

have a higher percentage of villages on top of mountains than those in the Nablus area. Taking into consideration the physical structure of the former (hardly disturbed by faults), and bearing in mind that the southern areas of the Hebron mountains were "peripheral areas", the explanation for such patterns of location is clear. As mentioned earlier, the threat of Bedouin raids affected only the expansion and location of those villages located in the peripheral zones. The central highland area has been relatively protected from threats of outside enemies.

The one internal threat that might have had an impact on the siting of some highland villages was "inter-village" wars. The on-going wars between the two rival fallaheen factions of Qais and Yemen is seen here as a factor that influenced the location of power centre villages, Qura el Karasi (throne villages).

The defence of any village should be looked at in the wider context of its sheikhdom. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, the central highland area was divided into twenty-one Sheikhdoms. Each Sheikhdom consisted of a number of villages ranging from a minimum of six villages in the Bitawi Sheikhdom (Nablus area), to a maximum of fifty-six villages in the bilad Hareth esh-Shamalieh (Jenin area). The throne villages were the centres of power and wealth of the Sheikhdom. The sheikh of such a village was often the tax farmer (multazim) of his Sheikhdom.

Thus, the village was never independent in its political role or in matters related to defence. The village's security was slocated in the power or lack of power of its Sheikhdom. Village security was the duty of the Sheikhdom army under the rule of its chief Sheikh (Sheikh en-nahyeh). Hence, it was crucial that throne villages have a defendable strategic siting.

Again from data given by the Survey of Western Palestine and from field data, this author studied the locations of the 24 throne villages (some sheikhdoms had more than one throne village because two villages in the same sheikhdom competed for power and tax-farming rights (iltizam) such as the two villages of Deir Ghassaneh