the king and his forebear are mentioned (RAINEY 1976, 62). In it, the king pledges allegiance to the Pharaoh and asks forgiveness for not having supplied grain, which, he claims, was destroyed (MORAN 1992, 287). Another tablet, EA 225, was not analysed,

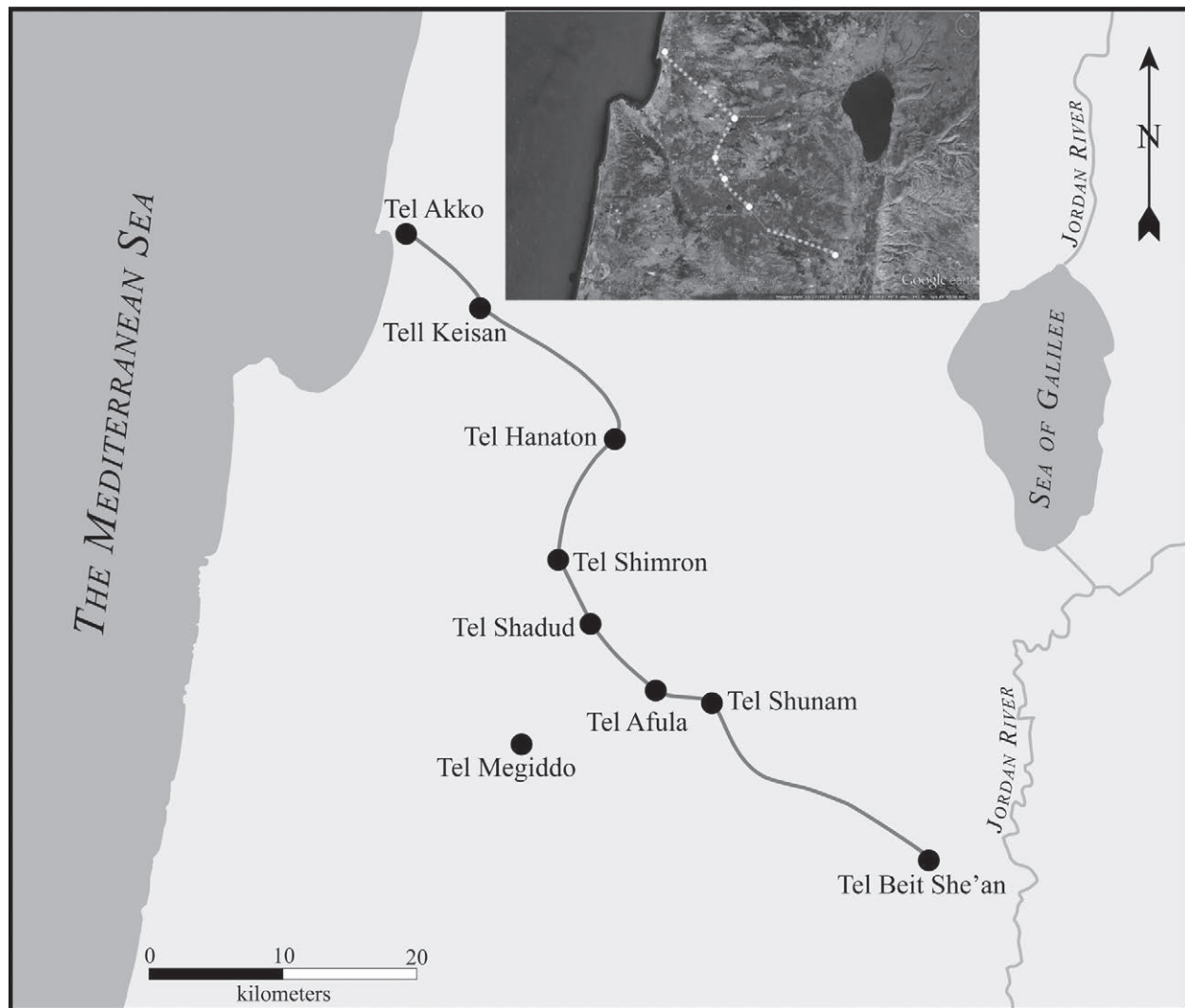


Fig. 7 Sites and the route suggested in this study (Drawn by R. Stidsing)

but in it, again, the king pledges allegiance (MORAN 1992, 288). EA224 was found to have been written in the Beit She'an area (GOREN, FINKELSTEIN and NA'AMAN 2004, 236), and is, therefore, similar to the tablets from the kings of Akko. In this case, Goren, Finkelstein and Na'aman do propose a scenario in which the tablet was written in the Beit She'an region.

