

highlands had large land holdings (Fig. 12). The scarcity of springs was another reason for these villages to be widely dispersed. One also notices that the vast majority of villages which functioned as the centres of Sheikhdoms, (i.e., "throne" villages) were relatively large. Examples are Arrabeh, Y'abbad, Dura, Beit-Jibrin, and Abu-Gosh.

The Availability of Agricultural Land And The Formation of Village Distribution Patterns:

The availability of relatively fertile land seems to be the primary factor in shaping the different patterns of village distribution, that is, the tendency to cluster along longitudinal axes as in the case of the Hebron hills or encircle a fertile basin as in the case of Sanur and 'Arabeh plain in the Nablus area. In general, villages abstained from settling on fertile land; they were located principally on the edges of plateaux and basins (Figs. 1.9 and 1.13).

This is clearly illustrated in the pattern of village distribution in the Hebron hills (Fig. 1.9). Here, one observes a concentration of settlements on the mountain plateau. Fourteen out of the thirty-two villages listed by the Survey of Western Palestine in 1881, were located on the mountain crest. Notice that only the two towns of Hebron and Halhul were located in the centre of the plateau. All other villages were located on the extremities of this plateau.

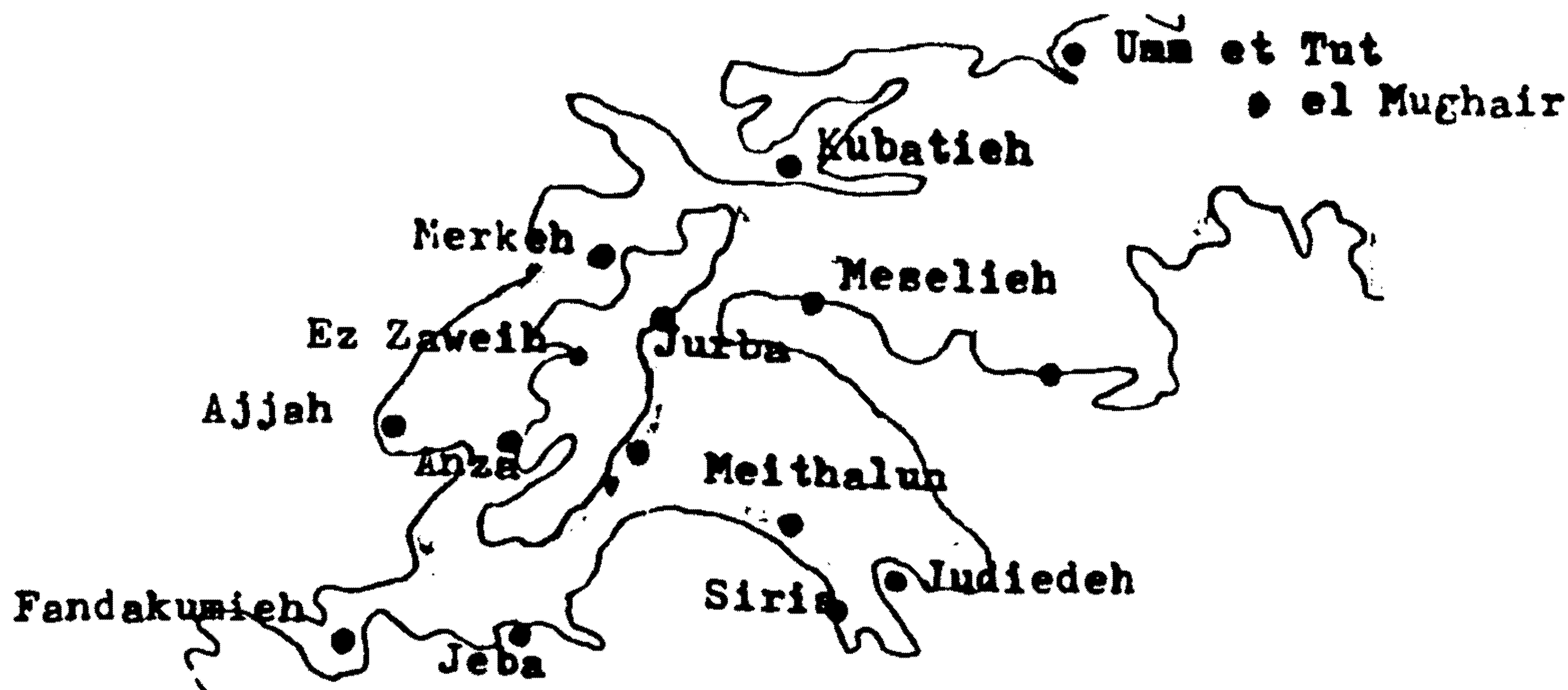


Fig. 1.13: Jarrar villages on the basin extremities (drawn by the author on the basis of information from the Survey of Western Palestine)