

Figure 1.13 illustrates how the vast majority of villages which belonged to the Jarrar domain were located on the southern and eastern boundaries of the Sanur Valley a consequence of the attempt to utilise every inch of fertile land. This pattern of settlement, on the extremities of fertile basins, plains or plateaux, is easier to observe in places where the amount of fertile land was extensive. In cases of hill tops and slopes, where agricultural lands were small in size, the relationship between village location and fields is more difficult to depict and requires further examination.

III. The Impact of Arid Zones on Village Distribution

The central highlands are surrounded by two arid zones; this had a distinctive impact on village distribution and size of village land holdings (Fig. 1.12). The aridity and steepness of the eastern slopes, descending towards the Judean desert and the Jordan rift, obviously limited the eastward expansion of sedentary settlements. This is clearly the case of in the eastern slopes of the Hebron hills. Here, the settlements of Bani N'aim, esh-Shuyukh, Sair and Beit Fajjar were all within a distance of only five kilometers east of the mountain's crest.

In the Nablus area, where agricultural land spread farther east (Wadi el Faria' and Ghor Bisan), we notice that eastern settlements such as Tammun, Tiasir, Bardalah and Khurbet Kaaun extended farther east than those in the Hebron or Jerusalem mountains. As a result of the aridity of land, the low annual precipitation (100 -300 mm / 4-12 in), and the scarcity of vegetation and water, we find no settlements on the eastern slopes. In the south, the penetration of the Naqab Desert resulted in the decrease of sedentary settlements as we go south, and the absence of any permanent settlement on the southern slopes, (south of es-Samua and ed-Daherieh).

IV. Was Defence a Crucial Criteria in Village Siting ?

Defence has been cited by many scholars as one of the most, if not the most, crucial factors which determined the "elevated" location of