LOCAL MANIFESTATIONS OF YAHWEH AND WORSHIP IN THE INTERSTICES: A NOTE ON KUNTILLET ʿAJRUD*

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Abstract

The *Shema* (Deut 6:4) has long posed a *crux interpretum* in studies of early Israelite religion. Although the verse is often understood as a rejection of "foreign" deities in favor of Israel's God Yahweh, some have understood the verse as a textual consolidation of Yahweh's multiple identities. The present study draws attention to the specific local manifestations of Yahweh at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and their respective archaeological contexts, locating those expressions within the larger regional and pan-Israelite religious system. Attentiveness to the archaeological provenance of each pertinent inscription suggests that distinctions obtained between the devotional expressions towards each local manifestation of Yahweh. Insofar as it is possible to draw conclusions from the extant epigraphic and iconographic data, the expressions of devotion towards Yahweh of Teman was officially sanctioned; no such official recognition of Yahweh of Samaria existed. When no sanctioned space existed for such recognition, personal expressions of piety were expressed interstitially.

Keywords: Kuntillet ʿAjrud, local manifestations, sacred space, boundaries

Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD alone (Deut 6:4, NRSV)

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1. *Introduction*

The Deuteronomic adjuration for Israel to worship Yahweh alone is a centerpiece of biblical law and theology, and continues to be a touchstone for the Abrahamic faiths in the modern day. Despite its overarching significance in theological interpretations of Deuteronomy and of the Pentateuch as a whole, the verse remains somewhat enigmatic. While the consensus view has typically maintained that the verse participates actively in a rejection of putatively "foreign" deities in favor of Israel's God Yahweh, a strong minority report attempts to understand the verse as a textual consolidation of Yahweh's multiple identities. This study attempts to clarify the import of the latter suggestion with respect to the history of Israel's religion by drawing increased attention to the religious expressions centered on specific local manifestations of Yahweh at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, and to locate those expressions within the larger regional and pan-Israelite religious system. The respective archaeological contexts of the various inscriptions mentioning local manifestations of Yahweh suggest a situation that has received too little recognition in the secondary literature. Namely, these data suggest on the one hand that the worship of Yahweh of Teman was intentionally and officially provided space at the site. Even in the interstices between officially sanctioned cultic spaces, ad hoc devotion to this manifestation is in evidence. On the other hand, the single expression of the worship of Yahweh of Samaria was similarly ad hoc, but it was apparently not marginalized entirely. The proximity of the veneration of these two divine manifestations, as preserved in the epigraphic record, suggests the following thesis: the boundaries defining sacred space were fluid. These boundaries could be permeated by other manifestations of the same deity to whom the shrine was dedicated, even if they were in "competition" with the "host" manifestation. In this regard, competition did not necessarily comprise an active battle between the two (as in 1 Kings 18), but rather consisted in the standing choice offered to patrons when deciding the object of their devotion. This competition was an economic one, consisting simply in the possibility of the patron's specification of one recipient of a dedicatory offering to the exclusion of another manifestation.

2. *Local Manifestations and the Fluidity Model*

In beginning the evaluation of the meaning of Deut 6:4, we are immediately confronted with the difficulties posed by the appeal's locution itself. What is meant, for example, by the syntagma *YHWH ʾeḥād*? Is this a verbless clause with *ʾeḥād* used adverbially or as a predicative adjective, as the translation in the epigraph above understands it? The second word can indeed mean "only" (e.g., 1 Kgs 4:19; 1 Chr 29:1), although this adverbial usage of the word is relatively rare.[1] Or, alternatively, is this phrase merely the second element of a larger verbless sentence, in which case *ʾeḥād* might be read as an attributive adjective of some sort, modifying *YHWH*? The use of *ʾeḥād* following a noun may indicate use in an attributive adjectival phrase in which the second word "may have an emphatic, counting force,"[2] meaning "single" (e.g., Gen 1:9; 2:24; 11:1; etc.). One might then translate, "YHWH our God is one YHWH," with M. Weinfeld,[3] with a more nuanced articulation being "Yahweh our God is *a single* Yahweh." However, the divine name, as a proper noun, is not normally a "count noun," that is, a noun conceptualized as a group of individuals to be counted when in the plural, over against collective and mass nouns such as "wheat."[4] As such, "it would be highly anomalous for it to be modified by a numeral."[5]

While there are thus significant problems associated with this translation, each of the proposed translations has attendant problems as well.[6] Therefore, in the present paper it is admitted that Weinfeld's preferred translation, "YHWH our God is one YHWH," is a problematic, or at least incomplete, understanding of predication in Deut 6:4. Nonetheless, it is also argued that the inscriptions from Kuntillet ʿAjrud provide some corroboration that the singularity of Yahweh was potentially of concern for the Deuteronomic

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[1] *IBHS* 274 §15.2.1c; cf. Tigay 1996:439-440; and N. MacDonald 2003:70 and sources cited there.

[2] *IBHS* 274 §15.2.1a.

[3] E.g., Weinfeld 1991:330, 337-338; cf. Tigay 1996:439.

[4] For a more thorough discussion of "count nouns," see *IBHS* 99, 112, 113-114, 119-120 (§§6.3.1b, 7.1c, 7.2.1, and 7.4.1).

[5] Miller 1999:5; see also N. MacDonald 2003:67. I thank Dr. Kent Reynolds for the Miller citation.

[6] For more detailed discussions, see, e.g., *IBHS* 135 §8.4.2g; Miller 1999:3-6; and N. MacDonald 2003:62-68.

author(s). Correspondingly, the adjuration to the Israelites in Deut 6:4 would not only be an explicit call to monotheism in the face of other deities—although it would secondarily make that plea as well.[7] The verse would also be serving as an appeal not to permit the disintegration of Yahweh into a variety of locally circumscribed manifestations. In this same vein, A. D. H. Mayes has suggested with reference to the divergent manifestations of Yahweh at Kuntillet ʿAjrud,

> The usual interpretation of this [command], that it is an affirmation of the oneness of Yahweh by contrast with the multiplicity of the manifestations of Baal or El, is not wholly adequate. Rather, the Deuteronomic proclamation is to be taken as a rejection of Israelite, Yahwistic religious practice, in which *Yahweh* was worshipped in different forms and manifestations within Israel.[8]

Mayes relies here on a long and ongoing tradition of recognizing "local manifestations" of Yahweh in the epigraphic data found at Kuntillet ʿAjrud. Indeed, the phenomenon of multiple geographically constrained manifestations of a deity was common throughout the ancient Near East.

The problem of local manifestations attains a unique degree of complexity when dealing with Mesopotamian exemplars. It is commonplace for scholars to note the examples of, e.g., "Ishtar of Arbela" (d*Ištar ša* uru*Arbaʾ-ilu*) alongside "Ishtar of Nineveh" (d*Ištar ša* uru*Ni-nu-a*) in documents such as the Esarhaddon Prism from Nineveh (Nin. A I.6, 10, etc.).[9] Such apparent dichotomies, however, pale in comparison to the full diversity of manifestations named in Akkadian treaty and ritual texts. The Assyrian documents associated with various instantiations of the *akītu* festival, collected by B. Pongratz-Leisten, name three regional, or local manifestations of Ishtar—"Ishtar of Arbela" (d15 *ša* uru*Arbaʾ-il*; K 4310; cf. "Ishtar *dwelling in* Arbela"; d15 *āšibat* uru*Arbaʾ-il*, VAB 7, 116-117 [= Assurbanipal, Cyl. B.V.52]),[10] "Ishtar of Nineveh" (reconstructed:

[7] Weinfeld (1991:338) points out that the claim to be "one" is made by deities in polytheistic religious milieus as well, and therefore Deut 6:4 may not be explicitly monotheistic, except insofar as it is combined with passages such as Deut 10:17.

[8] Mayes 1997:62. See previously Driver 1895:89-91; Donner 1973:50; and Tigay 1996:439-440.

[9] For text, see Borger 1967:40.

[10] See also the reconstruction in SAA 2, nr. 3, obv. line 9′ and rev. line 4′.

