34

A Preliminary View

In the last three parts a profile of Israel's social system was begun by pursuing three lines of analysis: a sketch of prevalent models for the Israelite settlement-formation in Canaan (Part V), an examination of the internal articulation and segmentation at four levels of Israelite social structure (Part VI), and a comparison of the overall social system of Israel with the proposed analogue of the amphictyony in Greece (Part VII). The result has been the emerging cross-section of Israel as an egalitarian, extended-family, segmentary tribal society with an agricultural-pastoral economic base.

The Israelite society was characterized by profound resistance and opposition to the forms of political domination and social stratification that had become normative in the chief cultural and political centers of the ancient Near East. There was a definite sociohistorical intent to the organizational segmentation of Israel's intertribal order into structurally and functionally equivalent and politically equal entities forming extended families, protective associations of families, and tribes in an overarching intertribal confederacy. The same sociohistorical intent guided the mutual cooperation of these pyramided social segments in cross-cutting bonding associations and activities, such as the cultic assembly of adult males, the Levitical priesthood, mutual economic aid, intermarriage, military levy, and the Kenite metal craft guild. *Together, the societal segmentation and inter-group bonding of early Israel were adaptively related to the fundamental aims of these segmented but cooperating people to escape imperialism and feudalism imposed by outside powers and to prevent the rise of feudal domination within their own society.*

So heavily have we emphasized this anti-imperialist and anti-feudal bias of old Israel, thereby staking out its distinctively oppositional and egalitarian character, that it becomes essential to our characterization of the early Israelite social system to counterpose it against the designs of Egyptian empire and of Canaanite feudal society. We have already laid the foundation of our sketch of this opposed dominant society in our brief summary of the revolt model of Israel's settlement (in V. 22) in which we described the Canaanite city-state feudal order as it developed under Egyptian hegemony from about the middle of the eighteenth century B.C., when the Hyksos imposed their rule on Canaan and moved on to become the masters of Egypt. Although the Hyksos rulers were later expelled from both Egypt and Canaan, the Hyksos feudal pattern continued as the normative political and socioeconomic structure of Canaan.

Although we possess archaeological data and historical texts concerning the Egyptian-Canaanite imperial-feudal blend spread over several centuries from about 2000 B.C. to about 1200 B.C., the Archimedean point for our analysis of Canaanite society is the diplomatic correspondence from the Amarna Age (c. 1410–1350 B.C.).[288] There is a richness and fullness to the documentation, even though the specifically social organizational data are relatively meager in comparison with the political and military data. Certain projections about social organization in the period can be hypothesized on the basis of north Syrian texts from Ugarit[289] and Alalakh,[290] which offer a somewhat fuller account of social organization in an area which shared at least some cultural continuities with southerly Canaan. The value of the Amarna texts is that they picture the political situation in the precise area in which Israel arose somewhat more than a century later.

In this part of our study, we shall consider first the Egyptian imperial hegemony over Canaan, the indigenous Canaanite feudal system, the functional interlock between the two, and the specific adaptation to feudalism made by a sub-element of the populace known as *'apiru*, a social grouping which constituted a significant antecedent to and, in my view, one direct line of connection with early Israel. With the Egyptian-Canaanite-*'apiru* sociopolitical complex in mind, we shall then show how the Philistines functioned basically as operatives within that preestablished complex. Possible sociopolitical models for Ammon, Moab, and Edom in the thirteenth through the eleventh centuries will be briefly explored. The persistent model of early Israel as a pastoral nomadic society will be sharply criticized and drastically reformulated. Finally, appropriate models or social "morphemes" will be proposed in a cross-cutting grid of complementarity and opposition in order to locate the synchronically fragmented but diachronically converging social segments of Canaan whose conjunction eventuated in the sociopolitical formation of early Israel.

