

with less dependency on the government or town notables, who provided security for coastal plain villages. Even though mountain villages suffered from inter-village wars, particularly between the two fallaheen factions, Qais and Yemen, their relationship to towns or main roads was not much affected.

#### THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS: Topographical Determinism ?

The rest of this chapter will focus on the central part of the highlands in order to trace in more detail the different factors which have influenced the dispersion of villages within this region.

The central section of the hill region in Palestine comprises The Hebron, Jerusalem and Nablus hills. In general the barren hills of Hebron and Jerusalem are simple and compact structures. The top of the Jerusalem hills is a compact upfold, hardly disturbed by faults. The Hebron mountains are narrow with a flat plateau. The southern parts of this mountain range are dry, and the eastern slopes are both extremely steep and arid. The western slopes are more fertile than those of the south and east.

The Nablus hills are morphologically more diverse. Many branch and rift valleys dissect the mountain blocks. Internal basins isolate the different mountain ridges. All of these valleys and basins are fertile, and the eastern slopes in this area are not pronouncedly arid. Due to the broken nature of the Nablus hills, moisture bearing sea winds coming from the west reach the eastern fold. The western slopes are of low foothills broken by valleys which connect the central parts of the hills with the coastal plain. Unlike the Hebron and Jerusalem hills which have a relatively small number of springs, the Nablus hills have many.

#### How did this geographic structure affect the dispersion of sedentary villages?

The following observations suggest that the nature of the terrain was one of the factors which determined the way in which villages