^{d}15 *ša* [*Ni-nu-a*], KAV 49),[11] and "Ishtar of the house/temple" (^{d}*Ištar*-É; Brit. Mus. 41239).[12] Beside Ishtar of Abela and Ishtar of Nineveh, we find an additional two Ishtars in Sennacherib's Succession Treaty (SAA 2, nr. 3): "Ishtar of the heavens" (^{d}15 *ša* AN-*e*; reconstructed in SAA 2, nr. 3, line 9′), and "the Assyrian Ishtar" (^{d}15 *aš-šur*-[*i-tu*]; SAA 2, nr. 3, rev. line 4′). These all stand in addition to the myriad other manifestations of Ishtar known from other corpora.[13]

Moreover, the Mesopotamian temple lists compiled by A. George further evince a stupefying diversity of local centers of worship, each potentially dedicated to a locally circumscribed manifestation of the revered deity.[14] Unfortunately, in these lists the precise relationship of the nominal phrase (e.g., *bīt* ^{d}*ištar*) to the prepositional phrase modifying it (e.g., *šá* ^{uru}*Ḫu-da-da* or *šá* ^{uru}*raq-na-na*; DŠ 32-14, obv., lines 28′, 29′)[15] is unclear:

(a) Are these temples dedicated to "Ishtar-of-Ḫudādu" and "Ishtar-of-Raqnana"?
(b) Or do these prepositional phrases indicate only that these temples, dedicated to (a single) Ishtar, are found "in Ḫudādu" or "in Raqnana," respectively?
(c) Or is *ištar* here a common noun meaning simply "goddess"?[16]

George seems to interpret these occurrences through the second supposition, for example, translating "temple of Ištar *at* Ḫudada."[17] But the commonly accepted locution "Ishtar of Arbela" renders the syntactically identical ^{d}*Ištar ša* ^{uru}*Arbaʾ-ilu*. In contrast, Pongratz-Leisten points to temples dedicated, respectively, to the Ishtars of Arbela and Nineva and located in Ḫarrān: if we follow this mode

[11] Reconstructed in SAA 2, nr. 3, obv. line 9′ and rev. line 4′.
[12] For the range of referents of the name "Ishtar," see Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 79-81, 81 n. 309, and 116-117.
[13] E.g., Ištar-Bābili, Ištar-Šawuška, Ištar of Kār Tukultī-Ninurta, Ištar of Kalḫu, Ištar of Uruk; for fuller discussion, see Pongratz-Leisten 1994:80, 117 n. 14, 134, 177, and literature cited there.
[14] George 1993.
[15] See ibid., 41.
[16] See CAD 7:271-274.
[17] George 1993:135 no. 918 (emphasis added).

of thought, the cult of local manifestations could be transported beyond the locale proper to that manifestation.[18]

As in the Mesopotamian milieu, Ugaritic ritual texts attest a number of manifestations of the deity Baal(-Hadad), all bearing appellatives of the "*bʿl* of GN" form. As examples of geographic distinctions between deities either named or titled *bʿl*, we may point to several alphabetic cuneiform deity lists. These include:

(a) RS 24.643 (= *KTU* 1.148),[19] which identifies a *bʿl ḫlb* ("Baal of Aleppo"; line 26) next to a *bʿl ṣpn* ("Baal of Zaphon"; line 27) and in distinction to at least one other deity named *bʿlm* (lines 3, 4, 11-12 [6x], 44)[20] or *bʿl* (lines 8, 10 [emended]);[21]

(b) RS 4.474 (= *KTU* 1.65),[22] wherein *bʿl ṣpn*[23] (line 10) is juxtaposed to *bʿl ugrt* ("Baal of Ugarit"; lines 10-11);

(c) RS 1.009 (= *KTU* 1.46),[24] where we find the same *bʿl ṣpn* (line 14, reconstructed in line 12) alongside several mentions of a geographically unrestricted *bʿl* (lines 3, 6 [cf. also the local manifestation *bʿl knp*],[25] 8, and 17 [broken]) and a single mention of *bʿl ugrt* (line 16), reconstructed by Pardee on the basis of identical lines in RS 24.253;[26]

(d) RS 24.253 (= *KTU* 1.109),[27] closely related to the previous text, which juxtaposes *bʿl ṣpn* (lines 9, 29, 32-33) to *bʿl ugrt* (lines 11, 16, 34 [broken], 35-36 [reconstructed]),[28] *bʿl ḫlb*

[18] Pongratz-Leisten 1994:79. I thank here Professor Pongratz-Leisten for a brief e-mail communication (Sept. 1, 2010), in which she expressed to me her continuing interest in the problem of what might be called the "transportability" of local cults.

[19] Pardee 2000:779-806 (= idem 2002:17-19, text 3).

[20] Pardee (2000:786 n. 42) posits six different deities named *bʿl*, which he numbers consecutively on analogy with RS 20.024 (= *Ugaritica* V_N 18), where we find six different "Baals" listed as ^{d}IM + sign II-VII, all juxtaposed to ^{d}IM be-el ḪŪR.SAG.ḫa-zi (equivalent to *bʿl ṣpn* in RS 1.017; see discussion of RS 1.017:5-11 (= *KTU* 1.47) in Pardee 2000:291-319, esp. 300-302 and, for local manifestations, 300 n. 48). It may be that individuals of this group correspond to deities listed more fully elsewhere (e.g., *bʿl ḫlb* or *trṯy* (idem 2000:796 n. 82, 797 n. 85, 800, 805-811)). The variation here is sufficient to make the point.

[21] Idem 2000:782 n. 17.

[22] Idem 2000:364-385, esp. 374-375 (= idem 2002:21-23, text 5).

[23] The reading *bʿl* is unclear except from context (idem 2000:366, 375).

[24] Idem 2000:265-287 (= idem 2002:26-29, text 6A).

[25] Idem 2000:279-280 and n. 62.

[26] Idem 2000:271, 286; 2002:29.

[27] Idem 2000:601-614 (= idem 2002:29-31, text 6B).

[28] Idem 2000:613.

(line 16), and an unrestricted *bʿl* (lines 13, 20, and possibly 35);[29]

(e) RS 24.284 (= *KTU* 1.130),[30] also related to the two aforementioned texts, in which the same three local manifestations of Baal appear: *bʿl ṣpn* (lines 7 [broken], 9 [reconstructed]),[31] *bʿl ugrt* (lines 11, 23 [both broken]), and *bʿl ḫlb* (line 24) all appear together.

These "DN of GN" and "DN in GN" formulae appear in southern Levantine epigraphic contexts as well; P. K. McCarter collected several exemplars in an important 1987 article.[32] In Northwest Semitic contexts can be found examples such as (a) Aramaic *hddskn* ("Hadad of Sikan"; Fekherye, line 1);[33] (b) Ugaritic *aṯrt ṣrm* ("Asherah of Tyre"; KTU 1.14.iv.35, 38); and (c) Phoenician *ʿštrt kt* ("Ashtart of Kition"; *KAI* 37A.5), *tnt blbnn* ("Tannit-in-Lebanon"; *KAI* 81.1), and *ʿšt<rt> bṣd*[?]*n* ("Ashtart-in-Sidon"; Bibliothéque Nationale, Paris, Inv. No. N 3316).[34] There appear here, too, a number of formulations with the theophoric element *bʿl*: e.g., *bʿl ṣdn* ("Baal of Sidon"; *KAI* 14.18), *bʿl lbnn* ("Baal of Lebanon"; *KAI* 31.1, 2), and perhaps *bʿl ṣpn* ("Baal Zaphon"; *KAI* 50:2-3).[35]

The same "DN of GN" and "DN in GN" syntactic constructions are plausibly reconstructed within ancient Israel. In the same article, McCarter discussed the "local manifestations" of Yahweh, noting the geographic particularity of the divine name "Yahweh-in-Hebron" (*YHWH bĕḥebrôn*; 2 Sam 15:7), and perhaps also "Yahweh-in-Zion" (*YHWH bĕṣîyôn*; Ps 99:2).[36] This geographically specific

[29] Ibid.

[30] Idem 2000:728-737 (= idem 2002:32-33, text 6C).

[31] Idem 2002:33; cf. idem 2000:730, 735.

[32] McCarter 1987:140-141. See there for further discussion of these and Mesopotamian examples.

[33] The same deity appears later in that text as *hdd ysb . skn* ("Hadad dwelling in Sikan"; lines 15-16). This locution is rendered by Akk. ^{d}*Adad āšib* ^{uru}*Sikani* ("Hadad dwelling in Sikan"; lines 24-25; cf. above, ^{d}15 *āšibat* ^{uru}*Arbaʾ-il*). For the text and discussion, see Abou-Assaf, Bordreuil, and Millard 1982:15-16, 23-24, 63-64.

[34] Avigad 1966:247-251, pl. 26; cf. Herr 1978:71 no. 36.

[35] See Chase 1982:65; Lemaire 1984a:133. Cf. though, below.

[36] McCarter 1987:139-43; see also Emerton 1982:esp. 5. Previously, Donner (1973:48-49) had argued that the Deuteronomistic portrayal of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12:26-29 was polemic indicting not a raw, profligate polytheism, but rather a "poly-," or more specifically, "di-Yahwism." Donner locates Jeroboam's apparently "poly-Yahwistic" impulse in the "Volksfrömmigkeit," and points to a possible cognate passage in which Absalom implicitly claims to have made a

nomenclature is not limited to the Israelite deity Yahweh, but is borne in the Hebrew Bible by non-Yahwistic deities, such as *dāgôn bĕʾašdôd* ("Dagon in Ashdod"; 1 Sam 5:5) and the various manifestations of deities found throughout the biblical corpus who are represented with the appellative *bʿl*.[37] A salient distinction, however, prevents a facile comparison of the biblical texts with other texts using the divine appellative "Baal." Whereas in the Ugaritic texts *bʿl* usually refers to the storm deity named Hadad/Haddu (or one of his local manifestations), in the southern Levantine texts (i.e., the Hebrew Bible and Phoenician inscriptions), the sobriquet *baʿal* is, properly speaking, an epithet that does not typically exhibit the same constancy of identification; the appellative commonly refers to deities other than Hadad.[38] It is possible, in fact, that the biblical texts preserve evidence of the ancient, syncretistic identification

vow to Yahweh *in* (i.e., *of*) *Hebron*, necessitating his repayment of the vow in that locale (ibid., 49-50).