35

Egyptian Imperialism and Canaanite Feudalism: The Amarna Age Interlock

The background to the development of Amarna imperialism/feudalism is complex and only sporadically and asymmetrically documented. The Egyptian Middle Kingdom (c. 2052–1786 B.C.) extended nominal control over Syria-Palestine. Its interests during the period were mainly in trade and the extraction of natural resources. Since there was no major political opposition from the east, Egypt was not greatly challenged to develop its loose political and military suzerainty in the region into a tighter system of imperial control. The Egyptian Story of Sinuhe[291] and the Execration Texts[292] give some valuable information on the populace in Canaan during the Egyptian Middle Kingdom.

35.1 Hyksos and Canaanite "Feudalism"

By all accounts, it was the entrance of the Hyksos into Syro-Palestine which introduced a tighter system of city-state social stratification and exploitative control over the surrounding countryside of a sort which can be broadly characterized as "feudal." Students of feudalism point out that its strictest and most elaborate form was developed in medieval Europe, and even there it appeared only in its "purest" form in northern France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D. In the vacuum left by the collapse of the Roman Empire and the decline of the Merovingian and Carolingian kingdoms, as well as by the attrition of international trade, a remarkably closed and self-contained system of tenurial and personal relationships developed between lord and vassal. The feudal system, by means of the grant of land in return for service, built up a network of economic, social, and political dependencies. In its full European form, feudalism developed intricate procedures of homage, tenant service, wardship, marriage, reliefs, aids, escheat, and forfeiture. By comparison with this fully developed feudalism, some scholars prefer to speak of the less fully developed but similar systems elsewhere as possessing "feudal tendencies."[293] In this context, in order to avoid clumsy circumlocutions, we shall speak of Canaanite feudalism, while remaining fully aware that it arose from peculiar Near Eastern developments and did not exhibit all the detailed features of European feudalism. What marks the Canaanite system

as feudal is its bonding by a network of regional dependencies with tenurial ties which locked a majority of the populace on the land.

In the section on settlement models (V.22) we alluded to the new developments in military technology which the Hyksos brought into Syro-Palestine and Egypt in the eighteenth century B.C. While there are now some second thoughts about the proper interpretation of the massive walls and revetments around Hyksos Age cities,[294] the hypothesis that it was the Hyksos who brought chariot warfare into the region remains intact. This military advance seems to have been the primary factor in stimulating the growth of the feudal system. Chariot warfare required: (1) strongly fortified cities which could dominate their hinterlands; and (2) concentrations of wealth, artisan skill, and military agility in order to develop and maintain chariot forces.

This twofold requirement concentrated populations within or near fortified cities in which a militarized upper class was able to expropriate increasing shares of the general productivity. The militarized upper class was related symbiotically to a local dynast who coordinated political and economic life. The dynast in turn depended upon the loyalty of the militarized vassals who were given grants of land on which serfs worked to support the centralized superstructure. This process apparently diminished vastly the power of assemblies of free citizens and councils of elders or nobility who had once held considerable stature,[295] and the very existence of a class of formally "free" peasants *(ḫupshu)* was seriously threatened. The data are very sketchy on these matters, but it seems that the revolution in military technology brought a new class of warrior-specialists into power at the expense of former hereditary nobility and free peasants.[296] The extent of the deprivation of the latter groups remains uncertain, but the dominant picture of the Amarna texts is that of so much internecine fighting, at such heavy expense to all parties, that economic erosion of the affluent classes and rapid swelling of the impoverished classes seems a plausible reading of the sketchy evidence.

A brief word about the Hyksos is in order, particularly since they have been improperly explained in many biblical studies. The misleading point of departure was the claim of the Hellenistic Egyptian historian Manetho that Hyksos meant "shepherd kings." From this erroneous etymology scholars frequently fantasized a nomadic Semitic people, and some of them went so far as to equate the Hyksos with the Hebrews and to view the descent of Joseph and his brothers into Egypt as part of the invasion of Egypt by the Hyksos. Most biblical scholars, without controlling all the data, nonetheless recognized the flimsy and incongruous basis of the identification, if only because Joseph and his brothers—whatever favor they found in Egypt—certainly did not come as conquerors.

