Defining Cities and Non-Cities through Emic and Etic Perspectives 

A Case Study from Israel/Palestine during Early Islam

ABSTRACT Differentiating urban places from rural is often obscure. This paper advances some clarification based on the analysis of settlements from the seventh to the eleventh centuries in Israel/Palestine. In this case study, archaeological sites in central Israel are classified into types based on their finds, settlement types are identified through terminology in texts from or about Palestine, and the results of the two analyses are compared. The main category for distinguishing one settlement type from another is the amount of services it provides, with the greatest range of services in cities. However, cities in this study are not big, not spatially central, and not very industrial; the only entity to answer such criteria is the metropolis. The paper thus highlights the importance of a contextual inquiry, a regional overview, and a bottom-up perspective.

KEYWORDS Site typology; terminology; madīna; metropolis; settlement systems; central-place theory; Palestine; Israel; Early Islam

Archaeologists define cities based on their principal layout and physical characteristics or on their assumed function (Smith 2016; 2020). Following these general guidelines, huge ancient sites such as Ur in present-day Iraq are recognized as cities, and sites with a rich variety of artefacts are identified as marketplaces and thus as regional economic centres and cities. The central role assigned to cities does not only relate to trade, but also to political and religious functions reflected in specific architectural forms (Osborne 2015). Archaeological sites which yield no such characteristics are often identified as non-cities or ‘rural’. However, historians and sociologists agree that the ‘city’ is a relative concept, changing in various contexts and through different perspectives (e.g. Abrams 1978; Brandes 1999; Wickham 2005, 592–93). Questions of locality and temporality are so substantial, that theoreticians of urbanity do not agree on a single comprehensive definition. Attempts to generalize cities under empirical criteria such as size, growth rate, density, or long-term continuity usually fail to include all assumed cases (Fletcher 2020). One of the challenges archaeologists face is to avoid projecting the ‘realities’ of industrial cities onto earlier sites and regions (Bettencourt and Lobo 2019; Lobo and others 2020). Roland Fletcher (2020) therefore calls for a division between industrial and pre-industrial cities which would provide better-refined data on ancient cities and enable testing the validity of a global comparison. In this paper, I argue that, before conducting any comparison, archaeologists must examine complete settlement systems and reassess former interpretations and terminology for settlement entities. This process will produce bottom-up definitions for ‘cities’ in diverse contexts which could then be compared.

In landscape archaeology, scholars employ mathematical models and central-place theory to illustrate the regional centrality of sites and possible urbanization processes (e.g. Nakoinz, Bilger, and Matzig 2020). However, the clear visualization enabled by

Acknowledgements This study is part of my PhD dissertation ‘Landscaping Early Islam: The History of Settlement in Central Israel during the Seventh–Eleventh Centuries through Archaeology, Terminology, and Narratives’ at Universität Hamburg (2019). The paper was presented at the second ICAS-EMME at the Cyprus Institute, Nicosia, on 12 November 2019. My thanks go to Anja Rutter for revising the English, as well as to the audience of the presentation and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and questions.
the method, together with its scientific quality, tends to obscure its theoretical basis and hypothetical proxies. The basic model for the theory, according to Carol A. Smith (1976, 7–16), was published by Johann Heinrich von Thünen in 1826. It measures the cost-effectiveness of produce being transported from and to the market centre. The subsequent model from 1933, the central-place theory by Walter Christaller, operates through a modular connection between markets. The competition between them is thought to create a hierarchy of big and small centres (Smith 1976, 7–16). A different influential theory which also deals with the relation between cities and their surroundings was published by the historian Moses Finley in 1973. According to Finley, a city is a single entity which controls its hinterland. The city dwellers depend on the countryside farmers who provide food, but the city owns the resources, has the authority, and controls the conditions of production and the access to other resources (Finley 1973, 124–25).

In contrast to these theories, archaeology shows that not every economic hub correlates with what we imagine to be a city. In Israel, for example, small sites identified as ‘rural’ by the excavators show a high level of trade networks, possibly reflecting marketplaces, in both the eighth–nineteenth centuries (Early Islam) and the thirteenth–fifteenth centuries (the Mamluk period) (Gabrieli, Ben-Shlomo, and Walker 2014; Nol forthcoming). Some of the early Islamic ‘rural’ centres were adjacent to other centres at large sites (Nol forthcoming). The ethnological and ethno-historical evidence supports this picture with evidence on major economic activities performed also outside cities — as for instance, periodical fairs (De Ligt 1993, 99–136; Binggeli 2012). A similar problem exists in Scandinavia and northern Germany, where scholars of Viking Age sites struggle with the definition of central places, which are otherwise identified as ‘emporia’ or even villages (e.g. Sindbæk 2007; Hodges 2012, 98). In short, at least one of our etic categories for differentiating between ‘cities’ and ‘non-cities’ — i.e. the level of their economic centrality in regions — is questionable. In other words, the adequacy of our terminology should be re-evaluated.

In research on the Middle East during the fourth to the eleventh centuries AD, sites selected for excavation are usually large settlements, monumental settlements, and/or settlements identified through textual toponyms (place names). Archaeologists concentrate on identifying physical evidence for ‘urban planning’ and perceive the gridiron plan as a representation, first, of cities, and second, of ‘good cities’ (Foote 2000; Eger 2013, 111, 119; Avni 2014, 177; Walmsley 2018). The identification of early Islamic cities also rests on three features which are noted in semi-contemporary chronicles and geographies — i.e. a mosque, a bath house, and a market (Whitcomb 2007, 15; Walmsley and others 2008) — and on traces of ‘industries’ including the production of pottery, glass, and textiles (Walmsley 2007, 348–49; Milwright 2010, 146; Taxel 2014, 134). Area studies of the period are not common, but when conducted they rely on surface surveys which can only produce limited information. Alternatively, excavations of a single large site are accompanied by surveys of its surroundings, justifying prior assumptions about its centrality. This picture is generally different in Israel, where salvage excavations have been conducted intensively since the 1990s on various types of sites and in various topographies, but the outcome does not change. In essence, historical cities in the Middle East are perceived as an economic engine; the city supposedly acts as a production centre, as the main space for exchange, and as the chief consumer.

With a social historical perspective, I focus in this paper on the economy of settlements, on social and economic relations between them, and changes over time both in the settlements and in the regional system. In archaeology, I apply high-resolution area studies to assign to sites their unique characteristics and regional role. In parallel, I use an emic approach, that is, I look at the terminology that communities employed to describe their own places of residence and at the characteristics that differentiated settlement types in these descriptions (e.g. Kalmring 2016; Nol 2020a). The last analysis involves contrasting the emic/terminological and etic/archaeological results. The first purpose of the comparison is to get two independent storylines which might correlate in some cases, thus providing strong arguments. Another aim is to test the validity of the etic interpretation. Importantly, the emic data do not necessarily provide a truthful presentation of reality to which the archaeological interpretation must align (Hayden 1984). It offers an offsetting perspective. The privilege to employ such a two-sided method is obviously restricted to research of historical periods and text-oriented societies.

In both the first and the second method, I use ‘Big Data’ analysing tools (Gattiglia 2015, 2–6). This involves, in the first stage, a non-selective gathering of information through a consistent list of categories. Relatively large amounts of data are obtained

1 For, e.g., Syria, see Eger 2015. For North Africa, see Leone and Mattingly 2004.
2 For Aqaba, see Parker and Smith 2014. For Jarash, see Lichtenberger and others 2019, 338–39.
by asking a wide research question, chronologically or geographically, and/or by going into very small detail. When assembling Big Data, quantity is preferred over quality. In archaeology, that would mean looking at detailed excavation reports along with interim reports. For the terminological analysis, it means collecting varied types of ancient texts at different levels of reliability. The large amount of information allows for a clarity which samples cannot provide through a longue-durée perspective. The next step is to cross-reference the categories until a pattern emerges. The goal of the method is to highlight patterns, not to explain them. The use of models and theories, or of historical context, comes only at that final stage.

Two research areas have been defined for this study: one physical and the other abstract. The abstract space is sketched from texts and principally relates to the region regarded as 'Palestine' by the third- to sixth-century administration and by ninth/ tenth-century geographers. It consists of famous toponyms (e.g., Ghazza, al-Ramla, Kafr al-Zāhiriyā) as well as lands and places in between. The physical space is situated between the modern municipalities of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa, Ashdod, and Ramla in central Israel.

