



**Tel Aviv**

Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University

ISSN: 0334-4355 (Print) 2040-4786 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ytav20>

# The Date of Kuntillet 'Ajrud: A Reply to Lily Singer-Avitz

Liora Freud

To cite this article: Liora Freud (2008) The Date of Kuntillet 'Ajrud: A Reply to Lily Singer-Avitz, Tel Aviv, 35:2, 169-174, DOI: [10.1179/tav.2008.2008.2.169](https://doi.org/10.1179/tav.2008.2008.2.169)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1179/tav.2008.2008.2.169>



Published online: 19 Jul 2013.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 90



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

# THE DATE OF KUNTILLET 'AJRUD: A REPLY TO LILY SINGER-AVITZ

**Liora Freud**

Tel Aviv University

## ***Abstract***

*Singer-Avitz (2006) recently suggested comparing the Kuntillet 'Ajrud pottery assemblage to the Lachish III pottery horizon and accordingly down dating it to the late 8th century BCE. Yet, certain forms found at the site already appear in Iron IIA strata in both the north and south of Israel. I therefore support Ayalon's (1995) original dating of the site to the late 9th and first half of the 8th centuries BCE.*

In a recent article, Lily Singer-Avitz (2006) maintained that the pottery assemblage from Kuntillet 'Ajrud should not be dated from the end of the 9th to the beginning of the 8th century BCE, as proposed by Ayalon (1995), but rather be down-dated to the end of the 8th century BCE, that is, to the narrow time-span between the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE and the Sennacherib campaign to Judah in 701 BCE. In what follows I wish to support Ayalon's original dating of the Kuntillet 'Ajrud pottery. Though the assemblage contains parallels to strata such as Lachish Level III, Beersheba Stratum II and Arad Strata X–VIII, all of which date to the late 8th century, it also has much in common with earlier strata at those sites.

## **THE POTTERY OF KUNTILLET 'AJRUD**

### ***BOWLS***

The round-based carinated bowl and the shallow carinated bowl (Ayalon 1995: Figs. 3.13 and 3.14 respectively) are the most abundant types among the bowls at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Ayalon 1985:18; 1995:149). Singer-Avitz does not deal with them in her article. Parallels to the shallow carinated bowl can be found at Lachish Level III (Zimhoni 1997a: 149: Fig. 3.62 from Locus 4421; for this locus see below), Tel 'Eton (Zimhoni 1997b: Fig. 4.1.2, 3) and Timna-Tel Batash (Type BL-24—Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 44–45; these bowls are red-slipped and hand burnished, while at Kuntillet 'Ajrud the bowls are rarely burnished). At Timna-Tel Batash this bowl is most common in Stratum IV of the Iron IIA, though it continues into Stratum III of the Iron IIB (8th century BCE). Another bowl of the same type comes from Megiddo Level H-3 (= Stratum IVA of the University of Chicago—Finkelstein *et al.* 2000: Fig. 11.55:3, 4), which dates to the Iron IIB, in the first half of the 8th century BCE.

At Kuntillet 'Ajrud deep bowls with rounded wall and thickened rim are also common (Ayalon 1995: Figs. 3: 7, 8), as are deep bowls with rounded wall and ledge-rim (Ayalon 1995: Fig. 3: 9, 10). Both have parallels in assemblages which date earlier than the late 8th century, e.g., Arad Stratum XI of the late Iron IIA (Singer-Avitz 2002, Fig. 6: 6 for the bowl in Ayalon 1995, Fig. 3: 7) and Timna-Tel Batash (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 36–38 [Types B-26 and B-32]). At the latter site the former bowl appears mainly in Stratum IV and to a lesser extent in Stratum III.

The final report of the excavations at Kadesh Barnea—the closest site to Kuntillet 'Ajrud—has recently been published (Bernick-Greenberg 2007). Parallels to bowls from Kuntillet 'Ajrud appear in Strata 4, 3c and 3b-a, dated to the early Iron IIA and the Iron IIB (Bernick-Greenberg 2007: Figs. 11.1: 2; 11.27: 3, 14; 11.30: 1, 3, 5, 15; 11.31: 1–3, 7, 8).

Another bowl, which Ayalon compares to Samaria Ware forms (*ibid.*: Fig. 3.6), is erroneously included by Singer-Avitz in the group of bowls which, in her opinion (based on petrography) originated in the Beersheba Valley (Singer-Avitz 2006: Fig. 1: 2a). Yet, this specific bowl has not been analyzed petrographically. Samaria Ware bowls appear at Megiddo in Level H-3 (Stratum IVA), which came to an end with the Assyrian conquest in 732 BCE (Finkelstein *et al.* 2000: 319–322).

A red-slipped krater, hand-burnished inside and out, appears at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Ayalon 1995: 152, Fig. 6: 2). Such external treatment is more common in strata of the Iron IIA, for example Lachish Levels V–IV type B-25 for the hand burnish and type B-27 for the shape of the vessel (Zimhoni 1997a: Fig. 3.30; 3.32), as well as Arad Stratum XI (Singer-Avitz 2002: Fig. 6: 7). At Yokne'am it appears in Stratum XII, type K11B1, dated to the Iron IIB (Zarzecki-Peleg 2005: 267).