It is now known that Manetho's "Hyksos" is in fact a rendering of an old Egyptian term meaning "rulers of foreign lands." Since the Hyksos adopted the Egyptian language once they became the rulers of Egypt, we know of their

language mainly through transliterated personal names. They appear to have been an ethnically composite people, since Semitic, Hurrian, and Indo-European elements occur among the personal names. That they introduced chariot warfare and presided over a process of urban growth, political centralization, and feudal stratification altogether discredits the notion that they were pastoral nomads. Increasingly it is felt that the Hyksos were part of a widespread migration of Hurrian peoples, presided over by an Indo-European ruling class, which spread over the upper part of the fertile crescent in the early second millennium B.C. and extended eastward beyond the Tigris River and southward through Syria and Palestine. Hyksos itself is primarily a political identification for those migrants who succeeded in penetrating Egypt and establishing pharaonic dynasties during a period of marked political decline following the Middle Kingdom.[297]

The feudal development in Canaan thus appears as the result of markedly different conditions than those obtaining in medieval Europe. Feudalism in Syria-Palestine was precipitated by advances in military technology introduced by the influx of an ethnically mixed ruling class. Feudalism in Canaan was characterized by the concentration of the populace in and around cities and the subordination of the countryside to the city. Finally, Canaanite feudalism occurred in a context of hegemony by the Egyptian imperium and in a situation of international trade which made of Canaan an emporium for the exchange of goods from all parts of the ancient Near East. Thus, whereas feudalism in Europe represented a more stagnant and socioeconomically retarded system compared to preceding periods, feudalism in Canaan occurred in a setting of general cultural advance, even though the "advance" was very unevenly shared by the general populace.[298]

These striking differences in the location of European and Canaanite feudalism in the evolutionary scales on the two continents compel great caution in interpreting the lesser-known Canaanite feudalism in terms of the better-known European feudalism.[299] Nonetheless, the similarities are evident, including the fact that the basic feudal units, articulated as city-states in Canaan, were autonomous and highly competitive, their only firm linkage lying in the overarching Egyptian imperial control which was, in its very nature, often exceedingly nominal. An inverse ratio existed between Egyptian suzerainty and Canaanite autonomy: the stronger the Egyptian presence, the weaker the assertions of Canaanite independence and the more "harmonious" the picture of political affairs; the weaker the Egyptian presence, the more virulent the competitive assertions of the multitudinous Canaanite autonomies and the more "disruptive" the appearance of political life.

It is evident that in spite of the political friction between Egypt and Canaan, the systems of Egyptian imperialism and of Canaanite feudalism were joined in a mutually dependent interlock. Each depended in important ways upon the existence of the other. Egypt developed no highly integrated administrative system

for dominating its empire, of the sort the Assyrians and Persians were later to introduce.[300] Egypt learned to rely upon native princes for exercising local rule and delivering the necessary services and tribute to the imperial master. It was highly advantageous that these local princes should be numerous and competitive toward one another, since the fragmentation and dispersal of their power vis-à-vis the Egyptian power tended to minimize the dangers of revolt. From the viewpoint of the Canaanite city-state princes, the Egyptian presence was a stabilizing factor which kept the general populace and its various restive factions in line and at the same time served as a guarantee against aggrandizement by other city-state princes. Furthermore, a stabilizing Egyptian political and military presence fostered a favorable climate for inter-city trade, so vital a factor in maintaining a high level of culture and luxury for the privileged upper classes. Obviously there were weaknesses in the interlock, since the areas of shared common interests between Egyptian and Canaanite were far less extensive than the official propaganda claimed. Egypt would have preferred more direct control of Canaan and Canaan would have preferred complete independence from Egypt but neither had the realistic prospect of imposing its maximal desires and neither had effective models for fully "going it alone." The Amarna correspondence reflects the intimate interlock between the two systems, but it also shows the growing strains and the contradictory interests of Egyptians and Canaanites.

