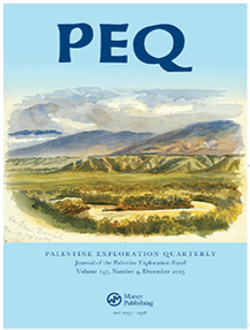

Palestine Exploration Quarterly

ISSN: 0031-0328 (Print) 1743-1301 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ypeq20

Kuntillet Ajrud: Religious Centre or Desert Way Station?

Judith M. Hadley

To cite this article: Judith M. Hadley (1993) Kuntillet Ajrud: Religious Centre or Desert Way Station?, Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 125:2, 115-124, DOI: 10.1179/peq.1993.125.2.115

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1179/peq.1993.125.2.115

Palestine Exploration Quarterly 125 (1993)

KUNTILLET ʿAJRUD: RELIGIOUS CENTRE OR DESERT WAY STATION?[1]

JUDITH M. HADLEY

Kuntillet ʿAjrud, 'the solitary hill of the water-wells' (Meshel 1978b, 50), is located in northern Sinai, approximately 50 km. south of Kadesh-barnea, on a hill overlooking Wadi Quraiya (grid ref. 094–954). The site is strategically located near an intersection of several ancient routes through the desert: the Darb el-Ghazza from Gaza and the southern Mediterranean coast southwards to Eilat; the east–west route following Wadi Quraiya; and a branch route south to Themed and southern Sinai. A team from the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University under the direction of Ze'ev Meshel excavated the site during 1975–76. They uncovered remains of what Meshel believes to be an Iron Age II religious centre (Meshel 1979a, 27).

The site itself lies on a narrow east–west plateau, and controls the access to the few wells that can be found in the vicinity. There are remains of only two structures, one of which has been almost completely eroded away. The other building, however, takes up the whole width of the western end of the plateau, and is preserved in places up to a height of 1.5 m. (see Fig. 1). The orientation of this building is east–west, with the entrance from the east through a small 'court'. One must then turn north into a small entry-way, before turning westward again into a long narrow room oriented north–south. This room is lined with plaster benches (as is the entry-way), and is called by the excavators the 'bench room'. At both the northern and southern ends of the bench room respectively, in what appear to be tower-like structures, are single openings in the wall above the benches, which lead into small rooms that have no other means of entry. Beyond the bench room to the west is a large inner courtyard. Upon excavation, this was discovered to be empty except for the remains of three ovens in the south-west corner of the courtyard, evidently used consecutively, since the floor associated with the second oven covers the first oven, and that of the third oven covers the second. In the south-east and south-west corners of the courtyard are steps, presumably leading to the roof or to a second storey which has not been preserved. Three more ovens were discovered in a small 'alcove' near the other set of steps in the south-east corner of the courtyard. Along the southern and western sides of the courtyard are two more narrow rooms, which contained several pithoi and storage jars firmly embedded in the floor and placed close together. In the north-west and south-west corners of the building are two more rooms, set in tower-like structures similar to those in the north-east and south-east corners of the building, and containing an assemblage of small pottery vessels, some stone slabs of local limestone, and several stone bowls. For a fuller description and more plans of the site see Meshel 1978a, 1978b, 1979a, and Beck 1982.

Several pieces of frescoes and inscribed wall fragments were discovered in the bench room and a few of the adjoining rooms, as well as in the eastern building. The inscriptions are in Phoenician script, and mention several deities, including *yhwh*, *bʿl*, *ʾl*, and *ʾšrt*. Although fragmentary, they seem to be of a prayerful or dedicatory nature. Meshel believes that originally these fragments would have been on the walls and door jambs, where traces of inscriptions are still to be found (1978a, 'The Inscriptions'; no page numbers in text).

Fragments of two large pithoi were discovered as well. These pithoi are covered with drawings and some Hebrew inscriptions, including several names, letters, and abecedaries (in which *pe* precedes *ʿayin*). Of the longer inscriptions, one mentions *yhwh.šmrn*, and another