Archaeological research in the area involves intensive surveys as part of the Archaeological Survey of Israel project, rescue excavations chiefly by Israel Antiquities Authority, and a small number of research digs. These studies recovered up until 2014 a total of 364 'nodes' with remains dating from the seventh to the eleventh centuries (Fig. 10.1), 124 of which are in and around modern Ramla (34 per cent). So far, 297 nodes (81.5 per cent) have been excavated. All nodes have been included in this study, using data from various levels of publications. As of 2014, twenty excavations were published as final reports in monographs, most other excavations were published as interim reports or limited final reports in archaeological journals (some online), and ten excavations have never been published. Moreover, six out of eleven survey 'maps' (10 × 10 km blocks) were published online. Ongoing surveys have generally not been assessed for the present study.

Relevant interim reports do not document every element but often record architectural features and
list special objects. Finds which are significant for our purposes, such as floor pavements, channels, pits, and ovens, as well as legible coins and artefacts made of bone or metal, are noted in every report. Surveys record visible architectural features without stratigraphic contexts and rarely reveal artefacts other than pottery and coins, thus the relevance of their findings and possible chronology is questionable. Therefore, sites of which all nodes were only surveyed, or remained unpublished, could seldom provide sufficient evidence and are largely absent from the following analysis. When limited published information entered our results, it did not change the established patterns, but this methodological challenge will be addressed below.

The term ‘node’ is borrowed from Social Network Analysis. In our context it denotes small areas of archaeological investigation, such as ‘sites’ in archaeological surveys or excavations on a limited scale. Nodes in the research area comprise two to sixty excavation squares (5 × 5 m) and measure between 5 and 200 m in diameter. Unlike the term ‘site’, which is a modern observation and is often imagined as a synonym for ‘settlement’ (Thomas 1975; Dunnell 1992), ‘node’ is envisaged as empirical and more neutral. Following the results of this study, ‘sites’ were identified as any independent node or a cluster of sequencing nodes that a) include architecture and b) are distinct from other such clusters, often at a distance of several kilometres. These sites may well reflect settlements. Nodes without architecture contained burials or portable artefacts and may support the boundaries of sites when reflecting cemeteries and dumps outside settlements.

A couple of modern municipalities, Ramla and Ashdod, consist of a few sites. Most other sites, however, seem to correlate spatially with their modern entity. In Ramla, mapping some of the architec-
tural elements resulted in a few possible clusters (Fig. 10.2). The distance between the boundaries of these clusters measures about 400 m but the division is not hermetic. One of the maps, with all the excavations at Ramla, suggests that the gaps between the clusters are not methodological (i.e. related to areas which were not excavated). Mapping Ashdod similarly results in a number of sites, among them Ashdod-Yam and Tel Ashdod (Fig. 10.3).

The first method employed here consists of a primary typology of sites that is chiefly based on the design of their installations and on their construction techniques. ‘Installations’ in Israeli archaeology means architectural features related to manufacture activities, to fire or water, and to any other (sometimes unidentified) technology. Characteristics which stood out are, as examples, channels, flagstone pavements, and bath houses. This typology was strengthened by the presence/absence of additional artefacts, such as iron objects, and by other attributes, such as the proximity to specific routes. In the attempt to avoid functional titles that limit the interpretation (Hodder and Hutson 2003, 171), the established site types were named as neutrally as possible at this stage, from type 1 to type 4.

In parallel with the archaeological analysis, the terminological examination resulted in a clear set of five settlement types. This set of types was used for a long period by various communities — communities, speaking different languages. Most significantly, there is an evident confusion between the functions of ‘city’ and ‘metropolis’, as they are frequently described with similar terminology in ancient sources. In fact, it is mostly the metropolis that is mentioned in the studied texts. However, I believe that the metropolis cannot be defined as a settlement type of its own — it belongs within the definition of a city. Non-cities are scarcely noted but comprise a variety of settlement types (‘town’, ‘village’, ‘monastery’, ‘fortress’). Toponyms were seemingly defined based on the scope of their services and, possibly, their relation to trade.

The case study does not show a complete correlation between terminology and archaeological site typology. For example, the settlement types ‘monastery’ and ‘village’ cannot be differentiated in our archaeological evidence. In addition, one site type with an industrial character could only be associated with a settlement type which appeared in later texts. This might mean that my etic definition was not a
perfect fit. Nevertheless, the comparison highlights important observations for our context: a) it points to the nuanced differences between 'town' and 'city', b) it demonstrates the relatively small size of cities, and c) it indicates the possible layout of a metropolis — as a cluster of cities, towns, and villages. Most importantly, it becomes clear that the dichotomy established by modern scholars between the most important site (which I would call 'metropolis') and all other settlement types unjustifiably cements the latter's inferior status. The more subtle definitions for settlement/site types, proposed in this article, enable the observation of the rich variety of places, and it allows us to better comprehend their economy and social life.

Archaeological Sites: Data and Typology

Certain features, artefacts, and characteristics differentiate sites and assist in their classification. Elements which emerged as significant are water installations, fire installations, bath houses, presses, channels, flagstone pavements, and copper coins. The typology is not perfect, first because several small sites provided too little information to allow for their classification (e.g. Nesher Quarries). Second, it lacks a temporal distinction and relies on 'essential' and unhistorical characteristics of sites. This subject will be dealt with in the discussion. In this section, I introduce relevant portable artefacts, relevant installations, and other architectural elements. Next, the initial typology of sites will be discussed, followed by additional characteristics which correlate with that typology and with an interpretation of site types.

Portable Finds

Objects from excavations in the research area are made of clay, glass, stone, metal, shell, and animal bone. They additionally include the waste or raw materials of possible crafts (pottery, glass, and metals). The following artefacts are recurrent and can be detected by the naked eye, excluding most types of pottery and glass. All the common portable artefacts were unearthed at Ramla but other key sites were observed, including Ashdod-Yam, Lod, Tell Qasile, and Tel Ashdod. Most finds are also known from famous sites in the neighbouring regions, such as Fustāṭ (Fustat), Ḥamā (Hama), and Caesarea. These contexts do not reflect the site character as possible production sites, marketplaces, or consumption loci at face value, and their role is investigated elsewhere. Many artefacts cannot be dated with any certainty thus their date will be mentioned only in passing. Likewise, their functions will be suggested but should be considered tentative.

Finds made of bone or ivory can be found in small numbers on many of the research sites. The distinction between the two materials is not always clear and therefore both will be grouped together. More common objects comprise figurines, beads, combs, decorated sticks or pins, and game pieces. The bone figurines, the so-called 'Coptic dolls', are 10 cm long (Fig. 10.4). They are interpreted as toys or as being fer-
tily-related, and some were found in burials (Golan 2002; Ayalon 2005, 80), yet two pierced specimens imply they were jewellery or amulets (Kubiak and Scanlon 1973, pl. 17.7). At Fustat, figurines were dated to AD 800 (Scanlon 1968, pl. 4) but can be attributed more widely to the ninth–tenth centuries, while the abstract ones (Fig. 10.4, nos 4–5) might even be of the tenth–twelfth centuries (Ayalkan 2005, 80, 260–67, figs 31–34). Specimens were found also in al-Mina, Hama, Caesarea, Nessana, and Jerusalem (Lane 1938, fig. 14.D; Colt 1962, pl. 21; Oldenburg 1969; Ayalon 2005, 260–67; Shatil forthcoming). In the research area, six figurines were found, one of them unearthed in a young female burial at Ramla (Golan 2002).

Grinding, pounding, and pressing objects are relatively rare in our region. The group includes flat and round millstones of the ‘rotary querns’ type, 25–45 cm in diameter. Such millstones are known from a northern site in Israel, Tel Yaqne'am, from the tenth century (Williams-Thorpe and Thorpe 1993, 270). The examples in the region are made mainly of basalt but also of beach-rock, and one specimen is made of marble. Both basalt and beach-rock specimens can be found at, among other sites, Ramla. Rotary querns are attributed to grain milling.

A much more common object type is handles of heavy jars which bear a round stamp with a symbol or a text. Based on the inscriptions and on petrographic examinations, it has been argued convincingly that these jars/handles derive from the site and surroundings of Nabi Samwil, 8 km north-west of the old city of Jerusalem (Magen and Dadon 1999; Gascoigne and Pyke 2011; Amitai-Preiss, Cohen-Weinberger, and Har-Een 2017). Up till now, the largest corpus has been found in Ramat Rahel (4 km south of Jerusalem) and allows for various observations about style and technique (Taxel and Amitai-Preiss 2016). Scholars suggest different purposes for the inscriptions: a potter’s mark, a blessing/symbol of success for the potter or the jar owner, or administrative control of some sort over the jars or their content (Taxel and Amitai-Preiss 2016; CIAP 111, 123–24, 132–33; De Vincenz 2004). In the research area, the spatial distribution of the handles in Ramla, Jaffa, and Ashdod-Yam suggests a link to export.