35.2 Egyptian-Canaanite Dominion: Temporal and Territorial Horizons

I shall now offer a generalized design of the various levels and dimensions of the interlocking Egyptian imperial and Canaanite feudal systems, with particular attention to the nature of the stresses within the overall symbiotic relations, in part those between Egyptians and their Canaanite vassals but mainly those between the Canaanite ruling class and other segments of the Canaanite social order. The discussion will increasingly focus on the *'apiru* as the most strikingly disruptive force in the system.

Obviously, such a cross-sectional design must bear in mind that the Amarna texts are as yet only imperfectly understood, both because of their occasional character as letters and because of the numerous Canaanite terms and idioms that the scribes employed. While they are written mostly in Akkadian, it is a form of that language permeated by the Canaanite dialect of the scribes. Furthermore, the texts represent the various regions of Canaan in a highly uneven manner. Cities such as Byblos, Megiddo, Shechem, and Jerusalem are documented with scores of letters, while others are unmentioned or alluded to only in letters from another city. Also, the place of origin of some of the letters is unknown.

It is important to recognize that the extent to which the Egyptians effectively controlled their Canaanite empire and the extent to which the ruling classes

dominated their respective city-states varied considerably from period to period and from region to region. We can in fact establish two horizons for characterizing the differentials in extent of effective domination by ruling elites, one a temporal horizon and the other a territorial horizon:

TEMPORAL HORIZON. Maximal Egyptian domination is to be posited for the first half of the eighteenth dynasty with its acme in the reign of Thutmose III (c. 1490–1436), following which the Amarna period represents a steadily declining, although never altogether relinquished, exercise of Egyptian domination over Canaan, connected with Egypt's growing absorption in internal affairs.

A corollary maximal Canaanite ruling-class domination over the populace is to be posited in the first half of the eighteenth dynasty, following which the Amarna period represents a weakening of Canaanite ruling-class domination, undermined by inter-city strife and internal revolts. But two qualifications are necessary. First, the internecine city strife also had a counter-effect of strengthening elites in some cities in the short term, even though the overall long-range effect was to undermine the system of elite control. Secondly, the city-state feudal system did not weaken at the same pace or to as great an extent as the Egyptian imperial domination, since weakening or termination of Egyptian expropriation did not automatically end the infrastructure of feudal expropriation by native elites.

TERRITORIAL HORIZON. Maximal Egyptian domination was normally exerted over the regions of Canaan most directly accessible to Egyptian armies and most profitable to Egyptian imperial needs, namely, in the coastal plains, the lateral valleys, and parts of the Jordan Valley. By contrast, the hill country east and west of the Jordan experienced minimal or sporadic Egyptian domination and in some periods escaped with no more than formal or nominal Egyptian claims of suzerainty.

Maximal Canaanite ruling-class domination over the populace was exercised in cities of the plains and valleys, whereas cities in the highlands, although apparently organized by elites, were less effective in extending control over their hinterlands. The correlated differentials in Egyptian and Canaanite elite control according to regions were functions of a complex set of variables affecting accessibility and profitability to overlords. Specifically historico-territorial factors were at work. The city-states in the productive plains and valleys were close together, with the result that rural populations were easily dominated by urban elites.

The city-states in the highlands were farther apart. Population was much sparser in the hills than in the plains and valleys because of the difficulty of cultivating a thicketed and forested region with bronze tools and with an undependable water supply. Trade was inhibited by the rough terrain and the region's relative remoteness from the main coastal and valley communication arteries. It was always possible for groups resisting domination by the highland city-state elites to withdraw into relatively inaccessible areas and to escape direct control. It

was just such hilly regions that served as base areas for the Amarna *'apiru* and for the later Israelites.[301]

35.3 Egyptian-Canaanite Dominion: Internal Dynamics

With the conditioning of perspective provided by these variable but correlated temporal and territorial horizons on Egyptian-Canaanite domination, we offer the following sketch of the dominant system in ideal-typical form. In doing so, account is taken of historical development and of problematic features, as well as documentation on the *'apiru* and the nature of the strains within the overall system.[302]

DYNASTS AND GOVERNORS. The Canaanite city-states were headed by native dynasts (sing. *ḫazannu*) and loosely integrated into the Egyptian empire by the oversight of Egyptian commissioners or governors (sing. *rabiṣu*) who had regional responsibility for a number of city-states.