[37] Writing in the years before the publication of McCarter's article, J. A. Emerton had been reticent to allow wide leeway to the notion of divergent divine manifestations. He cited the various names by which Baal (i.e., Hadad) was denoted in Phoenicia and Ugarit, expressing some reservation against dividing the deity's identity too dramatically:

> *bāʿăl bᵉrît* (Jdc 8 33, 9 4) may well have been regarded as essentially the same as the god or gods presupposed by such place names as *bāʿăl gād* (Jos 117), *bāʿăl ḥærmôn* (Jdc 3 3, I Chr 5 23), and perhaps even the Moabite *bāʿăl peʿôr* (Num 25 3. 5, Dtn 4 3, Ps 106 28; and the expression is apparently used as a place name in Hos 9 10). *bāʿăl zᵉbûb* is described as *ʾælohê ʿeqrôn* in II Reg 1 2. 3. 6. 16, but that does not necessarily prove that he was distinct from other gods named Baal, for it is possible to regard him as the great god Baal as manifested and worshipped in Ekron. (Emerton 1982:11-12; for a similar proposal, see also Day 1992:547)

To Emerton's list we may add also the biblical examples *baʿal ṣəpôn* (Ex 14:2, 9; Num 33:7), *baʿal məʿôn* (Num 32:38; 1 Chr 5:8; Ezr 25:9; Josh 13:17), *baʿal tāmār* (Judg 20:33), *baʿal ḥaṣôr* (2 Sam 13:23), *baʿal šālîšā* (2 Kgs 4:42), and possibly *gûr-baʿal* (2 Chr 26:7), although it does not display the same syntactic structure as the other exemplars. Despite the worthwhile warning not to assume too much independence between local manifestations of any given deity, it is not entirely clear that Emerton is working with the correct presuppositions concerning the proper referents of each of these "Baal" names. For example, *baʿal bərît* most likely indicated a local Shechemite manifestation of El, rather than of Hadad. Cf. *ʾēl bərît* in Judg 9:46; Cross 1973:39; cf. also Smith 2002:79. Additionally, Emerton does allow that the evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud may bespeak a trend in Yahwism in which various local manifestations of an acknowledged single deity found expression (Emerton 1982:12).

[38] See, e.g., the difficulties noted by Dearman 1993; Mastin 2009:111; cf. Day 1992:547.

of some deities called "*bʿl* of GN" with the Israelite deity Yahweh.[39] Judging from the Ugaritic and Mesopotamian parallels, these local manifestations of Yahweh in Israel were "semi-independent, almost as if they were distinct deities."[40]

In a significant recent study on Israelite monotheism, N. MacDonald has challenged this disintegration of Yahweh into *semi-independent* local manifestations, attempting to discredit the supposed drive exhibited by Deut 6:4 towards a "mono-Yahwism": "It is not clear that the association of YHWH with particular locations necessarily resulted in a fragmentation into a number of different YHWHs. It is possible that 'YHWH of Teman' and 'YHWH of Samaria' were understood as local manifestations of the same deity."[41] Instead, MacDonald understands the *Shema* as a statement focusing on the uniqueness of Yahweh, as experienced by the confessing Israelite religious community, which at the same time recognizes the continued (but lesser) existence of other deities.[42] MacDonald's explanation, while cogent, misses the problem posed by the divergent manifestations and too quickly dismisses "local manifestations" merely as locally situated representations of a single deity.

Subsequently, B. D. Sommer has approached the topic of local manifestations from a comparative standpoint in his book *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*. In this important study, Sommer argues that Israel's God had not just a single body, "but rather… [had] many bodies located in sundry places in the world that God created."[43] What makes this multi-faceted existence of Israel's God possible is a common feature of divinities throughout the ancient Near East, a feature Sommer calls the "fluidity of selfhood."[44] For Sommer, "fluidity" covers two enigmatic aspects of divinity and divine embodiment. One referent of this term is "the *overlap* of identity between gods who are usually discreet selves."[45] Indeed,

[39] E.g., *baʿal pĕrāṣîm* (2 Sam 5:20), whom McCarter identifies as a "locally worshiped god, 'the lord of [Mt.] Perazim,' who was subsequently identified with Yahweh" (1987:141; see also Dearman 1993).

[40] McCarter 1987:142. Although it has become the dominant model for understanding the epigraphic remains at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, McCarter's view was, at the time of its inception, not the norm.

[41] N. MacDonald 2003:71-72, quote from p. 71.

[42] Ibid., 72-75.

[43] Sommer 2009:1.

[44] Ibid., esp. 12-37.

[45] Ibid., 16, Sommer's emphasis.

this is perhaps the more obvious model of fluidity with which Yahweh is associated: the common identification of Yahweh with El or Baal (Hadad) is a frequent object of study.[46] However, the model of fluidity with which the present study is concerned falls under Sommer's rubric *fragmentation*: "Some divinities have a fluid self in the sense that there are several deities with a single name who somehow are and are not the same deity."[47] Although these deities share a name, bear similar features, aspects, and positions within the pantheon, and are thus "effectively identical with each other," they also remain distinct entities, each receiving individual mention in lists of offerings, prayers, and so on.[48] These manifestations need not be considered as self-contradictory, argues Sommer, but rather must be thought of as "fragmented—…manifesting [themselves] as separate beings in separate places."[49] When applied to the religious environment of ancient Israel, Sommer's fluidity model proves adept at describing the situation described by McCarter, challenged by MacDonald, and found in several biblical texts (e.g., Genesis 28 and 32) and especially the epigraphic remains at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.[50]

Sommer's monograph serves to bolster the basic thrust of McCarter's article, and to broaden its thesis. He refines McCarter's interpretive matrix surrounding the fragmentation of Yahweh's identity, and locates it within the larger dynamic of fluidity with which Israel's religion was familiar. Sommer's interpretation is nuanced, and this particular section of his monograph is a very satisfying interpretation of the biblical and epigraphic data at our disposal. However, his presentation of the situation at Kuntillet

[46] E.g., Cross 1973:44-75; Smith 2002:19-107.
[47] Sommer 2009:13.
[48] Ibid., 14.
[49] Ibid., 15.
[50] Ibid., 38-57. Lest we assume that this phenomenon has no modern cognates, mention should be made here of the various Marian apparitions in (some versions of) Roman Catholic devotional life, such as those commemorated at Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fátima, and Medjugorje. Equally intriguing is the fragmentation of Mary preserved at local and regional shrines in northern Spain and described by W. A. Christian: the inhabitants of the Nansa Valley partition their devotion between a number of shrines, one of which is dedicated to Our Lady of Las Caldas, another to Our Lady of Covadonga, yet another to Our Lady of La Bien Aparecida, and so on. While presumably none of the devotees would claim that these are "different Marys," devotion to each is maintained distinctly (Christian 1989:esp. 50-80; I thank Professor Mark Leuchter for this reference).

ʿAjrud, in which two local manifestations of Yahweh are mentioned, does not delve deeply into the juxtaposition of these two manifestations at that site.[51] The point of this article is to apply Sommer's conception of "small-scale manifestations" to the epigraphic remains at Kuntillet ʿAjrud more fully, and to probe the partitioning of sacred space—particularly as it applies to the permeability between two manifestations of Yahweh.

3. *The Nature of the Site at Kuntillet ʿAjrud*

The site of Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman) has been alternately identified as a cultic site, or as a (secular) fortress or caravanserai.[52] However, the most realistic interpretation of the archaeological data seems to be that recently espoused by B. Schmidt, who argues that Kuntillet ʿAjrud, like Deir ʿAlla, was most likely a combination of the two, the product of a

> practice of building fortified living compounds along extended trading routes designed to facilitate travel through the region. Specific rooms or areas within those larger complexes were set aside and decorated with ink-on-plaster wall paintings and inscriptions conveying various religious themes to facilitate the cultic observances of both the locals who regularly passed near the site and travelers who temporarily lodged at or near the compound on their way through the region.[53]

One may agree wholeheartedly with Schmidt's formulation that there was "extensive religious use of the site's architectural space," whether or not it is believed that space to have been deliberately constructed as such.[54] There is circumstantial but plausible evidence in biblical and extra-biblical literature that such cultic installations

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[51] Whether the worship of Yahweh of Teman is better classified as a *local* or *regional* expression of religious piety is irrelevant here, since no matter the conclusion of that argument, this southern cultic expression is neither quintessentially northern Israelite—although it seems to have garnered Israelite patrons in an at least ad hoc manner—nor is it normatively southern Judahite—since Teman is already *at most* a sub-region of Judah.

[52] For the cultic interpretation, see Meshel and Meyers 1976:10; Meshel 1978: unnumbered pages; 1979:34; Zevit 2001:374. For the secular interpretation, see Lemaire 1984a:136-137; Hadley 1987b:207-208; 1993; Keel and Uehlinger 1998:247; Soumeka 2002:83.

[53] Schmidt 2002:98-104; see also Hess 2007:285.