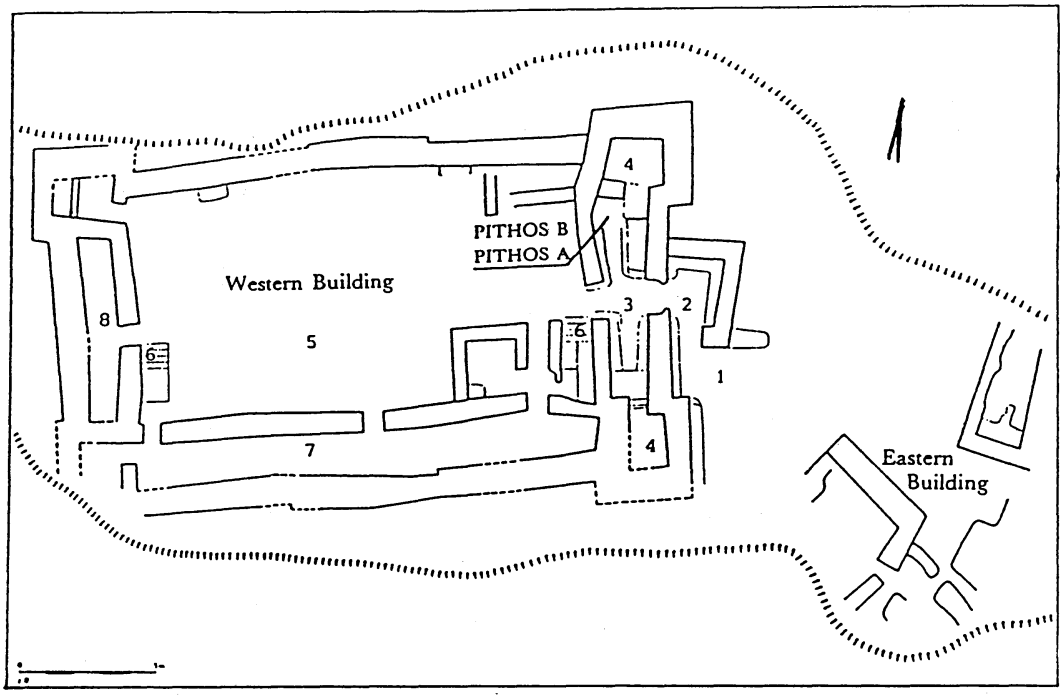

Fig. 1. Plan of Kuntillet ʿAjrud (eighth century B.C.), showing the surviving buildings and where the pithoi were discovered: 1. entrance 'court'; 2. entry-way; 3. bench room; 4. depositories; 5. inner courtyard; 6. steps; 7. south storeroom; 8. west storeroom (after Beck 1982 and Meshel 1978a).

yhwh.tmn (for a fuller discussion of these inscriptions see Meshel 1978a, 1979a, Weinfeld 1984, and Hadley 1987b; for a comparison of these inscriptions with those from Khirbet el-Qom, see Hadley (forthcoming)).

Meshel believes that 'the inscribed and painted material, the decorated plaster, the mention of several gods in the inscriptions and the presence of votive vessels brought from elsewhere, may well indicate that ʿAjrud was a religious centre' (1978a, 'The Nature of the Site and its Date'). He further states that perhaps the site 'served a dual purpose as a wayside shrine for the merchants of Phoenicia, Israel, Judah and the coastal strip as they travelled to Eilat and Ophir, and as a place of prayer where votive offerings might be left by pilgrims going south to Mount Horeb. It may also have been a border shrine demarcating the end of the territory of Judah' (Meshel 1982–83, 52, and cf. Axelsson 1987, 62–63 and 181, who believes that Kuntillet ʿAjrud may lie on a pilgrimage route for North Israelites travelling south to the mountain of God). Meshel repeated this opinion in his 1986 communication. However, there are some problems with the identification of the site as a religious centre.

If ʿAjrud were a local shrine, inhabited by local priests, and even perhaps a pilgrimage site of its own, why would the visitors invoke Yahweh of Samaria or Yahweh of Teman, and not Yahweh of the local site? It must be remembered that many of the inscriptions found on the wall plaster are in the Phoenician script, and therefore it is strange to find *yhwh* included here at all. This might indicate that Phoenician travellers stopped here to pay their respects to the local god at his shrine, but one also finds the other deities mentioned above. Whereas it is possible for

pilgrims to visit the shrine of one particular god and worship other gods there, this would have been an unusual practice in the ancient Near East. A 'shrine' usually implies the local residence of the deity, with even perhaps his or her image or symbol, possibly set up in a separate structure (cf. 1 Kings 8). Alliances were sometimes formed, and shrines dedicated to compound deities, but Yahweh and Baʿal seem to be especially strange bedfellows. Furthermore, both Yahweh and Baʿal are mentioned in Hebrew script as well. Admittedly, sometimes the term *baʿal* was applied to Yahweh, but even if one worshipped both deities, one would expect a shrine to be dedicated to one or the other. This therefore seems to indicate a place which served a diversity of peoples from different linguistic groups worshipping a number of deities, rather than a local shrine to one particular deity with its own resident priests. Another indication of different peoples can be found in the types of names which have been preserved. Some of the names discovered at ʿAjrud end with the *-yw* suffix, which is usually considered to be North Israelite (Millard 1980, 212; Norin 1980; Rainey 1983, 631; Lemaire 1984a, 33 and 1984b, 44; and my discussion in Hadley 1987b, 184, among others).

Furthermore, at ʿAjrud the architecture of the surviving buildings does not appear to be indicative of a shrine. In fact, Meshel himself states that, 'at first glance', the plan seems to be that of 'a small fortress with towers' (1978a, 'The Buildings'). He later argues that the date of the site (*c.* eighth century B.C.) and the ground-plan of the surviving building differs from the known fortresses in the Negev highlands. 'Especially marked is the absence of casemate rooms and of the coarse hand-made pottery so characteristic of the Negev fortresses' (1978a, 'The Nature of the Site and its Date'). However, if the site were considered to be a way station, or caravanserai, there would not be many 'permanent' local inhabitants, and thus the absence of locally made pottery is not a problem (and see the discussion below). In addition, the known Negev fortresses date from the eleventh or tenth centuries B.C., and here we have a structure from the eighth century B.C. Therefore, one would not necessarily expect to find a building with casemate rooms. (Nevertheless, the placement of the bench room, depositories, south storeroom and west storeroom along the outside walls of the building is reminiscent of casemate construction; see Fig. 1, nos. 3, 4, 7 and 8, and the discussion below.) Admittedly, Kuntillet ʿAjrud does not 'fit the mould' of the earlier fortresses; but then it is not being suggested that it is a fortress (indeed, the identification of the earlier structures as fortresses is disputed; cf. Herzog 1983; Finkelstein 1984 and 1986, among others). It would, however, not be surprising to find that a desert way station, for purposes of defence, was constructed in a similar fortified fashion.