TWO LEVELS OF ELITES. The chain of authority in control by elites operated on two levels: (1) the pharaoh granted the city-state as a fief to the dynast in return for goods and services; (2) the dynast granted lands and their usufruct to local aristocrats in return for their goods and services. Possibly there also existed independent crown land, held by the pharaoh or by the dynast or by both, although the evidence on this point is unclear.

GOODS AND SERVICES PLEDGED. The return of imperial-feudal goods and services was as follows: (1) the dynast provided the pharaoh with metals, craft products, timber, agricultural produce to supply Egyptian troops, harbors and garrisons for Egyptian use. He barracked Egyptian troops, and, as needed, supplied local troops to assist the Egyptians in punitive campaigns; (2) the aristocrat provided the dynast with such professional military service as a chariot-warrior, a body of troops in his charge, agricultural produce as "rent" on land, and probably also the corvée labor of his serfs.

SUBORDINATED SOCIOPOLITICAL GROUPS. This chain of authority, with its interlocking system of grants and services, depressed a considerable part of the populace into serfdom and pushed technically "free" elements of the populace into increasing powerlessness. We hear of peasants not wholly assimilated to the feudal system (*ḫupshu*). There are references also to "the people" (assembly of free citizens?), and "the council" (council of leading citizens, nobles, elders?). The materials about these groups are so sporadic and terse that it is impossible to judge whether they were given some formal status within the dominant system, and, if so, whether the assemblies and councils were more than "rubber stamp" bodies. Nor is it possible to say whether such groups were represented in all or most of the city-states. What does seem clear is that such social and political weight as they had was used to shift relative power balances within the system rather than to challenge the imperial-feudal system in a fundamental way.

COMPLIANCE OR REBELLION AGAINST EGYPT. City-states either complied with their obligations to the pharaoh or revolted, either in a general coordinated plan (as in the time of Thutmose III), or individually (as in the Amarna Age), or with the stimulus and support of another major power (as became increasingly the case with the Hittite intervention in Syria in the latter part of the fourteenth century and in the thirteenth century).

COMPLIANCE OR REBELLION AGAINST DYNASTS. The populations of the city-states either complied with their obligations to the local dynast, willingly or reluctantly, or rebelled against him. Uprisings might involve one or more of the following potentially disturbing segments of the populace: relatives of the dynast, feudal aristocrats, the people as more or less free citizenry (with such organizational assemblies or councils as may have existed), *'apiru* bands, "free" peasants, or serfs. The descriptions in the Amarna letters allow us to identify at least some of the rebel elements, but often the terms are very general or are ambiguously used, particularly in the case of the label *'apiru*. Uprisings might be restricted to the city-state populace or might be aided and abetted by dynasts in rival city-states.

INTER-CITY AGGRANDIZEMENTS. Dynasts freely seized territory from one another, and thus secured or lost feudal or crown estates, whenever Egypt was too weak to impose a "freeze" on inter-city rivalries. These inter-city aggrandizements were formal violations of the Egyptian imperium in that they disturbed the status quo. Only if they led to a diminution in imperial tribute, however, were the Egyptians likely to be greatly concerned. Probably in many cases the aggrandizing dynast continued to return his feudal services to Egypt. The exact relation between the inter-city struggles and the patterns of loyalty to or defection from Egypt is greatly obscured by the political dissembling that permeates the Amarna correspondence. Egypt was still strong enough in Canaan that every Canaanite dynast wanted to appear as the loyal servant of the pharaoh while stigmatizing his rival fellow dynasts as rebels against the pharaoh. The sentiments and motives, and even some of the reported events, recorded in the Amarna letters must be read with a generous grain of salt.