[54] Schmidt 2002:103; see also Coogan 1987:118; and the later and, in my opinion, more developed solution of Hadley 2000:108-120.

associated with travel routes existed in ancient Syria-Palestine. One might think, for example, of the notice in 2 Sam 15:32, which locates a place "where God was worshipped" (NRSV) or perhaps "where [David] would worship God" (*ʾăšer yištaḥăwe[h] šām lēʾlōhîm*) at the top of the Mount of Olives beside the road out of Jerusalem to the east. Yet, this cultic site was close enough to Jerusalem that it presumably did not need to supply protective cover for travelers, as did the more remote way stations. In Ugaritic literature, we read of Kirta's vow made during an overnight layover at the sanctuary of Ashera of Tyre (*qdš a*[*t*]*rt ṣrm*; N.B. the local manifestation!) on his campaign to procure a wife (KTU 1.14.iv.34-43). Although these texts do not necessarily clarify the exact nature of the structures at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, they do point to the interrelatedness of travel and worship or pious devotion in antiquity.

A similar nexus of travel and devotional expression in antiquity may be found in the recently published Wadi el-Ḥôl inscriptions.[55] J. C. Darnell summarizes the list of deities at the end of Wadi el-Ḥôl inscription 5: "Dedusobek [i.e., the author of the inscription] believed the deities whom he chose to list in the lapidary letter at the Wadi el-Ḥôl were appropriate protectors of a traveler in the Western Desert."[56] Modern examples of this interconnection may be adduced as well. For example, one might think of the "Seaman's Bethel" in New Bedford, Mass., a chapel that served the sailors moving through the town (see also the opening lines of ch. 7 in H. Melville's *Moby Dick*),[57] or, even more closely associated with the infrastructure of trade networks, the various "Trucker's Chapels" associated with interstate supply facilities in the United States. Aside from the temporally-circumscribed media of writing, P. Beck's observation on the Kuntillet ʿAjrud dedicatory inscriptions (1982:46) could apply equally to written petitions at either of the aforementioned sites: "The dedications on the pithoi could therefore be looked upon as 'route prayers' of the type that any traveler along these long, awesome trails might have used to invoke his particular

[55] Darnell et al. 2005:esp. 73-75. See also Darnell 2002:97-101, 126-127. I thank Professor Chip Dobbs-Allsopp for these citations.

[56] Darnell 2002:101. Notice also the listing of "Horus… and Horus the easterner" in lines 10 and 13.

[57] "In this same New Bedford there stands a Whaleman's Chapel, and few are the moody fishermen, shortly bound for the Indian Ocean or Pacific, who fail to make a Sunday visit to the spot. I am sure that I did not" (Melville 1851:127).

deity… to watch over him during his perilous journey." In any event, the nexus between trade and cultic devotional practice attested in antiquity and in modernity can provide an interpretive matrix whereby the epigraphic remains at Kuntillet ʿAjrud may be better understood.

4. *The Epigraphic Remains at Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Their Interpretation*

As is the case with the inscriptions from Khirbet el-Qom,[58] most of the debate surrounding Kuntillet ʿAjrud's dedicatory inscriptions, dated to ca. 800 BCE, has focused on the nature of the phrase "Yahweh… and his Asherah/asherah."[59] More important in the context of the present discussion, however, is the naming of two local or regional manifestations of Yahweh. As noted above, the "DN of GN" sequence occurs at Kuntillet ʿAjrud with two distinct manifestations of Yahweh, localizable to two different regions of monarchic Israel and Judah, or perhaps more accurately, to two localities within these two regions: Samaria and Teman.[60]

Because the present study is concerned primarily with the epigraphic attestations of the worship of these two local manifestations at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, it is necessary to provide a relatively detailed discussion of the epigraphic data leading to the identification of these manifestations as separate, and a few methodological points are in order here. Unless otherwise stated, catalogue numbers of, transcriptions from, and translations of inscriptions are taken from Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005 (= *HI*).[61] In order to provide clarity of identification, *HI* catalogue numbers are cross-referenced with several other common epigraphic manuals (e.g., *AHI*, *HAE*, *HAHI*)

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[58] E.g., Hadley 1987a; 2000:84-105; Zevit 2001:359-370; Wiggins 2007:190-196.

[59] E.g., Meshel 1979; Dever 1982; 1984; Emerton 1982:13-18; Weinfeld 1984; Lemaire 1984b; Freedman 1987; Hess 1991:12-23; 1996; 2007:283-289; Binger 1995 (=1997:94-109); Mayes 1997:63-64; Schmidt 2002; Smith 2002:108-147; Wiggins 2007:esp. 197-208.

[60] One might compare here as well the Khirbet Beit Lei inscription (*HI* BLei 5) mentioning the "God of Jerusalem" (*ʾlhy yršlm*), if the reading of Naveh is followed (1963:84-85 [see 2 Chr 32:19]); however, the reading is far from certain and generally not accepted (cf. Cross 1970:299-302; Zevit 2001:417-427; Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005:128-130).

[61] The conventions used here are as follows: *italics* mark normal text, roman type indicates questionable or broken text, and [brackets] enclose lacunae or reconstructed text.

and secondary literature in the footnotes. Published photographs have been consulted when possible, but as will be seen in the notes on the following readings, examination of the available photographs yields very limited data. Reliance on the testimony of those who have had the opportunity to examine the inscriptions is a necessity. Therefore, the following discussion must be considered provisional until the excavation team has published the photographs in much higher quality stills than are currently available.

On the one hand, the manifestation known as "Yahweh of Samaria" (*yhwh šmrn*) is mentioned in one of the inscriptions on pithos A (*HI* KAjr 18):[62]

> *ʾmr . ʾ*[--] *h*[--]*k ʾmr . lyhl*[*_yw*] *wlywʿšh . wl*[---] *brkt ʾtkm lyhwh . šmrn . wlʾšrth .*
>
> Says [PN]: Say to Yahil[yaw] and to Yawʿasa and to [PN …] I hereby bless you by YHWH of Samaria and by his Asherah.

On the other hand, the manifestation "Yahweh of Teman" occurs as many as four times in three distinct formulations.[63] The name may appear twice in a plaster inscription as *yhwh* (*h*)*tymn* (*HI* KAjr 14):[64]

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[62] *HI* KAjr 18 = Meshel 1978: unnumbered pages: "The Inscriptions": E ("main inscription on the first pithos") = Meshel 1992:107b = *AHI* 8.017 = *HAHI* 153-155 (with photos) = Aḥituv 2008:315-317 = *HAE* KAgr (9):8. Meshel (1978) initially read *šmrn* incorrectly as the 3.m.s. perfect inflection of *šāmar*, with a 1.c.pl. object suffix (*šōmərēnū*, hence, "our guardian"). But over time, and with comparison to *t(y)mn*, it became clear that "Samaria" was the correct reading; see Meshel 1979:31; Gilula 1979, cited in Emerton 1982:3.

[63] Cf. Hadley, who reports that "Meshel counts five [occurrences of the name Teman]" (1987b:187; followed by Renz 1995:64 n. 7). No further citation is given, and I have been unable to corroborate Hadley's enumeration.

[64] *HI* KAjr 14 = Meshel 1978 D (2) = Meshel 1992:107a = Meshel 1993:1462 = *AHI* 8.015 + 8.023 = *HAHI* 159-160 = Aḥituv 2008:322-324 = *HAE* KAgr (9):6 + Fragments. *AHI* and *HAE* both read this inscription much differently from *HI*. In *AHI* and *HAE*, only the first part of each line is preserved (although *HAE* does render in transcription two fragments which must be the same as those behind the continuation of line 1 in *HI*), thus, the word *tymn* appears in neither. *HAHI* reads *tymn* only in the first line. Indeed, the published photos (Meshel 1993:1462; *HAHI* 159) provide only the right portion of each line, and the second line is broken across the supposed *h* and *t* of the word. The reading thus remains provisional until the publication of photos corroborating the reading *tymn* in the latter half of the first line. However, Meshel himself (1993:1462) attests to the longer reading of the first line found in *HI* and reproduced here (see also *HAHI* 159). Moreover, it is clear from the photos that the reading *šmrn* may be ruled out in the second line: the letter following the word divider has a sloping forward-leaning vertical line (cf. *w* and *h* earlier in the line), and thus cannot be *š*, and the second letter displays no traces of the long tail of a *m* (cf. the exemplars earlier in the inscription).

[---] *ʾrk . ymm . wyšbʿ*w[---] *ytnw . l*[*y*]*hwh . tymn wlʾšrt*[*h*]
[*w*]*hyṭb . yhwh . hty*[*mn*---]

…longevity, and may they be sated…be granted[65] by [Y]HWH of Teman and by [his] Ashera[h and] may YHWH of (the) Te[man] favor….