During ten seasons of excavations at Kadesh-barnea (Tell el-Qudeirat), which lies 50 km. to the north of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, a team led by Rudolph Cohen uncovered remains of three successive border-fortresses, dating from the tenth to the sixth centuries B.C. (Cohen 1983). The first building was circular in plan, and therefore similar to the many other Negev structures which date from the tenth century (Cohen 1983, xi). However, unlike most tenth-century Negev structures, the one at Kadesh-barnea was rebuilt in the eighth century B.C. (Cohen 1983, xi). The plan of this structure was radically different from that of the first building. It was rectangular, with broad solid walls and eight towers (see Fig. 2, and Cohen 1983, 16 and xii for a fuller discussion and plan of the building). This is similar to the plan of ʿAjrud, which is also rectangular with a solid wall (see Fig. 1, and cf. Meshel 1978a, 1978b, 1979a, and Beck 1982). Although the ʿAjrud structure has only four towers, it is much smaller than that at Kadesh-barnea (25 × 15 m., as opposed to 60 × 40 m.), so perhaps there was not the need for more towers. Interestingly, the long walls of the ʿAjrud building are thicker in the middle, where one finds towers at Kadesh-barnea. The floor-plans inside the two buildings differ, but this is hardly surprising, as the one at Kadesh-barnea was much larger and presumably would have housed soldiers, whereas the emphasis at Kuntillet ʿAjrud seems to have been on space. Both had

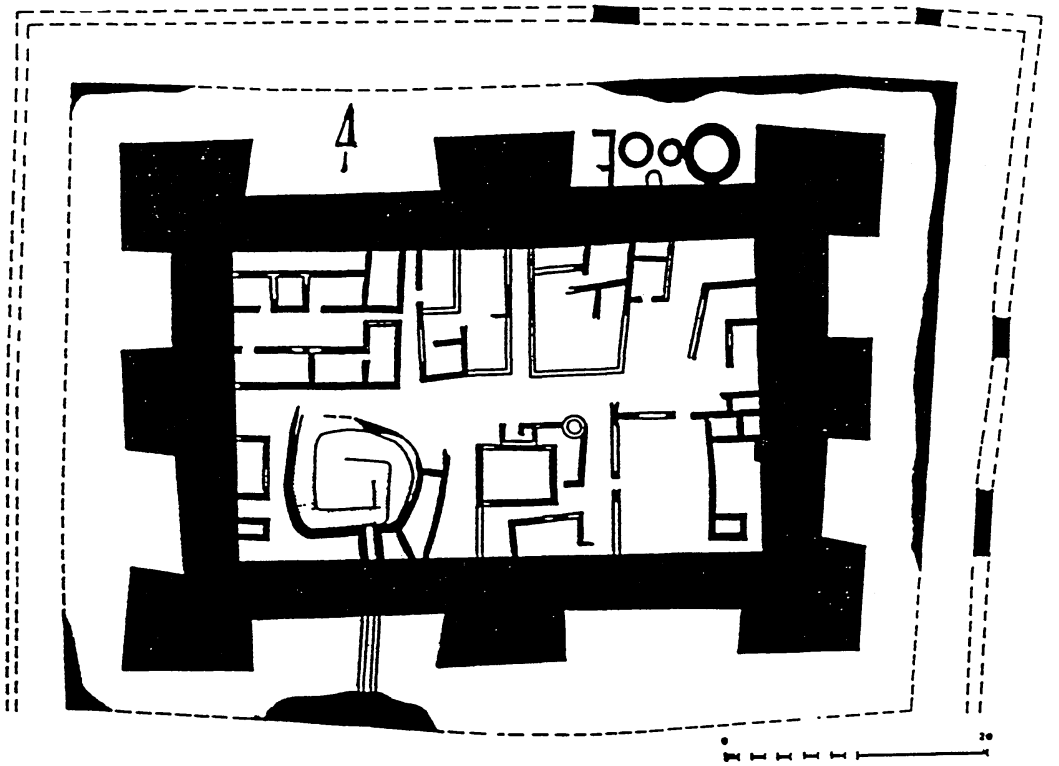

Fig. 2. Plan of the middle fortress of Kadesh-barnea (eighth century B.C.), with massive solid walls and an enclosed cistern in the south-west corner, accessible by steps from the ground floor (after Cohen 1983).

cooking areas and ovens, and provisions for grain storage; at Kadesh-barnea there was a silo, whereas at ʿAjrud the two long narrow rooms along the southern and western sides contained many pithoi and storage jars embedded in the ground. These narrow rooms, along with the bench room, provide one with the impression of semi-casemates, except that the corresponding one to the north is missing. The space inside the four towers was available for use as well. In this respect the structure is similar to the most recent (i.e. seventh-century B.C.) fortress at Kadesh-barnea, which has casemate walls and towers (see Fig. 3, and Cohen 1983, 22 and xiv).

Holladay (1987, 259) compares the bench room at ʿAjrud with the entry rooms at Tel Arad. He states that 'from an architectural point of view, the "Bench Room" sufficiently replicates the entry rooms of the Tel Arad gateway, except for the rear rooms and absolute scale, so that it probably is better taken as an example of fortress gateway planning than religious architecture' (Holladay 1987, 259; and cf. Herzog *et al.* 1984, fig. 16). Holladay further states that benches in gateways have been discovered at other Israelite and Judaean sites, especially Tel Dan, Tell en-Nasbeh, and Khirbet el-Qom (1987, n. 52). It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the building at Kuntillet ʿAjrud was not necessarily built as a religious structure.