CITY-STATE EMPLOYMENT OF *'APIRU* TROOPS. Dynasts made use of *'apiru* troops in their armies, and this is true both for dynasts identified as Egyptian loyalists and for dynasts identified as Egyptian defectors. *'Apiru* is used in the Amarna letters with a number of denotations and connotations. When these references are studied in relation to references to *'apiru* (or the equivalent SA.GAZ) from throughout the fertile crescent, the primary specific denotation for Amarna Canaan *'apiru* is as mercenary troops and as brigands. The kinds of relations between dynasts and *'apiru* groups appear to have been threefold: (1) *'apiru* mercenaries employed to serve as auxiliary infantry; (2) *'apiru* brigands encouraged and/or supplied by a dynast to harass an enemy dynast in paramilitary operations: (3) *'apiru* groups settled on lands as client but semi-independent forces, possibly conceived as a feudal grant entailing reciprocal military service.

One of the aims of territorial aggrandizement may have been to secure new lands for settling *'apiru* as militarized enclaves and buffers.

FORMS OF INTER-CITY CONFLICT. Rebellions against authority within the city-states were often encouraged by dynasts in other city-states who saw therein an opportunity to weaken rival states and to seize control over their territory. Rival dynasts thus played upon the social unrest in their opponent's domain. They were eager to pit the rival dynast against those in the upper echelons of power (or those who thought they should be included), such as the dynast's relatives (especially brothers), princes, and feudal aristocrats. They were equally ready to capitalize on the resentments of those who suffered under the feudal order, or who had been pushed aside by it, such as the peasant serfs, the semi-free farmers *(ḫupshu)*, remnants of the free citizenry with their assemblies and councils as a political tradition resistant to feudalism, and the *'apiru*. The latter, although at times collaborative with feudal dynasts and lords, stood to profit greatly from an overall weakening of the feudal system.

IMPERIAL-FEUDAL DISINTEGRATION. The above-described strains and conflicts in the Egyptian-Canaanite imperial-feudal symbiosis fit most securely within an imperial-feudal system that was undergoing slow but progressive internal disintegration. This was in full process over the entire region, but in the Amarna Age it was far from having reached the point of total breakdown.[303] The disintegration of the imperial control of Egypt was in fact very much farther advanced than that of the feudal system in Canaan. While the peoples of Canaan in this period show a steady convergence of consciousness on the desirability and possibility of weakening the Egyptian imperial grip, they do not show a corresponding convergence of consciousness on the desirability and possibility of reorganizing their socioeconomic and political existence on nonfeudal lines. When the Egyptian imperium is conceived as eliminated, the result is a plethora of city-state dynasts competing for dominance and of aspirants within each city-state striving to gain control. These are the articulate social forces at work in the Amarna Age, whatever the inarticulate strivings of segments of the population to be rid of the whole heavy burden of feudalism.

35.4 Alleged 'Apiru Revolt against Egyptian-Canaanite Dominion

The caution that we can discern no consciously conceived and organized counter-system, or even any articulate movement against the system, is of great importance in assessing the *'apiru* of Amarna Canaan in terms of their continuities and discontinuities with early Israel. The lower-class unrest in Amarna Canaan had not yet taken the form of a consciously conceived and explicitly organized movement of the disaffected with coordinated expression that reached across the city-state boundaries. The preconditions for such a conscious nonstratified, widely coordinated movement were building and perhaps find their fullest expression in a letter of Rib-Addi of Byblos to the pharaoh (EA 74) in which he

recounts the propaganda used by his opponent, Abdi-Ashirta of Amurru.[304] Yet, even here, the sociopolitical references are too obscure, and the co-opting aims of Abdi-Ashirta too obvious, to provide solid ground for believing that Abdi-Ashirta was gathering and leading a consciously anti-feudal lower-class movement.[305] Nonetheless, that such social restiveness was at hand to be co-opted by warring feudal factions is itself a significant datum. For this also implies that a reservoir of social restiveness was available for mobilization on explicitly anti-feudal lines, provided that a viable organizational and ideological model could be found and provided that the political security of Canaan should continue to deteriorate.

