

CHAPTER TWO

THE BANI ZAID SHEIKHDOM: AN ADMINISTRATIVE AND DEFENSE UNIT

During the nineteenth century, the Bani Zaid sheikhdom (mashiakha or nahyeh) was one of twenty-one administrative central highland sheikhdoms. Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, sheikhs of central villages (throne villages) enjoyed great political power and wealth. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the sheikhs of throne villages started to lose their powers as the Ottoman rulers shifted their alliances from rural sheikhs to urban notables and local mukhtars (appointed notables) (Migdal, 1980: 11). By the turn of this century their power had almost ceased.

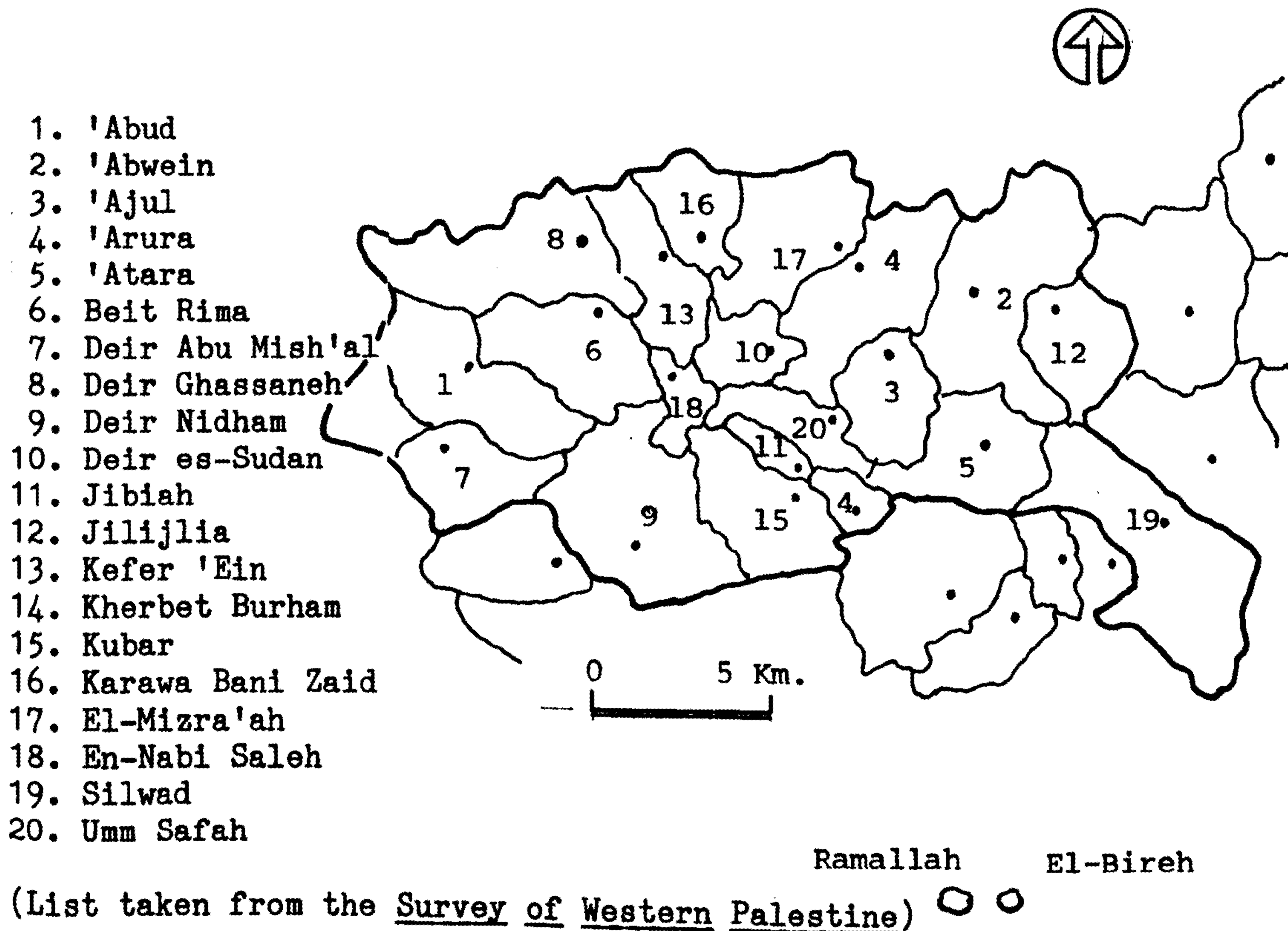


Fig. 2.1: Bani Zaid sheikhdom (Source: M. Dabbagh, 1965)

The Bani Zaid sheikhdom, which included nineteen villages, (Fig. 2.1), was located to the west of the highland's main road, north-west of Jerusalem. This sheikhdom had more or less defined geographic boundaries which separated it from the surrounding sheikhdoms: Wadi