The small number of reported metal objects includes a variety of finds, among them bowls, working tools, jewellery, knife blades, nails, coins, and weights. The main metals in our corpus are copper alloys and iron, but also some lead has been reported. Without conducting isotopic analyses, the source of these metals is obscure, and one can only offer a hypothetical map of potential mines (Allan 1979, 35; Morony 2019). Iron was found mostly as knife blades and nails, whereas lead could be used in pipes, weights, or inlays, but neither has as yet been studied in detail. Most coins are made of copper alloys and were found in very limited numbers at almost every site. The coins can be dated to the Umayyad and the early Abbasid periods until the mid-ninth century, which correlates with other sites in the Islamic world (Heidemann 2010, 660; 2011, 55).

**Architecture: Installations and Pavements**

Installations are abundant in the research area. Often, excavators name them according to their possible function, e.g. kilns or wine presses, but such definitions have been avoided here. Rather, I have made a conscious effort to describe and classify installations according to their form, size, and archaeological contexts and to label them as neutrally as possible. Exceptions were bath houses and deep wells, for which I agree to assume a clear function. Since I present here the research results, the interpreted function of the installations is also being provided.

Built fire installations could be divided into four types based on their construction methods, size, and in a second step, on their spatial context (Nol 2020b). I consider three of them to have a craft-related industrial function. The ‘Big-Built fire installation’ (BB), usually termed a ‘kiln’, is round or oval and dug into the ground, measures 2–3 m in internal diameter, is frequently built of mud brick, and can have an internal pillar which likely carried a second floor. In our region, this type can be found physically surrounded by pottery waste, including ash and deformed vessels, or adjacent to such waste. It can indeed be determined that it was the main installation for firing pottery, but not exclusively so. The ‘Medium-Lined fire installation’ (ML) is round, 1–1.5 m in internal diameter, partly dug into the ground, and built or lined with mud. It is named in literature either ‘kiln’ or *tabūn*. In one of the subregions this type has an air-tube made of two or three long jars and is argued to have functioned as a glass kiln (Bouchenino 2007, 122; Kogan-Zehavi 2008, 83, figs 6–7; Feldstein and Shmueli 2011, figs 3–4). In the research area, most nodes with that type include walls, often built of fieldstone, and/or channels. In addition, half of the nodes yielded glass-production remains, and a third has pottery waste. I support its interpretation as a glass kiln, but in a subregion where it was the sole type of fire installation, it might have had multiple uses.

The ‘Small-Lined fire installation’ (SL) is known in the literature as *tabūn* and is usually uncritically associated with domestic baking (Ebeling and Rogel 2015). It is rounded and lined with mud, built on
floors, with an internal diameter of 40–80 cm, and its remains vary between 0.3 and 1 m in height. Its contextual examination shows that it is almost always adjacent to walls, sometimes in a corner. According to its spatial context, these installations can be further divided into types: SL type 1, which relates to channels, animal bones, and copper-alloy artefacts, in fourteen nodes; and the obverse SL type 2, with nine nodes. Small-Lined fire installation type 2 was found clustered in five nodes (with a total of two to four SL), in six nodes designated refuse pits had been dug, and in three of the nodes the remains of glass production were found. While SL type 1 might have indeed been used for baking (although probably not for domestic purposes), SL type 2 is connected to the industrial manufacture of other perishable products, perhaps soap (Nol 2020b).

The most abundant group of installations is related to water and/or storage. It includes wells, open and covered channels, sunken jars, and additional subterranean installations. The wells, as known from all over the world, include a shaft dug into the soil until it fetches groundwater, usually lined with stone, bricks, terracotta, or wood. The research area is abundant with wells, but they are frequently undated, or dated to earlier periods. The limited information on them refers mainly to semi-distinct similarities, including lining with ashlar stones, sizes of 1.1–1.5 m in external diameter, and an adjacent system of channels and of square containers (‘pools’). Next, the sketchy examples of channels show a high diversity in material and building techniques, in their width, and in their height. Principally, they are either very shallow or higher and built of stones, then sometimes covered by additional stones and/or are subterranean.

Two types of additional subterranean installations are relevant to our discussion (Fig. 10.5). The first is the so-called ‘bell-shaped pit’. It is a dug container of a cylindrical form and a domed ceiling, lined with fieldstones or small carved stones, and plastered. It is interpreted as a fresh-water container. Another type is the ‘Barrel-Shaped Vault installation’ (BSV), which is rectangular, with a barrel-shaped vaulted ceiling made of gravel and mortar. It has two main variations, one plastered and the other not. Similar installations from Caesarea and Acre from the late tenth century, paved with mosaic or stone slabs, have been interpreted as storage for dry goods (Avni 2014, 51). Alternatively, the un-plastered variation could also have been a cesspit (e.g. Avni and others 2008). Another installation consists of intact jars buried in the ground, which measure a maximum of 70 cm in height and 60 cm in diameter. The function of similar installations is suggested to be the storage of dry or liquid goods (Billig 2005; Sion 2019; Toueg and Arnon 2011). Inside Ramla, a correlation was found between sunken jars, bell pits, and specific areas which were later interpreted as domestic.

Another group of installations is composed of large open containers and mosaic pavements (OCMP, Fig. 10.6). These installations are often interpreted as wine presses, but their diversity suggests a wider variety of purposes. Whereas the different types of this group of installations can be assigned to specific periods (with OCMP type 2 as the earliest), and two of them can be observed in specific subregions, three types seem to operate simultaneously and at the same sites during the ninth–tenth centuries. Clearly, all these types enabled the treading of grapes and the flow of the juice into containers. However, besides their varied form, four elements differentiate the later types and might have a functional role: the number of external cells, the number of containers, the presence of a settling pit, and the presence of the ‘holed stone’. The multiple cells of OCMP types 4 and 5, for example, can be explained by various instances of economic and/or labour organization. Most important is the lack of some elements in OCMP type 5 (i.e. a settling pit, a holed stone, and wide containers), which should have enabled the fermentation of the juice. In short, most types can be interpreted as wine presses, but OCMP type 5 was a juice press which excluded the fermentation processes.

The bath house is a complex installation which combines water, fire, and open containers. Only little attention is given to baths of the Byzantine-Umayyad period in the Levant, and even less to those of the ninth–twelfth centuries (e.g. Boussac and others 2014). It can be suggested that the ‘lack of evidence’ for early Islamic bath houses results, initially, from their long continuity, sometimes spanning periods of 400–500 years (Amitai-Preiss 1997; Blanke and others 2007, 179, 182; Charpentier 2014). Another possible reason is the gradual physical transformation of baths between the fourth and the sixteenth centuries, which resulted in the absence of indicative features such as the hypocaust (Fournet 2012a, 332, fig. 2). In the research area, ten bath houses have
been identified, some by their hypocaust and others by bathtubs and pipes (e.g. Ashdod-Yam), while the identification of some has not been specified.

Another architectural element that proved to be significant is flagstone pavements. Pavement materials and techniques in general are diverse in our context, commonly using plaster, chalk with gravel, or white raw mosaic. Much less frequent are floors made of mosaic with a polychrome pattern or an inscription, of clay bricks, or of flagstones. Whereas most techniques provide no correlation, polychrome mosaics and flagstone pavements can be assigned to specific periods, mosaics date to the seventh century and flagstone pavements date to the ninth–tenth centuries (Nol 2019). The flagstone pavements in Ramla are concentrated in three separate areas, they correlate with specific installations and artefacts, and they are distinct from the dwelling areas of the bell pits and sunken jars. I interpret them as reflecting industrial areas and/or marketplaces (Nol 2020b, 54).

Two architectural elements or sorts of structures which are absent from our typology are religious structures and fortifications. They should be discussed, however, as they are sometimes assumed in the literature to represent specific settlement types. Fortifications, including sizable walls, gates, and/or towers, have been identified on two coastal sites, Ashdod-Yam and Yavne-Yam. Both are square structures, which fit in well with monumental constructions of the period (see, e.g. Genequand 2006; Walmsley 2007, 99–105; Avni 2014, 202–03). The structure at Yavne-Yam is believed to have been built in the mid-seventh or early eighth century, but the excavation has remained unpublished so far (Fischer and Taxel 2014, 215). The fortified structure of Ashdod-Yam is 40 × 60 m, with two parallel gates, and can be dated only generally to the eighth–twelfth centuries (Nahlieli 2008). A tenth- or eleventh-century mosque has been found at Ramla, south-west of its centre. Another mosque, as yet undated, has been discovered inside the fortified structure of Ashdod-Yam. Churches have been noted scarcely, and their establishment is dated to an earlier period. They include a church on the Nesher Quarries site near Ramla dated to the fourth–seventh centuries (Kol-Ya’akov 2000; Zelinger and Di Segni 2006), a Samaritan house of prayer at Tell Qasile, dated to the sixth–seventh centuries (Kaplan 1978), one church from AD 511 at Gan Yavne (Sion and others 2010; Di Segni 2012), and a Byzantine church in Hazor-Ashdod (Barda and Zbenovich 2012, site 70; Ovadiah 1970, 22). In short, the examples of fortified sites and of sanctuaries are very limited in number. As we shall see, they do not correlate with the site typology.