It apparently occurs once in one of the pithos B inscriptions as *yhwh tmn* (*HI* KAjr 19.5-7):[66]

brktk l[*y*]	I hereby bless you by [Y]
*hwh t*mn	HWH of Teman
wlʾšrth …	and by his Asherah….

and once again on pithos B as *yhwh htmn* (*HI* KAjr 20.1):[67]

]*lyhwh ht*m*n . wlʾšrth*

…by YHWH of (the) Teman and by his Asherah …

Assuming that the difficult sections of each text have been interpreted and reconstructed properly, the referents of these two manifestations can be described roughly. The former, Yahweh of Samaria, was worshipped in that northern Israelite city, but the locality denoted by the term "Teman" is more ambiguous: "The word can denote the south in general, but it is also used as in connexion with Edom. It probably denotes a region of Edom rather than a town, and it is perhaps also used as a synonym of the land

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[65] As Aḥituv (2008:322) points out, this verb may also be parsed from the root **tny* "to recount" (see Judg 5:11; 11:40; perhaps also Hos 8:9, 10). The distribution in the verb may bolster claims of this inscription's links to northern Israelites; see below (I thank Prof. Gary Rendsburg for this suggestion).

[66] *HI* KAjr 19.5-7 = Meshel 1978: unnumbered pages, "The Inscriptions": E ("second pithos") = *AHI* 8.021 = *HAHI* 157-158 = Aḥituv 2008:319-322 = *HAE* KAgr (9):9.5-7 = Hadley 1987b:185-186. Unfortunately, the photo published as *HAHI* 157 is nearly impossible to read, is clearly missing a piece containing the last few lines of text, and therefore cannot be used as corroboration of the transcription here. *HI* reads with the majority of commentators (including Gilula 1979:130-31; Weinfeld 1980:284 [reconstructing on the basis of the site's location in the south]; Lemaire 1984a:132-133; Hadley 1987b:186; Meshel 1992:1462; as well as *AHI*, *HAHI*, and *KAE* [reconstructed on the basis of Hadley's testimony]), over against Chase 1982:63 (no reconstruction) and Naveh 1979:28 (reconstructing *šmrn* on the basis of Pithos A).

[67] *HI* KAjr 20.1 = Meshel 1992:107b = *AHI* 8.016 = *HAHI* 156 = Aḥituv 2008:317-319 = *HAE* KAgr (9):10.2 = Hadley 1987b:187. Why *AHI* does not list this inscription with the others on Pithos B (8.018-8.022) remains a mystery to me. Nonetheless, the handbooks are agreed on the reading, all seemingly based on the eyewitness testimony offered by Hadley, who considers the *m* questionable, and admits that "if this [inscription] does not read *tmn*, then the whole interpretation of these texts may need to be reexamined" (1987b:188).

of Edom".[68] The different manifestations' coincidence at Kuntillet ʿAjrud need not be correlated with an explicitly polytheistic worldview, and a number of proposals have been made. Emerton explained the concurrence of "Yahweh of Samaria" and "Yahweh of Teman" as a matter of personal choice in how to represent the aspect of the deity most closely aligned to the situation in which the petitioner found him- or herself:

> The former phrase [i.e., "Yahweh of Samaria"] was probably written by someone from Samaria, who, while he did not believe in a multiplicity of deities named Yahweh, thought it best to pray to Yahweh as he was worshipped in Samaria. The latter [i.e., "Yahweh of Teman"] probably associates Yahweh with Teman and the southern region in general, not only because the connexion had a traditional background (Hab 3:3), but because it was relevant to a journey in the region to the south of Judah. He presumably worshipped Yahweh in some place other than Teman, and the phrase "Yahweh of Teman" did not denote a deity different from "Yahweh of Samaria", or perhaps "Yahweh of Jerusalem" or whatever it was, but the needs of the situation led him to recall the one Yahweh's traditional connexion with Teman when he invoked a blessing on a friend.[69]

On this understanding, ostensibly shared with MacDonald, it is theoretically possible then to maintain the essential unity of Yahweh, at least as it was experienced phenomenologically by ancient Israelites and Judahites, while at the same time admitting local manifestations of the deity, and the corresponding variation in cultic practices. The degree of this variation, though, requires further clarification.

Citing Mettinger's study of Israelite aniconism, Schmidt argues that the nomenclature of two distinct deific manifestations—"Yahweh of Samaria" and "Yahweh of Teman"—each associated with its own distinctive iconic or aniconic representation, may be indicative of the type of cult in which each manifestation was most at home:

> regional cults comprised of open-air sanctuaries, employing empty space aniconism, and dedicated to a particular deity or group of deities existed alongside urban temple cults housing icons and images of these same deities. The reference to Samaria in the phrase, "Yahweh of Samaria," in the pithos A inscription is compatible with an urban temple court yard serving as the backdrop for the pithos A scene while the mention of the southern desert region of Teman in the phrase, "Yahweh of Teman," of both pithos

[68] Emerton 1982:9, citing de Vaux 1969; see also Hadley 2000:127-129.
[69] Emerton 1982:12-13; see also Hadley 1987b:186; Soumeka 2002:93.

> B inscriptions is in keeping with a rural open air sanctuary as the imagined backdrop of the pithos B scene.[70]

Although the relationship of the inscriptions to the drawings has been the subject of much debate,[71] and is left an open question here, it must be admitted that Schmidt's thorough art-historical argument is intriguing and worthy of further consideration. The only significant conclusion of Schmidt's with which issue might be taken here is his claim that the same hand is responsible for both drawings. In point of fact, the common authorship and artistry of the two pithoi scenes *may* be substantiated by Schmidt's argument, but the necessity of this position remains elusive.[72] Nonetheless, Emerton's and Schmidt's respective arguments are important because they point to the differentiation of the Israelite Yahweh-cult, while at the same time opening space for the interaction of its various instantiations.

5. *The Inscriptions in Archaeological Context*

Attentiveness to the archaeological provenance of each set of inscriptions (and possibly their associated drawings) proves suggestive of further distinction between the local cults of Yahweh, while at the same time admitting that the two are not so distinct as to necessitate complete separation from one another. The following discussion takes as its point of departure the respective findspots of the inscriptions under investigation, insofar as they can be determined. In some cases, such as the plaster texts, the archaeological provenance necessarily corresponds closely with the inscription's point of origin. That is to say, because the plaster inscriptions would have been written only after the plaster had been applied to the wall and allowed to set, the locus of the inscription's discovery can be assumed with a high degree of likelihood to have been the same as the site of its completion. The same does not necessarily apply to those inscriptions found on portable items such as devotional

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[70] Schmidt 2002:114-115, citing Mettinger 1995:18-38.

[71] E.g., Beck 1982:45-47; Coogan 1987:119; Dever 1990:140-148; Hadley 1987b; Mayes 1997:61-62.

[72] Cf. Beck 1982:esp. 43-45. Cursory examination of the variety of the handwriting on the two pithoi, as available in the published photos, would suggest that several authors have been at work here.

offerings or, more importantly for the present argument, the pithoi A and B mentioned above. In theory, these items were mobile, and could have been inscribed anywhere before their deposit at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.[73] Therefore, the following discussion assumes that the dedicatory or petitionary pithos inscriptions were all written at the loci where they were found, with the proviso that any divergence from this assumption will produce varying results.

Kuntillet ʿAjrud is comprised of two buildings on an oblong rock outcropping. All four inscriptions under examination were found in the larger Building A, which has a fundamentally rectangular shape, with its long axis oriented east-west (see fig. 1). Entry into the building is from the east. Pithos B, containing the two pithos inscriptions mentioning "Yahweh of (the) Teman" (*HI* KAjr 19, 20), was found in the large central courtyard. Before entering this open courtyard, one first had to pass through an entrance court and an antechamber with two side chambers. Each side chamber was lined with low benches, permitting Meshel to dub this broad space the "bench room."[74] The benches themselves seem to have been used as places to put votive offerings.[75] The bench room and the entry way were coated with white plaster, upon which drawings and inscriptions had been made in black ink. Aside from the numerous short dedicatory inscriptions on stone vessels and so forth, none of which figure into this discussion, as many as three plaster inscriptions were found in the northern portion of this bench room. In this same room is the findspot of Pithos A, on which was discovered the single pithos inscription mentioning Yahweh of Samaria (*HI* KAjr 18).

Unfortunately, the figures given here are necessarily tentative, since no official excavation reports have been published and the

[73] Insofar as neutron activation analysis is capable of determining the points of origin of the pithoi, it seems that most of the pithoi from Kuntillet ʿAjrud were crafted in the area of Jerusalem (Gunneweg et al. 1985:272, 275-278; see also the formal comparisons adduced by Ayalon 1995:157-158). Although Gunneweg's team studying the chemical composition of the pithoi does not give individual data for pithoi A and B, this origin elsewhere might be regarded as sufficient cause to suspect that the inscriptions on pithos B were made elsewhere. The same is not the case for pithos A: a presumed origin in Jerusalem suggests that an invocation by the Samarian manifestation of Yahweh is only with difficulty attributed to the inscription's origin outside of Kuntillet ʿAjrud.

[74] For descriptions and maps of the site, see, e.g., Meshel 1978: unnumbered pages; 1979:29; Beck 1982:5, fig. 2; Schmidt 2002:93, exhibit B.

[75] Meshel 1979:30, caption; 1992:103b, 105a; Schmidt 2002:99-103.

