5.1. Low Chronology in Galilee? The Thutmosis III List and the Settlement History

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Generating an absolute chronology of an excavated site or a region is still one of the most challenging problems in archaeology. Well excavated sites offer a reliable relative chronology through its different strata. Very often we do not find any items which date a specific layer into a certain period. Roman and Byzantine coins, sometimes datable to a specific year or at least some years, may help to date a layer. But such exact archaeological finds do not exist in pre-Persian periods in Palestine. Inscriptions mentioning any well-known kings are also seldom, at least in the Levant.

Usually, archaeologists use pottery forms for dating strata.[1] Pottery is a mass ware with a limited life period. Pottery easily brakes and since it is cheap it can be replaced cost-efficiently. Additionally, pottery changes its forms within a limited lifespan. Therefore, pottery analysis became the most important resource for dating specific layers. Nevertheless, pottery does not really offer an absolute chronology but relies on other criteria. Only with the assistance of a link between a specific form to an absolute chronology can ceramic sherds be dated correctly. Pottery without such a link is only important for a relative dating and not for an absolute chronology.

For some decades, natural sciences have offered additional options for dating sites. Dendrochronology may be the best way to date a layer, but unfortunately, our knowledge about this method is not yet fully developed in the Levant. Hopefully, in future years we will have a really stable chronology based on dendrochronology. Radiocarbon dating is actually the most important absolute dating method in archaeology. Nevertheless, the absolute dates offered by radiocarbon dating are not really exact and contain a timespan.

One major point for dating archaeological layers are still the written records – and they may even be the most exact. Some texts are well dated, sometimes exactly to a year, sometimes to a limited timespan like the reign of a king.[2] Texts often offer very concrete historical details which cannot be presented by any archaeological source. However, there is some justified skepticism concerning the reliability of texts. Every text needs some critical research and especially the genre ("Gattung") of a text should be carefully studied. Administrative texts are always more reliable than tales, narratives, and historical descriptions. The authors of these texts are often interested in presenting a specific detail (e.g., efficacy and the success of a pharaoh) more glorious than the historic reality. Nevertheless, texts are still at least one major source for an absolute chronology because they mention campaigns or destructions which can be linked to archaeological observations at a specific site.

To establish a reliable and convincing chronological frame we have to use all sources which are available and we have – after a critical analysis of all of these data – to combine all of them.

Actual Positions

This paper is based on some observations in the settlement history of the region around the Sea of Galilee. For another study we collected all sites in an area 10 km around the Sea.[3] Few sites in this region are excavated and thus well known, but most sites are only known by survey activities. Dating survey pottery is challenging especially for the transition period from Middle to Late Bronze Age since the repertoire of the pottery forms hardly changed. Usually pottery does not alter with the appearance of a historical event. Potters use their traditions for a longer period and only gradually change it. This makes the link between historical events and pottery analysis a little bit tricky. However, statistically the results of many sites of a region might be helpful in combining pottery analysis with historical events.

Different actual handbooks for archaeology of the Southern Levant offer different absolute data for the transition from Middle to Late Bronze Age (all data BCE):

[1] Cf. GITIN [Ed.] 2015; GITIN [Ed.] 2019.

[2] The dates of the pharaohs of Egypt, who are the most interesting data for an absolute chronology for the Middle and Late Bronze Age in Palestine, are actually discussed again. This paper uses rather traditional chronological data (cf. VON BECKERATH 1994; VON BECKERATH 1997; SCHNEIDER 1994) without any consideration of the renewed discussion.

[3] ZWICKEL 2017.

	Middle Bronze Age II A	Middle Bronze Age IIB	Middle Bronze Age IIC	Late Bronze Age I	Late Bronze Age II
NEAEHL: STERN 2008, 2126	2000–1750	1750–1550		1550–1400	1400–1200
MAZAR 1990	2000–1800/1750	1800/1750–1550		1550–1400	1400–1200
LEVY (Ed.) 1995	1800–1650 (Middle Bronze Age II)		1650–1500 (Middle Bronze Age III)	1500–1200	
WEIPPERT 1988	2000–1800	1800–1650	1650–1550	1550–1400	1400–1150

Table 5.1.1. Middle and Late Bronze Age absolute dates in handbooks.