Meshel furthermore admits that 'the typical cult vessels we would expect to be present at such a site [i.e. a religious centre] were not found here' (1978a, 'The Nature of the Site and its

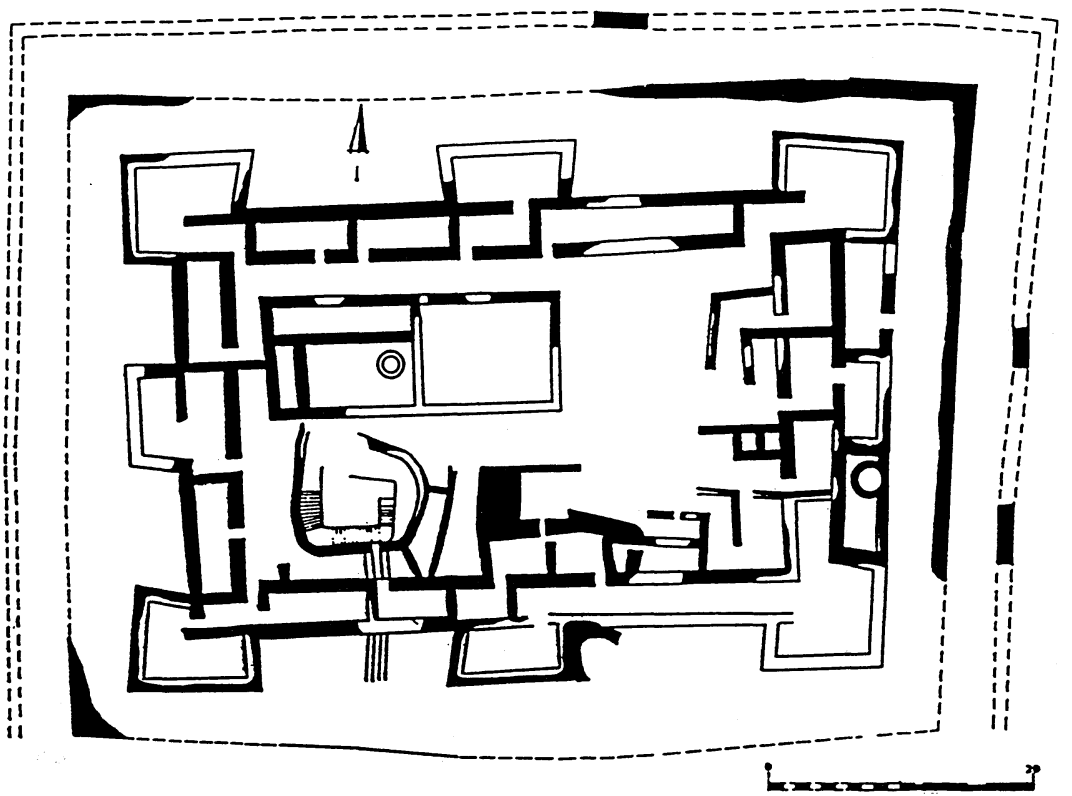

Fig. 3. Plan of the upper fortress of Kadesh-barnea (seventh century B.C.), with the casemate walls and towers, a separate building (25 × 10 m.) in the north-west corner of the fortress, and the enclosed cistern in the south-west corner, accessible by steps from the ground floor, as well as additional steps leading to the roof or to an upper storey which has not been preserved (after Cohen 1983).

Date'; 1981, 161). The nearest shrine, therefore, appears to be that of Teman. If Teman were to be associated with the southern part of Palestine, as opposed to Edom (see Emerton 1982 for a discussion of the meaning of Teman, and cf. Glueck 1935 and 1970; de Vaux 1969; and Ahlström 1984, 134, among others), then perhaps Yahweh of Teman could be seen as the local god. This, however, would not explain the absence of cultic objects normally associated with shrines. Therefore, perhaps a better interpretation would be that Yahweh is not a local god of Teman, but rather comes from Teman (or Samaria) to grant the traveller's request at this wayside outpost. This would not eliminate the religious or emotive atmosphere of the site, which could be accepted without the actual presence of a shrine or religious centre.

Another consideration is the absence of local pottery, a factor already raised by Meshel (1978a and 1981) as an argument against the interpretation of the building as a fortress. A recent analysis of the pottery found at ʿAjrud has shown that most of the vessels were made elsewhere, specifically in Judah, the southern coastal region, and the north of Israel (Gunneweg, Perlman, and Meshel 1985). Whereas this helps to establish the nature of the site as a place for travellers to stop along their journey, it may argue against the presence of resident