Finally, in down-dating Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Singer-Avitz also relies on types which appear in small quantities: a single item of a tripod bowl (Ayalon 1995: Fig. 3: 18) and two items of high-footed bowl (*ibid.*: Fig. 3: 19, 20). At the same time she does not take into consideration the bowl types which Ayalon specifies as being most abundant in the assemblage (Ayalon 1995: Figs. 3.13, 14).

### COOKING-POTS

The shallow rounded cooking-pot is the most common type at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Ayalon 1995: Figs. 5, 6). It was treated by Singer-Avitz under two sub-types (2006: Figs. 2: 1a, 2.2a). According to her, at Beersheba both appear in Stratum II, but the smaller of the two is absent from Stratum III (Singer-Avitz 2006: 199, 200). Twenty-one of these cooking-pots were found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud; six of them, in four different sizes, are complete, being the only cooking-pot type appearing in an appreciable number (Ayalon 1985: 30; 1995: 155). This cooking-pot appears at several sites in assemblages dating to the Iron IIB. It occurs in the north of the

country where it is considered to be a common local type. It also appears in Judah, but not as the only and most common type. The following is a list of parallels for this type, from both the south and the north:

**Arad:** In Strata X–VIII (Singer-Avitz 2002: Fig. 14 [Type CP1, CP3], Table 2, p. 126).

**Lachish:** In Level III, Tufnell's Type 441 (Zimhoni 2004b: Figs. 26.11: 6, 26.21: 8–10, 26.35: 3).

**Tel'Eton:** In the assemblage dated to the period contemporaneous with the beginning of Lachish Level III (Zimhoni 1997b: 186, 208).

**Gezer:** Gittin's Type 105A. This occurs mainly in Stratum VIA, which is dated to the middle of the 8th century BCE. Gittin gives this type a protracted time-span between the second half of the 9th century BCE and the first quarter (and even middle) of the 7th century BCE (Gittin 1990: 217, 231–234).

**Timna–Tel Batash:** The type under discussion was found mainly in Stratum III. The date assigned to the beginning of this stratum is the end of the 9th or early in the 8th century BCE (Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2001: 159–160, Pl. 28.8 [CP7], pp. 83–84). This type is grouped with other forms which carry over from Stratum IV into Stratum III but not into Stratum II. It appears in Locus E619, affiliated by the excavators with the beginning of Stratum III; they consider it contemporary with Locus 4421 in the gate area at Lachish, attributed by Zimhoni to the transition between Level IV and Level III (Zimhoni 1997a: 154–156; 2004a: Figs. 25.48–25.54). This locus at Lachish produced numerous parallels to bowls from Kuntillet 'Ajrud.

**Tel Yokne'am:** Parallels to the Kuntillet 'Ajrud cooking-pot were found mainly in Stratum XII of the Iron IIB (Zarzecki-Peleg 2005: 279 [Types VI–VII], Fig. 1.81: 11, and see there additional parallels), but it appears already in the earlier Stratum XIII, dated to the transition from the Iron IIA to the Iron IIB (Zarzecki-Peleg 2005 Fig.1.70: 13).

**Megiddo:** A parallel comes from Level H-3 (IVA) (Finkelstein *et al.* 2000: Fig. 11.45: 3, 53: 10), which dates to the first half of the 8th century BCE.

### **STORAGE JARS**

The majority of the parallels for the Kuntillet 'Ajrud storage jars cited by Singer-Avitz appear in 8th century BCE strata. Most of them continue with slight typological modifications into the 7th century BCE. But the prototypes of these storage jars appear as early as the Iron IIA. At Arad types SJ5-6 from Strata X–IX (Singer-Avitz 2002: Fig. 16) parallel jars from Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Ayalon 1995: Figs. 11: 3, 4, 5). Similar jars were found in the north in assemblages dated to both the Iron IIA and the Iron IIB. This is the case at Yokne'am Strata XIV to XII (Zarzecki-Peleg 2005: Fig.

II.30: 6 p.302). At Megiddo they appear in Level H-3 (Stratum IVA—Finkelstein *et al.* 2000: Figs. 11.46: 12, 11.47: 2; 2006: Fig. 15.8: 4).

### ***PITHOI***

Singer-Avitz compares the Kuntillet 'Ajrud pithoi to types which appear in strata dating to the 8th and 7th centuries BCE (e.g., Tel 'Ira Stratum VII). At the same time she acknowledges that they are present at Tel Beersheba already in Strata V–IV of the Iron IIA (Singer-Avitz 2006: 202). Items of this type which appear in 7th century BCE strata should be treated as fragments or isolated vessels that survived from previous strata.