According to these handbooks the transition happened either 1550 or 1500 BCE. Special papers offer even more possibilities for dating the end of the Middle Bronze Age. KEMPINSKI proposed the year 1570,[4] BIETAK and BURKE prefer 1530,[5] DEVER votes for approximately 1500 BCE.[6] Yet more proposals can be found in scholarly literature. Even the low chronology proposed in this study was already proposed, but with a different argumentation. Based on the architectural development in *Tell el-Mutesellim*/Megiddo R. BONFIL proposed to combine stratum X with the end of the Middle Bronze Age at this site; according to her opinion this was the stratum conquered by Thutmosis III.[7] Hence any date between at least 1570 and 1450 BCE for the transition period seems possible.

Survey and Excavation Results in Eastern Galilee

In our study[8] we collected a total of 470 sites settled from the Neolithic to the Persian period in the territory 10 km around the Sea of Galilee. There is a remarkable peak of settlements in the Middle Bronze Age with 164 settlements, 22 of them are at least partly excavated (cf. Table 5.1.2. and Figs. 5.1.1., 5.1.2.). And there exists an enormous decline in settlement history in the Late Bronze Age I period. Only 17 sites survived, 8 of them are at least partly excavated. The attribution of the surveyed or excavated sites to the Middle Bronze Age is only based on the experience of the scholars in dating pottery sherds according to the typical Middle or Late Bronze Age forms. This is definitely a methodological problem (see above). Even more, perhaps not all Middle Bronze Age II sites were settled during the whole period, and some of them were abandoned before the end of the Middle Bronze Age period. Anyways, this huge decline in settlement history from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age needs some explanations.

Period	All sites	Excavated sites
Neolithic	31	9
Chalcolithic	141	19
Early Bronze Age I	67	17
Early Bronze Age II	81	14
Early Bronze Age III	31	7
Early Bronze Age IV / Middle Bronze Age I	72	9
Middle Bronze Age II	164	22
Late Bronze Age I	17	8
Late Bronze Age II	23	8
Iron I	90	14
Iron II	129	20
Persian	75	18

Table 5.1.2.: Distribution of sites and periods in the region 10 km around the Sea of Galilee.

[4] KEMPINSKI 1983.
[5] BIETAK 1991; BURKE 2008, 19.
[6] DEVER 1987, 147; DEVER 1992; DEVER 1997.
[7] BONFIL 2012.
[8] ZWICKEL 2017.

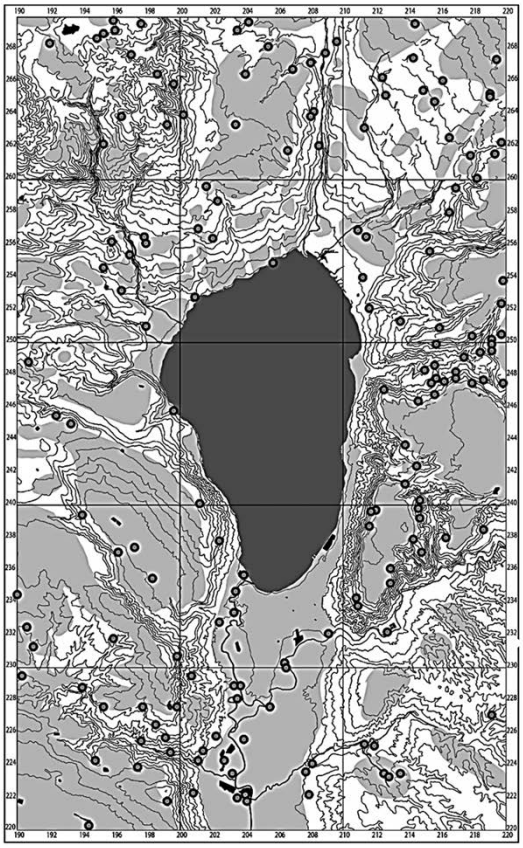

Fig. 5.1.1: Middle Bronze Age II sites.