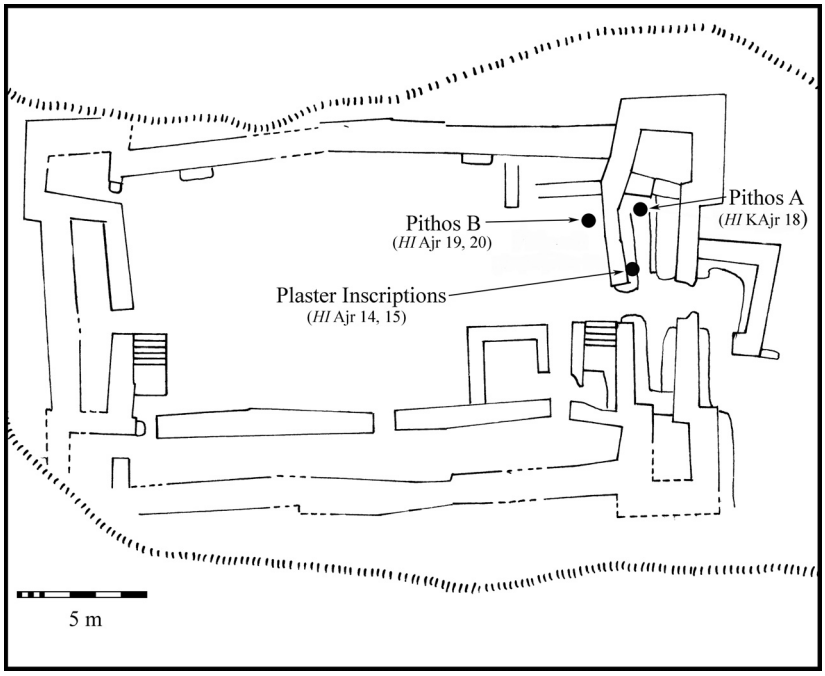

Figure 1: Plan of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, Building A. Modified from Meshel 1978: unnumbered pages; and Schmidt 2002: 93, Exhibit B

count remains unclear. Meshel at one point counted three plaster inscriptions in the bench room or on the immediately abutting doorjamb,[76] the first of which is consistently described as illegible, the second of which is legible and widely known (*HI* KAjr 14, reproduced above), and the third of which is spoken about by some as a separate inscription, and included by others as part of the first or second inscriptions. Meshel considered it possibly as part of the first inscription: "The third fragment was found in the debris of the same entrance on whose jamb the first inscription mentioned above [i.e., the illegible inscription on the north jamb of the doorway between the bench room and the courtyard] was found, and it may perhaps be part of it.... [text of *HI* KAjr 15]"[77] However

[76] Meshel 1992:105a, 107a; 1993:1461.

[77] = Meshel 1978: unnumbered pages: "The Inscriptions": D ("the third fragment") = Meshel 1992:107a = *AHI* 8.023 = *HAHI* 160-162 = Aḥituv 2008:324-329 = *HAE* KAgr(9):7. Meshel also mentions "Small fragments of two more inscriptions

this inscription is to be associated with the others, it is most conveniently separated and labeled as an independent major plaster inscription (*HI* KAjr 15).[78]

Thus, we may summarize the situation of the inscriptions' distribution as it is currently understood, and as it applies to the present argument. There are two legible plaster inscriptions in the bench room:

(a) First, we may mention the ink-on-plaster dedicatory inscription in which "Yahweh of Teman" is mentioned as many as two times (*HI* KAjr 14). Although it was written in a Phoenician script,[79] the linguistically Hebrew inscription[80] contained what appears to be Judahite orthography, in which the diphthong had not collapsed (*tymn* = /*tayman*/).

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on plaster… recovered at the western end of the courtyard, in the debris of the collapsed entrance to the western store-room and near it.… The few words which can be deciphered include several mentions of the divine name and Ba'al" (1978: unnumbered pages: "The inscriptions": end of section D). Presumably, this is the same group of fragments listed in *HAE* as "Fragmente" below KAgr (9):6.

[78] Most reports have correctly followed Meshel's initial report here, including this inscription (*HI* KAjr 15) in the bench room (e.g., Meshel 1992:105, 107a; Zevit 2001:372; Schmidt 2002:93, 100). But in some treatments, the inscription's findspot has been relocated to the doorjamb of the entrance to the western chamber at the far end of the courtyard. This assessment is undoubtedly based on the ambiguity of the location and enumeration of the inscriptions found in the room provided by Meshel's various publications, along with the relocalization of the inscription in one of Meshel's own publications: "Near the entrance to the western store room…, fragments of another inscription on plaster were found.… It can, however, be read partially.… [text of *HI* KAjr 15]" (Meshel 1979:29-30). Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005:286) mistakenly follow this localization: "[specifically of *HI* KAjr 15:] This fragmentary plaster inscription was found among the debris near the entrance to a long storeroom at the western end of the main building." For further discussion of the confusion produced by the conflicting reports, see Mastin 2009:100-101. Adequate discussion of all these inscriptions and their respective findspots requires some additional data, and therefore awaits Meshel's publication of the site. Unfortunately, the present confusion renders the argument presented here somewhat provisional.

[79] I am unconcerned here with the precise nature of the script, which has been handled recently by Mastin (2009:100-105), who argues that the script displays indications of northern influence, but may maximally be considered evidence of the work of "Israelites who had been in either direct or indirect contact with Phoenicians" (ibid., 105).

[80] Contrast, for example, the Heb. *hiqtīl* form *hyṭb* in line 2 to the normal Phoenician *yiqtil* of this period (e.g., Harris 1936:42-43; Friedrich and Röllig 1999:92-94 §§146-148, esp. p. 93 §147a). See in more detail Mastin 2009:105-109.

(b) Second, following Meshel's initial publications and the majority of subsequent interpreters, we many include here as well *HI* KAjr 15, the inscription mentioning *ʾl* (lines 1,6) and *bʿl* (line 5):

]*wbzrʾ . ḥl . br*[	] and when God shone forth…[
]*wymsn hrm*[	] and the mountains melted [
]*wydkn gbnm* [	] the peaks are crushed [
]*wšršš*[81] *ʿly*[*n*	] and the most high (?) uprooted [
]*lbrk bʿl bym mlḥ*[*mh*	] for the blessed one of the lord on the day of bat[tle
]*lšm ʾl bym mlḥ*[*mh*	] for the name of God on the day of batt[le[82]

While it would seem odd at first glance to find three names of as many as three different deities in the same cultic space (Yahweh, El, and Baal [i.e., Hadad]), B. A. Mastin has recently argued persuasively that the latter two might be used here as epithets of Yahweh.[83] Mastin locates this text's vocabulary within the Israelite theophanic tradition (cf. *zrḥ* in Deut 33:2; Isa 60:1-2; Mal 3:20; and **mss* "the melting [of mountains]" in Mic 1:4; Ps 97:5; cf. the identical imagery associated with **mwg* in, e.g., Amos 9:5, 13), although he admits the widespread correspondence of this imagery to that found in other, non-Yahwistic theophanic traditions across the ancient Near East.[84] More decisive for Mastin is the relative paucity of examples in Phoenician containing merely *ʾl* or *bʿl*.[85] In contrast, the epithets "God" (*ʾl*) and "lord" (*bʿl*) were in widespread usage in Hebrew inscriptions during the Iron Age II with Yahweh as the implicit or explicit referent.[86] Thus, concludes Mastin, "[i]t

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[81] Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005:287, 288) read here *šrš* instead of *šdš* as read by Meshel (1992:107) and Aḥituv (*HAHI* 160). Aḥituv has subsequently (2008:324, 326) emended his reading to *q{š}dš*, arguing for the first *š* as a mistake.

[82] The transcription and translation are that of Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005:287.

[83] Mastin 2009:110-113. Mastin was preceded in this assessment—without the detailed discussion—by, e.g., Soumeka 2002:86-87; and Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005:287; although cf. Zevit 2001:372-373.

[84] Mastin 2009:110-111; see also Dobbs-Allsopp et al. 2005:287-288.

[85] Mastin 2009: 111-112.

[86] For *ʾl*, Mastin (2009:112-113) points to an inscription from Khirbet el-Qom (ca. late-8th or early-7th cent.; *HI* Qom 5 = *AHI* §25.005 = *HAE* §Kom[8]:8); an ostracon from Jerusalem restored to read [*ʾl*] *qnʾ ʾrṣ* (late-8th or early-7th cent.; *HI* Jslm 78.3 = *AHI* §4.201.3; cf. *HAE*, "Grabinschrift nr. 3", p. 198); and possibly an example at Khirbet Beit Lei (c. 700 BCE; *HI* BLei 6 = *AHI* §15.007.1 = *HAE* §BLay[7]:2); as well as a number of biblical passages (Gen 33:20; Num 16:22; 27:16; etc.). For *bʿl*, one need only point to Hos 2:18 [=ET 2:16]: "On that day,

cannot be shown that *ʾl* and *bʿl* are not the names of Canaanite gods here, but they could perfectly well be titles of the God of Israel."[87] If Mastin's assessment of the epithets' correspondence to Yahweh is correct, then the cultic situation of the northern portion of the bench room becomes somewhat clearer: there is no official inscription in the northern bench room that cannot be read as pertaining to the pan-Israelite deity Yahweh, and particularly to Yahweh's Temanite manifestation.