priests. To date, the only objects of local manufacture discovered at the site which have been published (Gunneweg, Perlman and Meshel 1985, 273) are three stoppers for pithoi, a piece of an oven, and a loom-weight. These are all simple artefacts which do not require any firing, or special skill of manufacture. Whereas it is possible that any resident priests used only the vessels left to them by the travellers, it is strange that they would not need to make anything else locally, especially since at other settlements one does find local pottery (Cohen 1980, 75–76). Also, if the priests had been sent by one of the kings of Israel as Meshel believes (1982–83, 54), then presumably it would be that administration's job to look after their welfare, and send supplies as needed. However, most of the pithoi are of Judaean manufacture, and the storage jars are made of clays from the Tel Miqne or Ashdod areas (Gunneweg, Perlman and Meshel 1985, 273; but cf. also Meshel 1982–83, 54, where he states that some of the storage jars are Judaean and the cooking vessels are from the south coastal region). Meshel had earlier thought that perhaps ʿAjrud was 'a religious centre which was connected with the joint trade ventures of the kings of Judah and the Phoenicians out of Eilat and Ezion-geber, during one of Judah's short periods of supremacy' (1981, 161). This could explain the abundance of Judaean pottery, but need not mean that the site was a religious centre. Perhaps ʿAjrud was merely intended as a way station for these merchants as well as other travellers, to help foster trade through this potentially hostile region. As the site was in Judaean territory, and as tradē through this area would greatly benefit Judah, perhaps the Judaean kings built it and stocked it initially, with other provisions and pottery being left by the travellers themselves.

There must have been some sort of 'hostel-keeper', or someone to look after the stores and provisions, but this person or persons need not have been a priest. The presence of loom-weights and numerous fragments of textiles may indicate that some of the fabrics were woven at the site (Meshel 1978a, 'The Textiles'). Whereas weaving can be associated with cultic sites (2 Kings 23.7), it must be noted that some of the textiles discovered at ʿAjrud mix wool and linen, which is a forbidden practice for everyone in the Old Testament, and is the sort of law one would expect priests especially to observe (cf. Lev. 19.9; Deut. 22.9–11). Even if this prohibition was a later interpretation, the presence of such objects at a site does not necessitate a cultic interpretation. It is equally possible that the person in charge of the site was a skilled weaver, and undertook to make repairs to the travellers' clothing, or had some sort of provision for this work. This person may have been residential, or could have been a member of a tribe living in the vicinity.

Perhaps ʿAjrud is an example of the biblical *malon*, mentioned in Gen. 42.27 and 43.21; Ex. 4.24; and Jer. 9.1. It seems clear from the biblical record that such places existed, and that caravanserais were to be found in the desert, established as places of refuge for wayfarers.

A different kind of religious function for the building has been proposed by Catastini (1982, 128). In his discussion of the inscriptions incised on the storage jars after firing, he mentions that Meshel reads four of these as *lśrʿr*. These four Meshel equates with the stamped bullae from Jerusalem which read *lʾśar haʿir*. Meshel believes that at ʿAjrud we may have the same phrase, but spelled defectively without the *h* (Meshel 1978a, 'The Inscriptions'). However, in Catastini's opinion, the Jerusalem bullae date from the seventh century B.C. (a century or more later than the ʿAjrud inscriptions), and therefore this equation needs further consideration (1982, 128). After an examination of the photographs of the inscription which Meshel presents (1978a, fig. 21; and cf. figs. 20, 24 and also in the Hebrew section on 'The Inscriptions', where the same storage jar is depicted), Catastini believes that a Phoenician *dalet* should be read instead of the *ʿayin*. He believes that the writer would not have had problems engraving a perfectly rounded *ʿayin*, especially if one considers the rounded character of the *resh* (1982, 128). Meshel also provides a line drawing of another of these four inscriptions (1978a, fig. 21). In this drawing the letter appears more similar to a Hebrew *ʿayin*. On the basis of the photograph, Catastini appears

to question the reading provided by the drawing (1982, 128). The other letters could conceivably be Phoenician in style, although the *śin* is more reminiscent of the Hebrew letter. As mentioned above, the storage jars were made of clays from the Ashdod or Tel Miqne areas (Gunneweg, Perlman and Meshel 1985, 273), but Meshel (1982–83, 54) states that some of the storage jars are Judaean. Therefore it would be helpful to know where these specific vessels were manufactured. However, as the inscription was carved after firing, it may nevertheless have been written by either an Israelite or a Phoenician. Perhaps some grittiness or impurities in the clay made it difficult to inscribe a smooth circular *ʿayin*, and therefore the letter appears unintentionally more like a Phoenician *dalet*. Without the chance to examine the four different representations of this inscription, a definite conclusion would be premature. (Cf. my discussion of the Khirbet el-Qom inscription in Hadley 1987a, 53 and 61, where an *ʿayin* is to be read in the second word. The letter has been engraved over a scratch in the stone, and therefore has a more squarish shape.)

Catastini also sees no justification for the absence of the definite article if this were to be considered Hebrew, but mentions that this is perfectly acceptable in Phoenician. He therefore interprets these inscriptions as reading *l-śr dr*, and translates 'to the head [i.e. leader] of the community', thus giving to *dr* the meaning which this word has in the first Phoenician inscription of Arslan Tash (1982, 128–29). The meaning 'community' for *dr* is also found in Ugaritic, albeit usually in the context of a 'community' of gods (cf. Gaster 1942, 60; Aistleitner 1963, 81; and Jean and Hoftijzer 1965, 60).