**Typology of Sites**

Early in the investigation it became evident that bath houses are extremely rare in the research area, and wine presses are equally uncommon. Another observation indicates that flagstone pavements and fire installations stand in contrast to wells, subterranean installations, and channels. Four types of sites have tentatively been classified according to features they possessed or lacked. The maps (Fig. 10.7) illustrate the percentage of these features on sites according to general categories (fire installations, grape presses, bath houses, pits or wells, channels, and flagstone pavements). This typology proved sustainable after correlating it with the presence or absence of additional finds (objects made of iron, rotary querns, and craft wastes). Site types were then mapped, and spatial patterns could be observed regarding their location, the distance between sites of the same group, the relation between types, and their relation to topography and natural water sources. These comparisons supported the typology once more.

The first group (site type 1, Table 10.1) comprises sites that answer all or almost all of the criteria. These include fire installations (BB, ML, or SL2), water installations (wells, bell-shaped pits, or plastered BSV), bath houses, grape presses, channels, flagstone pavements, and copper coins. The sites that answer all of these characteristics are Mazliah, Lod, and Tell...
Table 10.1. The main characteristics of type 1 sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Fire installations</th>
<th>Presses</th>
<th>Bath houses</th>
<th>Water installations</th>
<th>Channels</th>
<th>Flagstone pavements</th>
<th>Coins</th>
<th>Waste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mazliah</td>
<td>BB, ML</td>
<td>juice</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>BSV, bell</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery, glass, metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lod</td>
<td>SL₂</td>
<td>wine</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>BSV</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azor</td>
<td>BB, ML, SL₂</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>BSV</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell Qasile</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>wine</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>well</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffa</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>juice, wine?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>well</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bet Dagan</td>
<td>SL₂</td>
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<td>well</td>
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<td>yes</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Table 10.2. The main characteristics of type 2 sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Fire installations</th>
<th>Presses</th>
<th>Bath houses</th>
<th>Water installations</th>
<th>Channels</th>
<th>Flagstone pavements</th>
<th>Coins</th>
<th>Waste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ramla, Centre</td>
<td>BB, ML</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>well, BSV, bell</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery, glass, metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramla, Stadium</td>
<td>BB, SL₂</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bell</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na’an (South)</td>
<td>SL₂</td>
<td>juice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery, glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafir Jinnis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Yavne</td>
<td>BB, ML</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery, glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khirbat Dayrân</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td>wine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horvat Hermas</td>
<td>BB, ML</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery, glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashdod-Yam</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>well, BSV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gan Yavne</td>
<td>BB</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>BSV</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holot Yavne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>well</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery, metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Ashdod</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>well, BSV</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pottery, glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganne Tal</td>
<td>ML, SL₂</td>
<td>wine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>glass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qasile. The group also includes Jaffa, Azor, and Bet Dagan, which lack a flagstone pavement, a press, or a bath house, respectively. The map shows that all six sites are located in the northern part of the region, with 4–8 km distance between them (Fig. 10.8). It also indicates that all sites are on the coast or adjacent to the Ayalon watercourse. We might assume a road between these sites. The next category (site type 2, Table 10.2) is for sites that comprise fire installations and/or flagstones as well as channels and/or water installations. It includes two sites in Ramla and ten sites elsewhere. Only one site in the group, Holot Yavne, lacks channels altogether. A map that sketches the spatial distribution of this type (Fig. 10.9) demonstrates its spread from the centre of the research area toward the south. The map also indicates its spatial division from site type 3. One site, Yad Binyamin, with only a bath house and flagstone pavement, could perhaps fit this type but was excluded as the evidence was considered insufficient.

The six sites of type 3 contain fire installations and may have a flagstone pavement but show no channels or any other water installation (Table 10.3). The table indicates that these sites comprise no bath houses or coins. Moreover, their fire installations are limited to one type each, either a BB or an ML. The spatial distribution of type 3 sites is limited to the central and northern parts of the research area, whereas at Ramla, this type could not be identified. Most sites belong to the last group, site type 4 (Table 10.4), with four sites inside Ramla and fourteen beyond. In contrast to the former group, these sites have no fire installations and no flagstone pavement, but they do possess channels and/or other water installations. The site of Ben-Gurion Airport is an exception, having a wine press and no water installations, but it was added to the group due to the absence of other characteristics and to the presence
of coins. Unlike the three former types, this group is distributed all over the region. Most type 4 sites are at least 4 km from each other. Four sites out of the eighteen of type 4 (22 per cent) and one out of the six in type 3 (17 per cent) were surveyed, excavated only in soundings, or have remained unpublished. In other words, the characterization of these types might have been influenced by an imbalance in research data. However, the relative number of excavated sites of these types, and in type 4 their total number, are sufficient to indicate their characteristics.

Additional attributes correlate with the site types and imply their nature. A comparison between the craft wastes of each site type (Tables 10.5–10.8) points to very little waste but from varied crafts on type 1 sites, in contrast to intensive industry on type 2 sites.

Type 3 sites contained pottery waste and metal but no glass waste. Only five sites of type 4 included waste, but at these five sites it was from a variety of crafts. Rotary querns and iron remains could not be found on type 1 sites, with the exception of Mazliah, but have been found on sites of the other three types (Fig. 10.10). A correlation has been detected between type 1 and 2 sites and artefacts made of bone and/or stamped handles of big jars (Fig. 10.11).

In summary, the characteristics of type 1 sites are very distinct and make their interpretation relatively simple. These six sites offered all the services available at the time (water, fire, bath, agriculture, market) and two of the more uncommon portable artefacts (jars with stamped handles and objects made of bone). These sites are located on a central route,
defining cities and non-cities through emic and etic perspectives

Figure 10.10. Iron and rotary querns on site types 2, 3, and 4. Maps by author.

Figure 10.11. Bone artefacts and stamped jar handles at site types 1 and 2. Maps by author.
between Ramla and the coast. It can be presumed that the type constitutes settlements which benefited from dynamic trade. The limited waste from crafts at the sites (except for Mazliah) could mean that most artefacts were exchanged but not produced in the domains of these sites. The clear absence of iron tools and rotary querns might reflect the absence of large-scale agriculture in their economy.

Sites of type 2 seem, at a superficial glance, only slightly different from sites of type 1, comprising many of the same installations or services and even the same rare artefacts. However, their variation is significant, starting with the distribution of sites, which seems random, the abundance of fire installations along with craft waste and rotary querns, and the limited number of bath houses and presses. Their function, like type 1 sites, must revolve around trade. A spatial support for this function is the absence of these sites from the domain of type 1 sites. Unlike type 1, however, this group is more related to what I interpret as industrial and agricultural production.

Sites of types 3 and 4 constitute opposites. Type 4 shows very few installations besides channels, wells, and cisterns, which can mean that its main source of income was agriculture. In addition, these sites exclude flagstone pavements, which implies scarce trade. Nevertheless, a number of these sites included craft waste or a wine press, indicating some level of production. Some also yielded coins, evidence that reflects a sort of exchange. Sites of type 3 all include fire installations, while on only some of them, a flagstone pavement and/or pottery waste was found. They comprise no water installations, bath houses, or wine presses. The essence of these sites revolves around the production of pottery and perhaps other produce, as some sites had rotary querns or metal waste. The absence of channels suggests these to be the only sites not involved in agriculture.

**Terminology of Settlement Types in Palestine**

The terminology of settlements discussed in this paper was examined through diverse media, comprising chronicles, geographies, and documentary evidence written by Muslims and others. Texts in Arabic, Hebrew, Palestinian Aramaic, and Greek were assessed. The texts were divided into four groups according to media and/or the religion of their authors: 1) one list of church records from the ninth or tenth century; 2) various documents written by Jews between the eighth and the eleventh centuries; 3) three geographies written in Arabic between the late ninth and the late tenth centuries; 4) the documentary evidence comprising papyri, inscriptions, and seals from Israel/Palestine in the seventh–eleventh centuries. The texts were chosen for their relatively rich vocabulary of settlement types, with no other preference. In the early stage of this research, I read full texts and noted words which might represent settlement types. These selected words were then put into search tools (mostly online). Some of these words were later excluded when proven to relate to property, agriculture, administration, or architectural elements. While document collections and search tools can be selective, I balanced the possible biases by assembling all major sources available.