I shall now attempt to explicate the last point above somewhat more fully as the context for discussing the *'apiru*, since it is abundantly clear that for our purposes it is absolutely essential not only to understand the specific data about the *'apiru* but, above all, to discern if possible their location within the total societal system, both cross-sectionally in relation to the other social actors and longitudinally in terms of the trajectory along which the total system was moving.

As far as I can determine from the Amarna letters, the leaders most frequently identified as *'apiru*, or as collaborative with the *'apiru* (e.g., Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru of Amurru; Labaya and his sons from Shechem; Milkilu of Gezer; Tagi from an unnamed city, etc.)[306] are not depicted as representatives of a nonstratified, anti-feudal sociopolitical movement. Their essentially statist ethos and practices show up well-marked features: They are dynasts like all the other *ḫazannūtu*, i.e., fathers and sons rule in succession unless interrupted by a coup from within or a defeat from without (EA 117:33, 35–39; 250:4–55; 253:11–17; 289:5–10, 25–26). They possess chariot forces and thus depend on feudally pledged professional military forces (EA 87:18–24; 197:2–5, 7–12). They pay tribute to Egypt, even though reluctantly (EA 254:10–15). They take peace oaths not to disturb the imperial status quo in Canaan (EA 252:10–11). They supply troops to Egypt for local campaigns (EA 195:24–32; cf. 189 verso: 9–18). They observe noninterference with Egyptian trade (EA 255:8–25). One dynast actually turns over his son to the Egyptians because he has associated (plotted?) with the *'apiru* (EA 254:31–37).

Of course it is admittedly possible, and even inherently likely, that with respect to some of these claims made by supposed *'apiru* dynasts, they are actually dissembling, i.e., denying what they have done or merely complying in part in order to cover up their deeper conspiratorial actions. Some points, however, are not easily explainable by deception, since they touch on the fundamental internal organization of the rebellious government or army. For example, the references to the principle of dynastic rule and to the use of chariot forces seem to serve no purpose of deception or intrigue, and it is difficult to conceive of a genuinely anit-statist leader delivering his son voluntarily to the Egyptians as a hostage.

It is particularly striking that Abdi-Ashirta, whose propaganda pitch to the dominated segments of the population in the area around Byblos which he sought to conquer might incline us to think of him as a leader of an egalitarian movement,

actually founded a dynasty which soon became vassal to the Hittites. Granted that Aziru's submission to the Hittite empire was undertaken with a measure of compulsion; nonetheless, the historical introduction to the treaty of Suppiluliumas and Aziru[307] pictures Aziru as taking the lead in establishing friendly relations with the Hittites, while other lands much closer to the Hittite homeland were still hostile toward the Hittite intruder. W. Helck points out the intriguing fact that Abdi-Ashirta and Ba'aluja, his son who succeeded him, bore Semitic names, whereas his second son to reign, Aziru, and the following six rulers (as far as the line can be traced), bore recognizably Hurrian names.[308] This seems to imply that Abdi-Ashirta regarded it as politic (assuming that it was he who named his son Aziru from the start) to identify his line with the Indo-European/Hurrian stratum whose princely families carried royal claims. This act may be understood as an assertion of sociopolitical pretensions which were in the end more basic to the man and his program than the pseudo-egalitarian rhetoric with which he urged Rib-Addi's subjects to revolt and come over to his side. At most, the impression of widespread revolt, conveyed both by Rib-Addi's alarm and by the quoted propaganda of Abdi-Ashirta, suggests the nucleus of a broad anti-Egyptian alliance of the sort that had rallied to Megiddo against Thutmose III a century before. Yet, in a letter from the pharaoh to Aziru chiding him for his hostility toward Rib-Addi, the Egyptian does not seem to regard Aziru as the real center of intrigue in southern Syria, but rather a certain "man of Kadesh" (Etakkama?; EA 162:15–29), who is elsewhere charged with treason by four princes of the region in separate (but commonly dictated?) letters to the pharaoh (EA 174—176; 363).[309]