Catastini (1982, 130) notes that the blessings contained on the pithoi (and indeed on the wall plaster) are expressed in an indirect way, unlike a greeting or a blessing formula in a letter. Here the blessing of Yahweh is invoked upon an individual or a group by another person, and it is assumed that the recipient of the blessing does not need to receive the inscribed object itself in order to benefit from the blessing. This is similar to the many examples in the Old Testament where the formula of Yahweh's blessing is pronounced by mothers upon their children, by the Psalmist, and by Samuel, Saul, David, and others. Catastini further believes that it is improbable that this practice could involve priests, as there is no mention of either priests or any evidence (*elementi*) that might bear witness to their work at ʿAjrud. However, he believes that the place is none the less a sanctuary, inhabited by members of the prophetic movement. He bases this conclusion on the constant reference to a Yahwistic cult and the presence of a congregation, supported by his reading of the inscriptions, both on the storage jars and the wall plaster (1982, 131). He believes that the community (his reading *dr*) at ʿAjrud is similar to the biblical *bᵉne hannᵉbi'im*. He finds further support for his hypothesis that the prophetic movement could have had a place in the Phoenician world, and was indeed present at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, in an inscribed jar from the sixth to fifth century B.C. from Sarepta, which evidently had a votive function and was placed in the sanctuary (1982, 131–32). Catastini admits that one must be cautious because of the paucity of material at our disposal (1982, 134). His observations on the nature of the blessings with their Old Testament parallels and his new translation of the incised letters on the storage jars are useful indeed, but firm evidence for a prophetic school located at ʿAjrud is lacking. Indeed, in the light of the discussion above, the evidence does not seem to indicate that the site was permanently settled.

Lemaire (1981, 25 and 1984a, 136) comes close to the view that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was a way station. He accepts that it was probably some sort of *khan*, but he also believes that there was a school here, on the basis of the discovery of several abecedaries. He further states that the presence of the blessing formulae on the pithoi, obviously not intended as a letter, indicates a scholarly exercise of the type well attested in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ugarit, and Sarepta (1981, 28). Furthermore, he expresses the opinion that the two pithoi were used as a type of

'blackboard' for students; the first pithos was perhaps the work of the teacher, whose students then copied the designs on to the second pithos (1981, 30). Lemaire also believes that the architecture of the site, particularly the bench room, was indicative, at least in part, of a classroom or school (1981, 30). There are several problems associated with these suggestions. First, it would be extremely unlikely to have a school based here at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, which is a rather remote and isolated area. Secondly, there is no evidence to indicate that the abecedaries and drawings were made by children, and not soldiers or travellers making use of the site. Rainey, in his 1987 communication, stated that all the inscriptions were graffiti; perhaps written by a soldier while at the site. The two pithoi were near the door, just sitting there, and so that is what he used (cf. Rainey 1983, 631 and Levine 1986, and cf. Fig. 1, which shows the location of the pithoi when discovered, on different sides of a wall). Furthermore, most of the drawings on Pithos A are not reproduced on Pithos B (with the notable exception of the 'cow and calf'), whereas some new designs occur on the second pithos (such as the 'procession of worshippers'). This does not seem to indicate a situation such as Lemaire describes, with the students copying those designs which the teacher drew on the first pithos. It seems more likely that the travellers to the site, perhaps moved by the emotive nature of the area, would leave precatory inscriptions, on either the pithoi or the walls. Others may have simply 'left their mark', as indicated by some markings on Pithos A (cf. Beck 1982 and Hadley 1987b, 207–08). Finally, Meshel (1982–83, 52) states that the benches in the bench room left only a tiny corridor, two feet wide, as a centre aisle, which he believed was not suitable for sitting or even waiting, let alone functioning as a classroom (and cf. Smelik 1991, 155–57).

As was seen above, there are several problems in identifying ʿAjrud as a religious centre. It seems more likely that the site was set up as a caravanserai, or way station, as a place where travellers could stop and find water for their animals (and themselves) from the wells in the vicinity, and could spend the night in relative security. I myself have travelled in the area of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, and spent many nights out in the open. Admittedly, I was riding in an open lorry and did not have pack animals or herds with me, but I can understand how welcome a way station such as ʿAjrud would be, with fresh water and shelter from the bitterly cold and windy nights. It is easy to see how a traveller under those conditions could be moved to invoke blessings for a safe journey and seek divine protection. This does not mean that none of the travellers was a pilgrim, because the site would be available to anyone, of any ethnic background, who passed that way for any reason. But this does not necessarily mean that the site was intended to be a religious centre. Beck (1982, 61) mentions that the few known parallels to the wall paintings found at ʿAjrud come mainly from Assyrian and Babylonian palaces. She follows Kraeling in believing that the murals are less typical of known religious buildings from Western Asia. Additionally, in his surveys of southern Jordan Jobling (1983) has discovered scores of Thamudic inscriptions of a similar nature, which are associated with local, tribal settlers.

As was also seen above, the architecture of the site is more indicative of a way station, and has little to identify it as a shrine or religious centre. In fact, Rainey (1987) has expressed the opinion that, had it not been for the inscriptions discovered there, no one would have considered the site to have had any religious function whatsoever. The mere presence of inscriptions invoking the blessing of a deity is not enough to constitute a shrine (cf. Holladay 1987, 259). Indeed, a very similar inscription has been discovered at Khirbet el-Qom, in a burial context (cf. Dever 1983, Lemaire 1984b, and Hadley 1987a, among others). Admittedly, burials had a certain degree of sanctity and cult connected to them, but no one would consider Khirbet el-Qom to be a shrine. The architecture of the western building at Kuntillet ʿAjrud seems to be better suited for a caravanserai, with a large inner courtyard for cooking and to house the

animals, rooms off the courtyard to store grain and provisions for the travellers, and steps, probably leading to a first floor, where the travellers themselves could spend the night. The bench room could be used as a convenient place for the travellers to store their belongings temporarily where they would be safe from both the domestic animals housed inside the caravanserai and the wild animals which roamed outside. The rooms associated with the bench room at either end may have become a place where the travellers left small tokens in exchange for their accommodation. In fact, most of the small votive objects were found in these two smaller rooms (Meshel 1982–83, 52). The other building could be for travellers as well, especially if the main building lacked a first floor. In this case, one or two people could be left with the animals to stand guard (or indeed the building could be closed up completely). Alternatively, the smaller building may have been used to house the 'innkeeper' or a few soldiers commissioned to look after the stores and provisions . As very little remains of this building, one can only speculate about the use to which it was put.