The terms were gathered by a quantitative method from sources with richer data (i.e. Arabic geographies) and from all other texts through context. The texts use terminology of settlement types in particular forms with different qualities: a) a direct reference, and thus a distinct one, e.g. ‘al-Ramla is a city’; b) a general reference, which is more ambiguous, e.g. ‘two markets are in the city’; c) a fixed or historic ‘incorporated toponym’ which here means a settlement-type term which is part of the place name, or of a formula, and therefore does not reflect the contemporary status of the settlement. For example, the toponym Diospolis in Greek might have kept its name even after losing its administrative (or other) essence as polis. The modern translations of the terms are also significant, both for the contextual interpretation of the term and for historiographic purposes. It will be noted (in round brackets) whenever it was available in the edited manuscript or in additional translations.

The full results of this part of the research, where an emphasis was put on changes in terminology until the thirteenth century, have been published elsewhere (Nol 2020a). In this paper, I emphasize the coherent set of settlement terms which was identified and its comparison with the archaeological results. One of the methods involved looking at terms listed together in a sentence, as this indicates their concurrence and might also point to their being antonyms and of relative importance. Another method was to compare toponyms that were addressed by more than one type of source, which highlights parallels or synonyms, translation of terms, and changes in the terminology.

This research shows that between the seventh and the eleventh centuries, the main set of settlement types in Palestine included (as they are com-

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monly translated): 1) city or town (madina, polis), 2) village or town (qarya, kome, 'ir), 3) estate, hamlet, farmstead, or village (day’a, kafir), 4) monastery (dayr, monasterion), and 5) fortress, citadel, tower, or camp (burj, kastron, miv’ar). The discussion of this section is dedicated to explaining and translating the terms madina, qarya, and kafir. In the twelfth century, as the wider research has shown (Nol 2020a), several Arabic terms were added (e.g. balda, thaghîr, bulayd), and terms were replaced in Hebrew (e.g. ‘ir for m’dinâ).

### Settlement Types in Contemporary Texts

The first source is the Taktikon in Greek, written or edited around 880, which describes the domain of authority exercised by the Jerusalem patriarchate of Palestine and its surroundings. Two different versions of the manuscript exist, one published by G. Palamas in 1862 and the other published by Jerosholumon Timotheous in 1939 (Levy-Rubin 2003, 201), which is the version accessed for this paper. The Taktikon marks toponyms and topographic elements in the landscape and notes terms for settlement types. It mentions the terms polis (town), monasterion and kastron (fortress) or kasteli (or kastoria). More frequent is the term kome (village), which appears chiefly in incorporated toponyms (e.g. Kome Zounou) or as an ‘estate’ by Milka Levy-Rubin. Other characters). Most of the rabbinic texts used in this study date between the eighth and the tenth centuries in Arabic were translated in other contexts. (e.g. ‘madinat Fas, ‘ir Sahraji) (Gil 1983, ii, 11, 121, 177–78; Oxford, Bodl., MS Heb. b. 11/9; BL, Or. 5544.1; Neubauer 1887, 40). These terms are also utilized as general references with activities or groups of an imagined space, such as the elite which are literally ‘the big people’ of the ‘ir (g’доле ha-‘ir) (Gil 1983, ii, 239. See also 84, 204, 506, 508). However, only the term ‘ir is present in poetic expressions, such as ‘a refuge town’ (‘ir miqlat) (Gil 1983, ii, 19; Cambridge, T-S, 184.26), or in fixed formulas, such as ‘the capital’ (ha-‘ir ha-g’dõlã (the big city)) (Gil 1983, ii, 202, 382). Less common terms in these sources include miv’ar (fortress), qiryâ (town) as an incorporated toponym — Qiryāt Onō, and kfar (village).7 In Arabic, the two terms often used in the Geniza are balad (city) and madina (city). The references to balad mostly relate to an imagined space within a general reference (e.g. ‘al-balad akhadhahu maṭar ‘azim wa-thalj’ (the balad was caught by heavy rain and snow)) (Gil 1983, iii, 197), but might also be part of incorporated toponyms (e.g. Balad al-Raqqâ, Balad al-Jurba) (Gil 1983, ii, 703; Cambridge, T-S, 12.13.). The term madina is used less frequently, mainly as an incorporated toponym, but also as a general reference (e.g. ‘dakhaltu ilâ-l-madina’ (I entered the madina)) (Gil 1983, ii, 577; iii, 332; Cambridge, T-S, 184.14). Much more uncommon, single references are found in the document ‘Guide to Jerusalem’ with dayr (monastery) and qasr (fortress, palace) (Braslawi 1964; Gil 1983, ii, 6–7). Other scattered texts use baṣîn (fortress), qarya as in the incorporated toponym Qaryat Hamuriya, balda (village, town, or city), and day’a (village).8 Save for the single reference mentioned, dayr was absent from the Hebrew and Aramaic sources. Outside Palestine, one text on Fustat describes a qasr, calling it also a burj in a context which indicates that the two terms function as synonyms (Cambridge, T-S, 12.694).

Three geographers who portray Palestine from the late ninth to the late tenth centuries in Arabic were

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5 Only by Timotheous (1939, 80).
6 For town, see Friedman 1983, 170–71 n. 3.
8 Gil 1983, iii, 81, 437; 1994, 54–55; Friedman 1986, 279–83; Cambridge, T-S, 159.8,257; New York, ENA, 2922.30. For the translation of bulda, see also the later text: Cambridge, T-S, 159.10.
Table 10.5. Frequency of settlement-type terms in the three Arabic geographies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement Type</th>
<th>al-Ya’qubi</th>
<th>al-Iṣṭakhrī</th>
<th>al-Maqdisi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>madīna</td>
<td>643 (83%</td>
<td>910 (62%</td>
<td>1001 (50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balda</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26 (1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bulayda</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qarya</td>
<td>44 (6%</td>
<td>275 (19%</td>
<td>338 (17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day’a</td>
<td>17 (2%</td>
<td>34 (2%</td>
<td>51 (2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḫīn</td>
<td>36 (5%</td>
<td>87 (6%</td>
<td>277 (14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qal’a</td>
<td>17 (2%</td>
<td>71 (5%</td>
<td>115 (6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṭībāt</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>77 (5%</td>
<td>169 (8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dayr</td>
<td>13 (1.5%</td>
<td>14 (1%</td>
<td>24 (1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>1471</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.6 compares these terms with the terms used only for settlement types in Palestine. The tables exclude terms that are very general or administrative, or terms that are mainly used for very different meanings, such as the word miṣr which usually means ‘Egypt’ in the same works. At the same time, the table includes terms that were often used to describe elements within sites and not necessarily settlement types, such as ḫisn, a fortress, or incorporated toponyms (e.g. Madīnat al-Salām). Nonetheless, contextual analyses will refine that list. Table 10.5 shows that the three terms most used by all authors and in relatively great numbers are madīna (town, city), qarya (village), and ḫīn (fortress). The second most important terms are ṭībāt and qal’a. Table 10.6 demonstrates that the only term which is mentioned in relation to Palestine by all three authors is madīna, while qarya is attributed to Palestine by two of them. Terms that cannot be found in these texts for settlement types in Palestine but are found elsewhere are: ḫīn, qal’a, qarṣ, balda, and balad. Some of these terms can be found in the texts, but not as independent settlement types. For instance, the term ḫīn might be used by al-Maqdisī but only for fortification elements inside other settlement types, such as in the madīna of Yāfā or qarya of Ḥabrā (al-Maqdisī, Aḥsan al-taqāsīm, 172–74). The term qal’a can be found in the description of Yūbnā by al-Ya’qubi, but in the meaning of a hill or tell that the settlement sits on (al-Ya’qubi, Kitāb al-Buldān, 329). The documentary evidence is a very important contribution to our corpus for its authenticity and its early date (the seventh and eighth centuries). Nevertheless, these texts are also the most scattered, and they rarely note terms of settlement types. Relevant epigraphy comprises foundation inscriptions, waqf (endowment under Islamic law) inscriptions, seals, and pottery. Lead seals found in Israel/Palestine, dated approximately to the late seventh century (Amitai-Preiss 2007; 2015), frequently bear incorporated toponyms. These include madīna (city) and kafr (village), such as Kafr Ḥabrā. The seals also display administrative titles — those of kūra and iqlīm. One seal that bears kūra ‘Aṣqalān on the one side and Madīnat ‘Aṣqalān on the other implies that ‘Aṣqalān answered both definitions of madīna and kūra. However, not every madīna was a kūra, as in the inscribed seal khātim kūrat Qāṣīrīya on one side and Madīnat Arṣīf on the other (Amitai-Preiss 2007, 26, 152–62; 2015, 78; Amitai-Preiss and Tal 2015). A somewhat similar medium are stamped ceramic jars, which have been unearthed in excavations in

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9 Translations follow Le Strange 1890.
Israel/Palestine and date to the eighth–tenth centuries. Some bear the inscription Dayr Samwīl (CIAP III, 122–24; Amitai-Preiss, Cohen-Weinberger, and Har-Even 2017), which is an incorporated toponym. On foundation inscriptions, terms that can be affiliated with Palestine are qarya as an incorporated toponym (CIAP i, 6), burj (tower) (TEI 2020, card nos 6034, 28342), ḏayʿa (estate) (Elad 1991, 304), and thaghr. The terms in these inscriptions are usually a direct reference (e.g. ‘āmara bi-ʿimārat hadha burj al-mubārak’ (he commanded the construction of this blessed burj)) (TEI 2020, card no. 28342). However, they always represent architectural elements — fortifications in our case — and not independent settlement types. A different example is ThaghrʿAsqalān, an incorporated toponym, which was mentioned in an inscription from Ascalon in the eleventh century (TEI 2020, card no. 6598) as well as in an inscription from Acre in the twelfth century (TEI 2020, card no. 7774). Whereas scholars commonly translate thaghr as ‘frontier’, Michael Bonner (1994) suggests it to mean a ‘fortified town’ in its singular form, and Moshe Sharon (CIAP II, 275) translates it as a ‘coastal fortress’.10 A waqf inscription from the eleventh century provides a direct reference to ḏayʿa (Yadin 1964, 106; CIAP II, 275) which indicates that the term is associated with property.