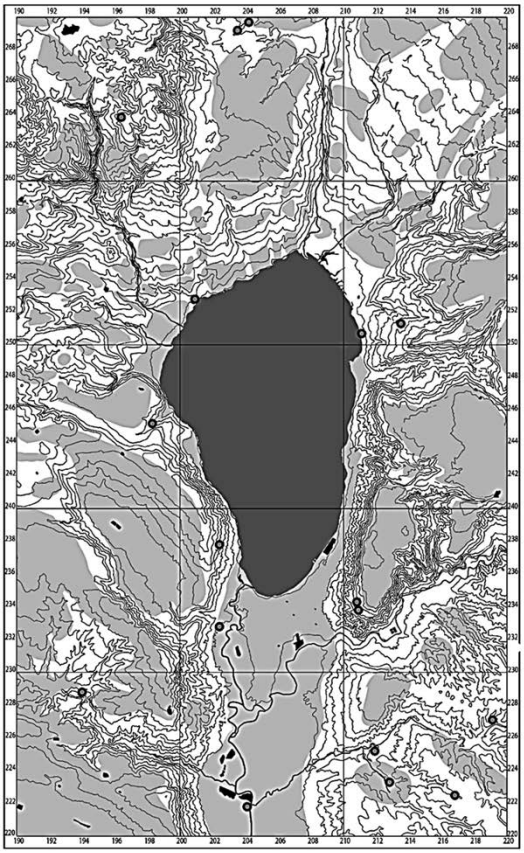

Fig. 5.1.2: Late Bronze Age I sites.

Possible Scenarios for the Decline of Settlement History

Such an immense decline is definitely not caused by natural developments like climate change or by a deterioration of economic conditions. In these cases, we have to expect a rather sneaking decline of settlement history. Additionally, we do not have any confirmation for climate change during these years.[9] 164 sites in the Middle Bronze Age II are an overall peak of settlement density and 17 sites in the Late Bronze Age I is the absolute bottom! This steep decline needs some explanation. If the postulated riots at the end of the Hyksos rule ever affected northern Palestine, then it is not attested at all. On the other hand, the economic decline of this region started likely not before the time of Seti I and Ramesses II,[10] who changed the international road system. While the main road from Egypt to Mesopotamia originally passed the Sea of Galilee, Hazor, and the *Beqaʿ* valley, they installed a new road from Bet-Shean eastwards crossing the Jordan River and running east of the Anti-Lebanon mountains to the north. There must have been other reasons for such a steep drop. We know nothing about a huge earthquake in that period. Therefore, it is very likely that this dramatic change in settlement activity in Galilee has to be connected with a historical event within the period from approximately 1650 to 1450. Fortunately, the historical records for this period related to Palestine[11] are relatively good and may help us to reconstruct this period.

No activities in Palestine of the pharaohs Sebekhotep IV (1694–1685), Sebekhotep V (1685–1680), Jaʿuib (1680–1670), Aja I (1669–1656), Ani (?), Sebekhotep (1656–1654), Sewadjtu (1656–1651), Neferhotep II (1651–1648), Hori (1647), and Sebekhotep VII (1646–1644), all of the 13th dynasty (1759–1644/1630 BCE), are reported. A statue of Sebekhotep IV, allegedly found in *Tell Hizzīn* near Baalbek in Lebanon,[12] could have been a present or could have been transported to this site in a later period. Nevertheless, this statue represents only good trade relation but definitely not Egyptian rule in the Lebanon. The 14th dynasty (1725–1650 BCE) existed concurrently with the 13th dynasty but ended about 1650 BCE. Nothing besides the name of the rulers is known. During the

[9] Cf. Zwickel 2012a; Neumann/Zwickel 2019.
[10] Zwickel 2018.
[11] Cf. the short overview of relevant texts in Zwickel et al. 2013, 42–43.
[12] Chébab 1968 Pl. VIA; cf. Genz/Sader 2008, 184–185.

Hyksos period (15th/16th dynasty) foreigners ruled in Egypt; additionally, some small kingdoms without any importance existed. The Hyksos conducted no campaigns against Palestine. No Levantine activities connected with the 17th dynasty are known.

Ahmose, the first pharaoh of the 18th dynasty (1539/1530–1292 BCE), expulsed the Hyksos from the Nile delta and was able to conquer the city of Sharuhen (= *Tell el-Aǧǧūl*), situated in southern Palestine next to Gaza.[13] However, this likely did not affect northern Palestine. We can only assume that Ahmose's expulsion of the foreign rulers resulted in some rebellions in Palestine. During these supposed riots Palestinian sites could have been destroyed. This is one of the possible scenarios for the end of the Middle Bronze Age in Palestine but it is very speculative, at least for northern Palestine. Thutmosis I (1493–1482 BCE) conducted a campaign leading him as far in the north as Carchemish/*Ǧerāblūs*. He obviously was not interested to subdue Palestine and Syria permanently. We do not have any records about an active Egyptian administration in Palestine.[14] Thutmosis II (1482–1479 BCE) had battles with Shasu nomads but we know nothing about fights in cultured land.[15] Hatshepsut (1479–1458 BCE) conducted two campaigns against southern Palestine. During the second campaign she conquered Gaza in the very south of Palestine.[16] Only Thutmosis III (1479–1426 BCE), who conducted several campaigns against Palestine, reached northern Palestine. The first and most important one is the battle of Megiddo/*Tell el-Mutesellim* in 1457 BCE which is well documented.[17]

