

villages in the Central Highlands. D.H.Amiran, for example claimed that security took precedence over any other consideration. This was illustrated by noting that many villages in the Jerusalem hills were built a hundred or more meters away from the spring in order to secure a strategic location (1953: 203).

E.Efrat also claimed that the location of villages in the Nablus Hills "are located on hill tops, domes and ridges dominating the surrounding countryside and offering a good strategic position" (1977: 99).

In a similar vein Wilson, in Peasant Life in the Holy Land, wrote:

"The sites of these ancient towns and villages were largely determined by physical conditions, such as a position easily defended or the proximity of an abandoned water supply" (1906: 57).

In the case of central highland villages, I believe that the influence of defence on village location, and the degree to which security took precedence over other considerations, can be disputed.

Based on data given by the Survey of Western Palestine, (Conder and Kitchner, 1881), I surveyed 325 villages out of a total of 372 (not all villages' locations or elevation were given by the Survey). All of these villages belong to Central Highland Sheikhdoms. In general, the villages of these Sheikhdoms are located in the highlands higher than 150 meters above sea level, but substantial numbers are located on the western slopes and low coastal plains.

The number of villages tabulated by the present author in the Hebron and the Jerusalem hills is 126. Out of this 76 (60%) are located on hill tops, 25 (20%) are on mountain slopes, and 25 (20%) are on low ground. In the case of villages located in the Nablus hills, a total number of 199 villages were surveyed: 57 (28%) are on hill tops, 67 (37%) are on mountain slopes and, 75 (38%) are on low ground.

We notice that villages in the two geographic areas have different patterns of location; those in the Hebron and the Jerusalem hills