### **CONCLUSION**

The majority of vessels prevalent at Kuntillet 'Ajrud—bowls, Samaria Ware vessels, cooking-pots and storage jars—have parallels in both late Iron IIA and Iron IIB strata (9th and 8th century BCE). In addition, many vessel types of the late 8th century BCE are absent at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Ayalon 1995: 198). Hence, based on typology, there is no justification for the contention that Kuntillet 'Ajrud was founded as late as the last decades of the 8th century BCE. Indeed, in checking the parallels between Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Arad, the comparisons to items found in Strata XI and X–IX are greater than the parallels with items retrieved from Stratum VIII. According to these parallels, and taking into consideration Herzog's new dating for the Arad strata (Herzog 2002: 14), Kuntillet 'Ajrud should be dated between the mid-9th and first half of the 8th century BCE. More specifically, assuming that the assemblage represents the final stage of activity at the site, we can assume that Kuntillet 'Ajrud ceased to exist *prior* to the end of Lachish Level III, Beersheba Stratum II and Arad Stratum VIII, whose termination is connected to historical events at the end of the 8th century. We do not possess sufficient data to determine the exact time span of Kuntillet 'Ajrud. But based on typological evidence we can say that it certainly existed at the beginning of the 8th century.

## REFERENCES

- Ayalon, E. 1985. *The Iron Age II Pottery Assemblage from Hurbat Teiman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud)* (M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University). Tel Aviv (Hebrew).
- Ayalon, E. 1995. The Iron Age II Pottery Assemblage from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud). *Tel Aviv* 22: 141–205.
- Beck, P. 1982. The Drawings from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud). *Tel Aviv* 9: 3–68.
- Bernick-Greenberg, H. 2007. Area D: The Southwestern Part of the Strata 3–2 Courtyard and the Cistern. In: Cohen, R. and Bernick-Greenberg, H. *Excavations at Kadesh Barnea (Tell el Qudeirat) 1976–1982*, part 1 (IAA Reports 34/1). Jerusalem.
- Goren, Y. 1995. Petrographic Analyses of Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud) Pottery. *Tel Aviv* 22: 206–208.
- Gunneweg, J., Perlman, I. and Meshel, Z. 1985. The Origin of the Pottery of Kuntillet 'Ajrud. *IEJ* 35: 270–283.
- Herzog, Z. 2002. The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad: An Interim Report. *Tel Aviv* 29: 3–109.
- Finkelstein, I. 2006. The Iron Age Pottery: Levels L-5, L-3, H-5 and H-4. In: Finkelstein, I. Ussishkin, D. and Halpern, B., eds. *Megiddo IV: The 1998–2002 Seasons* (Monograph Series of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University No. 24). Tel Aviv: 303–314.
- Finkelstein, I., Zimhoni, O. and Kafri, A. 2000. The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages from Areas F, K and H and Their Stratigraphic and Chronological Implications. In: Finkelstein, I., Ussishkin, D. and Halpern, B., eds. *Megiddo III: The 1992–1996 Seasons* (Monograph Series of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University No. 18). Tel Aviv: 244–324.
- Gitin, S. 1990. *Gezer III: A Ceramic Typology of the Late Iron II, Persian and Hellenistic Periods at Tell Gezer*. Jerusalem.
- Mazar, A. and Panitz-Cohen, N. 2001. *Timnah (Tel Batash): II. The Finds from the First Millennium BCE* (Qedem 42). Jerusalem.
- Meshel, Z. 1993. Teman, Horvat, *NEAEHL* 4: 1458–1464.
- Singer-Avitz, L. 2002. Arad: The Iron Age Pottery Assemblages. *Tel Aviv* 29: 110–214.
- Singer-Avitz, L. 2006. The Date of Kuntillet 'Ajrud. *Tel Aviv* 33: 196–228.
- Zarzecki-Peleg, A., Cohen-Anidjar, S. and Ben-Tor, A. 2005. Pottery Analysis. In: Ben-Tor, A., Zarzecki-Peleg, A. and Cohen-Anidjar, S., eds. *Yoque'am II: The Iron Age and the Persian Period*. Jerusalem: 233–345.
- Zimhoni, O. 1997a. Lachish Levels V and IV: Comments on the Material Culture

- of Judah in the Iron Age II in the Light of the Lachish Pottery Repertoire. In: *Studies in the Iron Age Pottery of Israel: Typological, Archaeological and Chronological Aspects* (Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University Occasional Publications No. 2). Tel Aviv.
- Zimhoni, O. 1997b. The Iron Age Pottery of Tel ʿEton and Its Relation to the Lachish, Tell Beit Mirsim and Arad Assemblages. *Studies in the Iron Age Pottery of Israel: Typological, Archaeological and Chronological Aspects* (Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University Occasional Publications No. 2). Tel Aviv.
- Zimhoni, O. 2004a. The Pottery of Levels V and IV and Its Archaeological and Chronological Implications. In: Ussishkin, D. *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish 1973–1994*, Vol. IV (Monograph Series of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University No. 22). Tel Aviv: 1643–1788.
- Zimhoni, O. 2004b. The Pottery of Levels III and II. In: Ussishkin, D. *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish 1973–1994*, Vol. IV (Monograph Series of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University No. 22). Tel Aviv: 1789–1899.