This short overview clearly demonstrates that the earliest recorded extensive and politically sustainable Egyptian military campaign against northern Palestine started in 1457 BCE. All other campaigns were either limited to the very south of the country or northern Palestine was not the main military focus of the campaign. This makes the very late date for a destructive end of the Middle Bronze Age culture in this region very interesting. Admittedly, it is outside of the traditional chronological frame of most scholars.[18] Therefore, the town list of Thutmosis III[19] and its data related to our problem have to be restudied.

The Thutmosis III List

Overall, the number of Galilean sites in this list, which were either conquered and destroyed or at least bypassed, is surprisingly high. Altogether 119 Syro-Palestinian sites are mentioned in this list, about 20 of them are situated in Galilee, and even more sites are situated in the northern part of Palestine or in Lebanon and Syria. However, these sites are not in a geographical order and several sites cannot be identified. Evidently, the writers wrote some groups of towns and joined these groups to the final text. Nobody in Egypt was able to read such a list and to understand its order or the distribution of sites. All the place names were completely foreign names for those Egyptians who visited the temple. The purpose of the name lists is exclusively to glorify the pharaoh who is presented on these pylons as fighting and conquering the enemies. Methodologically, we have to isolate subgroups with more or less well identified towns[20] which might have originally belonged together in a "Vorlage", which is now completely in disorder. This approach allows the reconstruction of 13 subgroups situated in Galilee, the Golan, and Hauran and the Jesreel-valley, while other sites are situated further in the south or in the north:[21]

Subgroup 1

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
2	Megiddo	167.221	*Tell el-Mutesellim*

At the beginning of this list the two main enemies of the Egyptians are mentioned: Kadesh on the Orontes (no. 1; *Tell Nebī Mend*) in Syria and Megiddo in the Jesreel valley, where the famous battle of the Egyptians against a Syrian-Palestinian coalition took place. The mention of these two geographically sites being a long way away from each other is pure propaganda – the most important conquered sites are mentioned first. Maybe in the original "Vorlage" these two sites were the headline for the whole site list describing the primary aims of the campaign.

[13] Weippert 2010, 94–95.
[14] Meyer 1986a, 536.
[15] Meyer 1986b, 539.
[16] Cf. Schneider 1994, 131.
[17] E.g., ANET 234–238.
[18] But compare the above-mentioned opinion of Bonfil 2012.
[19] Simons 1937, 27–44.109–122 [list 1]; Aharoni 1984, 157–171.
[20] The identification of sites is taken from Zwickel et al. 2013. Naturally, every single identification can be discussed. Some of the identifications are generally accepted, some are in debate. This study will not discuss the identifications, but is more interested in the general structure of the list. Cf. Fig. 1.3.5. in this volume for a map of the sites mentioned in this paper.
[21] We use a simplified transcription of the site names. For the correct hieroglyphic names cf. Simons 1937; Aḥituv 1984.

Subgroup 2

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
8	Kumidi	227.337	*Kāmid el-Lōz*
9	Dotina		?
10	Laban	277.397	= Lebo-Hamat, modern *el-Lebwe*
11	Kirjat Tandana/Natzal		?
12	Merom	193.270	*Ǧīš* at the foot of Mount *Mērōn* in Galilee, cf. no. 85[22]

Subgroup 2 starts in the *Beqa'*-valley in Lebanon where Kumidi and Laban are situated. The southernmost site is Merom in Galilee (if this site really belongs to this subgroup).

Subgroup 3

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
13	Damascus	273.324	*Dimašq*
14	Aduru	212.266	*Ḫirbet ed-Dūra*
15	Abel (= Abel Bet-Maacah)	204.296	*Tell Abīl*

Subgroup 3 starts at Damascus and also contains two sites in the Huleh valley. Probably, this subgroup describes a campaign which surrounded the Hermon and followed the road on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

Subgroup 4

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
20	Mesana		
21	Saruna		
22	Tob	266.218	*eṭ-Ṭaiyibe*
23	Bashan (= Ziribashan?)	266.253	*Izra'*
24	Imshan		
25	Mesaha (= Amarna: Mušiḫuna)?	272.279	*Mismīye*
26	Qanu	302.241	*Qanawāt*
27	Aruna?	237.236	*el-Bēdar*
28	Ashtarot	245.246	*Tell 'Aštara*
29	Nurpe	260.251	*Ḫirbet Ra'fe*
30	Maked		

The identified names of subgroup 4 are situated in the south of present-day Syria, the ancient area of Bashan. Likely these sites were part of a small campaign of some troops which tried to conquer this region. Unfortunately, little is known about the pre-Hellenistic archaeology in the Bashan territory.