The next site on the route of the messenger, as I suggested, is Tel Shadud, where in 2014 a salvage project carried out by a team of the Israel Antiquities Authority, directed by E. van den Brink, R. Beeri and D. Kirzner (VAN DEN BRINK *et al.* 2017, 105–135), found among other graves a clay coffin. The coffin is similar to those found in the Beit She'an cemetery (OREN 1973, figs. 81–84), and, thus, I venture to suggest may have originated in Beit She'an. Among other finds in the coffin was a scarab, encased in gold and bearing the name of

Pharaoh Seti I. While the distance from Shimron to 'Afula or Tel Shunem is such that there was probably no need for the messenger to even stop at Tel Shadud, the site forms the focal point where the routes from Akko and Megiddo converge. Thus far, the site itself does not have an extensive habitation layer dating to LB II, but there is undoubtedly much to be learned in future comprehensive excavations.

In 'Afula or Tel Shunem, next in our messenger's route, there are remains, mentioned by M. Dothan following his excavation of 'Afula, which include, among others, those from the Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze II and the transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron I Age, including, as the excavator emphasises, a large number of imported Mycenaean and Cypriot ceramics (M. DOTHAN 1955, 20). Tel Shunem is now located in the vicinity of the village of Sulam. It appears in

Thutmose III's lists of towns conquered (SIMONS 1937, 116) as well as in the Amarna letters, and in EA 365 (MORAN 1992, 363). This letter mentions corvée labour. They were brought to Shunama not only from the neighbourhood, but also from other places associated with the Egyptian authorities. The 'Crown Lands' were growing grain and as Finkelstein *et al.* states, this is true of the Egyptian administrative centre of Sumur, north of Akko, and mentioned in EA 60 (MORAN 1992, 131–132).

The distance from Tel Shunem or 'Afula to Beit She'an is c. 25 kilometres. The terrain, in this case, is hilly but a possible day's journey by foot. It should be mentioned here that the modern town of 'Afula is a focal point of the newly constructed railway from Haifa Bay to Beit She'an, which is situated in close vicinity to the ancient mound. Na'aman, in dealing with possible 'northern' Hurrian elements and their mark on the northern area of the Southern Levant, mentions this route:

"It is against this background that we can better appreciate the presence of northern groups in the interior of southern Syria and northern Palestine. It has already been noted that the Canaanite rulers called by 'northern' names were located on both sides of the Syro-African rift, whereas the coast south of Alalakh remained mainly Semitic. Thus, we may suggest that the Hurrian migration mainly flowed along the Syro-African rift, i.e. on both sides of the Orontes river and the Lebanese Beqa' as far as the Upper Jordan Valley. The new migrants reach the Acco plain by the road running from the Jordan Valley through the plains of Jezreel and Beth-shean..." (NA'AMAN 2005, 11).

Conclusion

The main documentary evidence cited in this study is mainly that of the corpus of the Amarna letters dated to the LB IIA period. While it is tempting to assume that the routes remained constant over the centuries, it should not be taken for

granted. Geopolitical changes in the various sites within the region and influence from beyond, land and sea, affected both coastal sites and the terrestrial routes. Upheavals in relationships, even among kindred Canaanites, were common, as can be seen in the Amarna correspondence from Tyre and Sidon (ALTMAN 2014). In addition, the numerous military campaigns of the different Pharaohs to this area, starting with Thutmose III to Ramses II, in which Akko and other sites in the Jezreel are mentioned, may actually point to the problems associated with the weakness of the Egyptian control of the area.

It is reasonable to assume that the route from Akko via the Jezreel valley to Beit She'an was used during the Late Bronze Age, when Akko was an important harbour serving the Egyptians in their contacts with their administrative centre at Beit She'an. While Akko served the Egyptian administration at least during the LB II, the anchorage of TAH, seemed, concurrently, to have served the northern areas, Ugarit and the Hittites, with close participation of Cypriot shippers (ARTZY 2016). Yet due to their geographic proximity, it is hard to imagine that there was a complete disengagement of the two anchorages. The sites along the ancient coast of the bay, such as Tel Nahal, Tell Idham, Tel Tzavat, Tel Gedora, Tel Zivda and Tel Afeq (Tel Kurdaneh), were, I venture to suggest, in daily contact. They were likely of similar cultural Canaanite identity and familial affiliations. The Bay of Haifa, with its two anchorages, Akko and TAH, served as 'combined conduits' as did Ashqelon in STAGER'S 'Port Power Model of Trade' (2002, 360). As to the 'balance of power' among the major players of the region mentioned in the Amarna texts, those who might have laid claims to the bread-basket of the valleys whether for the Egyptian authorities or their own interest (or both), namely the kings of Megiddo, Hazor and the infamous king Labayu, is a subject requiring a study of its own.

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