In conclusion, the several Phoenician inscriptions discovered at ʿAjrud together with the various names which have been preserved, seem to indicate a diversity of peoples using the site (Meshel 1978a; and cf. Angerstorfer 1982). Furthermore, the absence of typical cult vessels and local pottery may strengthen the argument for a way station as opposed to a religious centre. Finally, the architecture of the preserved building itself is most similar to secular buildings of the period, notably that at Kadesh-barnea. Even the bench room, which was less common, has parallels at other eighth-century sites. Therefore, we are to see in Kuntillet ʿAjrud a desert way station, similar to the biblical *malon*, which could be used by anyone — pilgrim, prophet, soldier, merchant, or herdsman alike — who sought food, water, and a safe place to spend the night while travelling.

NOTES

[1] I wish to express my thanks to Professor J. A. Emerton and Dr G. I. Davies, both of Cambridge University, for reading this article in draft and making many helpful suggestions. Thanks are also due to Professor A. F. Rainey of Tel Aviv University and Dr G. J. Cowling of Macquarie University, Sydney, for drawing my attention to some articles which I had overlooked. Finally, I wish to thank Mrs Valerie Collis of Cambridge for translating the first article by Catastini for me.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahlström, G. W., 1984. 'An Archaeological Picture of Iron Age Religions in Ancient Palestine', *Studia Orientalia*, 55, 117–45.
Aistleitner, J., 1963. *Wörterbuch der Ugaritischen Sprache* (Berlin).
Angerstorfer, A., 1982. 'Ašerah als 'consort of Jahwe' oder Aširtah?', *BN*, 17, 7–16.
Axelsson, L. E., 1987. *The Lord Rose Up from Seir* (Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 25), trans. F. H. Cryer (Lund and Uppsala).
Beck, P., 1982. 'The Drawings from Ḥorvat Teiman (Kuntillet ʿAjrud)' , *TA*, 9, 3–68.
Catastini, A., 1982. 'Le inscrizioni di Kuntillet ʿAjrud e il profetismo', *Annali dell'istituto Orientali di Napoli*, 42, 127–34.
—— 1990. 'Profeti tra epigrafia ed epistolografia', *Egitto e Vicino Oriente*, 13, 143–47.
Chase , D. A., 1982. 'A Note on an Inscription from Kuntillet ʿAjrud', *BASOR*, 246, 63–67.
Cohen, R., 1980. 'The Iron Age Fortresses in the Central Negev', *BASOR*, 236, 61–79.
—— 1983. *Kadesh-barnea: A Fortress From the Time of the Judaean Kingdom. Israel Museum Catalogue 233* (Jerusalem).
Davies, G. I., 1991. *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance* (Cambridge).
Dever, W. G., 1983. 'Material Remains and the Cult in Ancient Israel', in C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (eds.), *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake), 571–87.
—— 1984. 'Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrûd', *BASOR*, 255, 21–37.
Emerton, J. A., 1982. 'New Light on Israelite Religion: the Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntillet ʿAjrud', *ZAW*, 94, 2–20.
Finkelstein, I., 1984. 'The Iron Age "Fortresses" of the Negev Highlands: Sendentarization (*sic*) of the Nomads', *TA*, 11, 189–209.
—— 1986. 'The Iron Age Sites in the Negev Highlands — Military Fortresses or Nomads Settling Down?', *BAR*, 12/4, 46–53.