Subgroup 5

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
31	Lajish	211.294	*Tell el-Qādi*/Dan
32	Hazor	203.269	*Tell el-Qedaḥ*
33	*Paḥal/Piḥilum*/Pella	207.206	*Ṭabaqāt Faḥl*
34	Kinneret	200.252	*Tell el-'Orēme*
35	Shimon	170.234	*Ḫirbet Sammūniye*
36	Adamam	193.239	*Ḫirbet et-Tell/Ḫirbet Damīye*
37	Qasan/Kishjon	187.229	*el-Ḫirbe/Tell Qasyūn*
38	Shunem	181.223	*Sōlem*

[22] Merom is generally identified with Mount *Mērōn,* but Middle or Late Bronze Age sherds have neither been found on top of the mount nor in the nearby village of *Mērōn*, which was only settled from the Hellenistic period onwards; cf. FRANKEL et al. 2001, 38 no. 305. *Ǧīš* is the closest Middle Bronze Age II/Late Bronze Age site (cf. FRANKEL et al. 2001, 41 no. 340).

Subgroup 5 includes sites in the Huleh valley, in the Jordan valley south of the Sea of Galilee, and in southern Galilee. The sites are at least partly oriented along the so-called *Via maris* from north to south, ending in Lower Galilee. Evidently, no. 33 *Paḥal/Piḥilum*/Pella is out of order because this site is situated next to the Jordan River in Transjordan.

Subgroup 6

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
39	Mishal	166.256	*Tell Bīr el-Ġarbi*
40	Akhshaf	164.253	*Tell Kēsān*
41	Geba Shemen	159.237	*Tell el-Amr*

The sites of subgroup 6 are all situated at the eastern edge of the Akko plain. The sites are lined along a road running at the foot of the Galilean slopes.

Subgroup 7

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
42	Taanakh	171.214	*Tell Ta'anek*
43	Jibleam	177.205	*Ḫirbet Bel'ame*
44	Gat-Ashna/Gina	178.204	*Ǧenīn*

All sites of the small subgroup 7 are situated parallel to the northeastern slopes of the Carmel ridge, east of Megiddo. The sites are situated along an ancient road. Supposedly these three sites were bypassed by an Egyptian military troop maybe in order to reach the misplaced site of Pella (no. 33).

Subgroup 8

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
45	Alammelekh	163.268	*et-Tell/Tel Kabri*
46	Ayin		
47	Akko	158.258	*Tell el-Fuḫḫār*
48	Rosh Qadesh	150.244	Top of the Carmel Mountain

These sites of subgroup 8 are all situated parallel to the Mediterranean shore north of the Carmel Mountain. This road is parallel to the road of subgroup 6, but next to the Sea shore. The extremely likely identification of the Carmel mountains with Rosh Qadesh demonstrates that Carmel was already venerated during the 2nd millennium as a holy mountain.[23]

Subgroup 9

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
49	Keriman		
50	Bir („fountain“)		
51	Shamshi-Adam	193.245	*Ḫirbet Madyān/Qarn Ḥiṭṭīn*
52	Anaharat	194.228	*Tell el-Muḫarḫaš/Tel Reqeš*
53	Opel-Wer („big hill“)	187.232	*Ǧebel eṭ-Ṭūr*?/Tabor?
54	Opel-Shari („small hill“)	183.234	*Ǧebel Kafse*?*/Har Debora*?

The sites of subgroup 9 are all situated in the southeastern part of Lower Galilee next to Mt. Tabor. There was an ancient road connecting Anaharat/*Tell el-Muḫarḫaš*, situated in the *Wādi eš-Šarrār/Naḥal Tāvōr*, with Mount Tabor. However, there was likely no direct connection beween *Ḫirbet Madyān* and *Tell el-Muḫarḫaš.*

[23] During later periods there was a sanctuary of Zeus, cf. Pseudoskylax (GALLING 1964, 197; 4th century BCE) and an inscription (AVI-YONAH 1952), dating to the 2nd/3rd century CE.