The last group of sources are the papyri which were unearthed in Nessana and Khirbat al-Mird. The relevant documents from Nessana, mainly in Greek, date to the seventh century. They use the terms kome (village), chorion, which Casper J. Kraemer translates as ‘our native town’, kastron (camp), and polis (city district) (Kraemer 1958, 136–38, 153–55, 168–74). In fact, while Elusa is always termed polis, also in earlier papyri, Nessana changes from being a kome in the sixth century to a kastron in the early seventh century, and a chorion at the end of the seventh century (Kraemer 1958, docs 16–18, 21, 46, 58). The highly damaged papyri from Khirbat al-Mird, written in Arabic, are attributed to the seventh century. A single relevant document uses the sentence ‘fī qarya min kūrat’ (a village belonging to the district) (Grohmann 1963, 19–20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets of Settlement Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this section I use two methods to present the sets of terminology for each language or community. The first method is a comparison between different types of sources which employ the same toponyms (Table 10.7). This comparison enables us to recognize equivalents in the various languages. It also allows for detecting changes over time, but this has been dealt with elsewhere (Nol 2020a). My premises are that the toponym is a single settlement; and that when various names are involved, previous identifications and parallels are valid (e.g. Shḥkhem means Nābulus). Table 10.7 presents the most distinct term madīna with its parallel ʿmīdina, also showing that the term kūra is exclusively used for madīnas. Based on Kafr Sābā (and to some extent on Ḍnō), the terms qiryā/qarya and kome are equivalents. The second method for detecting sets of settlement types regards sentences that list two to three types together and demonstrate their concurrency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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as well as being antonyms. This method was most fruitful in the wider research, where several texts of the twelfth century were also examined (Nol 2020a), but it still provides some context here. Texts in the Geniza clarify the regional superiority of the ʾmādīnā over the ʾir and the kfar. This is, for instance, seen in a list of toponyms in which ʾmādīnā ʿSefāt is repeated while the adjacent ʾirs change (Mann 1922, 204),11 and it is apparent from the phrases ʾYrūshālāyim w-kāl ʾirēhā (Jerusalem and all its ʾirs) and ʾShʾkhēm w-kāl kfareyhā (Nābulus and all its kfarṣ) (Gil 1983, 111, 181, 382). Importantly, three terms (excluding ‘city’) are encountered together in a text which describes the Jewish community in Palestine, in the line ‘el kŏl ḥa-s ᷣamākiḥā li-mʿdīnā ṣḥFat [. . .], ’bāʿ-ʿl Bīrīyā ha-sʿmūkḥā li-mʿdīnā ṣḥFat [. . .], ’bāʿ-ʿl Aqāl Zētūn ha-sʿmūkḥā li-mʿdīnā ṣḥFat (at the ’ir Bīrīyā which is adjacent to the mʿdīnā of Ṣefāt [. . .], at the ’ir Aqāl which is adjacent to the mʿdīnā of Ṣefāt) and so on.

11 ‘bāʿ-ʿl Bīrīyā ha-sʿmūkḥā li-mʿdīnā ṣḥFat [. . .], ’bāʿ-ʿl Aqāl Zētūn ha-sʿmūkḥā li-mʿdīnā ṣḥFat (at the ’ir Bīrīyā which is adjacent to the mʿdīnā of Ṣefāt [. . .], at the ’ir Aqāl which is adjacent to the mʿdīnā of Ṣefāt) and so on.

Translating the Terminology of Settlement Types

The comparison in Table 10.8, particularly the epigraphic evidence, suggests that the term kfar (in Hebrew and Arabic) shifted in Arabic to dayʾa in the tenth century or earlier. Historians and translators interpret the two terms diversely, from ‘village’ to ‘hamlet’, ‘farm’, and ‘estate’ (Amitai-Preiss 2015, 280–82; Grohmann 1952, 214–18), but this is not conclusive. The ownership of both the kfar in the rabbinic sources and the dayʾa in inscriptions is private, implying its suitable translation as an ‘estate’. One inscription, for example, reads: hadḥā mā awqafa al-faqīh [. . .] bi-waqfihi hadīhi al-dayʾa bi-ḥudūdihā (this is what the jurist [name] donated on his waqf: this dayʾa on its borders) (Yadin 1964, 106). One text in the Jewish responsa discusses a sit-
The term *qarya* is used by al-Maqdisī to signify a mosque or a church in all eight toponyms, according to al-Maqdisī (Table 10.9). The table presents a mosque or a church in all eight toponyms, according to al-Maqdisī (Table 10.9). The table presents a mosque or a church in all eight toponyms, according to al-Maqdisī (Table 10.9). The table presents a mosque or a church in all eight toponyms, according to al-Maqdisī (Table 10.9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Mosque (M) / Church (C)</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Fortification</th>
<th>Water sources</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bayt Lahm</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(in the past)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥabrā</td>
<td>M (masjid)</td>
<td></td>
<td>ḥiṣn</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>(fruit)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludd</td>
<td>C, M (jāmi‘)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafr Sābā</td>
<td>M (jāmi‘)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥ‘Aqīr</td>
<td>M (jāmi‘)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yubnā</td>
<td>M (jāmi‘)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥ‘Amwās</td>
<td>M (minbar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafr Salām</td>
<td>M (jāmi‘)</td>
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The purpose of their meeting is to settle the tax portions in consonance with the land size of each k‘far and ‘to level their bribes in order to remove the burden’ (Pḥishtāvōt bá-hashhādā sh‘-hashhādā l‘āleq hā-ōnes). With a different meaning but also a different geographical context, Severus or Sāwīrūs ibn al-Muqaffā (d. 987), the bishop of al-Ushmūnayn in Egypt, writes in the tenth century about twenty-three *day‘as* of Orthodox Christians, which he subsumes under one name (Sakāšinā) (ibn al-Muqaffā, Kitāb Siyar, 97). That single name, and the absence of any note of a landowner, imply their independence and support the ‘hamlet’ interpretation, at least in Egypt. Similarly, Ze‘ev Safrai (1994, 19) explains the k‘far in the Talmud (third–sixth centuries), as either a ‘hamlet’ or an ‘estate’. At any rate, these terms denote a small residence unit with agricultural lands that could be privately owned. Additional to the shift of terms, *day‘a* in Arabic and *villa* in Latin widened their meaning to include also ‘village’ or ‘village territory’ (Wickham 2019, n. 26).

The term *qarya* in Arabic has been commonly translated as ‘village’ (e.g. Le Strange 1880; CIP 1, 107; Grohmann 1963, 20). In other words, it is interpreted as a non-city and more specifically as a small, non-central settlement. However, the comparisons in Table 10.8 present its various equivalents, which have sometimes been translated also as ‘town’, such as *chorion* or ‘τροις. In Arabic too, Tarif Khalidi (1981, 266) reads *qarya* in the Koran as ‘city’ and as a synonym to madīna. The characteristics which were ascribed to *qarya* in Palestine are homogeneous but limited, according to al-Maqdisī (Table 10.9). The table presents a mosque or a church in all eight toponyms, water sources in two, and almost no other features. The term *balda*, which I put in the same category as *qarya*, was rarely used by the geographers (twenty-six times by al-Maqdisī), and never within Palestine. Between around 1100 and 1200, it was already used in the Geniza, but gained popularity in texts of the early thirteenth century (Nol 2020a). Translating *qarya* as ‘town’ generates a more ‘city-like’ perception, which correlates better with the synonyms. Following this decision, the next settlement type in the administrative hierarchy and in possible size, the *day‘a* / k‘far can be translated as ‘village’.