In my judgment, the named dynasts, although often stigmatized as *'apiru* or accused of collaborating with *'apiru,* were not fundamentally challenging the feudal order. They were seeking greater elbow room for themselves by loosening the Egyptian imperial grip and by seeking advantages at the expense of their neighbors. But appeals such as those made by Abdi-Ashirta to the subject peoples of another city-state, when read in the light of the hysteria marking the Amarna references to the *'apiru,* strongly indicate that these dynasts made effective tactical use of lower-class resentments against the feudal order. The trick was to exploit the resentments of subjects against rival dynasts, while transferring and redirecting their energies toward allegiance to the new dynast. Thus, when a rebel sought to grasp the throne within his own city-state, or when one king sought to overthrow or take over the territory of another king, he deliberately stirred up and capitalized upon the general discontent and opposition toward the authority who was his prime personal target of attack. Implicitly or explicitly, the new contender for power claimed that his rule would offer an improvement in the subjects' conditions. We easily recognize that this hope was so often disappointed that subjects grew cynical; nonetheless, even the hope of marginal improvement spurred many an uprising and many an inter-city state conflict.

36

The *'Apiru* Adaptation in Amarna Canaan

While there is growing consensus that *'apiru* and Hebrew are linguistically related,[310] there is no certainty as to the language (NW Semitic, Hurrian, etc.) or the verbal root from which the sociopolitical technical term was originally drawn. Our grasp of the sort of social group(s) called *'apiru* must depend on categorization and comparison of the traits of *'apiru* attested in numerous texts widely distributed over the ancient world in the period 2000 to 1200 B.C.[311] The distinguishing generic trait of the *'apiru* turns out to be sociopolitical rather than ethnic or economic, although there are economic features that follow systematically from the dominant sociopolitical factor.[312] *'Apiru* cannot be characterized as ethnically homogeneous in any one location, much less throughout all the regions where they appear. Nor are the *'apiru* engaged in any single economic activity throughout the Near East, although in particular locales there is often a tendency toward one or another form of economic specialization.

The one trait that best comprehends all the *'apiru* appears to be that of the *outsider status* they occupy vis-à-vis the regnant social and political order. The term "outlaw" conveniently catches the double nuance of the *'apiru* as those who stand recognizably outside the prevailing order, both as "fugitives" or "refugees" who *flee from the dominant order* and as "robbers" or "rebels" who *prey upon or threaten the dominant order.* But "outlaw," except as broadly redefined, tends to miss the many grades and variations of adaptation of which the *'apiru* "outsiders" were capable vis-à-vis the dominant social order. While standing distinguishably apart from the existing order, they also relied upon it insofar as their livelihood was dependent upon the wider society, for which they often worked either as individual "contract laborers" or as hired groups of soldiers, agricultural laborers, or construction gangs.

It seems advisable to maintain a distinction between the individual occupations of *'apiru* before they departed from the prevailing order and the occupations they engaged in as hired laborers or mercenaries once they became members of *'apiru* communities. For example, in the Alalakh texts from fifteenth-century northern Syria, settlements of *'apiru* are recorded in forty-three places, where they appear as state-supported warriors. In a few instances the former occupations of *'apiru* are listed. They include a thief, a slave or servant, priests, and even what appears to be an ex-governor or ex-dynast *(ḫazannu).*[313] How the past experiences and