Subgroup 10

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
80	Karuru (Galal)	170–205.230–300	Galilee?
81	Har El	223.303	Antilebanon? Hermon?
82	Lebo	277.397	*el-Lebwe*; cf. no. 10
83	Numan		
84	Naaman		
85	Merom („heights“)	170–205.230–300	Mountains of Galilee?, cf. no. 12
86	Ain		

Subgroup 10 likely describes the regions of the *Beqa'* valley and Galilee. Two sites (Lebo and Merom) are perhaps already mentioned on other places of the list. Merom may refer to the mountainous area of Galilee or specifically to Mount Meron. Anyhow, an exact identification of the sites of this subgroup is problematic.

Subgroup 11

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
87	Rehob	197.207	*Tell eṣ-Ṣarīm*
88	Aqara	207.221	*Tell es-Saḫine*?
89	Hekalayim („the two temples“)	211.225	*Tell Zirā'a*?
90	Abel	231.231	*Tell Abīl*
91	Edrei	253.224	*Der'ā*
92	Abel	239.208	*Ḫirbet Umm el-Abār*?
93	Kinseuta		
94	Maqraput	234.187	*Ǧeraš*?

Subgroup 11 starts at the Cisjordanian side of the Jordan River but continues along the Yarmuk River up to the Transjordanian hill country and runs further southwards. The starting point in Rehob can likely be connected with Gat-Ashna (no. 44) of subgroup 7. If this reconstruction is trustable, a troop contingent of the Egyptian army left Megiddo (no. 2) in eastern direction, crossed the Jordan River near Rehob (no. 87)/Pella (no. 33), climbed the Transjordanian hill country, reached Edrei as the southeasternmost site and continued to go further to the south. Nos. 95 (Ain/*'Ammān*), 96 (Kuraman/*Tell el-'Umēri*?), 97 (Bite/*el-'Al*?), 98 (Dibon/Tipunu/*Dībān*), 99 (Abel/Arnon River? Or *Bālū'*?), 100 (Jarut/*Yarūt*), and 101 (Harkar/*Kerak*)[24] follow the road in the Transjordanian hill country to the south.

Subgroup 12

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
111	Bet-Ana(t)		

Bet-Anat is evidently not connected with any other town cluster. The site is likely situated in northern Galilee – today situated in Lebanon. Neither the identification is certain nor its location in northern Galilee.[25]

Subgroup 13

No.	Ancient name	Coordinates	Identification
112	Halaqtu	160.232	*Tell el-Qassīs/Tel Qāšīš*?
113	Ain Qanama/Yoqneam	160.230	*Tell Qēmūn*
114	Qaba-u	161.228	*Tell Qiri*?
115	Sarra	162.226	*Tell Abū Zarīq*
116	Safta?	163.224	*Tell Abū Šūše*?
117	Burkuna	174.206	*Burqīn*

[24] Cf. WORSCHECH 1990, 127 n. 15.

[25] AHARONI 1984 proposed *Ṣafed el-Baṭṭīḫ* (Koord. 190.289), but no Bronze Age remains are attested. The Lebanese area is hardly explored. Therefore, no convincing identification can be proposed.

The last subgroup for northern Israel covers sites which are all situated directly along the northwestern slopes of the Carmel ridge.

Although it cannot be determined with certainty whether Thutmosis III conquered or only bypassed these cities, this list clearly demonstrates the successful attempt of the Egyptian army to gain control over Palestine and especially over Galilee and the neighboring regions. At least 19 sites mentioned in these 13 northern subgroups are situated in Upper or Lower Galilee and its plains to the west and to the east:

No.	Ancient place name	Coord.	Modern site name	MB II	LB I	Archaeological reference
12	Merom	193.270	*Ǧīš* at the foot of Mount *Mērōn* in Galilee	X	(x)	Settlement of the Middle Bronze Age II period, only scattered Late Bronze Age sherds: HARTAL 2008. Cf. no. 85.
14	Aduru	212.266	*Ḫirbet ed-Dūra*	X	–	ZWICKEL 2017, 109.
15	Abel (= Abel Bet Maacah)	204.296	*Tell Abīl*	X	x	PANITZ-COHEN et al. 2015.
31	Lajish	211.294	*Tell el-Qādi*/Dan	X	x	BIRAN 1994.
32	Hazor	203.269	*Tell el-Qedaḥ*	X	x	BEN-TOR 1993.
34	Kinneret	200.252	*Tell el-ʿOrēme*	X	x	See this volume.
35	Shimon	170.234	*Ḫirbet Sammūniye*	X	x	RABAN/SHEMESH 2016, no. 53; D. MASTER (Late Bronze Age, pers. communication).
36	Adamam	193.239	*Ḫirbet et-Tell*/ *Ḫirbet Damīye*	X	–	ZWICKEL 2017, 64; GAL 1992, 34 no. 3.13.
38	Shunem	181.223	*Sōlem*	X	x	ZWICKEL 2021.
39	Mishal	166.256	*Tell Bīr el-Ġarbi*	X	(x)	LEHMANN/PEILSTÖCKER 2012, 53–54 no. 70.
40	Akhshaf	164.253	*Tell Kēsān*	X	?	SETON-WILLIAMS 1980, 386–387; G. LEHMANN (pers. comm.).
45	Alammelekh	163.268	*et-Tell/Kabri*	X	–	KEMPINSKI 2002, 451.
47	Akko	158.258	*Tell el-Fuḫḫār*	X	x	DOTHAN 1993.
51	Shamshi-Adam	193.245	*Ḫirbet Madyān/ Qarn Ḥiṭṭīn*	X	–	ZWICKEL 2017, 61–62; GAL 1992, 44–47 no. 3.15.
52	Anaharat	194.228	*Tell el-Muḫarḫaš/Tel Reqeš*	X	x	ZWICKEL 2017, 68.
53	Opel-Wer („big hill“)	187.232	*Ǧebel eṭ-Ṭūr*?/ Tabor?	–	–	No excavation remains; likely only a high unsettled landscape spot; cf. GAL 1998, no. 68.
54	Opel-Shari („small hill“)	183.234	*Ǧebel Kafse*?/ *Har Debora*?	–	–	No excavation remains; likely only a high unsettled landscape spot; cf. GAL 1998, No. 50, 60.
80	Karuru (Galal)	170–205. 230–300	Galilee?	–	–	No excavation remains; only a regional name
85	Merom („heights“)	170–205. 230–300	Mountains of (Upper?) Galilee?, Mount Meron?	–	–	Likely only a high unsettled spot. Cf. no. 12.

Most of the site names mentioned in the Thutmosis III list were occupied in both the Middle and the Late Bronze Age. This is not surprising because the Thutmosis III list mainly mentions the major villages and settlements, while during the Middle Bronze Age a lot of small villages or isolated farmsteads were settled. Generally bigger settlements better survive crisis than small isolated farmsteads.

Some of the site names are general topographic descriptions. This is true for the name Galilee (no. 80), for the heights of this mountain area or more concrete Mount Meron (no. 85; cf. no 12), and finally for two hill tops at the northern end of the Jesreel valley (no. 53 and 54). A little bit outside of Galilee is another landscape spot: the Carmel Mountain (“Rosh Qadesh” = “holy peak”, no. 48). All top areas of these mountains were not settled but used only as landmarks in the Thutmosis III list. This confirms the often-expressed opinion that the town (and landscape) list does not obligatorily refer to *conquered* sites.

Several sites were only settled in the Middle Bronze Age but not in the Late Bronze Age I period. This applies to no. 36 Adamam (*Ḫirbet et-Tell/Ḫirbet Damīye*), no. 45 Alammelekh (*et-Tell/Kabri*), and no. 51 Shamshi-Adam (*Ḫirbet Madyān/ Qarn Ḥiṭṭīn*). The last two of these three sites are excavated. Excavations allow a much more reliable dating than surveying. In no. 40 Akhshaf (*Tell Kēsān*) the excavation report of the old excavations conducted by SETON-WILLIAMS did not find clear proof for Late Bronze Age I material, nor did the new Israeli-American excavations until now. No. 39 Mishal (*Tell Bīr el-Ġarbi*) became much smaller during the Late Bronze Age I period; maybe only a cemetery existed there during this period, and the corresponding pottery may come from these tombs only. Also no. 12 Merom (*Ǧīš*) seems to have been much smaller during the Late Bronze Age than during the Middle Bronze Age. These sites besides *Ǧīš* are situated either in the western or in the eastern part of Galilee and are nearly all situated along regional trade roads. Evidently, the campaign of Thutmosis III affected also the trade connections in Palestine.

As far as we know, the town list of Thutmosis III is the first one ever to be engraved on temple walls, although there may have existed some older Palestinian town lists on papyrus in the Egyptian administration. The execration texts may confirm this thesis. Egyptian scribes needed some information about Palestinian sites in order to understand international and diplomatic correspondence. Anyhow, as far as we know, all the sites mentioned in the town list of Thutmosis III were not copied from anyone of these administration texts, but were really bypassed or conquered by Thutmosis' army.