The most popular term in this research context, in all languages and at all times, is madīna. Still, its unique characteristics are difficult to detect and define. In al-Maqdisī’s introduction to Egypt, he writes that there is no madīna without a minbar (al-Maqdisī, Aḥsan al-taqāsīm, 193). A minbar is commonly interpreted in the context of mosques as a physical platform for the leader to give the Friday sermon (e.g. Kuban 1974, 3), yet also that set of terminology should be examined afresh. Table 10.10 focuses on the physical features of madinas as noted by al-Maqdisī. It also includes al-Ramla, which is both a madīna and a metropolis or a regional capital (qaṣaba). The table introduces the significant characteristics of the madina, whether big or small, as comprising mosques (75 per cent), water sources (50 per cent), and fortifications (50 per cent). Including al-Ramla, the qaṣaba with the madinas does not significantly change the results regarding mosques (77 per cent) and water sources (54 per cent).

Comparing qaryas with madinas (Tables 10.9 and 10.10) provides little correlation as to specific characteristics. Based on the data from al-Maqdisī, however, the markets are exclusive to madinas, and churches are exclusive to qaryas. The most significant difference between the terms is the concentration of features in the madina. No correlation was found regarding mosques (or any specific term for mosques). Fortifications are attributed to madina more often than to other settlement types but not exclusively. Another difference that can be inferred from the tables is the regional superiority of madina. In accordance with that result, al-Maqdisī writes

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12 T’shuvōt ha-Gōnîm – Gōnîn Mîzarāḥ w-Mā‘râb, simān q.s.h.
that Kafr Salām is one of the qaryas of Qaysariyya (al-Maqdisī, Aḥsan al-taqāsīm, 175–76). Nessana is described as a chorion under the jurisdiction of Elusa, and the Geniza documents note the control of Jerusalem and Ṣefat over ʿīrs and the control of Nābulus over kēfars (Kraemer 1958, 168–71; Gil 1963, ii, 382; Mann 1922, 204). The interpretation of the madīna as geographically central correlates with various research paradigms, among them the central-place theory. However, these studies might relate to metropolises rather than to all madīnas, as we shall see.

The complete set of settlement types excluded the metropolis. This might be a result of methodology regarding one of our main sources, the Arabic geographies, which was examined quantitatively. First, the terms denoting metropolises could not be counted, as they are not particular to that meaning. For example, the word qaṣaba can mean ‘citadel’ in the same text, making its count rather meaningless. Second, one can expect to have only a small number of administrative capitals in every region, so they can be expected to appear less often in texts than other settlement types.

Nevertheless, the ancient authors rarely called the metropolis of Palestine or Syria other than ‘city’ save for al-Maqdisi. This leads me to argue next that the term ‘city’ represents both meanings — to the authors and/or to their informants. The first example is the papyri and the Taktikon in Greek, which do not distinguish between different types of polis. The texts in Hebrew indeed point to ‘the big city’ but employ the term ʿir, which means ‘town’ or the symbolic city, and do not create a designated word. Moving to the geographers, al-Yaʿqūbī is inconsistent throughout his work. For several areas, he uses the formula madīnat X al-ʿuẓmā (‘the greatest city’), but for Syria, he defines the metropolises with ‘the madīna of the region’ (al-Yaʿqūbī, Kitāb al-Buldān, 325–27, 334, 347). The text by al-Iṣṭakhrī reflects a time of change, with only five references to al-madīna al-ʿuẓmā, and forty-one references to a new term — qaṣaba — which is clearly a synonym (e.g. Qurṭuba or Fās) (al-Iṣṭakhrī, Kitāb al-Masālik, 39, 41, 46). However, he calls Ṭabarīyya and al-Ramla ‘al-madīna al-ʿaẓima’ (the great city) and ‘al-madīna al-kubrā’ (the greatest city) of their regions (al-Iṣṭakhrī, Kitāb al-Masālik, 56–59).

Al-Maqdisi is the first to employ a consistent terminology for the administrative status of places, capitals among them. He defines two types: the miṣr as the capital of the īqlīm (a mega-region, such as Egypt), and qaṣaba as the capital of the kūra, the subprovince. He does not use the term al-madīna al-ʿuẓmā. Interestingly, al-Maqdisi also defines the ‘capital’ and distinctly points to the mix-up people make between it and other settlements. He explains that miṣr is defined differently by jurists, linguists, the common people, and ‘us (naḥnu): according to the common people, a miṣr is ‘any important large

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10.10. Characteristics of al-Maqdisi’s madīnas in Palestine.</th>
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<td>Site/Characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dājūn</td>
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<td>Bayt Jibril</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal (12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>al-Ramla (qaṣaba)</td>
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<td>Total (13)</td>
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* Rustāqs in the research area are read as lands surrounding a central site or belonging to it administratively.
settlement’ (kull balad kabir jalil), such as al-Ramla. He explains, however, that ‘we consider a miṣr every balad where the highest authority resides, the government offices are assembled, the administrations are affiliated to it, and the madinas of the iqlim are adjoined to it’, such as Dimashq (fa-ja’ālna al-miṣr kull balad hallahu al-sultān al-ā’zam wa-jumī‘at ilayhi al-diwāwin wa-qullidat minhu al-ṣā’l wa-udifā ilayhi mudun al-iqlim). He also clarifies that the miṣr is the qaṣaba of its kūra, ‘but not every qaṣaba is a miṣr’ (wa-layṣa kull qaṣaba miṣran) (al-Maqdisi, Aḥsan al-taqaṣīm, 47). It is clear, then, that al-Maqdisi is interested in an administrative definition of capitals rather than their economic status in the region. In fact, looking again at the characteristics of cities he reports on (Table 10.10), his three ‘big cities’ might be ‘metropolises’ rather than physically large places. Likewise, cities that control their surroundings might also be ‘metropolises’. In that case, also al-Maqdisi defines the metropolis as ‘city’.

To summarize, the set of settlement types in Palestine includes city, town, and village, as well as monastery and fortress, which I have not discussed here. The definition of these types was based on the scope of their services, their relation to trade, and their administrative status. Since most settlement types included agriculture, this is not an essential characteristic for differentiating between them. The metropolis does not form another settlement type. It is first and foremost a city.

**Terminology of Settlement Types vs. Typology of Archaeological Sites**

Site type 1 includes Mazliah, Lod, Bet Dagan, Azor, Jaffa, and Tell Qasile. The six sites sit on the northern coast or on a route which leads to Ramla, they all have a market, and they might all have offered other available services such as water supply and a bath house. The most uncommon artefacts in the research area could also be found here. While these sites show some evidence of crafts, it is relatively scarce, and evidence of mass production in agriculture or industries is absent. The site of Mazliah near Ramla is exceptional in that regard since it is distinctly industrial. The madina similarly comprises a concentration of available services, such as agriculture, markets, a mosque, and fortifications. Its economy is related to trade more than other settlement types. The correlation with the physical evidence, if valid, demonstrates that cities are not always spatially central to other sites, and that the distance between them or from them to other sites is not relevant. Second, cities in this context were occupied with trade or distribution, but not so much with production. Third, fortifications and mosques, which are expected in some madinas, could not be traced on any of the type 1 sites.

Site type 2 includes Ramla’s centre and stadium and ten more sites from Kafr Jinnis to Ashdod-Yam. These sites contain most of the architectural elements which are found in type 1 sites but at a much lower rate. In addition, rare objects made of bone and infrequent stamped jar handles were unearthed at some of the sites and imply their relation to trade. Unlike type 1 sites, however, this group is very productive, with both major industries and large-scale agriculture. Finally, fortifications and a mosque were detected at one of the type 2 sites, Ashdod-Yam. These characteristics might fit the qarya (town) in the sources, which is very similar to the ‘city’ but never supplies all the services the city offers. If this correlation is valid, then towns were the main productive settlements in the region. The data suggest that these settlements were mostly absent around cities.

Site type 3 comprises six sites, three around Azor (Or Yehuda, Ramat Gan, and Hadar Yosef) and three in the Rehovot cluster (Yad Eli’ezer, Weizmann Institute, and Kefar Gabirol). All six sites included one of the larger types of fire installations, and most were related to pottery production. This site type is the only one without channels and other water installations, suggesting it was not involved in any sort of agriculture. The best terminological match for type 3 — based on its characteristics — is the term bulayda. The term is noted once in the book by al-Maqdisi (perhaps as a later addition) but becomes popular in the thirteenth century. Analysing the terminology of the later period (Nol 2020a, table 7) suggests that bulayda is trade-oriented with no mosques and very little agriculture, as opposed to the qarya of that time. If we are to accept the correlation of bulayda with site type 3, then we must explain the temporal gap of several hundred years between the date of the site type and the earliest appearance of the term. While it is certainly possible that a new settlement type, which emerges regionally, gains its own term centuries later, probably after being ‘successful’ (i.e. long-lived and geographically popular), this is only a speculation. Nonetheless, the comparison points to one clear lacuna in the written sources and thus highlights the corrupted picture of settlement patterns when relying solely on texts.