Obviously, the assertion that this inscription was dedicated to the local Temanite manifestation of Yahweh remains tenuous. It is difficult to solidify this argument, if only because of the variability of the divine names' referent(s): what prevents *HI* KAjr 15 from being one dedicated to a non-local "high" Yahweh, or to a different local—but non-Temanite—manifestation? The key to this problem lies in the "official" character of the plaster inscriptions. Although the broken context of the drawings and inscriptions on the plaster of the bench room and the adjacent doorway into the courtyard prevents absolute certainty in this matter, the observations of O. Keel and C. Uehlinger advance our understanding of the deliberation with which those in charge of the way station outfitted this dedicatory cella:

> The wall paintings show especially, with all the clarity one could desire, that the caravanserai was a royal/state outpost on a trade route that was under government control. The decorations, using designs featuring ornamental boxes and lotuses in series, indicate the official character of the site…, but this is made even more clear in the portrayal of a (besieged?) city. On the battlements, one can see a man with a helmet, with a bare-headed man right behind him.… The picture is thematically reminiscent of Assyrian palace reliefs and paintings on bricks and walls that were done in the period from the ninth to the seventh centuries. The representation of an enthroned prince with lotus blossom also has an official character about it.…[88]

Although Keel and Uehlinger do not explicitly treat the execution of the drawings, we might observe that the designs and drawings on the plaster of the bench room seem deliberately planned. Note, for example, the frame delineating the picture of the battlement mentioned by Keel and Uehlinger in the quote above.[89] Not much of

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says the Lord, you will call me 'My husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal (*baʿlî*)'" (NRSV).

[87] Mastin 2009:113.

[88] Keel and Uehlinger 1998:245 and figs. 237, 238a.

[89] Keel and Uehlinger 1998:fig. 237.

the surrounding space was preserved in this fragment. Nonetheless, one may tentatively suggest that the use of this frame indicates a large-scale, planned artistic rendering that would be inconsistent with the supposition that an artist unassociated with the site's overseers had drawn a scene completely ad hoc. In contrast, we may point to the (in)famous drawings on Pithoi A and B. No matter how skillful we might deem their execution, the relative impermanence of their media and the limited scope of their subject matter suggest a less well-planned endeavor. Insofar as the plaster inscriptions seem to be of a well-planned and professional quality similar to that of the drawings on plaster—and have parallels in both archaeological (Deir ʿAllā) and biblical (Deut 27:2-4, 8) contexts—we may voice assent to Mastin's assessment that "those who worshipped the gods named in these texts would have been responsible for the construction, or perhaps for the running, of this way station."[90] But if this is the case, why is it that a predominantly northern Israelite governing body would dedicate the site's primary cultic installation to a *southern* manifestation of Yahweh?

6. *"Competing" Local Manifestations?*

In the preceding section, we saw that the only legible plaster inscriptions located in the bench room referred to the southern, Temanite manifestation of Yahweh. Although two common epithets, "God" and "lord," were used to designate this deity, no unequivocal mention of deities or divine manifestations of Yahweh *other than* Yahweh of Teman has been found in the plaster of the bench room. However, several other inscriptions of a short dedicatory sort were discovered here as well. Among these was the inscription on pithos A, mentioning Yahweh of Samaria (*HI* KAjr 18). The other inscriptions mentioning Yahweh of Teman (*HI* KAjr 19; 20) were *not* discovered in this northern chamber of the bench room, but rather in the courtyard, written in ink on pithos B. A preliminary reconstruction of the inscriptions' significance with regard to the issue of local manifestations of Yahweh must take into account this variation between the local manifestations, between their respective

[90] Mastin 2009:113.

findspots, and between the divergent types of inscriptions mentioning each.

The multiple mentions of Yahweh of Teman in varying locations within the complex may be accounted for by positing the work of two distinct sets of individuals, both of which had different goals in mind. A reconstruction may be suggested as follows: As implied in the preceding section, the overseers of the site seem to have come from the northern kingdom of Israel. Consequently, they hired a scribe who was familiar with a Phoenician or northern Israelite scribal tradition (if these can truly be distinguished at this point);[91] it is irrelevant whether this knowledge came as a result of his learning, or simply out of prestige imitation.[92] For the most part, the scribe utilized northern orthographic conventions in these inscriptions on plaster (e.g., *bym* "on the day of" in *HI* KAjr 15.5, 6). However, the variability of orthographic traditions is preserved in the spelling *hyṭb* (/*hayṭīb*/?), which we would have expected to be rendered as *ḥṭb* (/*ḥêṭīb*/ < **haytīb*).[93] Equally anomalous appears to be the scribe's preservation of the pronunciation *tymn* (/*tayman*/) twice in the orthography of the official written inscription written on the plaster of the bench room.[94] However, this spelling is not necessarily as anomalous as it first appears: it may, in fact, preserve the pronunciation of the site's name in the *local* (and not necessarily Judahite) dialect. While all modern Arabic dialects of the northern Sinai littoral plain contract the diphthong **ay* > *ē*,[95] as apparently did the majority of Ancient North Arabian dialects as well,[96] these indicators do not necessarily provide any insight into

[91] The distinctiveness of these scripts already in the early 8th century is claimed by many epigraphers. Compare the recent debate between Rollston (2008:esp. 81-89) and McCarter (2008:esp. 49, 56) concerning the divergence—or lack thereof—of these two scripts already in the 10th century.

[92] See Zevit 2001:376-377; Mastin 2009:100-105. The latter argues for a script of "mixed character." Despite the disagreement here, we may be justified in viewing this as "evidence for a link with north Palestine.... Alternatively, [the inscriptions in so-called "Phoenician script"] could be evidence for a link with an area with which the Phoenicians traded. They were produced by Israelites who had been in either direct or indirect contact with Phoenicians" (Mastin 2009:105; cf. Keel and Uehlinger 1998:245-247).

[93] Aḥituv (2008:313) views this datum as suggesting that the plaster texts "conform to the Judean orthography"; cf. below.

[94] See above, section 5.

[95] De Jong 2000:77-78, 254-255, 340, 415-16, 495-496, 537; see also, for the southern Sinai, idem 2004.

[96] M. C. A. MacDonald 2008:186.

the dialect(s) spoken in the Negev during the 8th century BCE. It would appear from the few epigraphic traces of Edomite that have been found that the Edomite dialect, like Judahite, maintained the diphthong **aw*, as preserved in the divine name Qaus (*qws*) as late as the early 6th century BCE.[97] If we may extrapolate from this correspondence and assume that the diphthong **ay* remained uncontracted in Edomite as well, then we might have good reason to assume that the toponym indicating the southern desert was in fact pronounced locally as */tayman/*. Moreover, it would seem to be this pronunciation that is assumed by Eusebius' ubiquitous rendering of the toponym as Θαιμάν (*Onom.* 96.18-23; 102.7-10).[98]

According to Zevit, this inscription written on the plaster in the bench room "may have been a hymn or prayer on behalf of those frequenting the site, and… at least one of its objectives was to encourage largesse in support of the shrine."[99] Among the subsequent visitors to the site were two travelers from the northern kingdom of Israel, who, wishing to pay respects to the local manifestation of the deity whom they worshipped in a different geographic and cultic context,[100] or whose blessing "was simply seen to be propitious for travelers through the southern region,"[101] left their own petitionary inscriptions on pithos B (*HI* KAjr 19; 20) in

[97] This reading is found in two Edomite ostraca: first, the ostracon from Ḥorvat ʿUzza (*qws*; line 3), and second, the Edomite ostracon from Tell el-Kheleifeh (compounded as a theophoric element in the personal names *qwsb*[*nh*?], *pgʿqw*[*s*] [2×], and *qwsn*[*db*]; lines 4, 5, 9, 10); for texts, see Aḥituv 2008:351-353). It is possible that the presence of *w* marks *plene* orthography in a form where **aw* > /ō/ (as in Israelian Hebrew), however, we must contrast at least one unmarked vowel that derived from the Canaanite shift (**ā* > /ō/): *hšlm* /ha-šalōm/ < **hV-šalām* (Ḥorvat ʿUzza, line 2). Similarly, the same text lacks any *matres* where Hebrew would have developed /ō/ from an original **u*: *ʾmr* (< **ʾumr*, "message"; line 1); *ʾmr* (< **ʾVmur*, "speak"; line 1); *hʾkl* (< **ʾukl*, "food"; lines 3, 6). Although the comparison of the forms is hardly conclusive, it does suggest that the *w* in the DN *qws* derives from a different origin than either **ā* or **u* (therefore, most likely from **aw*), and that its phonetic realization remained qualitatively distinct from that of /ō/ < **ā* or the Edomite reflex of proto-Canaanite **u*.

[98] I thank Professors Gary Rendsburg and Leong Seow for pushing me to articulate more precisely the identity of this inscription's author, and for suggesting to me this linguistic interpretation. For a convenient edition of Eusebius' *Onomasticon*, see Notley and Safrai 2005; Aḥituv (2008:322) also notes Eusebius' mention of Θαιμάν, but attributes the orthography at Kuntillet ʿAjrud to "historical spelling, still preserved in the *Judaean* orthography" (emphasis added); cf. above.