If some of these sites were abandoned at the end of the Middle Bronze Age but are still mentioned in the Thutmosis III list only one interpretation seems meaningful and convincing: Middle Bronze Age II lasted in Galilee until 1457 BCE! The steep decline of settlement activity in the whole area can be explained by Egyptian campaigns undertaken during the siege of Megiddo. This siege was disastrous for the area of Galilee whose small farmsteads and villages could not survive this crisis.

Normally archaeologists use clear contemporaneous destruction layers to describe the end of a time period, in this case the end of the Middle Bronze Age. This approach is valid if earthquakes destroy a country or if foreigners conquer a region and destroy all the towns violently. However, we do not know exactly the aims of Thutmosis III. Was he really interested to conquer and destroy whole Palestine? Or was he rather interested in a substantial economy and safe trade roads with a good infrastructure? Did he mainly destroy the small settlements and farmsteads in Galilee which supported the sieged town of Megiddo and the associated Canaanite kingdoms with food? Actually, this last assumption is most likely due to the archaeological data. While Stratum X may be the final Middle Bronze Age stratum in Megiddo,[26] there is no clear destruction level at the end of the Middle Bronze Age in the excavated and well published sites of Hazor[27] or *Tell el-ʿOrēme*/Kinneret.[28] Limited destruction layers in parts of a town may easily happen by accidence due to fire or other reasons and even a peaceful restructure of the urban layout is usual after several decades. Therefore, a gradual change, connected with strong cultural continuity, may be valid at least for this part of Galilee.

If the same people still lived at a site, pottery forms do not change very much in the beginning of a new archaeological era. The very early Late Bronze Age potters continued to produce the same pottery as the very late Middle Bronze Age potters did. Only new settlers introduce a clearly different pottery tradition or a new architectural layout of the settlement. In excavations we normally find the pottery of the last 10 or 20 years of the occupation of a stratum. Older pottery forms seldom survive because pottery is fragile. People of those days only had a limited number of pottery items which they used daily. Therefore, those items tended to brake frequently. Pottery is thus not a good marker to describe archaeologically the transition of two different periods, because we mostly have sherds from the end of each stratum. It only can be used to describe the material culture of two different archaeological eras. Without destruction levels we do not have significant markers for describing a break in the cultural development or – with other words – a transitional period. Only historical events like military campaigns (like the transition from Middle to Late Bronze Age in both southern Palestine and Galilee), climate changes (like the transition from Early Bronze Age III to IV or the transition from Late Bronze to Iron Age I), earthquakes, riots, and others can help to describe a concrete cultural change.

[26] BONFIL 2012.
[27] BEN-TOR 2016, 78. YADIN found a thick ashy layer in area C and interpretated it as a destruction layer of the site at the end of the Middle Bronze Age. However, he did not uncover a comparable layer of ash in the Upper city. BEN-TOR stresses that there was a gradual and smooth transition from Middle to Late Bronze Age and definitely no gap in the settlement history.
[28] See this volume.

Conclusions

If our considerations are correct we have to assume an ultra-low local chronology in northern Palestine for the transition period from Middle to Late Bronze Age. This transition can only be connected with the Egyptian campaign in 1457 BCE. However, this does not mean that this absolute date is valid for whole Palestine. Archaeologists often have the biblical geographical region "from Dan to Beersheba" in mind, which is generally presented not only on maps of the Iron Age but also of the Bronze Age periods. But this territory was never unified before the days of David and Salomon in the 10th century BCE – and once again in the Hasmonean period. In contrast, during the whole Bronze Age there existed independent territories with their own history and development in this country. The end of the Hyksos rule affected southern Palestine much more than the northern part of the country. Only after 1457 BCE did Galilee and other parts of northern Palestine come under Egyptian control. Therefore, there is a difference of about 100 years between the start of the Late Bronze Age in northern and southern Palestine! In contrast, the end of the Late Bronze Age started in the north in the last third of the 13th century,[29] while southern Palestine was still under Egyptian control until the last third of the 12th century BCE.[30] The chronological tables in our handbooks are misleading, and one of the main projects for future will be to develop more regionally based chronological systems which pay heed to the local historical and economic development.

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[29] ZWICKEL 2017, 240–242.
[30] ZWICKEL 2012b.

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