The eighteen sites of type 4 are characterized by water installations, which represent agriculture.

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13 Translation by Peter Verkinderen (personal communication), with adjustments.
These sites show no flagstone pavement which would point to a marketplace, nor any of the industrial fire installations. A few of them contained craft waste (Ramla, Horvat Zerifin, Ramat Hahayal, and Khirbat al-'Ašfāra) or a wine press (Ben-Gurion Airport and Rishon Leziyyon). Copper coins were found on ten of the sites, indicating some level of exchange, perhaps related to their production activities. Moreover, a courtyard house of approximately 30 × 30 m was unearthed on one of these sites, Khirbat al-Zāhiriyya (Kogan-Zehavi and Hadad 2013). The settlement type that can be associated with these sites is the village (kafr, dayʿa) of local texts. This type of settlement is characterized by agriculture and can be privately owned. However, it could also mean monasteries, for which the information in texts is likewise scarce. One may notice that the Muslim geographers of the ninth–tenth centuries rarely mention dayʿas (with 2 per cent of all settlement types in their books) even though it is clearly one of the most popular site types in the research area. In addition, intensive industry can be associated with a number of these sites, hence with villages (or monasteries).

One site in this group, Yavne-Yam, is not a perfect fit. Like other sites of type 4, it possesses a complex of wells, channels, and pools, and excludes flagstone pavements and fire installations. However, unlike the other sites but with resemblance to type 1, it is located on the coast, has a bath house, and lies adjacent to a relatively big Roman site (Vitto 1998; Fischer and Taxel 2014, Area B). I suggest that it was a city at the beginning of our time frame but did not get updated with the trends which made cities central and important later. Based also on its fortification elements, it is possible that it became a fortress (biṣn) and not a regular village. Its interpretation as a fortress agrees with the one offered by the excavators (Fischer and Taxel 2014).

Unlike any other site in the region, all of which answer the definition of one type, Ramla was composed of one city, two towns, and several villages. This entity incorporated a few markets and/or industrial areas (with Mazliah being intensively productive) and different dwelling areas. This cluster of sites physically united in the late ninth century, with a mosque erected between the clusters in the tenth or eleventh century (Nol 2019). The unification of the Ramla sites into one physical unit correlates with the transformation of al-Ramla from a city into a metropolis in the ninth century according to our analysis of terminology (Nol 2020a). This means that the term ‘metropolis’ can denote, physically, a cluster of sites. The correlation also supports our former conclusion: that a metropolis is not a settlement type in itself.

Conclusions

Historical archaeologies hold the great advantage of being able to use another source — primary texts. In the archaeology of Early Islam, this opportunity is mainly channelled into the interpretation of structures and layers on sites based on narrative literature. This paper utilizes texts for their ‘inside’ views on settlement types in Palestine and compares them to archaeologically based observations. Brian Hayden (1984) questions the possible correlations between emic and etic typologies and emphasizes the superiority of the etic/archaeological classification over the emic/ethnographic one. Roland Fletcher (2010) warns us not to attribute too much weight to words, as they might reflect idealized concepts. However, the subjective typologies in archaeology, on the one hand, and the positivist nature of the discipline, on the other hand, necessitate a counterbalance. Each dataset must be analysed in its own context, avoiding direct analogies. Contrasting the datasets reveals weaknesses in their interpretation and assists in refining it. This comparison highlights the difficulty to differentiate some of the site types solely based on their features. In other words, if not for the emic approach, this distinction would be overlooked.

This series of analyses resulted in a clear hierarchy of settlement types with different characteristics. It starts with the city, continues with the town and the market town, and then moves to villages, monasteries, and fortresses. The main categories for distinguishing one type from another seem to be their access to easy transportation, at least in the case of cities, and the amount of their available services. The city provides all the services available in the region, and the town follows with many. A somewhat similar definition of cities is proposed by Jose Lobo and others (2020, 734, after O’Sullivan 2011) as a concentration of activities (and individuals) that is higher relative to the surroundings. The validity of these categories and the proposed definition should be tested on other regions than Israel/Palestine.

The case study of the present article refutes certain axioms about ancient cities. Surprisingly enough, cities in the research area are not spatially central. They are distributed only in the northern part of the area, with a small distance between them, and with very few other site types in their vicinity. This result disputes premises by the central-place theory or similar models and their applications in landscape archaeology. As far as the distance parameter can be interpreted, it shows no dependence on the city by other sites and no control from the other direction, and it presents no competition between cities.
This conclusion adds up with other archaeological studies from Israel, as well as to the ethno-historical and ethno-archaeological evidence, which point to marketplaces outside and in parallel to big sites (De Ligt 1993, 99–136; Binggeli 2012; Gabrieli, Ben-Shlomo, and Walker 2014; Nol forthcoming). The main implication of this result concerns the use of the central-place theory within network analyses in archaeology. Evidently, economic centres of regions and ‘cities’ are not synonyms.

The second unexpected result relates to the size of sites. Cities are indeed bigger than most other sites, conforming with the common definition. However, they are relatively small — certainly in modern eyes — ranging between 0.2 km² (i.e. Azor) and 2 km² (i.e. Lod). Furthermore, two towns show a similar size to cities (i.e. Gan Yavne and Tel Yavne, around 1 km²), so size cannot be the sole characteristic for the identification of cities. A third set of results contradicts the common categorization of cities or the unique characteristics of settlements (see e.g. Thomas 2010, 33–35). As it seems, agriculture can be found in most settlement types and does not signify ‘villages’, whereas industry can be detected in villages and is less frequent in cities. A similar situation can be observed in Viking Age archaeology, where scholars are baffled by the gap between the centrality of sites on the one hand and their size and set of activities on the other, which contradict common definitions (Sindbæk 2007; Hodges 2012, 98).

The results highlight the importance of a contextual inquiry, a regional overview, and a bottom-up perspective. In other words, archaeologists should first interpret their data by the data, and only later employ various theories, models, the historical context, and even their own expectations and common sense (Hodder and Huston 2003, 167–90). Notably, the investigation of relatively big settlement sites in isolation cannot indicate their regional role or uniqueness (Tesch 2016, 128; Chirikure 2017, 8–9).

A very different picture arrives from the region’s metropolis, Ramla. First, this is a very large entity (6 km²), at least when its clusters unite in the ninth century. Second, it is spatially central. The recurrence of the regional material culture in Ramla demonstrates its high economic centralism, perhaps acting as a distributor. In contrast to the other cities, it was engaged in industry and large-scale agriculture. Unlike some perceptions of cities as having a single centre (Wengrow 2018, 26), Ramla is composed of several settlement types and with distinct activity areas. Principally, the attributions scholars assign to ‘cities’ are a very close portrait of our ninth- to tenth-century metropolis. On the positive side, this result suggests that comparisons between industrial and pre-industrial metropolises may be valid, after they have been securely identified.

This, however, also highlights certain problems. First, the density and size of Ramla were temporary, spanning two centuries. Also, it took the place of the region’s previous capital, Lod, which had never been very large (Nol 2019). While this is not a new result (Fletcher 2010, 478–79), it suggests that ancient ‘metropolism’ may come and go while ‘citism’ may remain. The second issue is how to label or relate to ‘non-metropolis cities’ which evidently had an important economic role in the region. This brings us to the third problem, the lack of unified terminology by archaeologists (Fletcher 2020), which leads to a terminological fog over any settlement type. By translations not nuanced enough, modern scholars lower the status of settlements until small places vanish from the hierarchy. For example, the metropolis of written sources al-Ramla is considered a ‘town’ by some modern scholars (e.g. Luz 1997; Kennedy 2010, 55–56). The main problem this list points to is the division between ‘cities’ and ‘non-cities’ being simplistic and circular. It is time to click on ‘reboot’ and look at our categories afresh.

Text-oriented historians are not to be blamed for a city-centric perspective. At least within early Islamic periods, they reflect their commonly metropolis-centric primary sources. In contrast, archaeological research has the potential of observing the full range of settlement types. In order to make that division, we first must understand the characteristics of the sites in our region, detect the attributes that differentiate them from each other, and then decide systematically which might be ‘cities’ and/or ‘metropolises’ according to our set of etic definitions. Another set of questions can be addressed to metropolises, investigating their activity areas and internal chronology. Obviously, these directions of inquiry are not possible everywhere, with excavations often conducted only in ports, in monumental places, or at very big sites. In these cases, we should consider shifting our emphasis and surely our terminology.

**Abbreviations**


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