[99] Zevit 2001:374.

[100] With Emerton 1982.

[101] Hadley 1987b:186 = 2000:129.

the courtyard of the complex.[102] Both prayers utilize the expected northern orthography, in which the diphthong had collapsed (*tmn* = */tēman/* < **tayman*). This northern orthographic representation is consonant with the northern scribal conventions used to render names throughout the site,[103] and likely preserves the travelers' native Israelite pronunciation in the writers' habituated orthography. It also serves, however, to set the authors of the pithos B inscriptions apart from the author (i.e., commissioner) of the plaster inscription mentioning the same manifestation.

A third traveler, or perhaps one of the subsequent visitors mentioned above, left a petitionary inscription on pithos A in the bench room. Unlike the two pithos B inscriptions mentioning Yahweh of Teman, this one sought to bestow upon its recipient the blessing of the northern Israelite manifestation of Yahweh with whom the traveler was accustomed to interacting, Yahweh of Samaria (*HI* KAjr 18). Like the pithos B inscriptions, this inscription also utilizes the typically northern onomastic orthography.[104] This feature is demonstrated by the orthography of the name *yw'šh* and plausibly reconstructed in the preceding name *yhl*[*yw*].[105] No matter whether out of habit or nostalgia for home, this inscription was composed with the petition addressed to the author's favored and acculturated manifestation of Yahweh.

Whether or not the preceding interpretation of the archaeological situation and human history of the discoveries is correct, a second conclusion may be drawn: Building A at Kuntillet ʿAjrud seems to have several different loci in which varying levels of religious use were made of the available space. Although Zevit's understanding of the entirety of Structure A as specifically dedicated to cultic practice may overstep the available evidence, he correctly perceives that at least one of these spaces, the bench room, was deliberately claimed for the worship of a single specific regional—if not local—divine manifestation, Yahweh of Teman.[106]

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[102] Zevit 2001:377-378.

[103] Keel and Uehlinger 1998:247; Mastin 2007:130-131; Aḥituv 2008:319; but cf. Zevit 2001:381 and bibliography there.

[104] E.g., Aḥituv 2008:313.

[105] Cf. Aḥituv (2008:315-316), who reconstructs the name as "Yāhēlî", a hypocoristic form of *yhlyw*. Because the name is reconstructed, it lends less weight to the argument than forms that appear in the text intact.

[106] Zevit 2001:374.

Such partitioning of sacred spaces into smaller units dedicated each to a single deity is observable in Babylonian and Assyrian topographical lists as well. A. R. George has published a formidable collation of several such lists, one of which we may cite here briefly for comparison.[107] The Babylonian theological textual series known as "*Tintir* = Babylon" juxtaposes the traditional ceremonial (most often Sumerian) names of temples, shrines, chapels, and so on with their more common Akkadian counterparts. The second tablet of this series (*Tintir* II) lists a "seat" (*šubtu*) or "station" (*manzāzu*) for many deities. Essentially, these loci were pedestals for divine images.[108] In some cases, it is possible to posit the collocation of two such "seats" within the same "chapel,"[109] each of which seems to have comprised a constituent component of E-sagil, the large temple complex in Babylon dedicated (primarily) to Marduk.[110]

While the complexity of the data concerning the actual cultic *use* of such spaces in Mesopotamia does not permit wide-ranging comparison in the circumscribed venue of this study, we may make at least a few preliminary and tentative observations regarding the partitioning of space at Kuntillet ʿAjrud. There, the deliberate claim placed on the bench room's space for a specific religious expression does not necessitate that the worship of that manifestation was confined only to that locus. Although the courtyard of the complex shows little evidence of cultic use,[111] the two blessings mentioning "Yahweh of Teman," inscribed on pithos B, were found in this locus. This would suggest that the boundaries inviting or even confining worship of that manifestation in the bench room were not impermeable. Rather, the porosity of this boundary permitted expressions of devotion in unofficial capacities outside of that space, and even in an otherwise apparently non-cultic setting.

Moreover, the official dedication of the bench room to Yahweh of Teman evidently did not entirely preclude the expression of

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[107] George 1992. I am grateful to the editorial staff of *JANER* for this reference.
[108] Ibid., 9-10.
[109] Ibid., 10, citing *Tintir* II, lines 16′-24′, 40-41, 42-45, 31′-32′, 33′-34′.
[110] George 1992:11.
[111] Cf., however, the existence of two niches in the courtyard's northern wall, which have been interpreted as cultic installations subsequent to the initial publication of the site (see maps in Ayalon 1995:143, 189; and discussion in Zevit 2001:379; and Schmidt 2002:102 and n. 16).

devotion to other local manifestations of Yahweh in that room. If we may assume that the inscriptions were inscribed in the loci where they were found, as posited above, the discovery of an inscription mentioning Yahweh of Samaria on pithos A in the bench room would indicate that "competing" deities or manifestations of Yahweh could be worshiped side-by-side, even in a cultic space specifically dedicated to only one of them. This juxtaposition would further suggest that worship of this particular local manifestation was informal and ad hoc at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, simply a petitionary note left by the author of the inscription as an expression of personal piety in a setting publically recognized as dedicated to a competing manifestation.

It may be the case that we cannot reasonably sustain the assumption that the inscriptions were inscribed in the loci where they were discovered. Even if this is the case, we may nonetheless make an observation concerning the permissibility of importing vessels inscribed with cultic dedications or petitions into sacred space dedicated to a competing manifestation. If pithos A was imported into the bench room *after* the inscription of the "Yahweh of Samaria" petition, this would minimally indicate that such importations were in fact not prohibited, or at least not vetted thoroughly enough to prevent them. Similarly, in order to make a similar statement concerning the pithos B inscriptions, we must conclude that nothing prohibited the deposition of vessels inscribed with petitionary prayers in a putatively non-cultic setting. While we cannot demonstrate any of the foregoing scenarios with certainty, it is clear that the juxtaposition of the two small-scale manifestations of Yahweh in the bench room bespeaks the fundamental fluidity between such fragmentary local manifestations, attesting to an essentially ecumenical mindset of the author of the pithos A inscription or the overseer who allowed the vessel to be placed in the room.

7. *Summary*

Although conclusive argumentation is hampered by the paucity of diagnostic data, it seems to be the case that officially claimed sacred spaces were not sealed off from unsanctioned forms of worship by an impermeable prophylactic boundary. Rather, although cultic observance was officially limited to specific loci that were set off

structurally from other areas of the compound, official designation and dedication of a space did not prevent the simultaneous and collocated expression of devotion to a different local manifestation. Nor did it prevent the spread of cultic expression beyond the bounds of the officially circumscribed area. When no such space existed for certain manifestations, personal expressions of piety were expressed interstitially.

Nonetheless, it does seem as though MacDonald's facile telescoping of the two divine manifestations as *mere* "local manifestations" whose juxtaposition was unproblematic in the ancient Israelite worldview too quickly dismisses the very real distinction that was maintained at Kuntillet ʿAjrud in both iconographic (with Schmidt 2002) and epigraphic media. While there seems to have been no prohibition against the collocation of devotion to the two manifestations—or perhaps even an ecumenical identification of the two—the expression of cultic devotion directed at Yahweh of Samaria was interstitial, in that there was no official space set aside for it, and it had to be practiced in spaces otherwise devoted. Moreover, unless it can be somehow shown definitively that the pithos A inscription (*HI* KAjr 18) was, in fact, carried out *in* the bench room—as might be the case, for example, if it could be shown that pithos A had been fastened to the floor in the same way as the other pithoi in the room south of the courtyard[112]—the possibility remains open that the collocation of devotion to the divergent manifestations of Yahweh is entirely incidental. Far from providing evidence for mere localized reflections of a single, unified Yahweh, the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions more likely depict the fragmented, fluid divine self of the early 8th cent. BCE, appearing in two small-scale, geographically constrained manifestations.

Thus, while both manifestations share the name Yahweh—and thus, in Sommer's locution, "are… the same deity"[113]—they also seem to have led separate lives in the experience of worshippers. Along with Sommer, we may aver that their existence at Kuntillet ʿAjrud was not considered self-contradictory, but rather must be thought of as "fragmented", a case of Yahweh's presence "manifesting [itself] as separate beings in separate places."[114] It is precisely

[112] Meshel 1978: unnumbered pages.
[113] Sommer 2009:13.
[114] Ibid., 15.

against this background that the ambiguity of Deuteronomy's pronouncement of Yahweh's unity comes into focus. While we may admit that Yahweh's sole sovereignty over Israel is claimed in the *Shema*, we may also assert that this sovereignty comes with the concomitant requirement that Yahweh's personhood not be disarticulated. The tantalizing rendering of the *Shema* as the theologically prescriptive utterance "Yahweh our God is one Yahweh" serves to reorient our understanding of Deut 6:4 within a historical context in which locally and regionally specific Yahwistic practices, such as are attested at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, exhibited great divergence from one another. The deliberate use of an atypical syntactic construction in Deut 6:4—i.e., the enigmatic use of a proper name as a count noun, discussed above—may have been designed precisely in order to draw attention to the impropriety, both syntactic and theological, of differentiating between local manifestations of Yahweh.

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