Fritz, V., 1979. 'Kadesch-Barnea', *BN*, 9, 45–50.
Garner, G. G., 1978. 'Kuntillet ʿAjrud: An Intriguing Site in Sinai', *Buried History*, 14/2, 1–16.
Gaster, T. H., 1942. 'A Canaanite Magical Text', *Orientalia*, 11, 41–79.
Gilula, M., 1978–79. 'To Yahweh Shomron and his Asherah', *Shnaton*, 3, 129–37 (Hebrew).
Glueck, N., 1935. *Explorations in Eastern Palestine II. Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 15.
—— 1970. *The Other Side of the Jordan* (Cambridge, Mass.).
Gunneweg, J., Perlman, I., and Meshel, Z., 1985. 'The Origin of the Pottery of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, *IEJ*, 35, 270–83.
Hadley, J. M., 1987a. 'The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription', *VT*, 37, 50–62.
—— 1987b. 'Some Drawings and Inscriptions on Two Pithoi from Kuntillet ʿAjrud', *VT*, 37, 180–213.
—— (forthcoming). *Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess: The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah* (Cambridge).
Herzog, Z., 1983. 'Enclosed Settlements in the Negeb and the Wilderness of Beersheba', *BASOR*, 250, 41–49.
Herzog, Z., *et al.*, 1984. 'The Israelite Fortress at Arad', *BASOR*, 254, 1–34.
Holladay, J. S., 1987. 'Religion in Israel and Judah Under the Monarchy: An Explicitly Archaeological Approach', in P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (eds.), *Ancient Israelite Religion* (Philadelphia), 249–99.
Jaroš, K., 1982. *Hundert Inschriften aus Kanaan und Israel. Für den Hebräischunterricht bearbeitet* (Fribourg).
Jean, C.-F., and Hoftijzer, J., 1965. *Dictionnaire des Inscriptions Sémitiques de l'ouest* (Leiden).
Jobling, W. J., 1983. 'Recent Exploration and Survey in Southern Jordan: Rock Art, Inscriptions and History', *Berytus*, 31, 27–40.
Kaiser, O., *et al.*, 1982–. *Texte aus der Umwelt des alten Testaments* II/4 (Gütersloh).
Keel, O. (ed.), 1980. *Monotheismus im Alten Israel und Seiner Umwelt* (Biblische Beiträge 14: Fribourg).
Keel, O., and Uehlinger, C., 1992. *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole* (Quaestiones Disputatae 134: Freiburg, Basel und Wien).
Lemaire, A., 1981. *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israël* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 39: Fribourg and Göttingen).
—— 1984a. 'Date et origine des inscriptions hébraïques et phéniciennes de Kuntillet ʿAjrud', *SEL*, 1, 131–43.
—— 1984b. 'Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah?', *BAR*, 10/6, 42–51.
Levine, B. A., 1986. Review of A. Lemaire, *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l'ancien Israël*, *JNES*, 45, 67–69.
Mazar, A., 1982. 'The Bull Site: An Iron Age I Cult Place', *BASOR*, 247, 27–42.
Mazar, B., 1981. 'YHWH Came out from Sinai', in A. Biran (ed.), *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (Jerusalem), 5–9.
Meshel. Z., 1976. 'Kuntillat ʿAjrud. An Israelite Site on the Sinai Border', *Qadmoniot*, 9, 119–24 (Hebrew).
—— 1977a. 'A Lyre Player Drawing from Ajrud in Sinai', *Tatzlil*, 17, 109–10 (Hebrew).
—— 1977b. 'Kuntilet-Ajrud', *RB*, 84, 270–73.
—— 1977c. 'Kuntilat ʿAjrud, 1975–1976', *IEJ*, 27, 52–53.
—— 1978a. *Kuntillet ʿAjrud. A Religious Centre from the Time of the Judean Monarchy on the Border of Sinai. Israel Museum Catalogue 175* (Jerusalem).
—— 1978b. 'Kuntillet ʿAjrûd — An Israelite Religious Center in Northern Sinai', *Expedition*, 20, 50–54.
—— 1979a. 'Did Yahweh Have a Consort?' *BAR*, 5/2, 24–35.
—— 1979b. 'Kuntillat-Ajrud', *Le Monde de la Bible*, 10, 32–36.
—— 1981. 'A Religious Center at Kuntillet Ajrud, Sinai', in A. Biran (ed.), *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (Jerusalem), 161.
—— 1982–83. 'The Israelite Religious Centre of Kuntillet ʿAjrud', *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society*, 52–55.
—— 1986. 'The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ʿAjrud', Communication given at the 12th Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (Jerusalem).
Meshel, Z., and Meyers, C., 1976. 'The Name of God in the Wilderness of Zin', *BA*, 39, 6–10.
Miller, P. D., 1985. 'Israelite Religion', in D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker (eds.), *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters* (Philadelphia and Chico), 201–37.
Millard, A. R., 1980. '*yw* and *yhw* Names', *VT*, 30, 208–12.
Naveh, J., 1979. 'Graffiti and Dedications', *BASOR*, 235, 27–30.
Norin, S. I. L., 1980. '*yw*-Names and *yhw*-Names: A Reply to A. R. Millard', *VT*, 30, 239–40.
Rainey, A. F., 1983. Review of Z. Zevit, *Matres Lectionis in Ancient Hebrew Epigraphs*, *JBL*, 102, 629–34.
—— 1987. 'Some Historical Notes on Epigraphic Texts', Communication given at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (Boston).
Shanks, H., 1986. 'Antiquities Director Confronts Problems and Controversies', *BAR*, 12/4, 30–38.
Shmueli, A., and Grados, Y. (eds.), 1979. *The Land of the Negev* (Tel Aviv) (Hebrew).
Singer, S., 1976. 'Cache of Hebrew and Phoenician Inscriptions found in the Desert', *BAR*, 2/1, 33–34.
Smelik, K. A. D., 1991. *Writings from Ancient Israel: A Handbook of Historical and Religious Documents* (Louisville), trans. and rev. edn of *Behouden Schrift: historische documenten uit het oude Israël* (1984, Baarn).
de Vaux, R., 1969. 'Téman, ville ou région d'Édom?', *RB*, 76, 379–85.
Weinfeld, M., 1980. 'A Sacred Site of the Monarchic Period', *Shnaton*, 4, 280–84 (Hebrew).
—— 1982. 'Additions to the Inscriptions of ʿAjrud', *Shnaton*, 5–6, 237–39 (Hebrew).
—— 1984. 'Kuntillet ʿAjrud Inscriptions and Their Significance', *SEL*, 1, 121–30.
Wilhelm, G., 1978–79, 'Kuntilet ʿAğrud', *AO*, 26, 213.